

Aging Parents

By Jennifer Hein

The horror, fantasy, and science fiction story that is written as an incident report to lessen your burden as an aging caregiver for your parent.

My Aging Parent, My MOM

This is only a phone call, but a positive change from the past two years. My parent as she ages, tends to make up stories about people and things when these visitors interfere with her personal space when they do such a dreaded thing as visit.

To view the setting, you need to imagine that as the old woman ages, she has less details to remember yet she has so many possessions in her three story 1890's home she cannot seem to keep track of where she has squirreled away her possessions when she decided to store things. At 83, this old woman appears reasonable to others. She has had high blood pressure for 10 years and has adopting ways to use doctors' medications with some success to fend off problems with her processed foods diet which has contributed too many blood pressure crisis. The older woman would not be so difficult or annoying if she would not be filled with anger, at the way things did not or did turn out in her life.

The old woman has continued to accuse two of her daughters of "stealing" items with only sentimental value from her home, when she cannot locate them. Ironically when they are found, they must have been returned on their latest trip "because I missed them."

Her recent anger had suggested the children had taken some sentimental doo-dads from her younger years, a Chinese vase, a ceramic old couple These were all happy things she acquired in her early days as a young adult. The reason given behind the guise was that one of her middle daughters had decided to profit from the sales of her recent sewing project, the clothing she makes for a mid-size princess doll.

This popular doll is the second doll she has made clothing for, maybe 100 outfits each, which she finally came around to after years of making clothing for tiny "Barbie" size dolls, who

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only the old woman seemed to find adorable. No one appreciated her dolls no matter how many porch sales she had, or store windows she displayed them in.

The now 83 year old woman had no concept that 3 or 4 generations had passed and none of them appreciated the same kind of tiny doll she thought was so novel in her daughter's generation, let alone it was not even possible to make these in her youth. Plastic did not allow such detailed precision when she was a child. Or, was there even plastic, we would have to research that online. The old woman thought these tiny dolls were adorable and yet her daughter's all thought them to be cheap and cheesy. How could that be?

The great grandma who could soon be a great-great grandma did not think she had a problem remembering where items had gone, but she was sure they had been stolen.

The problem as the old woman stated was finding out which daughter had taken these things. Maybe the younger one who had not visited for 2 years could not be blamed anymore since items were still vanishing. The daughter did not visit because she had been accused of stealing from her parent's home and did not appreciate the anger in the old woman's voice accusing her of such ludicrous things on the phone, over and over.

After time had passed, the old woman decided to call her youngest daughter and discuss whether she could ask incognito whether the middle daughter had taken these items, especially since she recently had a yard sale trying to sell things for a profit, just one month ago. She must have taken these doll clothes from the old woman's house so she had more items to sell. The great grandma had accused the daughter of being duly influenced by her previous husband because of course we would never have supported any such shenanigans in our home.

The old woman stated, she could not of possibly of learned that from me, her middle daughter must be the thief since she had been influenced by her shady husband.

You can see where this is a story of an aging parent with hardening of the arteries or blocked arteries. The personal twist is that the youngest daughter appreciated this turn of events. The youngest has been amused for almost a week because her mother finally had a pleasant phone conversation after two years of being called a thief and having notes written to

her that she should confess and return the items. Early on, she had tried to be rational with little success.

Which items are missing? The youngest had asked. The missing contents seemed to change along with the missing memories from day to day, week to week.

So time went on and the youngest adapted to being called the thief so her confused parent should have someone to blame. But this time was different, they had only a few positive phone conversations in the last few years and this time the old woman had said, "It must be your sister."

How could the youngest daughter be so amused with this? How could she not feel the same pain she had earlier felt from her confusion when she was accused? Should she feel remorse that she had not defended her sister more vehemently?

NO, she was enjoying the moment when she was finally, "out of trouble."

Yes, it's a parental control issue and yes we all continue on in our life expecting praise from our parents. No, we never did enjoy being scolded or chastised over anything we did or did not do. Maybe that is a parent's rite to continue to "sculpt" our virtues, even if there are no vices or virtues to sculpt.

Why as we age do we expect our parents to act as parents when they are grandparents? Is that the turning point when you should expect the role reversal? At what point in their degeneration do we realize that they have regressed to a childish state? Is it when they begin to blame others for their problems? Or is it when they begin name calling others through their frustration? When do we accept that their actions are more like a 5 year old or even a 10 year old but no longer our parent?

At least, there are multiple children in this family, and they have somewhat found support in their siblings. The daughters have a general awareness that the old woman continues to change her story around, "It could be her, No it must be that one. "

Over the last five years the old woman has found any number of items missing and now she has said that the boxes were moved around, there is a box that I never had and it has

someone else's hand writing on it.

"Did your sister have you write something on it? It looks more like your writing. It is not your sisters writing but I am sure she DID it, the last time she stayed overnight."

The youngest daughter did add, "Yes, we had talked on the phone and she said you both had to clean off the bed so she could stay there overnight, but she made sure you came up with her and moved the items around. You were in the room as you both straightened out the piles of boxes off the bed."

This did not phase the old woman, she continued to offer the insight that "they were in a different order and I never bought anything with that product name on it. Plus it seemed to have your writing on it."

"Did she have you mark a box of my doll clothes? "

In all fairness to the old woman, I am astonished and amused that she continued on in that same phone conversation to tell a very detailed lucid story about their recent car trouble and how they had AAA tow them 50 miles. They had 2 garages and gas stations look at their 15 year old vehicle. We discussed how nice it was to have AAA plus membership. I especially remember that my recent bill of \$162 came in the hard mail delivered by the post girl to our mail box just this week. In our day, very few bills come this way, as a piece of paper in an envelope addressed to the house where I reside, so I remember them easily. But knowing the state of affairs at the old woman's house, I know that all of her bills come this way.

Does she still have the mental acuity to pay her bills on time? Only a visit to her parent's house will give the youngest the answer to that query accurately. The daughter is unsure whether to ask such a question about mundane details since the last time she had discussed this was when the old woman had decided that the youngest was trying to take control of her finances and this was a bad thing. The old woman had made sure the youngest knew that the bookkeeping was the only remaining job and she intended to keep working at her job. This has worked OK over the last two years. Has it been that long? The youngest daughter, the bookkeeper type in the family had pressed the old woman to get the household bills lined up

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online. This insistence was why she was not trusted over the last few years so she knew to “tread lightly”.

In remembering that I am a baby boomer, is it not surprising that I still wonder, why does my mommy get angry with me? What did I do to make her so angry?

I regret that it does not take much to make us regress to our childhood. I hope this incident report will lessen your burden as an aging caregiver for your parent. Possibly even make you chuckle, since this entire story is about small doll clothes that have vanished but no one wanted them to begin with.

Oh but wait, they do reappear when the old woman misses them... OH how can that be?

The End

Jennifer Hein bio: As a college graduate, my mom tells me “they think they know everything” ... yes, we all learn until we pass on, but the problem is we all learn at different rates & we learn different ideas. As a baby boomer, I need to share what I am learning when I explore aging concepts. When I was 30, I worked with retirement residents and the weekly meeting requirement was to learn a few nursing aging gracefully concepts that seem to be coming back to me now that I need to know. As an official senior, age 60 I am only beginning to act as the parent to my parent. They always said the day would come, so read on if U like.