

Role Reversal

Another day begins, and it's the same old routine. Wake Up. Get Dressed. Have Breakfast. I have to do all this within ten minutes. But to help my mother do exactly the same things it takes ten times longer. We eat breakfast together acting normal, but inside I know that it isn't.

We used to think that it was just the time of the month, but then it got the stage when we couldn't cope any longer. Me and my Dad took her to the hospital to get a diagnosis. The doctor told us they had to keep her in overnight and do tests on her to find out what was wrong. Eventually, after what seemed like months, the doctor gave us a final diagnosis. She was bipolar. My Dad couldn't cope with looking after someone with a mental disease. So he left us. He left me to cope on my own.

I tell my mother, that I'm going out and won't be more than half an hour; even though I know that it will seem like more than that for her. Half way through my trip to the shops, I receive a phone call from my mother. 'Emergency, come home now' are the only words she can get out of her mouth in her panicked state. I rush home, leaving all my shopping on the shop floor, to find out what is wrong. As soon as I open the red front door my mother screams "The man, he just won't leave me alone! He wouldn't even let me go the toilet" she wails. And with that she breaks down into a hysterical state of uncontrollable madness. It takes me a long hour just to calm her down and get her to the toilet. Even then, I have to guard the door, to reassure my mother that "the man" cannot harm her.

Each night when lying in bed, I remember back to the days in my childhood when my mother used to care for me. Just before I went to bed, she bought me warm milk and a cookie and read me a story to help me settle. When I had a nightmare, she used to let me sleep in her bed and she'd sing my favourite lullaby to me till I fell asleep. Looking back on my childhood I wish we had spent more time together. Now, before I go to bed, I have to bring my mother her medication to help her get through the night. If she has hallucinations, I have to stay and comfort her for half the night.

After caring for my mother for three years, I began to notice that it was getting worse. The medication was making it worse. I decided to attend a carer's group in my local school. It was two hours long, but I didn't like the idea of leaving my mother by herself. That day, my mother had been having bad hallucinations all day, but I needed to escape from her screaming. I calmed her down and headed out towards the school. It was a rainy and cold night, so I decided to catch the bus back to the flat. However, when I reached the door, the light was off and the door was on catch. I pushed the door open slowly and saw my mother lying on the floor in the hallway, as white as a ghost. I walked towards my mother. Scattered all over the hallway floor was all of her medication. She had taken an overdose. She was dead. I felt guilty for leaving her, but in a strange way, I felt free. My role reversal was over.