

Two Different Shoes



Thoughts and reflections from people who
live with dementia and their carers

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Two different shoes

Sometimes we have funny moments.
At one hospital appointment we realised
He was wearing two different shoes!
I whispered to him, 'Keep your legs under the chair.'
He passed the test and said, 'Let's celebrate.'
We went for lunch -
With two different shoes.

Introduction

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This book has been written by people living with dementia, carers and care staff. It reflects life in a care home, general thoughts about living a life affected by dementia, and memories shared by the people with whom I worked over nine months.

The inspiration for this book came from my own experiences with my mum and dad, who both lived and died with dementia. They lived in the same care home but on different floors. I visited them every day and I also got to know some of the other residents. It struck me that while staff were great in so many ways, they didn't always have the time to just be with people and listen to their thoughts and stories.

The idea of this book had been swimming around in my head for a long time, many years in fact. I used to take my laptop to the care home where my parents lived and type in all my thoughts and feelings about this thing we call dementia. It was my counsel, being able to write.

After mum and dad died I had a lot of time to reflect and knew I wanted to do something positive. I wanted to give people with dementia and carers the opportunity to have their voices heard – this doesn't happen very often, especially if you live in a care home.

I approached the Life Changes Trust to ask if they would fund a short project that would mean we could really slow down to listen to people living with dementia in care homes and in the wider community. My role was to spend time, helping with writing where people could write and being the scribe where they could not. I began to meet with people, armed with a note book, dictaphone and a bag with some objects and photographs to inspire some conversation. Some people with dementia needed encouragement to talk.

What I found worked every time was to sit as close as was comfortable for the person and gently touch the back of their hand. They would usually look me in the eye and all I had to say was, 'Tell me about...'

By using gentle physical contact and maintaining eye contact, as well as being silent and never interrupting, people spoke about their life. I never really needed the photos to prompt, and people quickly gave permission for me to write their story or thoughts down. I was amazed at the richness of conversations and the reflections that poured out. It has been extremely difficult to decide which pieces to include in this publication.

I would ask, 'Would you like to hear what you said?' and they would say 'yes'. When I read back what had been said or written, it clearly touched something deep inside. It was moving to see a person's reaction when they heard their own words read back to them. It was powerful.

One lady took my pen from my hand and wrote her name on the page, like an autograph.

As you read this book some of what you read will make you laugh; some things will make you feel a little sad. But it is my hope that the power of the real voices of real people whose lives are affected by dementia will make you think differently about dementia.

It has been a privilege to be involved with this project.

Caroline Brown, writer and former carer - May 2018

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Part 1



Living in a Care Home

Moving to a care home

Things moved on

Mum was becoming unsafe at home.
The police arrived via an emergency call.
Mum thought there was someone in the loft.
There was no one.
Things moved on from there.

It was hard to come to terms with.
I did feel it was better for mum.
She was safer.
It was funny not going to her house.
It still is.

I was up the way and down the way.
One day I felt I'd done the right thing.
The next I'd wonder.
Mum needed more support.

Kind of lost

I've got kind of lost up here,
Whatever it was I was doing.
I'm not taking it any more,
Aye, what are ye wanting?

Is this for you to claim something?
Did somebody tell you where to get me?
I wonder who that could be,
I wonder about that.

You have to go with it

14 years ago, we sent her to America to see her sisters.
We thought she was depressed.
Her eyes were dead.
She wouldn't eat.
She would just sit there staring out of the window.
For weeks, we knew there was something wrong.

I packed in my job to look after her.
I couldn't cope, I worried all day.
She kept leaving the cooker on.

It was heartbreaking.

I let her go to (a home) for respite.
To get a break, to decorate.
I thought she was coming home.

Then Karen said, 'There's an opening in our care home'.
It's just round the corner.
That was it!
I was advised not to go near for a few days.
She still said she wanted to come home.

When we ask her where she wants to go, she says 'home'.
We ask where home is and she says 'Lochwinnoch'.
It's a moment in time and you have to go with it.

She said, 'I was supposed to go home, my mum will be
worried about me, I'm at school tomorrow.'
It breaks your heart.
She says, 'Do you think I'll get to leave?'
Oh, but I've not been a good person.'

You can't rationalise.
You have to go with it.

Move in day, what do we do with all this stuff?

We were both here.
Liz came down in the car, everything was packed.
I wondered, 'What do we do with all this stuff?'
Luckily I have a spare room.

When we arrived, they had the wrong name.
It felt like no one explained anything.
We had to ask about the laundry.

We met Graham who took mum's details about her life.
He was lovely.
Karen has the right personality, she knows how to interact.
That impressed me.

We wanted to make mum's room more personal.
There's important information they need to know -
Like Margaret doesn't like long nails so they need to cut them.
Maybe we are just picky.

Helen is Margaret's power of attorney.
We want to be aware of what we should and shouldn't do.
The cleaners and auxiliaries are really supportive and approachable.

You settled in quite quickly, Mum.
'Yes, but I don't do nearly as much.
I just jumped in sort of.
I don't like hanging about.'

You look so much better, Mum.
'Well, I don't have the worries.'
You don't have to worry about anything.

You like the garden.
You still help to set the tables.
You worked in school dinners.
Old habits die hard.

'I used to think I was backwards.'
No, you weren't,
Not in a million years.

Guilt

You feel guilty.
People tell you not to.
If I was 20 years younger,
I'd have got a hospital bed
And had it at home.

Lack of sleep got me in the end
I was snapping at her because I was tired.
She looked after me all my life.
Now I was doing it for her.

I couldn't let go.
Everyone's different; no two people are the same.
Specialists can't really understand.

If I thought about it too much, I'd sit and grieve.
But other people need me.
No one gives you a hand book.

Why this care home?

I can sit here in my bedroom
and watch people from my window.
I wouldn't be there but I was thinking about it.
I think it's because of where it is.
That's where my life was.

(The home) is surrounded by Waulkmill Avenue,
Bowerwalls Street and Crossmill Avenue,
Granny McWilliams, Mary Robertson.
The good thing is you know other people here,
from years ago.

Living in a care home

Every day

I waken up.
Next thing there's a plate with toast
And a mug with coffee
And that kicks me off for the day.
It keeps me fit.

I like walking in the garden, picking up chestnuts.
You get different flowers
then the grass men come in and cut it up.
Ach well, that's life.

I like working in the garden, cutting grass.
When the rain comes down from the hills,
it feeds the chestnut tree;
It's about 100 years old and it flowers.
Every day you wake up, the rain is pouring...
What, is there a shortage of water somewhere?

A wonderful view

'It's a wonderful view for you, Jean.'

Thank you very much indeed.

I've got a beautiful window.

Look at my desk, it's one of those big ones.

That's the ten shillings one.

What's your name?

What's your name?

'Caroline'

Caroline what?

'Caroline Brown'

That's a nice name, mine's Meg, I like to be called Maggie.
I'm Maggie, my sisters Jeannie, Mary, Anne, I have 5 sisters,
there's a big crowd of us, 10 in total.

What's your name?

'Caroline Brown'

I'm Maggie Ashwood, my faither's name is Hughie,
faither-in-law Ashwood.

'How are you Maggie?'

Aye, fine.

What's your name?

'Caroline Brown'

That's a nice name.

'Are you happy Maggie?'

Aye. Will you write that doon?

'Do you want me to?'

Aye, happiness is smiling a lot, all the time.

'You have a lovely face Maggie'.

I canny help it.

What's your name?

'Caroline Brown. What's yours?'

Maggie Ashwood.

Do you mind if I go to bed?

'Not at all, are you tired?'

Aye, I'm always tired.

'Do you need a sleep?'

Naw, I don't think so.

'What do you need?'

What do I need? A pen and a book.

What's your name?

'Caroline Brown'.

I've nothing mair to say.

Today

I wonder who I'll see today, nobody likely.
My latest grandson, his mother brings him up the path
from the main street.
He calls out my name, what a boy.

I'll need to have a shave this morning, I need to be
respectable
I'll get a lot of visitors today, very few.
I think once I was in here, they forgot all about me,
Och aye, but never mind.

It's no' the same as yer ain

I don't think I could tell you much.
It's years and years.
I've got my ain faimly.
My ain boys.

I've been here two and a half years.
It's nae use, you've got to go ootside if you want a cigarette,
In the rain and cold.
Try to get them to put the bloody heating on.

I just watch the telly and go to my bed and read my books.
That's all.
I don't mix with anyone.
I used to like my baking and that.

It's not the same when you come to these places.
I've put in for my own wee place.
I don't know how long I've got to wait.
Too many bloody rules and regulations.

It's no' the same as yer ain, hen.
You've got to go by *them*.

I got this from one of the carers (points to stuffed dog on chair).
I thought she meant a real one at first.
It doesn't have a name.

I'd just like my ain wee place.

Privacy

In my room, people come in without knocking.
I'm lying in bed, or on the toilet.
That's not great.

I spoke to someone, my social worker.
I understand why people walk in
If they have dementia.

But it's my room.
I like my privacy.

One of the times they pulled the toilet door open.
I said, 'Get to hell or I'll call security.'
She said, 'What's that love? Do you want your Bible?'
I said, 'No, I don't want the bloody Bible.'

Then a carer came and escorted her out.
'This is not your room,' she said,
'It's Ruby's room.'

A privilege

It's been a great privilege meeting such wonderful people over my 30 years in nursing. It's people's stories I remember.

Like one man in his early 50's who was an Olympian speed skater. He had dementia and he loved to run.

He would stand at the top of the corridor, look at me, then run. I ran with him.

He would always be faster than me and wait for me, looking to see if I would run with him again, which I did.

He could not speak, but had a wonderful smile that said so much.

Here's another one

Mum's probably not known me
for about a year and a half.
She doesn't look at me; she'll say,
'Here's another one.'

Staff say she was talking about Anne today.
I think she sees me as another carer and person
Who comes into the room.

She'll say 'bugger' or 'rotten'
If I spill water on her when giving her a drink.
She also says, 'You're lovely.'

She made up stories like
I was pregnant and going to have a boy.
They were stories with such detail.

She'd say she was at an oil rig for the weekend.
If I argued, she'd insist 'I was!'
She was determined she'd done these things
before she came here.
Lots of bizarre stories.

I'm just glad she's well cared for here.
I think it's the right thing, as she's still here...
Is it?
I suppose.

Communion

Jon Joe was a volunteer in church.
He'd visit people who were house bound
and bring them communion.
I felt bad that I could no longer attend mass.

Jon Joe came to my house
before I moved into the care home.
He gave me communion
and that was important to me.

Out and about

A bus is hired and we go to the theatre.
We go for something to eat first.
Even the men sing all the different songs.
Then they want out.
I've got a sister in Neilston,
but I don't see her very much.
I've got 2 brothers who used to come and see me
but they both died.

There's some nice people in here.
I've been in a good while now.
I'm forgetting when I moved.
We go to a lot of meetings to the school in Kilbirnie.
You can be there in 10 minutes.
A wee girl asked an older lady what she did.
She said, 'I didn't leave school til I was in my nineties.'
We all laughed.

I'm as settled as I can be.
It's not home.

Crucifix

I bought that at an auction
at my grandson's school in San Francisco.
I fell in love with it.
I paid 80 dollars for it.
It just grabbed me.

I marked it to keep til I'm away,
Then some of my family will get it.

You don't have any worries here

It's quite nice actually.
I never thought I'd be coming here to stay.
But that's the way it's worked out.

There's always a lot going on thanks to Karen.
It's thoroughly enjoyable.
Recently we went to Kirkintilloch.
We went on a barge.
I always wanted to go on a barge.
We got a lovely fish supper.

We also go to the Salvation Army every Tuesday
We have a lovely lunch each week.

You don't have any worries here.
Everything is laid on for you.
They take care of my medication.

I'm also very lucky to get my favourite tippie.
A whisky.

What matters to me

The end story

When nursing someone, losing people can become the norm. There can be a high turnover of residents. It's inevitable that people will die here. Working in a care home includes a lot of palliative care.

It becomes a person's home for life and we are with them until they die. I find it a privilege to nurse someone at the end of their life. To treat someone with the dignity and respect they deserve.

We are only human and you form really strong bonds. It's not the first time I have cried when a resident passes. Dementia is a horrible illness. I suppose when people pass they are probably at peace.

It's natural to feel emotion.

It's important to try not to dwell. Look back but don't stare. You get back on board and begin again.

Someone else arrives at the start of their journey.

The shape of me

Working in a care home all my career long and supporting people that live with dementia has shaped me into the person I am now.

When I first came to Scotland, I was looking after a Professor who taught German at the university all his days. I was on nightshift and, at times, quite homesick and literally lost for words.

He sat for hours teaching me English or, should I say, Scottish. I have to thank this lovely gentleman for my Glaswegian twang when I speak. He had advanced dementia but me talking German to him, and being his student, put him right back to his teaching days and gave both of us a sense of achievement and joy.

Time

I spend my time on the Kindle.
I've only had it the past few weeks.
Sometimes it's hard to get onto.

One story takes you onto another.
I use big print
So I don't have to use my magnifier.

Reading stories.
And the paper.
The Daily Record.

It's important so you know
What's going on in the world.
Keeps the mind active.

I always like to be doing something

I've not had much of a life.

I like sewing.

I like knitting.

I like to watch telly especially if there's a good film on.

I always like to be doing something.

Competitions

I could write my competitions, I enjoy that.
I'd have my paper and write it and make sure I got it right.

Somebody I know would write about when Bill and I went
on holiday.
Bill would leave me and I'd have my notebook or diary.
I've still got it to mind as if I'm sitting here.
My memory is not that good, but...

I'd make up a story of my own.
I've got a big book.
I won a prize once for a story.
The words I wrote, folk had never heard before.

Church

I used to be in the choir at church.
I must have been married, so a decent age.
It was the High Church I went to.
Just as you go out there and up the hill.

Jenny takes us there every so often.
She gives us the singing and we feed the birds.
We all take our Bibles with us.
I quite like the Bible.
I'm not a Bible thumper by any means.

It's good to sing and make you happy.
We just enjoyed going and singing.
I like all my hymns, oh aye.
It's hard to remember the names.
'The Lord's my Shepherd', that's a nice one.

We were at the church last week.
There's a fish tank.
They're so gentle I'm afraid I'll hurt them.

ART – my space

I just love it!
I am not doing it to show off or to sell,
I am doing it because it is part of me.
I **NEED** to create things...
Anything – arts, crafts, cooking.
It is a special feeling...warm inside.

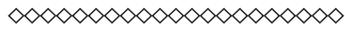
Learning to really listen

I have met some amazing people
Who all have something to teach me.
For example, the gentleman who always has a smile
for everybody,
No matter how he feels.

Or the most challenging lady
Who really just needs a hug.
Or the family member who just needs to talk.

I've learned to really listen.
I mean, hear what people are trying to tell me
Even if their words don't make sense.
I've studied a lot about dementia,
But there's nothing like what you learn
from people themselves.

Part 2



Reflections

Dementia

I'll embrace it

When I was diagnosed with dementia in my head,
it didn't change a thing.
I still could do things.
It wasn't a death sentence.
It didn't fill me with negativity.
I thought, 'I'll embrace it,
'Take it on.'

Dementia

To me dementia is an illness we can't help.
It can come to anyone.
It's devastating to me and Jessie.
She'll sit and greet as she knows something's not right.
It doesn't penetrate as she doesn't understand.

I take it bad as she's not the same person.
We're still the same people but Jessie's not with it.
It's a devastating illness for anyone to go through.
My parents died of strokes.
Dementia was never known to my family.
It's a devastating illness for Jessie and me.

Even my son is finding it kind of difficult.
My grandson is discovering now his gran's not right.
He'll come in and say, 'How are you gran?'
'I'm fine'
'How are you papa?'
'I'm fine'.

War and Peace

In the words of Alzheimer Scotland:
“Nobody has to face dementia alone”

There was a **War** raging within me during the time I was trying to come to terms with living with vascular dementia.

My demeanour changed dramatically, from being happy and contented to being continually disagreeable, unreasonable, and perverse to simple requests, as well as generally being bad tempered, irrational to logical demands and in the main, bad tempered with everyone.

It was everybody’s fault except mine!

Anne, my Dear Wife; nobody knows me better than Anne.

The **Peace** is the calm and tranquillity experienced in the company and loving companionship of Anne, “Boss Lady”, who is also my carer.

Remaining remarkably calm

Dementia was something my patients got, not me.
It wasn't that I had any prejudice,
It's just a different story
And I didn't recognise it.

My wife tells me it goes back several years.
I've got Alzheimer's type dementia.

When I'm in company I think I remain remarkably calm.
I'm not angry, not disturbed by it.
I think it reflects the strength of my relationship with my wife.
I think I come across calmly.

I also think it's possibly in my nature,
To cope with things well
Because I was a G.P. and in a hospital way.
I think in a secondary way.

You can go either way but
Probably the last thing I am is angry.
I think I cope with it well.

I make a point of being independent.
Yet utterly dependent on my wife.
I do a lot on my own:
It's not about proving a point,
It's confirming and maintaining my drive.
My humanity, my personality.

I think if you don't do that and sit at home watching TV
You would disintegrate.
I'm not going to do that.

DEMENTIA and my family

To date, three of my precious family have been taken by the storm of conditions they call DEMENTIA, but not before suffering the atrocities it offers.

Now a further two of my family - my sisters - have been caught in this same storm and are being swept up in mind and body by DEMENTIA.

The aftershock of my sister's diagnosis of DEMENTIA left us reeling in disbelief: the cruelty of this condition; how unfair that our big sister should be affected.

My personal thoughts were, "it's got us again".

I experienced the sort of fear that can eradicate hope and stops you in your tracks.

My sister was the one special person in my life who provided an incredible listening ear and always made things easier. She had level-headed common sense. I feel lucky to have had her in my life, my go-to person when I needed help.

This sort of drama arrives in your life, unbidden and unexpected. I was looking the other way and wasn't ready.

DEMENTIA is here to stay and you can't navigate a way out of it.

How do I react?

What do I do?

I decided to offer my support and realised quickly that I needed direction. I made many mistakes along the way.

Slices of time have redirected my purpose in my life.

I have adapted to new and different, sometimes difficult, situations.

I have learned to embrace what DEMENTIA means for my sister.

Finding rays of hope rather than fear and loss.

All of this begs the question: “What is the destiny of my brain?”

“Is dementia inevitable for me?”

“Will DEMENTIA creep up and wrap its claws around my mind?”

“Do I share a single copy of the APOE4 susceptibility gene?”

The idea of having DEMENTIA sends chills like no other.

A malevolent creature

Why should God invent amyloidosis?
Do other creatures have it?
Do animals have it?

It's a strange battleground
For a condition you can't even take a hold of.
It's like an invisible malevolent force
That creates itself on humans
And changes their lives.

It's not all-powerful.
It doesn't plague me on a daily basis.
I'm very keen on research
For obvious reasons.

A malevolent creature.

Forgetting

I can't remember.
This part of myself, forgetting.
I forget quite a bit.

I draw within myself.
Mind you I'm a lot better now
Than when I was younger.

I just take everything to myself.
I think about it
And probably make it worse.

It annoys me.

You want to hold onto things.
There are some things I want to keep.
And things I don't want to talk about.

I think when you are younger
You take more to yourself.

Just in case

My mother had a collection of diazepam,
In case she got this (dementia).
The thing is, for those who say they don't want this,
The time has passed.

My mother used to write poetry.
She fell in love with Hemingway
When she was a schoolgirl.
Looking back I think things started when she was 75.
She used to come down after school once a week.
Then one day she put the plastic kettle on my gas stove.
It melted.

She went to Argos and bought the same one.
I never knew for six months.

Relationships

Who is she?

She's my mum, a gran, a sister.

She loves singing.

She loves Engelbert Humperdink, Julian Clary, Boy George.

She loves River City and is very liberal for her age.

She had falls, lots of them.

Lochwinnoch is her favourite place in the whole world.

She is unaware of some things.

When she fell once, she cut her nose but doesn't feel pain.

She smoked 50 fags a day.

She loved every one of us.

She was a feisty lady.

Would have fought the world for her family.

Her language.....

You'd have thought she was a sailor.

She and my father,

He was the love of her life and died when he was 29.

She was devastated.

She married a man who was not good for her.

She should never have done it.

But, if she hadn't, I wouldn't have my nieces and nephews.

She brought them up.

Dad died when I was nine.

Between us we looked after the kids.

She was a cleaner on the buses.

Looking after a remarkable woman

I think my mum is a remarkable woman. She has a great attitude towards her dementia. She stays very positive about things and rather than getting upset, she just laughs. Sometimes she gets frustrated but not very often.

She's always interested in other people and puts her energy into helping others. I think we were lucky that her Alzheimer's hasn't progressed quickly. She can still manage to catch the bus into town and back home again. She sometimes forgets where she lives.

I've learned a lot from my mother, having spent a lot of time with her these past few years. Like how to run a household. She lives in a tiny one bedroom apartment and everything has a place. She tidies up a little bit here and there.

She likes to mother me still, telling me to lose weight and carry a lighter handbag. (At least once a day.) She likes to visit her sister who lives in a care home in Edinburgh every Sunday. We take Aunt Betty out to a café in Crammond for tea and a scone. That's mum's way of taking care of her.

It's funny, the shift in responsibility now mum's not able to decide. She'll object and call me a bully sometimes, but it's half joking. There's a delicate balance when you're taking over doing it, in a gentle, not forceful way. We get on very well, we joke a lot, it's almost like a comedy team. You get used to answering the same questions again.

It's like a patience exercise, staying in the present, dealing at mum's pace. Otherwise, there's turbulence. I really love her a lot and I think that makes things easier. It's difficult to find a balance looking after yourself and your mother.

One thing I learned from a book called Contented Dementia is that you lose the memory of what happened yesterday but retain the emotion of whether it's a green or a red day. Green days are good days and red not good. We try to give mum green days and an enjoyable and happy life.

I feel very blessed to be able to spend this time with my mum.

Love you forever

I absolutely love her to bits.

I protect her.

I would never harm or hurt her.

We were just made for each other.

The strength of our relationship and benefit I've gained,

I don't want to overburden her.

Even if I'm feeling low I try not to burden.

So many levels describe her.

She has tremendous empathy in general.

She has capacity and ability to cope with my condition.

She provides strength.

She understands it and why it affects me.

She is a doctor.

She can distinguish me.

The condition can make me more emotional.

I don't think having dementia makes me stand out in the crowd.

I realise I could easily be a burden emotionally.

But I try to make a point of not doing so.

If she was right here I would say:

I absolutely love you to death.

Love you forever.

To me it's the most important thing.

If we feel like this and can get through this,

Other people can.

If we can help others

Then this has been a very powerful and meaningful conversation.

A balancing act

It feels like my life is on hold at the moment.
I'm trying to have a balanced life as it's hard to go off and do my own thing.
I'm trying to carve out time but it's not easy.
My home is in California and I'm missing life there.

My friendships are getting fragile because I've been gone so long.
You don't know how long you're going to be committed to caring for someone else.
It's got to be sustainable otherwise you burn out.
I'm trying to find the balance still.

In some ways it's like everything could change tomorrow
It could be stable but I see a decline in these past 12 months.
I feel bad to be going away.
I don't want to neglect my mother but I need to take responsibility elsewhere.

Changing when they change

It's an unknown thing.

It must be worse if you haven't had experience. I used to work in a care home so had some insight. It was something I thought my mother would always take.

She always had a lack of concentration over many years. It was a slow thing. My mum must have had it for over 20 years.

I said to my husband, 'My mum's going to take dementia.' I remember when I said it to him.

You don't think of your position, you just say, 'How can I help?'

That's when the unknown starts. It would be good to have an insight, for example, a book. It's scary, especially for the family.

So, when diagnosed, that's when everything starts to change for them and the family as well. Especially for people who don't live near. It just goes from there, you have to change when they change.

Social work were always very good, asking how they could help. There's maybe not enough care organisations to meet people's needs as they live longer. I just got on with it. Life changed, it was my mum and dad. My main concern was what was best for them.

There came a time for my dad. He had dementia and didn't know it. My husband knew there was something wrong when he stopped coming to do our garden.

The hospital diagnosed it. They asked how he was. 'Aye, I'm fine.'

Not many things are explained. I had a call from social work. Every option available should be given to people at the beginning. I might have gone for the self-funding.

I might have kept him at home a bit longer.

Navigating your father's emotions

He's coping, for now, through his eternally grounded
optimism...and a bit of denial.
It's really difficult having to navigate your father's emotions
When you've never had to.

You start to worry that other people will realise there's
something wrong.
You hope against hope that he's not noticing that others are
noticing.

It's learning to do it, and trying to find a way.
It's sad and excruciating for Mummy.
For us kids, it's earth shattering.

It uproots your sense of family structure.
We're all finding our way
And fighting with each other as we navigate it.
It affects us as sisters.

You see faults in the way your siblings deal with things,
But you also see their skills emerge.
We're all married now
And you're shaped by the people you're with.
Trying not to fall out whilst agreeing how to be doing
things.

Maybe we'll come together again through having to deal
with this as a family.

Experiences

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Now on her fifth life

She worked for the railway office when we were young.
A short hand typist.

She worked for Heinz beans too.

Late in her 30's she got her Highers at Jordanhill College.
She became a head teacher
In the school where her father and brother had gone,
In the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Then life after retirement - which was huge.
Writing and travelling.

Now, on her fifth life.
Probably all those living in care homes are there.

Singer sewing machine

I had a rotten life because of my dad.
As my mum would say,
'When he's good, he's good; when he's bad, he's a b.'
There were more bad than good
and it made me backward.

My dad learned to sew in the army.
When he came out, he learned me how to sew.
He got me a second hand Singer sewing machine.
It was the old fashioned Singer machine that he bought me at first.
I finished up with two.

I used to go into the back bedroom
and sit at the window on my sewing machine.
I used to make skirts for my mum.
She was so thin she couldn't get things to fit her.
My mother was hopeless at sewing, she didn't hide it.
She said, 'A needle's only for jaggging you.'

She was a lovely baker and baked on a Thursday for
visitors coming in.

My colourful past

I used to go to Millport.
The month of October was quite wild.
It was just a wee ferry boat.
It would go up and down.

My mother would say,
'Don't go downstairs, stay up in the fresh air.'
I was never sick.
She always got a wee sheltered spot.

It was exciting.
I just liked it.
We went from Largs.
I sailed up the Clyde in the paddlesteamer.

They played music all the time, Scottish tunes.
I went with my parents,
Then with my husband.
That was a long time ago.

Holidays

It was never far away,
Rothesay Bay.
My mum always went with us.
I went to the shops in Kilmarnock.

I was never a wanderer really;
I just had my family and didn't wander far.
Rothesay Bay was a big place.
The music played outside.

Mixed live music in the afternoon,
Then they came back at night time as we walked along.
It was quite entertaining.
I like hundreds of songs,
It's a long way to Tipperary.

Note to self

I still have the ability to do things
with considerable help from my wonderful family.
Everyone to the last, help and continue in love,
which is the warmest thing you could ever feel.
And I am eternally grateful to them.

Two Different Shoes

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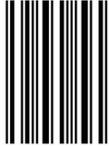
This collection of poems and reflections has been written by people living with dementia, unpaid carers and care staff. Through their unique thoughts, memories, aspirations and concerns, contributors deepen our understanding about life in a care home and living with dementia. This book is honest, poignant and rich in content.

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