

A woman I know...

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...is dealing with the brutal fact of her own decline. Our lives may be shaped by hopes and fears and dreams but it's the facts that establish the boundaries. And this fact is one we will all face, sooner or later. But of course, that doesn't make it any easier to accept. Not for her. And not for the people who love her.

She has trouble remembering things. Things like turning off burners and taking her pills and what someone said a moment ago. And what and when to eat and drink and not to set the microwave timer for two hours.

What she does remember is raising six children and a frequently childish husband. She remembers doing for and doing without and the struggles and the triumphs. But painfully, too frequently of late she remembers what she should be able to remember but just can't, quite.

And it hurts. It hurts her so deeply to know that she can't be the person she once was. And to know that more and more, day by day, her loss is so apparent to those who once came to her for answers to the questions in their lives. She is beyond being able to hide the hurt and that hurts, too.

Her children try to understand how to be both kids and caretakers. How does one strike the balance between being a daughter and a supervisor? Between being a son and an enforcer of the little rules that keep her safe when she's alone? Rules that she taught you so many years ago.

Her children, each and all, would give anything to have back the mother who raised them. And that mother is there, for her and for them, in memories. Theirs and hers. But she can't be in the moment. In the anymore. And therein lies the rub.

For her it is frustrating and maddening and hurtful and inexplicable. And for her children it is frustrating and maddening and hurtful and inexplicable.

The love in this family is palpable.

Sometimes, that has to be enough because that's all there is.