
Kathy Wilson was Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) a loving daughter and wanted to do the right thing when it became apparent that her mother wasn't able to take care of herself any more. But getting her mom into assisted living became a nightmare—and that was just the beginning of her troubles.

Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore

by Tonya Thomas

(Kindle Edition)

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"You're not going to want to hear this, Kathy, but your Mom is starting to fail."

That simple sentence, uttered by my cousin Lila, changed my life.

"What do you mean?" I asked, noting the time. My husband would be home from work in only five or ten minutes, and I hadn't even thought about what we'd have for dinner that night.

"She's taken a couple of tumbles."

My eighty-nine year old mother lived by herself in a small apartment some sixty miles from me. I'd moved from Ithaca to Syracuse, New York, after graduating from college. I loved my new hometown. I met my husband there—had two children. Like me, my kids went out of town to

college and they both decided they liked the greener pastures of a different city—and in different states. They had good jobs and ... I never seemed to see them enough. Was that how my mother and dad felt when I'd abandoned them?

"It's all water under the bridge," my mother used to say. But lately when I phoned her to talk, she said very little. I was the one asking the questions, and she didn't seem to understand most of them. I attributed it to a loss of hearing, but when Lila called, I realized I'd been living in a state of denial for some time.

My mother needed help, and I was going to have to be the one to give it to her.

Lila spoke again. "I took her out to lunch today."

Lila and her sister Christina had been good to mom. They'd Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) lost their own mother some ten years before. Since then, they took their Aunt Lucy out to lunch on almost a monthly basis, and included her in nearly all of their family celebrations.

"She didn't want to let me into the apartment, which made me suspicious. It ... smelled."

"Smelled?" I echoed, my stomach tightening.

"I don't think she'd taken her garbage out in at least a month. And ... her hygiene left something to be desired, too."

My mother smelled? My mother, the one who used to nag me to wash my hands—past the wrists—when I was a child, wasn't washing? And then I realized that her apartment had a tub-shower combination. Mom had lost several inches in height since she'd moved in. Was it too difficult for her to climb safely into the tub? Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) There were no grab bars. But surely she would use a bar of soap and wash herself at the sink.

"You said she'd fallen?" I asked with trepidation.

"There was a plant on the floor. The dirt was very dry. I think it had been dead a long time. She said she'd stumbled and knocked it over, and hadn't gotten around to cleaning it up. I asked her when that had happened, but she just waved me off. And then there was the lamp."

"Lamp?"

"You know that one she keeps on the TV? The one with the colonial man and woman." It had been a gift from my grandparents for mom and dad's wedding. I'd always thought the thing Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) looked hideous, Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) but my mother had treasured it.

“What happened?” I asked with dread.

“It’s gone. I asked her what happened to it and she said it broke. I pushed for details and she admitted she stumbled when one Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) day Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) when she went to turn it on. It fell off the TV and smashed into a million pieces. I poked around and saw there were still some broken pieces behind the TV stand.”

I closed Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) my eyes and hung my head. Why did I have to learn this now? I was supposed to travel on business the next Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) day. I didn't have time to deal with mother and her problems right then.

“Do you think she’s in any danger?” I asked.

“I do,” Lila said with characteristic honesty. “I don’t think she should live alone any more, and she will be angry when she finds out I’ve called to let you know that.”

“Did you tell her that you would?”

“I hinted,” Lila admitted. “It’s past time, Kathy.”

“I know. I guess I’ve known it for several months now.”

“What will you do?”

“I don’t know. But I’ll call you in a day or two and let you know what I’ve decided.”

“Please do. I care.” I could hear the affection in her voice.

My heart sank as I put down the phone. I loved my Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) mother, but we had what I’d call a “difficult” relationship. It seemed we were always vying for my father’s affection. After Daddy died we became closer, but weren’t what I’d call friends. I called her every Saturday of the month. We’d exchange polite conversation for five minutes and then life would go on until the next week. We invited her to stay with us at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Mother’s Day, but even then we didn’t talk much. She’d bury her nose in a book or magazine and I was content to hide in the kitchen or my home office.

I must admit, the last few times she’d come to visit her hygiene had become an issue. There’s no truer saying than fish and visitors stink after three days, and though Mom didn’t smell when I’d pick her up at her apartment, by the time her visit was over she and old fish had a very nasty odor in common. This, despite the fact I provided her with clean towels and her own bar of soap.

“I can’t take it any more,” my husband Barry said after her last Mom Can't Live Alone

Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) visit. He'd been a real sport about Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) letting her share all our holidays these past ten years since the kids had left home.

During our next phone conversation, I brought up the subject. Somehow it seemed easier on the phone than in person.

"I do so wash," Mom had said defensively. "But what if Barry burst in on me when I was naked? I couldn't take that."

"Mom, all you have to do is lock the door."

"But you said it could be opened in an emergency. You said there's a key!"

I'd told her that if she fell while in the bathroom we could come and help her. She'd taken that piece of news more as a threat than an assurance.

"Are you having some kind of a medical problem?" I asked.

"No!" she said quite firmly, but I wasn't sure I believed her. "Now, my favorite TV show is coming on in a few moments. I have to hang up now, dear. I'll talk to you next week. Good-bye."

And I had let it go. But falling ... now that was too serious to ignore. But I had flight and hotel reservations and a meeting I couldn't afford to miss. I had to honor my commitment to my employer—but what about my commitment to my mother?

It was with terrible guilt that I went on that business trip. But I could barely concentrate on my work when my heart was in Ithaca. On a lunch break from one of my meetings, I found a medical supply house nearby with a mission in mind: to buy my mother a cane. That might help her to stay steady on her feet. They had quite a variety, and I found one printed with a lovely rose motif. Before we moved her from the home I'd grown up in and into a smaller apartment—an ordeal that had strained Barry's and my marriage, and caused mom to tell people that we had forced her from her home—Mom had always had a garden, and was terribly proud of her roses. Of course, the last few years at the house she didn't have the stamina to plant annuals, Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) and her Mom Can't Live Alone Anymore (The Women of Strength Diaries Book 4) rose bushes were overgrown and unmanageable—at least for her.

I had the store package the cane and ship it directly to my mother's address. Would she use it? That was debatable. But I knew her greatest desire was to stay independent, and hoped she would see the cane as a tool to do just that.

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