

*excerpts from **my mother, my madness***
by Colleen Higgs

Deep South, 2020

The yellow-stained room

6 September, 2009

My mother Sally lives in an assisted-living care centre near Century City in Cape Town. She has a small one-bedroomed apartment with a kitchenette, a living area, and a bathroom with a shower and handrail in it. From her bedroom and the living room she has a full view of Table Mountain. She objects to the Centre calling itself a Luxury Retirement Resort as the billboards near the entrance proclaim.

I manage her life for her. I pay her bills, organise doctor's appointments, and sort out problems. Once a month I buy her what she needs online from Pick n Pay. She eats all her meals downstairs in the dining room, where waiters serve the residents their three course meals. The tables are laid with linen. My mother complains about the food, "They're always giving us fish," she says, "I don't like fish." Omelettes are offered as a substitute. "And I don't like omelettes."

Each month I buy her snacks, four packs of 9 double ply toilet rolls, the You magazine, Cokes – 70 x 2 litre bottles for the month, and cigarettes, seven cartons of Rothmans 30s – the blue pack. And shampoo, tissues, soap, toothpaste, shower gel, roll-on deodorant, facecloths, body lotion, moisturiser, depending on what she needs or has run out of.

My mother's fingernails are stained yellow from nicotine and the cream coloured paint around the doorframe entrance to her apartment is also stained yellow.

There is a gym in the resort's health centre, with a swimming pool, and gardens to walk in, but my mother spends most of her time sitting in her recliner smoking, drinking Coke and watching TV on her big flat screen. She doesn't use the gym or the gardens.

Shitty dreams

29 September, 2009

Last night I dreamt about my mother. I was still living with her, with my three siblings (we are all in our forties now, I am the oldest). In the dream we were in our teens and twenties, and the older of my two brothers, Sean, lived upstairs. The toilet got blocked and started to overflow, and a brown liquid stain started to appear along the edges of the ceiling and down the kitchen wall. My mother got dressed for work, oblivious. I begged her to do something about it, but she calmly set off for work as usual. Later on a plumber arrived. We had to throw away all the food in the kitchen cupboards and clean them out and wash the soiled containers.

I must remember to phone and book an appointment with my mother's psychiatrist. Her previous one has gone

to Canada for 18 months. So she now is seeing a psychiatrist nearer to where she lives. He wants to interview me for background on her. Even though he has her file and case notes, he wants more information, from the horse's mouth, he says. Not sure if I am the horse or my mother is.

I need to pay her levy for the Centre in the next few days. Most of her other bills, apart from the pharmacy bills, come off her account automatically – the DSTV, the phone bill, the bank charges and some others that I forget now. I pay her insurance once a year. The insurance is not expensive, as her life has been reduced to few possessions.

It's peculiar managing someone else's life. Having that kind of responsibility but at the same time how mundane much of it is.

Sometimes she phones me.

"When you going to visit me again?"

"I'm not sure."

"Well I need toilet paper."

"OK, well ask Chantel and I will send some with your order on Friday."

She uses at least one roll of double ply toilet paper a day. Is that a lot? It seems to be. And always she runs out. However much I buy for her, it is never quite enough.

The last time I shopped, Chantel asked me to buy Sunlight dishwashing liquid for her. Her carer washes her Coke glasses and her ashtray. When I visited two Sundays ago, Chantel told me that my mother had poured the whole bottle of Sunlight down the drain. When I asked Sally why she had done this, she said, "What do I need this crap for?"

My thoughts exactly, Mom.

A history of madness

8 October, 2009

The trip to my mother's psychiatrist was odder than I could have imagined. I arrived to find Sally sitting in the waiting room. I wasn't expecting her. I think the receptionist must have thought I was making the appointment for my mother. So Sally did see the doctor and I waited and read crappy magazines. No recent magazines at all, and mostly corporate hospital publications. The radio played softly all the time. I told the doctor finally, after waiting an hour, that I was annoyed at having my time wasted. He was apologetic and we moved on. He likes my mother, has seen her three times. He thinks she is a bit bored and thought perhaps we could get a companion for her, who would take her out and do things with her three times a week or so. My heart sinks. The work involved.

He asked me to write down a brief history of her mental illness. Here it is:

Sally's first big trauma was at the age of 7. Her parents,

who lived in Selukwe, in what was then Southern Rhodesia, “gave her away” to her childless aunt and uncle, Ailsa and Iain, who lived in what was then Basutoland. She didn’t see her parents again till she was 38. The reunion was organised by her sisters who had not been given away. After that meeting she plummeted into a deep depression.

When she was in high school, she got into trouble for stealing; she was at Eunice Girls High in Bloemfontein, as a boarder. She left school at the end of Std 9 and went nursing in Cape Town. During her second year of nursing, she had a bad car accident, and soon afterwards she got pregnant, at age 19. She then moved to Joburg and joined up with her second boyfriend, Philip, and married him. She wasn’t sure whether boyfriend number one or two was my father, or if she did she never told me with clarity, but I did find out that boyfriend 1 was 18 and a first year student at UCT while boyfriend 2 was doing his accounting articles in Johannesburg, although she knew him in Cape Town.

When I was twenty-one months old she had another baby, Sean. Then she had a nervous breakdown (as they used to call it) at age 23, for which she was hospitalised for 6 weeks. After this interlude she went to Mozambique with her friend, Vivian, whose parents had a holiday house near Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, for another 6 weeks to recover. Sean and I were sent to her in-laws in Kimberley for that period. Her husband, Philip was still in Johannesburg, but as we know single dads don’t manage children and jobs at the same time. Especially not in the early 1960s. Shortly after all of this, my mother decided to divorce Philip. A custody battle ensued. While this was going on, she met David, and married him just a few months after first meeting him. He insisted on taking her “to fetch your kids” from the in-laws and drove her to Kimberley to retrieve us.

When I was 5½, she had my second brother, Michael, and then another baby when I was 7½, my sister Geraldine, whom we have always called Gerry.

The first time that my mother tried to commit suicide (that I was aware of) was while she was pregnant with Gerry. Over the years there were numerous other instabilities and ordeals.

Sean had a hard time in his late teens and twenties. He went into the military at age 17 and then started smoking dagga, and taking other drugs. The next ten years were distressing for the whole family as he too was unstable and had many traumatic experiences, which often involved my parents or other family members rescuing him, or trying to. He was hospitalised at Valkenberg for six weeks in his early 20s. After that he spent some time living on the streets and busking.

My mother had a violent temper that over the years involved throwing things, shouting, breaking things,

threatening to leave, and actually leaving at least once.

She suffered from migraines and back pain and neck pain from a whiplash injury in her late 20s. She became addicted to painkillers, and when she was in her late 50s, after my stepfather David's death, she took this to new levels. She obtained sleeping pills by misusing prescriptions. She frequently took far too many sleeping pills and painkillers, and would sleep for a couple of days.

She was admitted to hospital a number of times for psychiatric reasons over the years, in periods from a few days to several weeks in various hospitals at different times. She has been diagnosed as bipolar by two psychiatrists in Cape Town. I am not sure what her diagnostic history was before, as I was not managing her care then.

She declined rapidly after David died, stopped eating properly, frequently overdosed on over-the-counter medications, and she didn't take care of herself. She was known to go to the shops in Fish Hoek in her pajamas. At one point she was admitted to the Kenilworth Clinic for three weeks.

After that she went to live in the house next door to Sean. She had two carers while living there, neither of whom was good for her. The first was a bully and the second was manipulative and made constant attempts to get money out of my mother, and me.

After much anguish and discussion with my sister in particular, we decided to buy her an apartment in the High Care Centre of the Luxury Retirement Resort. Just before she went to live there, she was admitted to the Kenilworth Clinic for two weeks to give her some structured input and support before she moved to the LRR.

Staying alive

2 November, 2009

So many chores; just being alive is a long work-in-progress, just being alive, staying alive (cue the Bee Gees).

So glad tomorrow is Tuesday and the day I see my analyst. It's always cheering to see her, reassuring. Sifting through the lentils and the stones with her, sorting things out, brightens my heart. At times I find it hard to figure out which is which. To trust myself. To be on my own side. My side is the one of the bad, hard-hearted girl. The cold one, the one who is not a good daughter, not a good friend, not a good wife, who guards her time and her energy preciously, ferociously.

Feel slightly beset tonight. Overwhelmed, overloaded. All day my inner weather has been changing for the worse. Colder, rainier, stormier, inclement.

I love Kate with all my heart, but I also wonder if I am a good mother, a good enough mother. Am I too soft? Am I

failing her in her growth to independence? Am I keeping her crippled and needy of me? I don't want to do those things, but it's not always clear what one is doing, what is the right choice. At seven she still likes to, wants to, demands to be put to bed by one of us, tonight she tried having our dog, Perry, a golden retriever, on her bed. She didn't go to sleep till I finished Sally's online shopping.

It was meant to be her Dad putting her to bed tonight, but she wanted to try by herself. Her dad is a bit all or nothing and not prepared to engage in going-to-sleep experiments at 7 o'clock at night. I am endlessly flexible, and open to suggestion, and to finding a better way.

I feel like crying tonight. Sometimes my life feels full of loss and grief and tears.

While I was putting Kate to bed, I thought about the women's clothing shop, Robelle, in Pinelands that sells clothes for older women and larger sizes. I will have a look at it and perhaps buy some clothes for my mother there. She takes a size 44 or 46 in pants and 42 in tops. She has become heavier, more overweight than she has ever been, from no exercise and all that Coke, and the good food at the Luxury Retirement Resort.

We can only give you seven cartons

27 November, 2009

So on Wednesday I went with Barbara to have tea with my mom. Barbara fetched me, kindly. I'd asked her if we could stop at Shoprite to get the cigarettes. She stayed in the car at Century City and I ran in to get them. I did my time in the queue at the cigarette counter, and when it was my turn, I asked for eight cartons, and the lady gave me eight boxes, "No, I said eight cartons." She had to get a key because the cartons are locked up in a special stockroom. Cigarettes are a form of currency.

She said she could only give me seven cartons. Why was that, I wondered. Do Shoprite want to create a feeling of scarcity around cigarettes for the heavy smokers? Or did they only have seven cartons? Or did they want to be sure to keep some for the other customers? Next time I will ask for twelve and see what happens. Anyhow, I got seven cartons, two plastic bags and R2400 later, with a queue building up behind me, I swung the bags off the counter and walked away, trying to look cool with buying so many cigarettes. My queue-mates looked at me. I could hear their thoughts. Spaza shop? Gosh! Maybe she lives out in the sticks. They were all wondering. I fiercely kept myself from explaining. The whole spree took less than 15 minutes, and we didn't have to pay the R7 for parking. Small mercies.

We picked Barbara's mom up first from her apartment and then went to get mine. I called her from the lobby and

she came down to meet us. I felt a little anxious – how would Barbara see me after meeting my mom? As we were having tea, either Barbara or her mom told me that I look like Sally. Not a thing I like to hear, even though I know it is true. I guess it's because I can't see beyond who she is now. Barbara said she could see that she had been a handsome woman. We had an Appletiser, two teas and a Coke.

My mom didn't make much of an effort, or maybe she couldn't. Barbara, her mom and I kept the conversation going, like the shuttlecock in badminton. Every now and then it did actually fall on the floor and someone had to pick it up and bat again. My mom kept asking Barbara's mom, "Oh, do you live in Laguna Beach?"

"Yes," said Barbara's mom, over and over again, as if she were answering the question for the first time. That was Sally's only contribution to the conversation. She did also once say that something wasn't her cup of tea; I made a joke, "that's not my can of Coke". She smiled but it was more of a grimace.

I envy Barbara her mom. She is 76 and still spry and charming, she drives and comes over for dinner once a week. She is enjoying her life. A discussion ensued about the view of Table Mountain from my mother's apartment. Sally said she liked it. First time I heard of it. She once said, when I asked her if she liked the view of the mountain. "Well I've seen it hundreds of times before." (Turns out she does like it, especially at night.)

I felt as though I had shared an intimate secret with B, taking her to my mother, showing her the source of it all, as it were. I enjoyed the visit and felt almost tender and loving towards my mother. But I was somewhat wiped out by the time I'd got home, fetched Kate from aftercare, landed. I didn't go to the music event I'd planned to go to, the visit had taken all the energy I had for the day. Even the next day I felt like I was running on empty.

Birthday brittle

15 January, 2010

Today I went for a walk – 6 kms – and now am at my desk, more focused, although not as focused as I would like to be.

Still haven't been to see my mother, maybe tomorrow afternoon. I'll bake a cake in the morning. My birthday is on Sunday, and I don't want to see my mother on my birthday, that would be a downer. I wonder if the way I feel in January before my birthday doesn't have something to do with my mother, my mother complex. She was 20 years old, probably frightened, overwhelmed and wondering what the hell she was going to do, how she was going to cope with a baby and what it would mean for her life. I guess that is how I feel at this time, a whole year ahead, lots of huge challenges, it's

overwhelming. If I see my mother tomorrow, I will ask her to tell me what it was like for her just before I was born. I seem to remember her saying she was hot and her ankles were swollen. And she was in labour for 24 hours. I was born just before midnight.

When I was younger, my birthday was a brittle thing, I expected things to go wrong, to be disappointed. But years of therapy have shifted my expectations, and I am able to give myself the kind of birthday I want, and my feelings of self-worth and confidence aren't undermined, even if it's not celebrated in quite the way I would like by those nearest and dearest. Usually these days I am surprised by getting birthday wishes from people I don't know that well, and surprise calls, and even gifts and treats. I usually do something for my birthday, even if just with my tiny nuclear family. The three of us.

I love celebrating Kate's birthday and this has also been healing for me, to give her the kind of attention and love I would have liked as a child. A cake, a party, presents, lots of hugs and kisses. The little girl inside me also enjoys the birthday celebrations. Kate takes for granted that she will have a lovely birthday and doesn't have a clue what 'birthday brittle' is.

Dreaming of snakes

7 February, 2010

Last night had another powerful snake dream. I was putting Kate to bed, not here at home, but in a holiday bungalow. The room was darkish, nighttime; she was in bed under a duvet. The bed wasn't right up against the wall or window and as I was about to sit down on it, I saw a snake slither into the room, across the wooden floor. A big snake, red with black markings and a yellow face, a frightening snake. I called Adam and he came in and reached down and picked the snake up, he held it in such a way that it couldn't bite him. He had to grapple with it a bit first. I was rooted to the spot, immobilised in that way that happens in dreams. While he was trying to pick the snake up, I was full of fear, part of me wanted the snake to bite him and kill him and the other part was afraid that it would. He managed to dispose of the snake, took it out of the room and put it outside, far away. I woke up my heart pounding.

In waking life I am angry with him because he is making it hard (to put it mildly) for me to give Kate a kitten. I really want her to have a cat, and I think she would enjoy one. As an only child, I think it would be good for her to have an animal familiar. A cat would offer her a place outside of the tightness of our tiny

nuclear family, a place in which she and the cat can have another sort of relationship. I was thinking of getting us an Abyssinian crossbreed kitten. An old friend of mine has some that will be ready to go to their new homes in a few weeks. Sometimes marriage feels like the hardest possible way to live.

Non-smoking building throughout

19 November, 2010

Yesterday I received a letter from the LRR management who informed me that my mother may no longer smoke in her apartment. Apparently the LRR is now a non-smoking building throughout.

Huge sigh. There is always something else to work out. Just when I'd sorted out the whole cigarette delivery system with Pick n Pay. The system was slightly rocky at first, but has stabilised.

Here's the thing. We wouldn't have bought an apartment for my mother at the LRR if we knew that they were going to become a non-smoking building. I don't know how we are going to manage this. I phoned our attorney and he has suggested that I get mediation via an advocate who works in the same building as him. He cautioned against getting too heavy with the LRR and to rather try and find a way to sort things out by talking.

Dealing with my mother, or even thinking about dealing with her, tires me. Sometimes it feels like a full-time job, managing her and her needs. Just to list some of what I have done for her in the last while: I bought her some new sandals; beach slip-ons with a single broad strap across the foot. I saw them in her cupboard the other day. She has never worn them. The shoes she wears every day are very grubby and are going to fall off her feet one of these days. Shopping for shoes for Sally means going to a shoe shop, buying three pairs, taking them to her to try on, her choosing a pair, and then me going back to return the other two pairs.

I also bought her panties. I'd got a slightly frantic call, in fact four calls from her and one from the sister, telling me she had no panties. I began to wonder what she had done with them. She has a history of throwing things away. A history of destructive behaviour. Breaking things too. I bought her four packs of five XL cotton briefs from the Woollies in Pinelands. Also a nightie, some t-shirts, a pair of cotton pajama pants that you can wear with a T-shirt. And a pretty blue cotton blouse from Robelle, the ladies outfitters in Pinelands at the Howard Centre. They cater for older and larger women.

Oh and I also had to deal with a short period where she wanted to smoke 90 cigarettes a day, so to have an extra pack of 30s a day over and above her 'normal' 60 a day. Beats me

how someone smokes that much. I got the psychiatrist to see her and tell her to smoke only 60, “doctor’s orders” which she will listen to more than anything said by me, or anyone at the LRR.

In the river

5 December, 2011

Deciding to get divorced isn’t something you decide to do one day. It happens over a long time, longer than a stormy front, you can feel the barometer falling; a change in air pressure, the sky darkens. It took me years to make the decision.

It has been a big decision. It’s like deciding to cross a very wide river; you have to get into it in order to get across. The river is wide and deep and full of currents; the weeds and algae underneath are frightening, slimy and they move. You can’t see into the water, it is murky, muddy. There is broken glass.

I am in the river, completely wet, mostly my attention is fixed on getting to the other side, but I have to swim, try not to drown, and not listen to the sirens on the bank behind me beckoning me back.

The Cape of Storms

15 September, 2012

It’s been two years since I separated from my almost soon-to-be-ex-husband. We will sign the consent paper next week. Thirteen years after we got married.

The calm, the sanity, the inner peace I feel most of the time nowadays has given me a bigger space to be open to my mother. I see her, I do what I have to for her, and I don’t take it personally. I find I love her, I remember that I love her.

Today the weather in Cape Town is wild and stormy, the Cape of Storms. I picture my mother in her place, her small apartment with its classic view of Table Mountain. There won’t be much to see today, the weather is close, grey, rainy. She watches television downstairs now, with other residents (she calls them inmates – her sense of humour dark as always). She has to smoke outside, even in the wild wet weather. There is a shelter and a chair, but no one else smokes with her. She had some smoking friends, but they have gone home. People come to the High Care facility for relatively short periods of 24 hour nursing or when they are recuperating from something. My mother smokes much less now. From three packs of 30s a day, she is down to less than two.

I still don’t always pick up when Sally calls, I call her back later. I need to brace myself. But mostly she just calls to say hi, and to ask how Kate is, and what grade she is in, that kind

of thing. Sometimes she wants something, and lately she asks for chocolate. Her tastes have changed. She no longer eats fish, now she likes chocolate.

Emergency Room

25 March, 2017

My mother got better after her illness, although she was frailer. It took time for her to get back to herself, but she was able to move back to her apartment and was walking about using her wheelie walker. Her ankles were painfully swollen. They cut her hair as it had become matted when she was in hospital, so she looked more like the person I was familiar with; long thin hair in a ponytail was strange for a woman like my mother. She'd recently got new dentures; she'd lost her upper dentures in the previous hospitalisation episode.

The evening before last I went to the Milnerton Mediclinic with Kate, just a visit to see my mom in hospital again. But when we arrived on the ward there was a scene from ER going on. The curtains were drawn – there was a swarm of people busy with her and there were all kinds of machines and beeping noises and people rushing out and rushing back.

The doctor emerged from the curtains, “She has had heart failure,” he said. “We resuscitated her after three attempts.” He asked me to consider if they should resuscitate her if “she went again”. I felt panicky; it was hard to breathe. What was the right answer? I didn't know. He told me he was taking her into the ICU and he told me what he would do for her. I couldn't really make head or tail of what he said. I heard words as though I was hearing a foreign language that I only vaguely understood. Ruptured ulcer. Heart failure. Kidney failure. Vomiting. Ventilator. Resuscitate.

He asked me if I had someone who could come and be with me. A sibling. A friend. I understood only then that he meant this was very serious. That I would need support. I called my friend, also Colleen, who has effectively been Kate's granny. She left her pottery class and came with her friend Marijke, who was also at pottery. Marijke took Kate to get something to eat. She hadn't had supper. My sister in law, Gaye Lisa, and my niece Megan arrived too.

Eventually, after my mother had been in the ICU for nearly two hours, the doctor came out and told us what had happened, what he now suspected and what he was planning to do. He was calm and kind and clear. It seems she had a perforated small intestine and this had infected her whole body. Her kidney had failed, her blood pressure was very low, and her body was 10 times more acidic than it should have been. She had effectively been vomiting up the contents of her small intestine. He said there was a single

digit percentage that she might recover from this, and he could not say what her neurological function would be.

He said many other things that I don't remember. I remember kindness. Calm. The kind of love that strangers can have for other strangers, because they are human too.

Indian summer

18 April, 2017

It's almost a month later. Even in death my mother defies me. I have had many expressions of condolences and I'm thankful for them, it means that there are people who have noticed enough to say something. And many of the expressions are kind and caring. However, I can't take them into my heart in a simple open way. My relationship with my mother was so fraught and complicated that even now I don't feel plain grief.

Part of what I'm grappling with: Is she really gone? How can this be? I know I was with her when she died. I saw the last breath leave her body. I saw her body in the funeral parlour, her mouth looked like a beak; she didn't have her dentures in. Her beautiful cheekbones and high forehead were visible, but she wasn't lovely in death, she had dark rings around her eyes, as though she had been in a fight.

My oldest connection to life, to my life is gone. Even though I feel something of a relief that the burden of caring for her has been lifted from me, even though I feel lighter, I'm still grappling with what her death means.

We have celebrated her life twice now – once with her friends and family from the Fish Hoek area at the Glencairn golf course, and once at the Luxury Retirement Resort – where we were able to thank the staff and acknowledge her life with the other “inmates” as she called them.

We buried her ashes at Silvermine on the ridge that overlooks Cape Town and False Bay. My siblings were here and we did it together. We buried her near where we buried the ashes of David, her husband, our father. There was something satisfying about doing all the right things, getting the needful things done. I like the thought that she and David have a lovely view from where their ashes are buried. They can look down onto False Bay, the sea.

Life goes on. We're having a glorious Indian Summer here in Cape Town, the rains still have not come, the drought continues. If you didn't know about the drought, you would be able to simply enjoy the exquisite days.

What kind of person are you?

27 October, 2018

I think of my mother sometimes when I am going through an ordinary day, going to the gate to check the post, driving

up Klipfontein Road to fetch Kate at school, waiting at a robot, pushing a trolley in the shops. I imagine visiting her, popping out to Century City, to go and have a cup of tea with her. Not that there was anything in it for me. After I'd visited I was likely to feel tired and weak and need to lie down.

I picture her sitting in her small apartment watching television, smoking and drinking Coke; the carpet around her comfortable recliner chair dirty and stained from her spills and ash. At her windows hang the lovely embroidered heavy creamy curtains with the pink and orange embroidered flowers I had made especially for her flat, and through the windows there is a magnificent view of Table Mountain. Mothers can't live by views alone, I hear a voice say in my head. Another voice whispers back fiercely, It's you or her.

My mother was not very old; just over 20 years older than me. She had early onset senile dementia, she was bipolar, she needed care, she couldn't take care of herself. Sometimes I glimpsed a sweet bright person through the cloudy, murky, washed-up person who read You magazine, who always complained. Cokes and cigarettes were the refrain of my mother's life, complaint and repetition the melody.

In the years before we realised she needed care, she did some very weird things, she would go shopping in her pajamas, she didn't eat properly. She lived in a road in Fish Hoek where everyone's house was painted either white or cream, or at its most colourful, pale lemon. My mother painted her house cerise, she painted a frenzy of colourful flowers on her garage, she painted the inside vibacrete walls bright orange, she planted a wild garden filled with gnomes, stone frogs, metal birds, bird baths, tortoises – an enchanted secret crazy garden bursting with colour and life. And some days she would harvest sleeping pills and Syndols from pharmacies where she was still served even if it meant driving to Tokai and Wynberg first. Then she would take a small overdose, not enough to kill her, but enough to knock her out for a few days.

Her neighbours wrote her hate mail, they accused her of bringing down the tone of the neighbourhood. She loved the attention. She would phone me and read me the letters, sounding both aggrieved and victorious.

It was a big shift for me to realise I had to be responsible for my mother, especially when she had been a black hole of ambivalence for most of my life.

Once we were coming back from a holiday driving on that last stretch back into Cape Town, where you can see Table Mountain ahead, and Century City comes up on the right. Kate was asleep in the back. I said to Adam, "You're lucky your mother is dead." He turned, looked at me shocked, and said, "What kind of a person are you?" There are many things that he didn't forgive me for, and my sometimes

wishing that my mother was dead was one of them.

When you have a mother like Sally, how do you recover? How do you make something of your life that isn't all about suffering, reluctance, resistance, bushels and hiding under them. Sally is what there was. She was my mother, the roots that fed me as I grew.