

Betty is a feisty, cigarette smoking senior who loves her rum and claims, “Dwindle? What an unkind word for people growing old.”

Author Janet, explains to her Mom that to dwindle is when health starts to fade but death is still far off. In reality Janet knows it means a slow death. She knows there is not much to look forward to as both of your parents begin to ‘dwindle’.

Janet and her twin Judi create the Parent Project; they had a plan. But like most plans they had no idea how difficult the next ten years would be. Even though their Dad Fred had a second wife, she was not as engaged as the twins, in his slide into old age and then death. The twins along with the other siblings do everything they can to give Betty and Fred happy memories, peace, comfort and love.

We should all be so lucky as to have a family to care and advocate for us as we age, like Betty and Fred did. The largest growing population is seniors in their eighties as the Baby Boomers thrive and are living longer than their parents did. Janet and her sister fight the Alberta Health Care System that Janet calls Goliath to try and find that care for their parents. Along the way, the Reader falls in love with Fred and Betty. Fred, who after going through Customs declares he liked having his scrotum squeezed and Betty, who believes that God is in charge, throws out funny quips page after page. To me, this was a love story even though the focus was on health care and end of life experiences. Fred and Betty’s children sacrifice their own families and health at times to care for their parents.

There is conflict, regret and memories. The twins persist in feeding Mom in spite of family concern that Mom was ready to go and not eating was her way of controlling her death. Sometimes it is difficult to read and absorb the harsh reality that comes with dying. But to see what Fred and Betty suffered is to honour them and the family that cared for them so very much. These types of stories are so important to share.

The Dwindling is an honest, well-written, heart-warming book full of love and laughter. I look forward to Janet’s new book as she is a writer with heart, empathy and skill.