***The Last Waltz: Love, Death & Betrayal – by Sean Davison***

**Preview**

**I** **am feeling so much pain as I watch Mum slowly fading away. I wonder if this will have any lasting effect on me; I don’t think so as I am emotionally strong, but it is very stressful. She just lies in bed all day waiting to die. It breaks my heart.**

**I don’t want my Mum to suffer, so I must let her go. It is just so instinctive to try to hold on to someone you love as long as possible, but by doing that I am prolonging her suffering. Sometimes I feel she is holding on only because I am not letting her go. She is still giving me so much pleasure. Every time I am with her she gives me these beautiful, kind smiles. Today I asked her why she can smile so easily when she is suffering so much. She replied, “They are smiles for you.”**

**It is becoming very difﬁcult for Mum to walk to the toilet and I now have to escort her.  She told me that she wouldn’t need to go to the toilet during the night. However, as it turned out, at 4:30am I was woken by the sound of her dragging herself to the toilet on her own. This was no ballet performance; she was clinging desperately to each wall, trying to pull her frail body along. She had already made it past my bedroom door before I came and escorted her. She probably would have made it on her own, but it was a huge effort, and the potential for falling was high.**

**I am shocked at how frail Mum has become now. This is particularly noticeable when she tries to stand or walk. Her trips to the toilet symbolize her loss of independence more than anything else, and are embarrassing for her. I have managed, however, to turn these trips into a playful ritual. When she needs to go I ask her if I can have the pleasure of a dance. I then lift her up so that she is standing only lightly on her own legs and announce which ballroom dance it will be. We then move together, in time to a fox trot, tango or waltz. When we get to the turn in the hallway, I lead her through a spin turn. She appreciates the fact that I take the dance timing seriously, not making a mockery of the circumstances. She taught me to waltz when I was a small boy; it is time to return the favor.**