

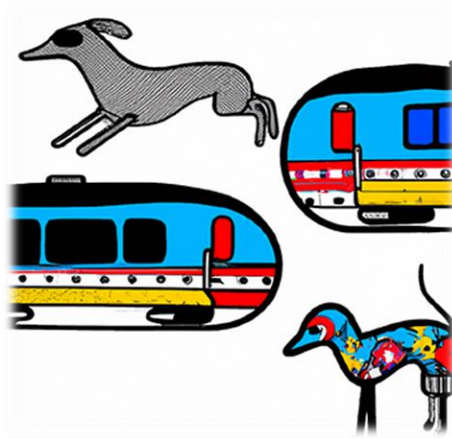


Lindsay Wincherauk

**MAY 2023**

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TRAINS + BUSES  
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I'm kind of at this stage where little things set me off. Like yesterday, my fitness watch started acting up, rebooting, rebooting, rebooting... tears leaked from my eyes, and I became obsessed with fixing it, frustrating. I can't fix it; another tear leaks.

How will I know if I'm sleeping correctly? I'm not.

What if my phone doesn't count all my steps? It won't.

I've returned to the dark ages? I haven't.

I am writing a chapter of this story. I do.

I need to move. I move.

I can't afford a new watch. I cry.

I cross the Cambie Bridge. Thoughts are trying to form, but they are jumbled, bouncing back and forth in confusion. Worry has never solved a problem. I worry.

I don't need the watch to tell me I struggle with sleep. With J back, I'm sleeping better. My stomach has calmed, mostly. I need to find a way to take care of us, and to see the magnificence most certainly coming next. I must trick my mind into believing everything will be okay and that the universe is on our side. It is. I just can't see it yet.

I'm coming for you. You definitely deserve what's coming. The pain. The uncertainty. Well, more pain. Just so you know, that's not the universe talking.

It must suck to be you. You seemed to have given part of your business to someone more damaged, narcissistic, and egotistical than you. An American. It must destroy you. I'm sorry for your loss.

I love what I'm creating.

I know there are no guarantees it will find an audience.

It will, at least amongst all of the people, your kind, have hurt.

Yes, you have a kind?

Snort a rail. It will do you good.

I will take care of my family. I'm sorry for yours. Collateral damage.

Open an illegal daycare. You did.

Flash your wealth to your struggling employees. You do.

They hate you; you are too stupid to realize that.

Don't call people stupid. It's not nice.

I don't really think you are stupid. I'm sorry.

Your struggling employees hate Tyler, it's not fair, but it is a thing.

I'm frightened.

I walk.

I feel despondent.

I do not deserve what you have done.

Get over it.

People don't get over things.

If we just walk away from evil, we allow evil to win.

Don't walk away; the power belongs to you now. Use it. I will.

Your father and grandparents are my age. Would you do what you've done to me, to them?

You had a responsibility to care for your valued senior employees, you failed, and some-fucking-how you convinced yourself you've done no wrong.

Don't walk away.

I won't.

Most people find me to be intelligent. I'm not sure intelligence matters

when it doesn't come with a dash of greed. So why can't I be greedy? I'm not wired that way. Could that be my Achilles heal? That's why you could so easily exploit me.

Vengeance is important.

I don't feel sorry for myself.

I try.

I try.

I try.

They say no matter how hard things get, keep trying, and things will eventually come around. As I age and health worries slip into the equation, I'm not sure trying is what matters. Especially when someone was raised in a construction family. How can you compete with that?

Raised in a construction family versus self-raised in a family trying to hide your existence.

How fucking disgusting is it to advertise your privilege?

I believed Tyler was my friend.

I really did, and I wanted him to be my friend.

I saw the goodness in him, but you, using the '*raised in,*' only highlights the damage inflicted upon him by his family (father). Tyler desperately wants to be his own man; you can't even allow him that – you and your new American overlord think entitlement is a selling feature – something people will buy.

I gagged when I typed *I saw the goodness in him...* who the fuck am I to be so damn condescending?

The world is changing, and you are rapidly becoming a dinosaur.

I stop for a bite to eat, and to read. Another major publisher sent me a message asking me to read their authors; and to share my thoughts. I'm 'failing hard' chasing unattainable 'dreams.' Respected. But failing, nonetheless.

We remember the darts.

I'm pulling the darts out of my flesh board, collecting them, and throwing them your way.

Do you understand 'failing hard' and no business chasing my 'dreams' is the root of my vengeance?

Duck.

It will be glorious. Bullseye. Bullseye. Bullseye. You won't even know what hit you as the plasma trickles from your being.

I take a bite. I read a page. A tear leaks from my eye. I feel down, defeated. I need to scratch and claw my way into the light.

I look out the window. Two young girls, maybe 16, are talking to a sketchy guy on the sidewalk below me. One of the girls hands the guy some cash. He stumbles across the street to the liquor store; when he returns, he gives the girl a bottle of vodka. I want to say something. I don't. It's not my business. I should have taken a picture.

I read another page. Another tear leaks from my eyes. I want to find the positive things in life. J. Hana. I'm loved.

I walk down Broadway. A train has been built below the roadway. I find this fascinating. I love looking across the street at the businesses coming and going, opening and closing, an ever-changing streetscape. It distracts me.

It's incredible the things that cross our minds.

It's 1966, I'm six, and my mother and father have taken me to the train station; they have put me on the train from Saskatoon to Edmonton, which was approximately eight hours. The last words I remember my father saying were, "Make sure you get off at every stop and stretch your legs."

The train pierces through the prairie night.

I sit in the observation car with a man I don't know.

I sit in my assigned seat next to a woman and a man I don't know.

I get off at every stop, swallowed by the humid, mosquito-filled night.

In Edmonton, I'm picked up by an aunt and uncle. I spend two days with them.

They take me to the bus station. I'm sitting between a little old lady and an inebriated man on the bus from Edmonton to Calgary. Every few miles, I ask the lady, "Can we see the mountains yet?"

Just before the bus reaches Calgary, the inebriated man wakes and asks me if he can help me get where I'm going?

I tell him my sisters are picking me up.

I get off the bus in Calgary. My sisters are not there. They're late. Actually, they forgot I was coming. I pull out a slip of paper my aunt had stuffed into my pocket; the paper has my sister's number and address etched on it. I walk twenty blocks to my sister's apartment. The inebriated man follows one block behind. When I arrive, my oldest sister says, "I thought you were coming tomorrow." I'm six.

Little did I know, she was my birth mother.

But you know what? I wasn't raised in a fucking construction family.

I really wanted Tyler to be my friend. I'm sad about how it is; I can see the good in him.

Is it raining in here?

Why do I think about this? I will never get over my family. I don't think what has happened in my life is any more damaging than what Tyler has had to endure; I just don't think, how we began, should be used to determine our intrinsic value.

I think about this because I lost more than just my livelihood.

I wanted Tyler and I to be great friends.

But I now know, he would sell his father and grandfather down the river.

I'm fucking trying to worry (yes trying). My mind feels clunky, jumbled. My head hurts. I can hear John G's voice in my head. He died. I never liked him. Why am I so sad? Oh, I know, he's in my demographic, and now, with my life in shambles, I am supposed to be searching for jobs I don't want. Jobs that don't exist. John G was in my demographic. I don't want to be dying at a job I don't want.

I buy a Coke.

I don't identify with the person behind the counter.

I didn't identify with the person behind the counter when I bought my lunch.

I purchase a lottery ticket at a convenience store and don't identify with the person behind the counter. Everywhere I go, the people working don't look like me. My life savings are gone. I'm scared. I need to take care of my family, but all you left me with is a thirst to make you hurt as much as me.

I hate that.



But I cannot feel good about myself at this stage of life if I let you get away with what you have done.

After I buy the lottery ticket, I start crossing the Granville Bridge. A crow just misses my head. The railing on the bridge is barely over my waist. I'm above the water. I look down. My father. The one from the last chapter is floating in the water below. He's looking up at me; I can see the back of his right hand. He's flexing his fingers, squeezing them rapidly into his palm; he's waving for me to come to him. The railing is barely over my waist. I can't swim. But I'm not afraid of water. A dangerous combination.

I don't think I should cross this bridge again.

Later, I will share this story with two people I know. It resonates with them.

I arrive at the back of my building. A lady grabs my attention. She needs to talk about her frustration with the Strata Council. I listen. Sort of. She apologizes. I tell her there is no need to apologize.

I needed the distraction.

I'm turning 63 soon, and throughout my days, I never see a working person who looks like me.

Darren, Todd, and Tyler took away my future. They also took away friendships.

My future is telling stories.

What was my father trying to do?

Is he even my father?

I really thought Tyler, and I were friends.

My beginning was less than auspicious, but you know what? I am a fantastic man.

Tomorrow, I am going to take a different bridge.

I'm living with depression.

I'm sorry, John G. Even though you were a miserable bleeper, I needed to be better.

Two thoughts have snuck into my mind.

1. I will never understand how, many people, are oblivious to the pain they inflict on others.
2. I must win the lottery! Because when I do, when they ask me how I'm feeling? I will say, *this is literally not surreal; I bought the fucking ticket.*



And when they ask me what I will spend my winnings on?

*After saying; the question is ridiculous, I will add, I will eat some tacos and a massive bowl of Avgolemono soup. Oh, and also, I'm going to start a Jumping Jacks Academy.*

That is why I should win the lottery.

I'm not sure why this is in this story. But it is.

I really thought Tyler, and I were friends.

Stop it.

There you go, being all weak again and trying to find the good in people.

Stop it.

John G was horrible to you; sure, it's sad he's gone, but...

I don't know what he went through in his life. I never tried to understand.

You can't be... for everyone.

And Tyler sold you down the river.

I know.

I had seen the good in him, a tiny bit of vulnerability; I think he may be no different from many of us; I think he often feels alone.

Grammarly Readability Score = 87

HUMAN SNAPSHOT  
HUMAN SNAPSHOT

ROD

Rod is 50 years old, emaciated, looks 70. Rod is frail. Maybe 120 lbs. He's been hooked on crack for the last; he *doesn't know how long*.

Every morning at 5 am, Rod lines up at an employment agency, hoping to be selected and sent out to a *back-breaking job* to get enough to manage his addiction.

On the way to work, the Agency's Driver, who had built a rapport with Rod, and several other workers, because he regularly drove them to work, controlling the narrative along the way. The Driver feels the suffering of the workers because he, much like the workers, was not born into entitlement + and has suffered himself periodically throughout life. During one of the drives, Rod feels comfortable enough to share, "OMG, I must get off of the dope. I'm 119 pounds."

The Driver tells him it would be a good idea, attempting not to judge Rod, and then adding, "Rod, you must; you're wasting away. Crack is going to kill you."

Rod aptly injects, "It is almost impossible to break the cycle."

"Why?" the Driver asks.

"Because at the cheque cashing place, my dealer is always waiting outside."

Rod lines up every day at 5 am hoping to get a job to manage his addiction.

Rod, every Todd, eventually breaks or dies.

The agency doesn't care; another Rod is waiting in line