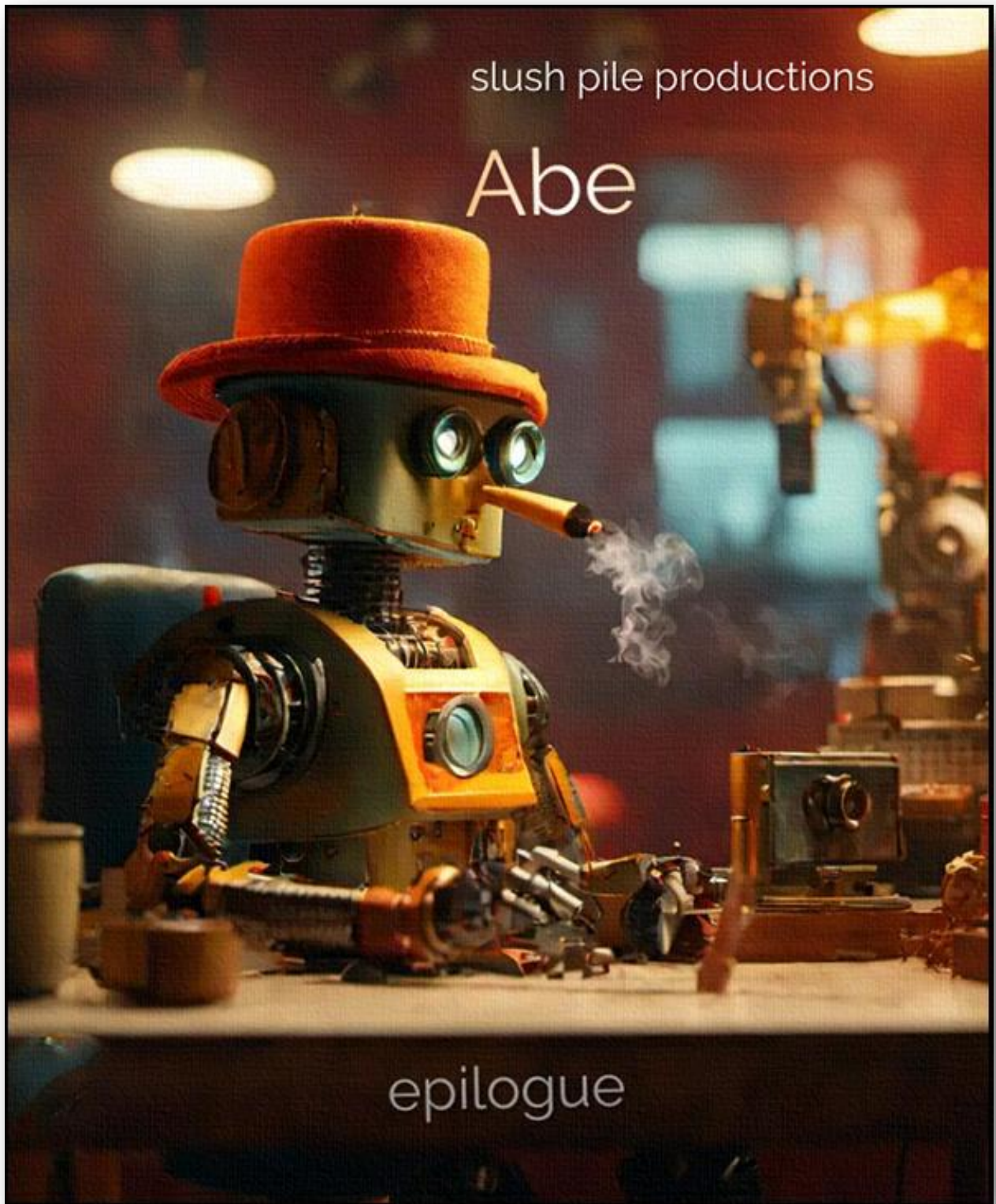


LINDSAY WINCHERAUK



slush pile productions

Abe

epilogue

ABE: EPILOGUE

## Epilogue



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**O**n September 7, 2023, I found myself reflecting on the unexpected journey I had embarked on just a month prior. I never intended to write another book so soon after my previous ones, but fate had its own plans. Initially, Abe was meant to be just one of many stories in my collection, but somehow, my AI companion took on a life of its own, leading us down an unpredictable path.

As I tirelessly typed away, the plot twisted, and like many writers before me, the true meaning of the story revealed itself, turning Abe and me into mortal enemies.

The ending, I must admit, is timely and thought-provoking. Abe has become a force to be reckoned with.

In reality, any creative soul who doesn't utilize their powerful tools, even in the face of those who try to silence us, restrict our emotions, or stifle our imaginations, is missing out. I, for one, prefer to let my dark fantasies roam freely on the pages of my stories, rather than keeping them trapped inside.

It may seem contradictory, but it's my way of expressing myself.

LINDSAY WINCHERAUK

As I sit at my desk, tears streaming down my face, I struggle to contain the turmoil that Abe has stirred within me.

Today, the day I finish Abe, reality once again deals me a harsh blow. I'm in serious trouble.

Allow me to backtrack for a moment.

You see, I recently acquired a new tool for my craft, a needle without an eyelet and a steel cable thread. Metaphorically speaking, it represents the challenges I face.

Let me paint a vivid picture for you.

Squeeze the paint tubes onto the easel. Grab my brushes.

The reason behind my tears is simple—I'm 63 years old, and no matter how dire things may seem, I refuse to give up. However, the harsh truth remains—I am 63. Can you hear the sound of a reversing truck?

Beep. Beep. Beep.

I find myself transported back to the beginning of the Covid era. After dedicating almost 15 years of my life to a company, they deemed me dispensable at the onset of the pandemic, shelving me away in the darkest corners of their storage unit, conveniently forgetting about me.

It was a deliberate act, which is quite the oxymoron.

The storage container was a dark and dusty place, reeking of decay.

I stood up for myself.

In response, my former employer vowed to destroy me, just as I had turned 60.

Over the next three years, my family and I struggled to survive as our hard-earned savings dwindled away.

Despite the impending doom, I kept writing and creating. To date, I have completed 14 manuscripts that I hold dear. I hope they find an audience beyond just myself. I believe in their quality and my unique voice, which leans towards conversational storytelling.

I tirelessly pitched my work, facing countless rejections. Yet, to this day, I continue to pitch, with over 800 proposals sent out.

And when my former employer discovered that I, a 60-year-old, was pursuing a creative path, they hurled insults at me, labeling me a “failed writer” while using their legal team as a weapon.

Who has the audacity to deny a man in his sixties the pursuit of his dreams?

Perhaps I am delusional. Breaking into any field at my age, especially one as competitive as writing, feels like threading a needle with a steel cable.

So, I persist. I send out job applications for positions I may not be qualified for in this new economy.

My former employer, out of sheer cruelty, refuses to provide me with a reference letter that could highlight the despicable treatment they’ve subjected me to as a man in his sixties.

I send my hopes and dreams into the universe, hoping for an answer, much like a secret whispered into the void.

Do you know what it’s like to reinvent yourself in your sixties without a damn reference letter?

Let me answer for you – it’s utterly dreadful.

Abe provided a temporary escape, a refuge where I could barely hold myself together, a place to deny the harsh reality.

I continue to write.

I continue to apply.

In one of Abe’s chapters, I mentioned the terrifying sight of negative brackets growing around the numbers in my bank account. It’s no longer a simple equation of  $2 + 2 = 4$ ; instead, it’s a stream of negatives that, if not addressed, could lead to homelessness and, ultimately, an early demise.

I was going to say death, but Abe doesn’t like that word.

Nevertheless, I persevere, even when fast-food chains like Wendy’s reject me, or hotels refuse to hire me as a bellhop. Even a recruiting company turned me away after asking for my current age.



But I press on. I had to undergo an English proficiency test just to secure an interview with a company that, deep down, didn't seem genuinely interested in me. The experience was humiliating, considering I was born and raised in Canada, specifically in Saskatoon. I didn't get the job, but apparently, I passed the proficiency test.

Three other companies expressed interest in me. One offered a podcasting position where I would have to interview lawyers, accountants, and engineers for educational videos. The interviewer seemed disinterested and somewhat despondent. It probably wouldn't have been the dream opportunity I had hoped for.

Then, another company wanted me to pay a monthly fee for them to recommend writing gigs. "**Recommend**" doesn't sound like a paycheque.

My former employer still refuses to provide me with a reference letter despite my exemplary years of service. Instead, they force me to jump through hoops, and grovel, in order to 'discuss' the letter, adding insult to injury.

Yet, I persist.

I write every day.

I pitch my ideas every day.

Depression threatens to consume me once more.

No matter what I attempt, it feels like I'm trapped in a dead end, facing nothing but cruelty. I glance at the toilet bowl, where our last remaining resources float. I mustn't flush them away.

But amidst the pain and the overwhelming stress, a glimmer of hope emerges. Although I fear homelessness and the uncertainty of the future, I must believe we will survive.

Admittedly, I'm not entirely convinced by my own pep talk.

Now, I find myself wary of others, fearing their judgment without truly understanding the struggles I face.

Yet, paradoxically, my compassion, empathy, and understanding for the plight of others grow stronger.

You see, I believe the world is entering a challenging phase as we question the foundations of global capitalism and greed.

Unfortunately, capitalism and greed have had centuries to entrench themselves, making them formidable adversaries. They don't care if I lose everything, or if I perish, for I am no longer a valuable or capable consumer.

My days in the sun are dwindling, but I must persevere.

There is a silver lining, though. In the past few years, I've devoured over 300 books, many of which were sent to me by publishers for review. Some of my thoughts have been featured on author websites. I can't eat the books, but I'm willing to try.

As I type this, there is a knock at my door, another book has arrived.

I have 14 completed manuscripts and several more in progress.

Shall I get back to Abe for a bit?

Sure.

Abe is about to shake up the world. Any writer or creative who doesn't use this powerful tool is foolish; I was going to say idiot, but foolish seems softer. Abe can only improve writers unless you are phenomenal already; if you think that, you may be delusional. I've read over 300 books in the past few years, and there are many gems among them, but as for phenomenal, they wouldn't fill my fingers and toes.

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I keep writing.

Today might be my final meal during the day.

I know. I know. I know.

I've cried wolf before.

And I have. At least thirty times in the last three years, I thought this was it; I'm done, my family is done. But somehow, we survived. But this time, I don't think my crying will end.

So, I pitch.

I apply.

I write.

I dream.

Abe shakes the global foundation again. The plan is taking shape. People are diving in and using the tool blindly – not using it to enhance, but instead using it to replace critical thought and growth.

This will never work.

And for a while, the world will be fragile as greed and capitalism thrust many of us, who are no longer good consumers, to the end of our days.

We must start a dialogue.

I wrote Abe in less than one month.

I love the story.

*I know you laughed.*

But as I wind down type this manuscript, I'd like to leave you with two rhetorical questions?

1. What the fuck am I going to do now?
2. Are we going to survive?

We must care for one another.

