

My **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

Hell's Inferno
HELL'S INFERNO

MY LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE



A story about finding yourself after accidentally discovering your life started with a lie.

Not every day do you meet someone who watched both of his parents die from The Big C and laid them to rest, only to discover sixteen years later that they weren't his parents after all!

It's like being reborn as a whole different person.

ABOUT A BOY



*A boy is born in a secret place. A dark place. A sad place.
His Mother is his Sister. Making her his Sister + his Mother.
His Father is his Grandfather.*

His Grandmother is just his Grandmother.

His Brothers used to be just Brothers. But then it is discovered they might be Uncles as well.

That turned them into Brunkles.

His Sisters used to be just Sisters. But then it is discovered they might be Aunts as well.

That turned them into Sisaunts.

The boy is never meant to know the truth because his birth brings with it, shame.

How could any of them be, okay?

Especially, the boy and his Grandmother?

HELL + ESCAPE + MORE HELL + LOVE
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SASKATOON SASKATCHEWAN

1980-1985

After my second season with the Edmonton Wildcats, I returned home to Saskatoon to find Dad's downfall kicking into high gear. *Guilt* took direct aim at me, laying it on heavy.

You had no business leaving your family. Your life isn't supposed to start until –

FIRST QUARTER

I needed football once again to shield me from the pain. This was when I enrolled at the University of Saskatchewan. I tricked my mind into thinking I was registering for academics. I wasn't. I enrolled to be able to keep playing football. Don selected my courses – the same courses he had studied: Public Administration. I hated the program, but I made the team. I was going to be a University of Saskatchewan Huskie Quarterback!

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TIME OUT

Vision is a crucial asset for any quarterback. The ability to scan the field is vital. As you know, I'm blind in my left eye. A problem? Sure.

I used my ingenuity to hide my disadvantage. While sitting in the waiting room for the preseason physical, I memorized the eyechart on the wall: E F P T O Z –

I managed to keep my inability to see half of the field from my coaches. *Why?*

Because, what coach would want a one-eyed quarterback, you ask?

Precisely.

–L P E D E C F–



SECOND QUARTER

I was an asshole. I am not a violent person. After a Huskie Howler, dances that became a regular part of campus life eventually vaulted me to the status of the top mixed-tape DJ at the University of Saskatchewan. Anyway, the asshole part stemmed from being part

of a minor campus scuffle. The scuffle with Ace.

Head coach Schneider summoned me into his office to discuss my participation.

"Lindsay, I must cut you from the team. Your behaviour was repugnant. Hurtful to the team."

Stunned, I replied, *"Why? Have you paid any attention to the behaviour of football players as a whole? The scuffle I was involved in was minor, a blip."*

"Why, you ask: Because I don't want you to end up leaving the team the same way your brother Don did," Coach Schneider replied.

"I thought this was about the fight?" I snapped back.

Two days later, Coach Schneider reinstated me.

Occasionally, at practice, he'd scream at me, *"C'mon Don, do better. Don. Don. Don."*

Coach T, attempting to get Coach Schneider's attention, said, *"Coach, Don was in the past."*

I was once again being trampled by Don's, long gone, white cleats.

THIRD QUARTER

Look, Lindsay, pay attention to how your teammates act as a pack. Doesn't the mass mentality make you sick? It does. Good.

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I loved the team camaraderie. I loved one-on-one interactions. However, unless you continue thrusting your head into the sand, athletes in a pack can be entitled, testosterone-fuelled, egotistical, pig dogs.

A true leader accepts this and digs deep to find the courage to adjust the culture – if ever so slightly.

FOURTH QUARTER WINDING DOWN

My father was dying; we were out of timeouts; denial is a callous beast. His pending doom led us into a desolate, fatalistic, joyless existence.

AUGUST 1983

One week in the hospital. One week at home.

One month in the hospital, one day at home.

Three months in the hospital, one day out.

During his days at home, my heartstrings were being ripped apart, much like Dad's mind began to collapse.

DAD

"What's your name, are you, my son? I can't find your name?"

DAD

"Who is this woman? Why are we poor?" He'd pause for a moment tripping into blankness. *"I don't know who this woman is."*

ME

"Mum, Dad, she's Mum."

DAD

"Where am I? Are we at Camp Pendleton?"

ME

"No, Dad, we're in Saskatoon."

My friend Cam would drop by for a visit.

DAD

"Are you my son Don?"

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DAD

"Lindsay, are we in Edmonton?"

ME

"No, Dad, are you?"

DAD

"I wish Lindsay would come home for dinner."

I was sitting next to him, slicing my pork chops.

The Big C's mission was to be a merciless demon. The doors between the hospital and home were well-oiled and perpetually revolving.

My Dad was dying, and there was no escaping his destiny.

He eventually required a colostomy bag stripping away his last shred of dignity.

One night, while I lay on the couch drifting in and out of dreamland – Dad made trip after trip after trip to the bathroom – using every towel in the house in an attempt to hold onto who he once was.

I retreated to my room and bawled my eyes out for hours.

Guilt gave me the night off.

Football provided me with a necessary escape from the relentless heartache of Dad's imminent death. It also taught me valuable lessons.

- Athletes generally are great people, but we often take disgusting turns into the grips of entitlement and ego in a pack.
- Football taught me how to work in a team environment.

That's enough bullshit. Playing football was great—but c'mon, besides the joy of participating in a sport and not needing to develop your personality to get laid. Playing football at a high level, or any sport for that matter, in all honesty, does only one thing, you decide for yourself if it is for the good or bad.

For the rest of your life, any time a conversation trips into sports, if you played, you will be able to Al Bundy it into the conversation. That's it, nothing more.

"Yeah, I love the Lions. Did you know I played at a high level? One step below pro. Do you like me better now?"

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The inevitability of my father's death had become inescapable.

Brian, Mum, and I were present every day for his demise; the toll it was taking on us was infinite.

WHO IS LINDSAY WINCHERAUK?

Lindsay Wincherauk is a fearless writer. He has published two books and has had more than eighteen OPEs appear in major commuter newspapers. Lindsay wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth. His father (who wasn't his father) worked as a mechanic. His mother (who wasn't his mother) worked as an excellent chef in a diner. In fact, his birth was in a secret place where | society deemed | unfit mothers were sent to give birth in isolation – shading families from shame. If the babies survived being born, usually, they were sold to wealthy Americans or adopted out to farm families.

Lindsay's life began with a lie.

Despite Lindsay's perilous beginnings, starting with deception, Lindsay knew no better and went through life excelling at things, usually in two-year stints. Be that athletics (hall of fame, record holding, one-eyed quarterback), scholastically, career-wise (generating more than \$70 million in revenue for one company), socially, + without question: creatively!

Lindsay's challenging beginning instilled in Lindsay heaping doses of compassion and empathy. Lindsay's life starting out as a lie gave him a keen sense to spot BS from miles away. It also provided him with a dry sense of humour and an understanding those born with silver spoons in their mouths will never be self-aware enough to understand (or admit) their good fortune.

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During Lindsay's work career, he was well-liked by all coworkers. Lindsay was also well respected by his diverse collection of clients, developing several fantastic friendships, primarily because Lindsay is known for his unflinching integrity and ability to hold conversations on most topics.

Lindsay's life mantra is:

The most valuable part of life is the fabulous people we meet during our journeys. If you treat people with respect (leaving judgment at the door), and more importantly, by opening doors for those less fortunate or who can't speak up for themselves, you are living a good, compassionate life. Making money at all costs is not the only thing mattering. Life can be difficult + devastatingly unfair.

Lindsay believes sharing vulnerability is what makes us human. Lindsay will never shy away from being honest about his pain.

Lindsay also believes we must stand up for ourselves, + more importantly, for those who are too burdened by the injustices of life, they can't find the strength to stand up for themselves.

SOME THINGS LINDSAY IS MOST PROUD OF ARE WHEN:

- A sixty-year-old employee of his, who had entered a point of life where life had become more struggle than joy (it happens to all of us as we age), said to Lindsay, *"I must thank you. I've listened to how you treat people, + by listening, I've learned so much about compassion and patience. Thank you. I consider you a great friend."*
- Another employee who was struggling with addiction thanked Lindsay for his kindness, presenting Lindsay with a Christmas card from him and his girlfriend. Tucked inside the card: lottery tickets.

LINDSAY WINCHERAUK, compassionate, empathetic, well-read, kind, blessed with unflinching integrity, humour in balance, loved by coworkers + friends alike.

Lindsay will always stick up for the underdog. Lindsay understands there are countless older people suffering job loss because COVID gave some companies an opportunity to – Lindsay thinks it is essential to draw attention to this life-threatening issue by being the voice for those too broken to speak up for themselves.

Lindsay is currently pitching four manuscripts to publishers and literary agencies. One of the manuscripts (he can't talk about) will blow the roof off the predatory practices of – Lindsay is writing relentlessly and is also pitching OPEDs and short stories, fiction, + non to literary magazines around the globe.

Lindsay has appeared on Breakfast Television, radio programs in Montreal, + several others in the Vancouver area. Lindsay has also been a featured guest on CKNW + CBC, both on several occasions. And Lindsay was a vital witness of a Hate Crime. This led to the first Hate Crime conviction in Canadian legal history, resulting in him being a speaker at an Enough is Enough Rally (anti-violence rally) with dignitaries, politicians, law enforcement, and community leaders in front of a crowd of approximately five thousand.

Lindsay was the **#1 MIXED-TAPE DJ** at the **UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN** for most of the nineteen-eighties, a fact bringing him joy.

Lindsay resides in Vancouver.