

My **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

The Day My Dad Died

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 CITY HOSPITAL

17 JULY 1985

I had been to the hospital more than twelve hundred times in the past five years. Today was to be the last time.

At 2 PM, my father's doctor called.

"It's time, Lindsay. You need to get your family together, now, if you want to say goodbye."

I called Mum at work, "Mum, I'm coming to get you. Dad doesn't have much time left." Her husband of more than fifty years was about to check out.

My heart was bursting; *Lucky Number Seven* was not given the luxury of self-pity. So, I had to feign strength for Mum and Brian.

Shamefully, I felt relieved.

The previous day, I turned twenty-five.

I know what you are thinking; what horrible timing?

Fuck that, people; the Grim Reaper doesn't care about birthdays or Christmas or anything else. *Good timing and death are not a thing.* Humans, I beg of you to evolve. What I will tell you, as much as an indelible mark was about to be put on my birthday, I'm grateful for the painful yearly reminder. If dad's last day was, shall I say, October 7, his memory might end up being lost in the mundane realities of daily life?

I celebrated my birthday with friends. I did this after my penultimate hospital visit, where I stared through tear-soaked eyes at my father's incoherent near lifeless body for hours.

Like many of us have, I am sorry for reawakening the memory if you have been there.

I celebrated my birthday because, strange to say, my fucking birthday was never a thing with my family. There was nary a celebration. It was a soul-sapping non-event.

During my late teens, I celebrated with friends, not family.

Because I had a summer birthday in grade school, I lied to have a celebration during the school year; my teacher let my fibbing slide.

Guilt suggested I was selfish celebrating while my dad was dying.

I told *Guilt* to fuck off.

Today, my father was going to die. And I was fucking angry.

No words can describe what it is like to ride a five-year-long, wild roller coaster. MY. DAD. WAS. DYING. I couldn't recall him ever being alive. He always seemed to be burdened by struggle. The industrial accident. The collapsed lung. Endless financial worries. And now, *The Big Fucking C*.

Guilt gave me a reprehensible glance. Guilt reminded me; I had robbed my parents of their golden years by being born.

Because Brian and I were the only children living at home, we bore the brunt of the hospital visits. The rest of the clan were far removed from the sterile stench of the hospital + the ups and downs of dad's unforgiving rollercoaster.

How's dad today?

He ate, and things were looking up.

THE NEXT DAY

How's he doing?

He didn't remember my name; I want this to... never mind.

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Beat down by six years of visits, I wanted it to fucking end. I said goodbye in my heart more than six hundred times. I hated the illusion of false hope. Dad had dropped to eighty pounds from two hundred. *I wanted him to die*. I wanted the fucking pain to be over.

My siblings would periodically roll into town. Their visits raised Dad's spirits. Each time, upon leaving, they'd complain I wasn't doing enough.

You need to go to the hospital more often; they'd often tell me as if every fucking day wasn't enough.

Suppose you've ever visited someone in a medical prison. In that case, you'd understand the prison extends beyond the hospital walls and engulfs the daily visitor, whereas monthly visits brought the excitement of something new.

As quickly as they arrived, my siblings would exit the scene.

You need to go more often.

Fuck off, I'd mumble.

LAST GASP: 4:45 PM

At roughly 4 PM, I veered off Warman Road onto Seventh Avenue. We were seven blocks from the inevitable ending, speeding toward death. I heard sirens; I glanced in the rear-view mirror. A police car was chasing me. I was pulled over.

The Police Officer asked, *"Son, do you know how fast you were going? Licence and registration, please."*

Mum was sitting beside me, crying, vacant.

"Mum, could you hand me the –"

She couldn't find the strength.

"Sir, we are going to watch my father die," I solemnly told the officer.

His voice cracked with emotion as he said, *"I'm so sorry, be on your way."*

I parked the car in the hospital's massive parking lot, Brian, and I, took our mother by her arms, Brian on the left, me on the right. We strolled. Mum was quivering. Every step forward was one step closer to the end. Once inside the hospital, the familiar stench greeted us. We got on the elevator and started rising. It should've fallen downwards. My poor mother, a half-century of struggles, was about to flicker to an end.

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I wish I were never born. Mum + Dad's lives would've been so much easier, entered my mind.

During Dad's final years, Brian supported Mom at home.

I, on the other hand, avoided home; instead, I'd retreat to Corrie's house to escape the heartache.

I failed Brian.

The elevator stopped on the fourth floor. We exited left. When we reached the nurse's station, we were met by my father's Doctor and a Nurse. They ushered us into my father's room.

At 4:43 PM, we walked into the room. Brian stood at Mum's left. I stood to her right. Dad's skin was devoid of colour. He looked feebler than the day before. He opened his eyes and reached for my mother's hand. He tried to mutter something. *He died.* I witnessed the exact moment his life ceased. I saw his spirit leave his body; I started to collapse as tears exploded from my eyes.

I realized my mother and father were in love for the first time. He held on just long enough to say goodbye. Upon her touch, he was freed.

I think the words he may have been trying to say to her were, *I love you; I'm sorry.*

Out of the corner of my eye, I'm sure I saw, *The Big C* leave the room.

THE FUCKER; WAS SMIRKING.

WHO IS LINDSAY WINCHERAUK?

Lindsay Wincherauk is a fearless writer. He has published two books and has had more than eighteen OPEDs 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.