

# My **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

*Knock. Knock. Knock. Is Your Mother Home?*  
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# 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.*

**Knock. Knock. Knock. Is Your Mother Home?**

# 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?*

**Knock. Knock. Knock. Is Your Mother Home?**

HELL + ESCAPE + MORE HELL + LOVE  
HELL + ESCAPE + MORE HELL + LOVE



Knock. Knock. Knock. Is Your Mother Home?  
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# KNOCK. KNOCK. IS YOUR MOTHER HOME?

SASKATOON SASKATCHEWAN

SEPTEMBER 1986-17 JANUARY 1987

Six years of watching the love of her life being ravaged by The Big C had taken a devastating toll on Mum's health. Unfortunately, the Big C didn't give a dam. Mum was seventy-one when she began to be confronted by anxiety coupled with crippling stomach pains. These issues reared their ugly heads mere months after Nicholas's death.

*"Rebekah, you have nothing to worry about. You are fine. Your symptoms are psychosomatic."*

*"Thank you, doctor."*

KNOCK. KNOCK. FUCKING KNOCK.

The boom of the knocking rang familiar.

*The Big C was at the door again.*

*GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE. GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE. My screaming echoed in my mind.*

Our good doctor was wrong, Mum was diagnosed with stomach cancer.

The revolving door between the hospital and home was oiled once more.

Brian had just turned thirty. He needed to obtain his driver's license to visit Mum at the hospital by himself. It was up to me to teach him how to drive. This time on Saskatoon's roadways instead of plowing through a farmer's field.

**Driver's Tests 1-3:** He hit a guardrail, a Volvo, and ran a red light.

**Test 4:** Passed.

Perhaps, my instruction sucked.

**17 JANUARY 1987: VANCOUVER, BC: WESTIN BAYSHORE HOTEL**

Brother Don provided the family with a break from the despair. He was getting married in Vancouver's International Suite of the Westin Bayshore Hotel. A suite, Howard Hughes, once spent six months eating nothing but pancakes.

The breather was short-lived, and Mum was marching toward death.

**Knock. Knock. Knock. Is Your Mother Home?**

# *I'M NEVER GOING TO COME HOME AGAIN, AM I?*

## SASKATOON SASKATCHEWAN

5-10 DECEMBER 1987

↑UP↑  
↓DOWN↓  
↓FALSE HOPE↑  
↑UP↑  
↓DOWN↓  
↓DOWN↓  
↓DOWN↓  
↑up↑  
DENIAL—

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—repeated over and over again.

Brian and I made another three hundred trips to the hospital. With Brian being able to drive, the burden became a little more bearable.

Mum's cancer issued querulous attacks on her stomach to the point where she, too, needed a colostomy bag.

I was now twenty-seven.

UP came calling, traipsing into our home disguised as Promise, just before the holidays.

UP sent our spirits soaring after Mum had had a successful operation to remove a tumour.

Mum was no longer dying.

### 7 DECEMBER 1987

Saskatoon was in the grips of a bone-chilling -37 Celsius and the bluster of late fall storms. When I returned home from a night out with my friends Bub and Jeffbo, ~~UP~~ was about to be cancelled. Mum lay on the sofa in immeasurable pain. Brian was breaking; Mum needed to return to the hospital; the fucking surgery wasn't a success.

*Knock. Knock. Knock. Is Your Mother Home?*

I had spent a decade as *LUCKY NUMBER SEVEN* watching *The Big C* annihilate my parents, and once again, I needed to fake strength.

I took my mother by the arm and helped her to the door. The frozen door squeaked open with ice dropping from the frame, smashing on below ground. I walked backward down the icy steps, supporting Mum. When I reached the bottom stage, with Mum one step above me, we stopped and looked into each other's eyes. My mother's eyes filled with tears. The tears froze before they could fall from her frail cheeks. She looked at me and meekly said, "I'm *never going to be home again. Am I?*"

I looked at her and calmly said, "Yes, you will."

That was the biggest lie that I have ever told.

I need to pause to regain composure before typing the following sentence. I want to burst into tears.

The UP of December 5 was gone. The only direction left was DOWN. We could no longer linger in denial.

"Doctor, should I phone the family and tell them to come home for Christmas?"

"Yes."

## 10 DECEMBER 1987: SASKATOON CITY HOSPITAL

Mum was barely holding onto life. I sat beside her grasping her hand for five hours on this day. She gripped mine tightly. Suddenly, her grip loosened. Her pulse slowed. I left the room. I couldn't command the strength to watch her take her last breath.

The previous day, Mum uttered her last words to me. Mum looked into my eyes, gently pulled my head close to her mouth, and whispered into my ear, with her voice quavering.

"Goodbye."

I'm not too fond of that word.

That night I went out with friends to mourn. I returned home in the morning to find Bernice sitting in the corner of the kitchen, consumed with grief. We embraced for the first time. We cried.

Bernice calmed, broke the embrace, her tears had stopped flowing, and then she asked me, "Could you find another place to stay? We need the house for the relatives."

I'm *Lucky Number Seven*; indeed, I'd be okay.

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## 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.*

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## 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.