

i THINK
I THINK

if i lose my mind. will i lose me?



BY **LINDSAY WINCHERAU**K

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?

THE SPECIALISTS
THE SPECIALISTS

THE SPECIALISTS

It's been a tough three or four years. If you know me, you likely wouldn't know because, despite being a memoirist, I tend to hold things close to the vest—occasionally, sharing life snippets with a comedic bent. Probably, denial.

I shared I had a fucking stroke on Facebook—I was quickly lambasted for doing it and then never spoken to again (by family).

"Facebook isn't where you are supposed to share things like this."

I sort of agree, but I also don't.

Anyway, four years of crap.

- My niece, Allison, who is really a cousin, passed away. I may have, shamefully, pushed her away because of my own neurosis when she needed me the most.
- For the first time, I said hello to my mother, Bernice, alongside her deathbed – a week later, she died.
- I was diagnosed with Sarcoidosis, a phantom illness that attacks the joints.
- This led to Specialist #1.
- A level ten pain steamrolled through my body. I never missed a day of work.
- I released my memoir: *Driving in Reverse - The Life I Almost Missed*.
- My youngest sister/aunt, Beverly, passed away.

I shared my upset with an acquaintance. An acquaintance after hearing my upset, said, *"Lots of people come from screwed-up families."*

His loud **"SHUT UP - NOT INTERESTED"** was noted.

- On January 5, 2018, I suffered a catastrophic stroke. If I hadn't gone to the ER when I did, *"noted,"* would have been the last word of this story. Actually, I'm not sure what the final word would be because I can't remember the last word, I typed that day.
- I performed a twenty-five-minute stand-up comedy set while my brain was trying to reset itself.
- My brother-in-law/uncle, Beverly's husband, Gordon, passed away.
- Three friends passed away (two of them had been *best*).

"Lindsay, this is not the place."

- During a plethora of medical appointments, my doctor of the last twenty-eight years retired.

21 JUNE 2018

Doctor Musial has been my doctor for twenty-eight-years.

I enjoy his company.

I enjoy his somewhat not doctorly manners.

He finds brightness in the challenges of living life.

We have a good rapport.

I'm profoundly sad – today is to be my last visit. The good doc is retiring on the thirtieth. I'll miss him.

Do you remember the last time when I said you shouldn't be allowed to retire until all your patients are dead? You do! I joked with friends it would be hilarious if you ended our appointment today, saying, "Well, that's it, Lindsay, you're my last patient." To which I'd reply, "But you're retiring on the thirtieth." And you would fire back, "About that, I wouldn't make Canada Day plans if I were you."

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He laughed.

Hey, do you know what my blood type is?

I don't know – why would I know that?

Are you sure you're my doctor?

Lindsay, I think you will see the humour in this; some patients don't. If a patient asks if they must take a pill for the rest of their life? After I reply, you're lucky there is a pill to take. I say, No, you don't, you can quit taking it the week before you die.

We both laughed.

The blood type question is the only question I had for you.

You're healthy, except –

I know, thanks for everything.

TIMES UP

Here come the tears. *Fight them, Lindsay. Fight them.*

I stuck out my hand.

The tears were winning.

I grabbed Dr. Musial's hand and shook it while looking away.

All the best.

All the best to you, Lindsay.

I ran to the door.

It's time for a new doctor. Fortunately, I have Specialist #1!

"This is not the place to share."

Newsflash, absent family: I don't care.

That sounded angry.

I assure you, it's not: it's sad.

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THE FOLLOWING FEW LINES ARE THE MOST HEARTBREAKING LINES I HAVE EVER WRITTEN.

The only time I hear from family now is if someone is sick or has died. When this happens, the news devastates me. It also reminds me, I don't belong.

If I were to kick it – nobody in my family would ever know.

BACK TO THE SPECIALIST

"Hey Doc, the Chemo pills are shredding my insides."

"You best keep taking them. Hey, we have a machine downstairs that scans your insides. We are offering the scan for free. You should get it done. I'm sure, there is nothing wrong. I'll call you if we discover something."

THE NEXT DAY

"Yeah, Lindsay, the scan is troubling; it shows significant scarring. I need to send you to Specialist #2. Oh yeah, stop taking the chemo pills."

My new doctor (not this Specialist #1 or soon to be visited Specialist #2) thinks my voice is powerful.

"You should do podcasts; your voice is outstanding."

A month later, I met my new Specialist. He ordered a laundry list of tests.

Two months later, I met him again.

"You have a genetic deficiency. It's called Alpha One. It's serious. I don't want you to worry. We need to do a whack of genetic testing, and when you come back in January, we will make a plan."

"Is there anything I should be doing?"

"Eat healthily."

What's that Google – use you.

Alpha One Deficiency: Lungs fail. Liver fails. You fail. Life Expectancy: Now. The next page is the same. The next page is the same. The next page is the same.

My friend, Jay, asks me if I'm dying; I lie and say I'm sure the next page will be different.

JANUARY 9 ARRIVES, MY FOLLOW-UP. I'M TOO AFRAID TO GO – I CANCEL

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 23, ARRIVES. I GO.

"Hey, Lindsay, how are you? We'll do another scan and then come talk to me."

"Well, good news, the genetic markers are insignificant. You are fine. (I'm dumping you) You don't need to see me anymore. You will need a pulmonary function test – your other doctors can deal with that."

"You don't need to see me anymore... I'm fine...you know you freaked me out...Google exists."

I laugh.

I cry.

I'm exhausted.

"This is not the place."

Oh, bleep off.

I phone one of my best friends, Wayne. It's his birthday.

"Wayne, I got you the best birthday present ever."

"What is it?"

"I'm not dying."

Wayne seemed happy. We chatted for several minutes. I told him what my ailment supposedly was. He Googled.

*"Your illness has a **Foundation**. I don't need to read more."*

Relief swallowed me in exhaustion. It's been a trying four years.

AT WORK

"Lindsay, how are you feeling?"

"I feel the worst I've ever felt. I'm bleeping wiped out."

"Yeah, I never got much sleep last night, either."

I stopped talking.

FEBRUARY 2020

Back to Specialist #1 for my regular six-month visit, wiggle, question, question.

"You're good. (I'm dumping you). You don't need to see me anymore."

"You know, the other Specialist freaked me out. I thought I was dying. He told me I have – "

"Alpha One is serious. You don't have it. That's great."

"Except for Google. You do know patients have Google? Before I bid you so long, is there anything I should be doing?"

"Eat healthily."

WRITTEN: 17 FEBRUARY 2019

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.

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.
