

MY **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

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?

WHO AM I GOING TO BECOME?
WHO AM I GOING TO BECOME?



HOTELIERS + MANUEL NORIEGA

VANCOUVER - FORT LAUDERDALE -

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA - VANCOUVER

17 SEPTEMBER 1990-MAY 1991

It was time to find a hat and a rabbit. We needed to come up with \$5-million US.
"Hey, Wes, do you have \$4,999,900 US?"
Why \$5-million US? You ask.

- \$2.9-million US for the purchase of the hotel.
- \$2.1-million US for operations until we reach profitability.

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Wes ripped the cushions off the couch. He found \$1.37 in loose change + three Cheezies covered in lint. He ate two of them and offered me the other. I declined.

I spun in a circle three times. When the dizziness subsided, and I regained focus, I found a \$10,000 Apple McIntosh computer sitting on my desk.

When did I get a desk?

"Hey, Wes, where did we get the computer from?"

"You know my friend Bob, right? He had spent his life savings on the computer. You see, Bob likes boats. I also like boats. I told him if we could use have his computer, he could run our Aquatics Division."

When did we get an Aquatics Division?

I slapped together a comprehensive Business Plan. ⁽¹¹⁾

Upon the BP's completion, it was time to search for funds.

WHERE TO START

Wes bought a newspaper and flipped straight to the Money to Borrow section.

A few days later, we were sitting on a plush sofa in the office of a company called

Metropolitan. A lady named Joan was to be our dream merchant. Joan was, for lack of a better term, ugly. She resembled the Elephant Man meets Eddie Munster. Her lack of beauty gave us a sense of confidence ⁽¹²⁾ in her ability to perform her job.

Two days later, our funding was approved. Joan called to give me the itinerary of a funding trip she was sending me on.

"Lindsay, you will be flying to Miami. There, take a cab to Fort Lauderdale. Check into a Holiday Inn. Either that day or the following morning, you will receive a call from a representative of a company from Zurich. The representative will provide you with the next steps."

FLY TO JAMAICA

Fly to Jamaica

Buy a Hotel

Magically, a computer appears out of thin air

Fart

A donkey + an extensive business plan falls out of my ass

Remove the sofa's cushions

Watch Wes eat two Cheezies

Buy a newspaper

Wella, \$5-Million US drops from the sky!

Sounds reasonable.

FORT LAUDERDALE FLORIDA

OCTOBER 13-15, 1990

Final boarding call for Air Canada Flight 123 to Toronto –

TORONTO TO CHICAGO TO MIAMI

TAKE A CAB TO FORT LAUDERDALE

CHECK-IN AT A HOLIDAY INN

I eagerly waited in my room for the call from the Swiss connection. To unwind and ease my mind, I took a lengthy stroll, approximately ten miles up Fort Lauderdale's expansive beach. *Little did I know, if I walked another thirty-one miles to Mara Lago, I might have been able*

to alter the future. ⁽¹³⁾

Fort Lauderdale is a lie. The beach is littered with nondescript hotels jutting out of the Sand. Streetside, the hotels' sport lavash facades. Beachside, they look like crap.

Meanwhile, back at the lodge, my phone never rang. The following day, I'd be returning home defeated.

In the morning, I grabbed a copy of the Miami Herald. The cover greeted me with a troubling headline.

ENCEPHALITIS SCARE HITS MIAMI KEEP EXPOSED SKIN COVERED
AVOID MOSQUITOS AT ALL COST

That may have been why I was the only person out walking? No big deal. I was only bitten 200-times.

Out of desperation, I called Joan with the news of the non-news.

"Lindsay, sorry for the confusion. Head back to the hotel and wait by the phone. Zurich will call you this morning."

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RING - RING - RING

A heavily accented female was on the line. *"Go down to the docks. Find, The Crab Shack Restaurant and wait. Bring \$10,000 US in cash. It's a good-faith gesture. Sven will meet you. Give him the cash. He will have documents for you to sign. We will meet tomorrow to finalize everything and present you with the confirmation of the \$5-million US being deposited into your account."*

Sounds reasonable. Except –

I questioned her.

"Lindsay, these are normal business practices," she said.

"Yeah, I'm not so sure. How about this? Why don't you deposit \$10,000 into our account today as a good-faith gesture? Tomorrow when we meet, I'll give you the cash back once you confirm the rest of the money has been deposited in our account."

She hung up.

MANUEL NORIEGA

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

27-29 JANUARY 1991

Joan found OPTION 2: A Pan Panamanian company, Pan Global, was interested. Pan Global required us to hire a consultant.

Wes grabbed the Yellow Pages. ⁽¹⁴⁾

In the offices of William L, William perused our plan.

"Guys, your plan is outstanding. I am willing to work with you on this on a contingency basis."

Wes grabbed a dictionary. ⁽¹⁵⁾

Joan sent us the itinerary. I was supposed to fly to Panama with William to do a presentation to the brass of Pan Global. Our company (Shoreline) was to foot the bill.

Wes pulled the cushions off the sofa again, nothing up my sleeve.

"Lindsay, Wes, I've secured \$10,000 in bridge financing for trip expenses," Joan expressed to me.

VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

27 JANUARY, 6 AM

Wes and I strolled up to the counter of Continental Airlines.

I said to the clerk, *"We need two tickets to Panama."*

"That will be \$3,000."

"Okay, the thing is, we don't have the cash right now. We will have it by noon. So, how do you like your coffee? Anyway, our funding is approved, but Joan, our funding guru, can't get it into the bank until the banks open. Here, take this as collateral."

I handed her Wes's expired passport.

She handed me the tickets.

Moments later, William arrived.

SEATTLE TO DENVER TO SAN ANTONIO TO MIAMI

HAVE FAJITAS FOR DINNER

ARRIVE @ 11 PM TO PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

The humidity was stifling. William and I were standing on the sidewalk outside Panama

City's Airport when William asked, *"Did we forget to do something?"*

We walked back inside the airport, tapped four times on the Customs Office's windows, waking the agents, and announced we were here.

I'm not kidding: the humidity was nearing 300%. William hailed a cab. The driver whisked us to our hotel, past homes gated with iron bars. Tomorrow I was going to own a hotel. I was overwhelmed.

I turned on the TV to relax but was greeted by a warning message instead.

WARNING

Tomorrow's humidity will reach 500%. If exposed to it for more than one minute, you will turn into a puddle only to be lapped up, bypassing mules. Stay indoors at all costs.

THAT WASN'T IT

WARNING. WARNING. WARNING

Due to volatile conditions, stay out of the following sectors – Failure to do so may result in arrest, injury, loss of limb, or even death. The fighting is intense, creating a grave situation. The humidity will reach 500%. We've spotted packs of thirsty mules ⁽¹⁶⁾ throughout all sectors.

I drifted off to dreamland, only to be shaken out of my slumber by knocking on my door. I cracked the door open a whisper.

"What do you want?"

A muffled, panting voice announced, *"This is Francis from room service."* ⁽¹⁷⁾

I hadn't ordered room service.

During our ride to Pan Global, it was impossible not to notice, every business came with a semi-automatic-gun-toting doorman. But strangely, I did not find this comforting.

"Hello, Lindsay, I'm Mr. Ortega. This is Mr. Hernandez + Mr. Ortega + Mr. Martinez. Welcome to Panama."

Mr. Ortega's voice was low and gravelly. He gave us a brief history of Pan Global. Then, it was my time to rock their worlds with my presentation.

Mid presentation, I paused and looked out the window. Military helicopters were hovering in the distance. Plumes of smoke were rising from the conflicts below.

"What is going on?" I asked sheepishly.

Mr. Ortega poured more gravel into his mouth. *"Lindsay, Bill, Panamanians are passionate people. We are in a seemingly never-ending struggle for liberation and justice. What you are witnessing is nothing to be concerned with. It is simply a way of life. We fight weekdays from 9-5. On weekends, we come together, friends + enemies, to celebrate life."*

At the end of the presentation, the funding was stamped:

APPROVED

I hovered above the cab all the way back to the hotel. William and I drank celebratory beers. Afterward, I retreated to my room to call home with the good news.

THREE TAPS ON MY DOOR LATER

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"Hello, William, why the glum look?"

*"Lindsay, we must get out of the country now. I called our company's office down here. They told me Pan Global has ties to Noriega. They told us to get out of the country as soon as possible. **DO NOT TALK TO ANYONE ON THE PHONE.** If you bring me the tickets, we can cash them in and fly out on the next flight."*

"Yeah, William, about the tickets. Joan didn't come through with the funding. Our flights haven't been paid for."

William handled the news with grace. He'd spoken to Joan before; he didn't blame us. Instead, he had his office arrange flights and pay for the hotel.

I slammed back two beers and retreated to my room to cry, and to call Gail.

"I love you, sweetie. I'm coming home."

Our dream was dying in the humidity of Panama. I struggled drifting off to sleep that night because the rotors of military helicopters buzzed all night long as they continually circled the hotel.

I called Steve in Jamaica when I got back in Vancouver to break the disappointing news. He offered us a 6-month extension.

Two weeks later, we met William at his office. Stapled to our file, a picture of a military

officer with his foot on the head of an enemy. His rifle was pressed against his temple. The picture came with a headline.

ATTEMPTED OVERTHROW GREET'S PANAMA

LOW TIDE

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

FEBRUARY-MAY 1991

My relationship with Gail was hanging by a thread.

The Shoreline Investment Group had exhausted its funds, I had maxed my credit cards. Wes ate the third Cheezie. But, barring a miracle, our dream was dying.

I wasn't likely going to be a Hotel Owner. Instead, I was a crippled bartender unable to work. My relationship with Gail paid the price. We were growing in different directions.

In May, the Jamaican dream died.

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27 JULY 1991

"I love you. You're the sweetest man I've ever met. I'm so sorry." Gail dumped me.

For the next seventeen hours, I cried uncontrollably. Gail had to decide to *press on* or leave our love on a tropical beach.

She chose the beach.

PATHETIC

AUGUST-NOVEMBER 1991

Screw - twist - screw - twist

With my head cracked open, 70% of my brain was removed, along with my *Dignity, Pride, and Esteem*. I gingerly asked for them to be hidden somewhere. Maybe in the closet beside the Atari?

I was about to painfully learn valuable lessons about love.

Before love school commenced, I decided respecting Gail's wishes was ridiculous.

With my brain-lightened skull, I was able to convince myself I couldn't live without her.

Idiot.

Yes.
162'

I searched for a self-help book to help me through my heartache.

**SURVIVING LOSS: NO
LETTING GO: NO
HOW TO WIN LOVE BACK: BINGO!**

The book suggested:

- Tell her you to love her 28,000 times.
- Buy her a ring you can't afford.
- Give her surprise gifts on meaningless days.

Surprisingly, the advice within the book was flawed.

Not to be deterred, I convinced myself what I was doing was genius.

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Gail didn't dump me because she no longer wanted to be with me. She left me because I wasn't buying her random shit I couldn't afford.

I don't like you.

I don't like me either.

I listened to Phil Collins, *Throwing it All Away* on a continuous loop.

*Some day you'll be sorry
Someday when you're free
Memories will remind you
That our love was meant to be
Late at night, when you call my name
The only sound you'll hear
Is the sound of your voice calling –
Calling after me.*

Wow. Puke.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF NEEDY + CRIPPLED + BLITHERING
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF NEEDY + CRIPPLED + BLITHERING

Hoteliers + Manuel Noriega

I'm impressed, you managed to achieve all three in less than three months. So, it may be time to fill the bathtub.

"Hello, Gail, please, don't hang up. You know I love you. You, you may not believe this, I love rhythmic gymnastics more than football?"

Wow. Douchebag.

I'm not done yet.

It was time to go for the gusto. I rented a video camera and filmed myself reciting *Off to Sea*, a fantastic children's book about losing and finding love; I played Extreme's song *More Than Words* in the background. I placed the video on Gail's doorstep.

BLIND DETERMINATION

Thanks to my brain's malfunctions, I still believed I could win Gail back. My manipulation plan failed miserably. Anxiety attacks occur daily. But still, I thought I wouldn't survive without her.

I was a dickhead.

Guilt made it his mission to remind me of that daily.

I continued to be a dickhead.

Guilt called me a fool, laughed at me; and then told me:

Idiots do not deserve to be loved.

It took me one year to realize, I was becoming sad, pathetic, and borderline certifiable.

11. I "made up" a comprehensive Business Plan.
12. The person (me) who typed the bit about Joan's looks was rude. I do not know that person, and I personally find the brand of low-browed humour he typed to be reprehensible. But still, the fact remains that Joan was kind of hideous, which gave us comfort in her ability to find our funding.
13. Wouldn't it have been sweet if I could have met with the owner of Mara Lago and encouraged him to take a different life path?
14. If you were born after 1990, you might be asking: What is Yellow Pages?
15. If you were born after 1990, you might be asking: What is a dictionary (contingency)?
16. There has never been a reported case of mules lapping up the liquid remains of melted humans, although possible, it is implausible.
17. Once upon a time, there was a talking mule named Francis

IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT HOME

ONLY

MAKING LEFT TURNS

YOU WILL NEVER GET HOME

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.

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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.