

# My **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

My **SISTER** IS MY MUM

A **META-MEMOIR**



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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.*

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



# GOODBYE BERNICE + SADIE

JAMAICA → REGINA → SASKATOON → EDMONTON → CALGARY

15 DECEMBER 1989-14 FEBRUARY 1990

In December 1989 Bub, and I returned from our second trip to Jamaica, she had left her socks at home.

Bub was to return to Saskatoon. I landed in Regina to be greeted by a bone-freezing, lips-stuck-to-the-light standard -40 Celsius. My car refused to start for the next week. I had to eventually have it towed to a garage to thaw.

I hated selling insurance. My disdain for insurance ended my career at the sixteen-month mark. I loved my cadre of hard-drinking Regina friends. My liver was not fond of them.

## DECISION TIME

- No Job
- No Girlfriend
- A Dying Liver
- Most of My Friends were Moving West
- It's fucking -40 Celsius

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West it was going to be, but how far?

## OPTION 1

Edmonton = Brother + SISTER-IN-LAW + Nieces + Aunts + Uncles —  
— was a possibility.

## OPTION 2

Calgary = 3 Sisters + 1 Brother + 1 BROTHER-IN-LAW + Close to Banff

I decided to let the thermostat decide.

Before my departure date, I returned to Saskatoon to organize my life. When February arrived, I loaded my Acura Integra with my worldly possessions, including my white cat, White Cat, and launched my odyssey.

Corrie & Vern, Darryl & Rhonda, and Barb escorted me to Edmonton where -36 Celsius

erased Option 1.

Tearfully, I bid my friends adieu, and moved on, skating my way toward Calgary.

I visited my relatives, Bev & Garth, and their daughters, my nieces, Shannon, and Aimee.

I stayed with Bernice + Sadie, who had now entered their early fifties.

I had made several trips with friends to Calgary and Banff over the years and avoided contacting them each time.

*Could you find another place to stay? We need the house for the relatives.*

Calgary's decision wasn't weather-related.

**Flash to the future:** Turn on the tube. The Simpson's are on. It's an episode featuring Patty and Selma.

**Flash backward:** Middle-aged + live together + single + both worked for AGT + chain-smokers –

– what are my other options?

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### OPTION 3

**Vancouver = Wes**

### VALENTINE'S DAY 1990

#### Calgary to Vancouver

I was desperately trying to sleep on my sisters' sofa bed. I was feigning sleep at 5:30 AM when Bernice + Sadie flanking my sides, puffed hard on their fags. I cracked open my eye(s), a haze of smoke rivalling a blues bar rolled over me like a dense fog, smothering me. Bernice + Sadie bantered over top of me. Their words hung in the smoke.

*MacGyver is one hot tomato.*

*I couldn't agree more. Richard Dean makes me –*

*I don't think Lindsay will ever amount to much.*

*I couldn't agree more. Lindsay will never be as good as his older brothers.*

*He should give up and live with us.*

Unfortunately, only the first two sentences were embellished.

The last time I saw this pair was when the door closed behind them when they left for work.

*I'm going to do my best to amount to something.*

# WELCOME TO VANCOUVER

14 FEBRUARY 1990

**W**hat do I know about Vancouver?  
I love it.

It is one of the most beautiful cities on the planet, where the pristine mountains melt into the crisp sea.

I was excited to be starting a new life.

Shortly after Bernice + Sadie had left for work; I ventured into the freezing Calgary day and began my trip.

When I hit Kamloops, the thermostat had risen to +5 Celsius.

One hour later, the snow started pelting my windshield, the highway turned into a skating rink, and visibility was reduced to near zero.

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*That's okay; when I get over the crest of the mountains and start my descent into Vancouver, certainly: snow will turn to rain.*

It didn't.

I began counting: 1, 2, 3, 4...200 cars in the ditch.

Vancouver was being bombarded with a rare snowstorm.

For the rest of the drive, I avoided being beside other vehicles.

I found a bartending job at Carlos & Bud's, a funky Tex-Mex joint. Two weeks later, Wes and I found a killer pad.

My new life was about to kick into gear!

*"Wes, I'm not certain how happy I am. I'm beaten down. Lost. Alone."*

*"Linds, you've been through so much. You will be okay. When did you feel the most content?"*

*"In Jamaica," I said.*

# ROAD RASH

## NEGRIL JAMAICA

11 JULY 1990

Our plane touched down on the tarmac in Montego Bay on this brilliantly sunny day.

Wes, and I, along with Greg (four-foot-eleven), were going to rub our coin collections together and buy a hotel.

We sat on the patio of one of the suites at the White Sands Resort with Steve (named changed), the owner of the hotel's son-in-law. Greg's feet were dangling.

Wes, undaunted by the task at hand, asked, *"What will it take for us to take the hotel off your hands?"*

*"\$4-million US."*

Wes started blinking as if he was doing calculations in his head. The Caucasian from Virginia, Steve, summonsed his staff to bring us more Red Stripes.

Wes took a big swig.

*"Let me get this straight, Steve, the property consists of twenty-nine units, a private villa, a beach bar & restaurant, and it is smack dab in the middle of Negril's seven-mile pristine beach."*

*"Yes, and our occupancy rates have been outstanding. So, what we are searching for is new owners to keep my father-in-law's legacy intact."*

Wes glanced at Shorty and me and then back to Steve. *"I'll tell you what, we are prepared to offer \$2.5-million."*

*"If you make it 2.9, we've got a deal. We will give you six-months to secure funding."*

It was time to celebrate – we had bought a hotel, sort of.

The next day we rented motorcycles.

I had never ridden one before.

*"Wes, should I go back to our hotel to change? I'm only wearing flip-flops and short shorts?"*

*"Nah. You should be fine."*

Shorty was a wee bit stoked.

We blasted over hills, breezed by breathtaking seascapes, all the while dodging carnivorous potholes.

## PIT STOP

Tasty Jerk Chicken + Tings = Delicious

Satisfied it was time to return to Negril

Wes opened the throttle, with the *Friendly Giant* trailing close behind and struggling to keep pace.

When we started our journey Wes had told me, "*Don't worry, Lindsay, we'll go at your pace.*"

He lied.

I tried anxiously to keep up. I feared being left behind to be devoured by roaming packs of spliff-wielding Rastafarians.

**THUD**

I hit a pothole at forty miles per hour, dead center. I started to fly over the handlebars. I figured that would end badly. So, I pushed downward, fell sideways, and performed a fifty-yard slide with the bike between my legs.

It hurt.

A lot.

93 My riding gear didn't protect me.

I sprung to my feet.

I threw my hands in the air.

I screamed at the top of my lungs, "*I'M OKAY.*"

I was alone, and Wes and Kareem were long gone.

I looked behind me and started doing inventory.

***Bike: Check***

***Sandal: Check***

***Sandal: Check***

***Hat: Check***

***Skin: Check***

***Roaming Pack of Rastafarians —***

I paused and pondered.

*That's odd; the white tape I was wearing on my hand seemed to have peeled off. Oh fuck, I wasn't wearing tape. Hmm. My toe is dangling. That can't be good.*

By the time Willis and Wes returned, the shock was setting in.

*"Wessie, my sandals didn't protect me. Have you seen my spy camera?"*

A non-Rastafarian Jamaican was kind enough to let me bleed in his vehicle and transported me to a nearby village clinic.

Wes escorted me to a seat. I plopped down. Wes positioned a fan in front of me, and he placed my flip-flops on my toe-dangled feet. A nurse would come by every two minutes to empty the blood from my sandals.

Eventually, I was escorted into the Doctor's Office.

*"Hello, my name is Dr. Bab's. How may I help you? Ewe that looks nasty."*

Dr. Bab's had obtained his credentials from the University of Nigeria.

*"For \$100-US, I'll fix you up good. The price will include everything, including Demerol."*

*"I only have \$60-Canadian on me."*

*"I'll do the best I can. But, hey, Rhea, could you grab a batch of purple stuff and a couple of vials of whatever is next to the Demerol."*



The vials made me hallucinate.

Correction: it was what was in the vials that made me hallucinate.

It was time to return to Vancouver to pull a rabbit out of a hat.

*Rocky, do you want to see me pull a rabbit out of a hat, nothing up my sleeve.*

Tap. Tap. Tap. *"Wes, does this sound normal? My calves are as hard as rocks. And look at my foot. It's gigantic."*

## EMERGENCY ROOM: SEATTLE HOSPITAL

When Doctor Wright had finished scraping the beach remnants out of my dangling toe, he looked for an older doctor to help him figure out what the purple stuff was.

*"Lindsay, I don't know what your plans are, but if you want to save your foot, you probably should stay for a couple of days."*

*"Sounds good Doc, I like my foot."*

## PRE-TRIP TICKET INSTRUCTIONS THE DAY OF THE FLIGHT

*"Hey Greg, when you pick up the tickets, make sure you get us MEDICAL INSURANCE."*

*"No problem, Linds, I will make sure to grab us MEDICAL INSURANCE. We can never be too cautious."*

## THREE MONTHS AFTER MY FOOT HAD BEEN SAVED

*"Wes, could you grab the mail?"*

Bill. Bill. Bill. Bill. Seattle Hospital Bill.

*"Holy crap, Wes, hospitals in the States are SELL-YOUR-FIRST-BORN expensive. Not to worry, I'll get Greg to bring over the MEDICAL INSURANCE and take care of this."*

## TWO HOURS LATER

*"Hey, Greg, why do you look distraught? Never mind, did you bring over the MEDICAL INSURANCE?"*

Greg handed me an envelope.

*"FLIGHT CANCELLATION INSURANCE. Greg, you bought FLIGHT CANCELLATION INSURANCE on the flight day by mistake. WTF."*

Greg hasn't been seen since.

## THE MORAL(S) OF THE STORY

1. Being patted on the back by Jamaican pavement isn't fun.
2. Flip flops and shorts aren't motorcycle riding gear.
3. Private rooms in US Hospitals are lovely, but –
4. Rastafarians do not travel in packs.
5. Nobody knows what the purple stuff is.
6. Stay hydrated.

Wes and I began rolling coins.

# LET'S MEET GAIL

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

28 JULY 1990

Love has a way of rearing its beautiful head at the strangest of times.

In Vancouver, Wes was now my manager at Carlos & Bud's. Wes enacted a unique managerial style; every staff member + customer was to be sufficiently pickled on a nightly basis.

To ensure his mandate was met, he filled a cleaning bottle with tequila and then he'd go table to table administering quick bursts.

~~Cleaning Liquids~~ Tequila + Ten Cent Chicken Wings =

*Lindsay, after eating, I don't know, a gazillion wings, including: 'so hot that they'll slaughter your intestines placing them in a fiery grave only to force hair to grow on your eyeballs,' and umpteen blasts of Jose Cleaning Fluid Flavoured Tequila. I woke in the middle of the night sweating profusely. You'd never guess what I saw: I opened my drapes; thousands of wingless birds were pecking at my windows. How do they know where I live? What was in the spray bottle? Save me!"*

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I suggest you take a moment to grab a bucket.

On this night, Gail meandered into Carlos & Bud's. Upon sight, I was in love.

Gail was enticingly gorgeous, ridiculously gorgeous, gorgeously gorgeous.

Wes approached me and ordered me to shotgun a beer.

*"Wes, look, over there, girl, table, over there, pretty, likes, hair –"*

Wes immediately beelined to her table. When he returned, he had great news to share with me.

*"Seed (my nickname), her name is Gail, you are going out with her in a month or so."*

## FLASHING BACK ONE WEEK

I blew my knee apart during the inaugural Carlos & Bud's Flaming Hoops two-on-two Basketball Tournament. It was the third time I blew my left knee apart – and the fourth significant trauma to my knees.

## INJURY #1

### THE SETUP

- There was an Exhibition offence versus defence hockey game in the summer between my first and second season with the Saskatchewan Huskie's Football Team.
- I can't skate. Not entirely true. I skate with my ankles turned outward with the skates nearly parallel to the ice.
- I blocked a shot at our blueline and took off like molasses on a two on zero breakaway. By the time I reached the other blueline, every player on the ice had caught up to me. When I passed the faceoff circle, I snapped a pass cross-ice to my teammate (also a feeble skater).
- He snapped a pass right back to me.
- I fired the puck into the top corner with the goalie sprawling desperately to make the save.
- GOAL!!!
- I fell into the boards.
- The teammate who passed the puck to me also fell into the boards.

The goalie saw that I had scored and screamed, "FUCK." So, I scored this beautiful goal at the start of the Second Period. Simple math extrapolates to, at that scoring pace, I would score a hat trick every game. Throughout an 82 game NHL schedule, I would achieve 246 goals per season. Maybe I was playing the wrong sport?

On my next shift, I landed a devastating body check on the team's safety, MS. I was feeling cocky. During the change, a two hundred-fifty-pound linebacker was skating at full speed with the puck, with his head down. He was being chased by an equally sizeable offensive lineman. My plan was to lay a brutal body check that would undoubtedly send the linebacker into next week. At the last second, *a terrible idea* raced through my mind. It was too late to abandon my plan. The linebacker and lineman plowed over me like a small speedbump. My knees slammed into the ice, splitting downward.

For the next three months, crutches were useless, except for standing because I blew up both knees.

### ADULT SURGERY COUNT

3 x Left Knee  
1 x Right Knee  
1 x Appendix  
1 x Dr. Babs  
=  
6 Total

## FIRST DATE

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

24 SEPTEMBER 1990

I discarded the crutches with the enticingly, gorgeously gorgeous Gail just in time for my date.

Gail was a twenty-three-year-old nationally ranked rhythmic gymnast.

She was in her last year of psychology at UBC.

She was adopted.

Her parents were Japanese.

Gail was half Japanese.

I don't think I'm Japanese.

Her parents disapproved of me.

"Hello, sir, it is a pleasure to meet you," my hand extended.

Gail's father refused to extend his hand; instead, he turned and walked away.

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*That's okay, Lindsay. You are a charming man; you will win them over with your charm and ambition.*

*Do you really think so?*

*No.*

*In the meantime, I think I'm turning Japanese. I think I'm turning Japanese. I really think so.*

# HOTELIERS + MANUEL NORIEGA

VANCOUVER - FORT LAUDERDALE -

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA - VANCOUVER

17 SEPTEMBER 1990-MAY 1991

**I**t 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.

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.

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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 his computer, he could run our Aquatics Division."*

*When did we get an Aquatics Division?*

I slapped together a comprehensive Business Plan. <sup>(11)</sup>

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 <sup>(12)</sup> 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.* <sup>(13)</sup>

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.

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

### **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. <sup>(14)</sup>

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. <sup>(15)</sup>

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

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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 <sup>(16)</sup> 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."* <sup>(17)</sup>

*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**  
BOARD

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.  
TSP\*

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.

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.

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*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.

*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.

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*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**  
IF YOU CAN'T MAKE IT HOME

**ONLY**  
ONLY

**MAKING LEFT TURNS**  
MAKING LEFT TURNS

**YOU WILL NEVER GET HOME**  
YOU WILL NEVER GET HOME

# FRIENDS + SURGERY + FRIENDS + MORE SURGERY

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

AUGUST 4, 1991-MAY 16, 1992

PATRICK KM

VANCOUVER

4 AUGUST 1991

*Hello Lindsay, welcome to Dumpsville, population = you*

Life began to suck. With Gail issuing me my pink slip, I was primarily alone in a new city. Sure, Wes was still there, but he was a free spirit chasing life.

*Do you remember Pat from Corrie & Vern's wedding?*

*You do!*

Pat had signed on to Serve & Protect as a Royal Canadian Mountain Police (RCMP) member. Fortunately for me, he'd been transferred to Vancouver.

Pat is a big burly man. Rumour has it, his family originated from the Screw part of Cork, Ireland. Not only had he signed up to protect society from its more nefarious elements, but he had also been assigned to drag me out of the emotional quicksand I was wallowing in.

*How did he do that?*

Well, the simple answer: booze.

*"Hey Linds, I know you are suffering from an emotional explosion – do you like The Hip? Anyhow, listen to this tune. Can you hear the melodies swell? Is this not an atmospheric jam to help cure all ills. Buddy, I'm sorry for what you're going through; pour your heart out while I pour you some gin + juice."*

Pat would allow me to share the story of my heartache in short bursts. Then he'd shove another drink in front of me. He'd let me flounder in the burdens of my broken love that couldn't be undone. And then, he'd shove another drink in front of me.

He did an outstanding job at dragging me out of the quagmire.

I was drunk., often.

## KNEE UPDATE

8 AUGUST 1991

Gail kept spinning and twirling away from me. I couldn't keep up with her. I couldn't win her back. My knee was still shredded from my injury during The Flaming Hoops Basketball Tournament.

*It's a Thursday, why don't you get her a gift?*

*Good idea, maybe after my doctor's appointment?*

*"Lindsay, your knee, well, not good. You must do an hour every day of rigorous physiotherapy."*

*"Can I do three hours?"*

*"Sure."*

I spun between physio and crying.

Jocelyn, a co-worker from the Bombay Bicycle Club, dropped by for a visit, Jocelyn used to be a professional stripper.

110 *What other kinds of strippers are there?*

*All of us.*

She brought her five-year-old daughter with her.

*"Sweetie, sit here. I'll turn on this nice man's TV. I need to talk with him for a while in a different room. His kitty will look after you. Lindsay, do you like contorting?"*

*Towel, please –*

*Lindsay, why did you include this in your story?*

*Because Jocelyn was an ex-stripper, nothing more.*

## FAMILY SUPPORT

VANCOUVER

9 AUGUST 1991

I needed to reach out to the family. Isn't there a saying, family is everything – or something along those lines?

Brother Don had moved up the political ranks in Saskatchewan and he had met Gail.

"Don, Gail dumped me. I blew out my knee. I'm a mess."

"Well, Lindsay, you know your problem: you are an underachiever. You are the best looking + smartest Wincherauk, but still, you fail. That is likely why Gail kicked you to the curb."

That fucking, sucked.

I know, I'll phone Bernice + Sadie. They did once tell me if I ever need to call, for anything, call collect because they work for the Alberta Government Telephone Company (AGT).

"Hello, Bernice, I have a collect call for you from Lindsay. Will you accept the charges?"

Bernice replied, "Lindsay, who?"

## ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS' OFFICE

VANCOUVER

9 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, I'm happy to tell you your knee has recovered enough for you to go ahead and play sports again."

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## TOUCH FOOTBALL GAME

11 AUGUST 1991

I took the snap from center, sprinted to my right, cut + spun + planted to throw, POP.

NOT FUCKING GOOD.

"Gail, I blew my knee apart. I can't drive. You know I love you. I've got a gift for you. Can you pick me up?"

CLICK

It must've been a bad connection.

Gail stopped answering my calls.

Until we got back together.

We now have 3 beautiful children.

THE END

## ORTHOPEDIC SURGEONS' OFFICE

VANCOUVER

14 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, you'll have to come back in four months. The doctor is too busy to see you today. Do you still have crutches?"

## DR. REGAN'S OFFICE

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA HOSPITAL

VANCOUVER

14 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, this might hurt a little. Brace yourself, I am going to wiggle your knee."

"FUUUUUUUUCCCCCK."

"|Inaudible|, can you come back to see me in a few days? I need the swelling to subside to be able to give you the best diagnosis?"

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## 16 AUGUST 1991

"Lindsay, there is no easy way to tell you this. Your knee is fucked. The previous doctors kept removing things instead of fixing them. You have no cartilage left; your bones are grinding together. You have torn your ACL + two other ligaments."

I need to call Gail.

"Son, operating may no longer be an option. For now, learning to walk normally is your first goal. So, you need to go for extensive rehab to rebuild your leg. If you can do that, I will look inside to see if I can do anything?"

"Will I be able to play sports?"

"For now, let's focus on the first goal."

"Doc, if you can fix some of the damage after the second surgery, then what?"

"Lindsay, extensive rehab."

## SATAN'S PURSUIT

UBC PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINIC TO HOME

VANCOUVER

19 AUGUST 1991

Rehab sucked. Pain + Pain + More Pain.

The thermostat hit +30 Celsius. 86 Fahrenheit if you're American.

I was \$\$\$ broke. I was seven miles from home, with no way to get there. Going home today was going to resemble a journey to Hell. I'd been to Hell before.

I began to crutch. The sun beat down on the sidewalk, much like a tinsmith working his craft. I began to hallucinate; Satanic demons were chasing me; I beat them away with my crutches. Crutches that were sparking fires on the burnt grass of a long summer.

Three miles into my crutch home, I was drowning in a tsunami of my own sweat. My underarms were burned raw. Beelzebub and Lucifer were on my heels, salivating.

I was on the verge of succumbing to the oppressive heat of the day.

Just as my inevitable end had arrived, three miles into my journey, with the vultures circling above, a lovely couple driving a Pontiac Sunfire pulled up beside me.

"Hey, mister, you look like you could use some help. Where are you going? We'll give you a ride."

I turned to face them, with my face broken with anguish.

"NO."

*Wow, you are an idiot.*

*I prefer Martyr.*

Crutch - Crutch - Crutch

*Lucifer, give up; you will never catch me. But, hey, is that Beelzebub in that Starbucks? Is he sitting with a Zombie?*

**REHAB + ANXIETY + TUESDAY GIFTS FOR GAIL +**

**WES AND PAT PLYING ME WITH BOOZE**

**VANCOUVER**

**OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1991**

*I can't live  
If living is without you  
I can't live  
I can't give anymore*

*Turn that crap off.*

*What do you mean you need your bartenders to be able to stand up?*

I hurt myself on a Sunday; I was pulling the cushions off the couch by the following Wednesday.

Somehow, I survived.

Not without moments of rage.

Crutch - Crutch - Crutch

I'd come across a posse of young panhandlers sitting on the sidewalk in front of the pharmacy where I would go to have my prescriptions filled.

"Mister, spare change?"

"You do see I'm using crutches, don't you? Can't you even open the door for me?"

"Fuck you."

**SMACK**

*Did that hurt? It looked like it pulled.*

## **KNEE SURGERY...**

**VANCOUVER**

**FEBRUARY 1992**

This was becoming far too familiar, a freezing sterile room — stinking clean. Masked men and women hovered above me. My ass was exposed. No matter how many times one has surgery, it doesn't matter. I was terrified; needles dangled from my arms; Satan sat in the corner anxiously waiting.

Doctor Regan asked me to count backward from 100.

I made it to 99.

Operation number (?) was underway.

When I woke up, Satan was gone.

"Lindsay, good news, you qualify for another operation."

I was drifting in and out of dense fog.

"Lindsay, I'll come back later, once you kick your morphine addiction, and repeat what I just told you."

Hours later, the rehab bus pulled up to the hospital, Doctor Regan told me if I hurried, I might be able to catch it.

## **FAMILY DOCTOR (DOCTOR MUSIAL)**

**VANCOUVER**

**FEBRUARY 1992-?**

Doctor Alex Musial's practice is in the upscale neighbourhood of Kerrisdale. Most of his

patients are aged. Close to expiring. He is also Wes's doctor. We got along famously.

*"Doc, my knee is screwed. The pain is relentless. It swelled to the point of Blimpdom."*

He began laughing hilariously.

*"What's so funny. I'm in excruciating pain."*

*"I'm sorry, Lindsay. Didn't you have chest hair? Never mind. Now, what were you saying? Hey, Lindsay, I have an idea; since you are out of commission anyway, why don't I send you to an eye specialist who can perform surgery to fix your drooping eye?"*

*"Okay."*

## BLIND EYE(S)

VANCOUVER

11 MARCH 1992

*"Lindsay, count backward from 100."*

I made it to 99.

*Hmm. This morphine is sure trippy.*

My postoperative nurse was certainly crotchety.

*"I don't care if you just had knee surgery and can't walk. We will not release you until you can go to the bathroom by yourself."*

*"But I can't see or walk."*

*"I don't care."*

*"Why are you lying on the floor? Let me assist you? Stop using your knee as an excuse."*

## REVISED ADULT SURGERY TOTAL

5 X LEFT KNEE

1 X RIGHT KNEE

APPENDIX

EYE

1.5 X AMATEUR LOBOTOMY

DR. BABS

=

8 SURGERIES ADMINISTERED BY MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

## VEHICULAR SOLIDARITY

VANCOUVER

APRIL 1992

I had purchased a sweet ride complete with working headlights and a regular gear shift, a fiery red Fiat Spitfire convertible.

It only had one quirk. It developed an aversion to making left turns. Right, sure. Straight ahead, no problem. Left, never. It was an unfixable problem.

I think it was showing support for my mangled left knee. I had finally done the responsible thing and purchased a car I could afford. Oh well.

## MONEY WOES

VANCOUVER

END OF APRIL 1992

I needed \$\$\$.

I put my walking sticks in the closet beside the Atari. I was finally able to return to work. I was facing one daunting problem: my employer had replaced me. They decided 155-days off was one day too many.

I hit the pavement searching for work and managed to land two jobs.

1. Earl's Restaurant (Waiter + Bartender)
2. Hotel California (Bartender + Eventually Manager)

Bartending had sucked me back in. I was about to check-in.

*Relax, said the night man  
We are programmed to receive  
You can check out any time you like  
But you can never leave!*

The Hotel California = 5 Stars minus 4.5.

Dive doesn't do its description justice.

Occasionally, the cleaning staff would come to my office with upsetting news.

"Mr. Lindsay, the man in Room 450, is sitting upright in his room. There is a needle dangling in his arm. We poked him. I think he's dead. Do you want to come to look?"

"No."

## CAM PART 2

VANCOUVER > VICTORIA

2-4 MAY 1992

*"Hello, Cam, how long has it been? Great to see you."*

Before starting my career at Earl's, Cam dropped out to the coast for a surprise visit.

He was reeling from the lost love of a failed marriage; rumours of insider trading were swirling around his head.

Wes had managed to land a managing gig at a funky restaurant named Cucina – Cucina, an Asian-owned Italian joint. Wes filled the cleaning bottles and managed to pack the joint nightly. The owners loved their restaurant being full. Eventually, they tired of his techniques.

On a horrific morning, one of the owners was kidnapped. A ransom note was issued, exciting Wes. The other owner, not so much, so he fired Wes. Severance was served. Cam and I were to be the recipients of its gravy.

## PARTY TIME

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Hop on the fast ferry from Vancouver to Victoria

In an attempt to

Alleviate my knee pain + Cam's divorce pain + Wes's sobriety pains.

Drinks were served onboard.

Fifty minutes after departure, we arrived in Victoria's beautiful inner harbour.

We grabbed our luggage and sauntered into Milestone's Restaurant Lounge.

Cam knew the bartender.

*"Hey, Barkeep, can we store our belongings in the office?"*

## ITINERARY

Lounge + Lounge + Lounge + Brewpub + Nightclub

I can't recall the name of any of the establishments

See Above↑↑↑

We were collectively pickled, feeling no pain, two sheets to the wind, but somehow, still delightfully charming. I was cutting a rug on the club's dancefloor when my knee started to turn into spaghetti.

## TIME TO EAT TIME TO EAT

Three lovely locals joined us at an all-night eatery.

*"Let us be your hosts for the evening."*

*Hey, fantastic, spaghetti! I don't recall ordering spaghetti.*

*"Gross, Wes, look at your chicken burger. It's pink inside."*

Our server approached, aghast at the kitchen's mistake. *"Sorry, let me get you a new one."*

*"Don't worry about it. My stomach has a strong resolve."*

*"Hello, your name is Lindsay; you're cute. I'll take care of you tonight. You can stay at my place for the night."*

Wes and Cam left with the other girls.

*"Yeah, no, Lindsay, I've changed my mind. You are on your own."*

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When the server returned, she gently pulled my face off my pasta.

*No problem. Better check my pockets. \$5. It's going to be a good night.*

My knee began to revolt.

I left the restaurant hitting the streets; rain was pelting down. I needed to think.

*I'm drunk  
Maybe I need to not think at all.  
Yes, that would be the ticket.  
Escape your problems with denial and the answers will find you.  
Those bricks over there look like bricks.  
Not thinking wasn't going to work.  
I know, think more.  
Those guys hanging in storefronts seem to know what they are doing.  
Nah, they don't look like me.  
Damn it: I thought.  
Think Lindsay, think.  
What would Lindsay do?  
Hey, that's me; I will just ask.  
What's the best hotel in Victoria?*

I answered the Empress, *I liked my style, the Empress it was going to be.*

I was on a mission. I could see the Empress's lights in the distance. I juttred across the hotel's front lawn. I slipped and fell onto my back. *This will do.* I closed my eyes. The rain pounded my face forcing me to stay awake. *Crap.* I got up. I hobbled the last few yards to the hotel. A bellman held the door open for me.

I was dripping with confidence, drunkenness, and I limped past the front desk.

I glanced left and casually said, "*Hold my calls, please.*"

The Empress has six floors; I hopped in the elevator and punched 6 and then, checked my pocket: still only \$5.

The door opened on the 6th floor, and I hopped off and began searching for a resting place where I could avoid eviction.

*My brain spun.*

I stumbled upon vending machines. I purchased a coke and a newspaper and continued my search. Finally, I found a room with my name emblazoned upon it.

## FIRE CLOSET LIKE CLOSET

My room was spacious, three-feet wide x three and a half feet long. I'm slightly shy of six-feet tall, so the room was a perfect fit; I settled in for the night.

I used my coke as a pillow + the real estate and classified sections as my mattress. I used the remainder of the paper as blankets. I am supposed to keep my knee elevated while sleeping. The length of the room left me no option.

I slept like a baby.

In the morning, I was awakened by the rumbling of maids in the hallway. I feared being discovered. I deduced my remaining \$3.25 wouldn't cover the cost of the room. Paranoia raced through me. It was time to Check-Out.

I propped myself up, attempted to regain a sense of composure and exited my room.

A maid passed me in the hallway.

*"Good morning. How are you? You may clean my room next. Have a wonderful day."*

I hustled around the corner to freedom.

I grabbed a bite to eat at McDonald's and started aimlessly roaming the streets. Two hours later, Wes and Cam found me.

*"Lindsay, we stayed at this magnificent acreage. The girls served us breakfast in bed; the night before had turned carnal, we fed apples to horses in a meadow in the morning, and then, the girls drove us back to the city. It was amazing! What did you get up to?"*

*"Well, let me show you. Follow me. Follow me. Just a bit further. Floor 6, please. This way." I*

opened the Fire Closet's door. *"Here, this is where I slept."*

Cam asked me, *"Are you done with the paper?"*

We returned to Milestones to retrieve our luggage. Cam's friend listened intently as we shared our stories.

At the end of the tall tale, he festooned a confused look and then asked, *"Was that the only room they had left?"*

## THIEVING SPIKE

VANCOUVER

4 MAY 1992

NEW FRIEND INSERTION NUMBER ONE

Thieving Spike, his moniker, will make sense soon.

We worked together at Earl's, where I started as a server instead of behind the security of the bar. Unfortunately, I sucked at carrying trays of anything.

First shift, first table, I carried 10 glasses of water on a tray.

*"Sorry, sir. Could I offer you a shampoo packet with your meal?"*

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## FLASH FORWARD: 2006

Life was testing me daily.

I could either fight my way through my challenges or wither away.

I was fucking up.

I needed to sink or swim.

I'm talented, I think.

I need to speak up.

*Why this insertion here?*

Because I'm reeling in drunk.

I've returned home to a stinking cat litter box and a solo dinner.

I loved my cat.

I needed someone to love me.

I'm a big talker.

I'm full of shit.

I'm personable.

I sound like a success.

I sabotage everything.

*What holds me back?*

I'm not sure.

What I do know, if I don't snap out of whatever the Hell this is, I risk my story ending sadly.

## RIVALRY

Thieving Spike and I shared many things in common, we loved the Montreal Canadiens Hockey Team, + we were avid tennis players and golfers.

'In common' helped our bond form quickly.

In May, Dr. Regan gave me the GREEN LIGHT to play tennis.

My next operation was two months away.

The GREEN LIGHT came with a few conditions:

1. I must wear my knee brace.
2. If I experience the slightest twinge of pain, stop playing.

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Spike and I formed a ferocious rivalry on the tennis courts of Vancouver.

## SLICK

VANCOUVER

**MAY 16, 1992**

Enter Slick.

I'm sure you'll remember him from my stint in Regina.

Slick is Rick Gillis. He was a transplant from the flatlands of Saskatchewan, just like me. Slick is exceptionally gregarious and personable. He transferred from a Keg Restaurant in Regina to manage a Keg in Vancouver. He moved west to be my flatmate just when I had added the Hotel California to my work roster.

With the insertion of new and old friends, my life was swinging upward.

Slick is a great man with a big heart. Back in Regina, he teetered between one of the best-dressed men in the city and often spilled into the "Caddyshack" persona of Bill Murray.

SLICK = BIG CITY SUAVE + A HINT OF SMALL-TOWN SENSIBILITY.

He loved the purple cloak of Crown Royal.

"More Napshkins, please."

Slick had been gifted with a huge laugh, best described as a Hyena squeezing the life out of a Gremlin. With each pinch, the infectious squeals would increase in pitch. Disturbingly, it appeared as if the Gremlins were enjoying their demise.

## BIG RED

VANCOUVER

19 MAY 1992

Carol, Big Red, sauntered into the Maximum Blues Pub in the Hotel California for her first shift as a server. I was behind the bar. Her face was strewn with disgust. She looked like she was about to turn and sprint away.

I calmed her.

"Carol, it's not all bad; you know this is like any other dive bar. Our patrons are old, misunderstood, always drunk, often crotchety, many suffer from waning health, and occasionally, some of them poop themselves."

She laughed.

"Carol, we are their guardians. From time to time, we have to wake them when it is time for their next drink."

She stayed.

Big Red is slim, beautiful, and funny. She has an insatiable lust for life. She is equally at ease climbing a mountain or laying poolside with a margarita. And she's a gifted writer and a polished businesswoman.

Big Red has crawled through caves, repelled down buildings, swam with crocodiles, and she overcame a fear of sharks. Big Red lights up life.

Most importantly, she became a great friend.

*Would you like to hear more?*

She loves tequila. If you tried to drink shot-by-shot with her, you'd likely be left under the table.

Carol learned from the sharks she once feared.

"Fuck, Carol, that hurts. STOP IT."

I'd frantically shake my ass with Carol's teeth clamped onto my ass; I started running.

Big Red's teeth were sunk in deep, creating denture moulds on my ass. This was a regular occurrence.

I kept running; Big Red floated horizontally behind me.

# NO BLOOD. NO FOUL.

SEATTLE WASHINGTON

30 JUNE 1992

Corrie & Vern were visiting from Calgary. Corrie wanted to go to a Seattle Supersonics basketball game. Wes, Pat, Dave, and I, more on everyone except Dave, later, joined us.

We booked a hotel on Mercer Island, home to Bill Gates.

The I5 blacktop was waiting, and we hit the road.

There was a freewheeling component to our trip. We were going to rake in the experience of Seattle saloons as we broke into two cliques to flirt the night away.

Posse 1 consisted of Wes and me.

Posse two, everyone else.

Wes and I were swimming in inebriation in Seattle's Entertainment Zone, Pioneer Square.

I was dressed to the nines; Wes was dressed in the fashion of the city's grunge.

Alcohol led to hunger, street tacos, after eating, we crumpled our wrappers and shot them at a trash can thirty feet away.

Swish. Swish. Nothing but net

*"Nice shots for two candy-assed white boys,"* floated in the air behind us.

In a moment of stupidity and a sign I had yet to evolve, I fired back without seeing the source of the trash, *"We'll kick your sorry black asses any day."* Of course, the kicking I was referring to, was basketball.

Terry and Ryan happened to be black.

Ryan told us, *"Get in."*

We jumped into Terry's Datsun B210, and they whipped us to a dodgy neighbourhood of the Emerald City.

*"Let me grab you each a drink,"* Terry said. *"Is gin + juice, okay?"*

Ryan flipped on the TV and inserted a tape, porn. I was sure this would be my last night on earth.

*"Terry, Ryan, we must get back to Mercer Island. I'm certain our friends on Mercer Island are worried about us,"* Wes calmly stated.

*"No,"* was shot back in unison. *"Do you remember saying something about kicking our sorry black-asses?"*

After forty minutes passed, Ryan asked, *“Would you like me to wake up our neighbour for...you know!”*

We didn't.

*“Lindsay, Wes, it's hoops time.”* Terry opened his closet; it resembled a Nike Store; it was filled with NEW shorts, shoes, shirts, and socks.

*“Ryan, I can't play without a knee brace; I just got off crutches.”*

No problem, Ryan pulled out a brand-new brace.

Thirty minutes later, we rolled onto a schoolyard basketball court. Terry parked his car leaving the lights on for illumination. Rap music blared from its speakers. Starting at 4 AM, it was time for a spirited game of two-on-two hoops.

RULES = NO BLOOD, NO FOUL

## NOW FOR A MOMENT OF CULTURAL AND RACIAL IGNORANCE

### GAME 5

I drove the lane, and Terry violently knocked me onto my ass on the asphalt.

*“C'mon, man,”* I shrieked. *“Rodney King never had it that bad.”*

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Whatever was about to rain down on me, I most certainly deserved.

I looked up at Terry with begging eyes and whispered meekly, *“Bad joke, huh?”*

My life was spared.

*Of course, your life was spared; I just read that.*

Wes and I miraculously slashed and shot our way to victory. Terry and Ryan were gracious losers.

*“Let's get you two back to Mercer Island. But before we do, we must make a couple of stops.”*

1. Ryan hopped out at a convenience store, stole the newspaper drop, The Seattle Times, to sell down in Pioneer Square.
2. A gas station's convenience store.

*“Guys, if you want to mend International Relations, remember we let you live; we think it might be best if you bought us a case of Lucky.”*

## THE LESSON OF THIS STORY

My cultural and racial evolution has a long way to go.

# MORE SURGERY + HELLO KITTY

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

31 JULY-7 OCTOBER 1992

31 JULY 1992

"Clack, clack, clack," the orderly wheeled my gurney toward the operating room. The hospital's familiar stringent metallic stink filled my nostrils.

Doctor Regan cracked open my leg, borrowed parts from other parts of my body, and stapled my knee back together.

**No walking** was once again going to = **No working**.

This time I was blessed with drink supplied by Pat + Wes, Rick for constant companionship, Big Red for comfort, and Thieving Spike provided me with free meals at Earls.

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5 SEPTEMBER 1992

## HOTEL CALIFORNIA EVICTION POLICY

**DRUGS - HOOKERS - PETS = EVICTED**

**DEAD WITH A NEEDLE DANGLING FROM YOUR ARM = FOLLOW THE FLASHING LIGHTS**

Dade had no problem continuing cashing the deceased's welfare cheques. I think scum lord would be an apt description for Dade.

*Ah, why is there a kitten in my office?*

Walter, the maintenance man, found her roaming the lower roof of the hotel.

*Maybe she was dealing drugs.*

I named my new two-week-old kitty, Fuzzy Nose & Toes.

I took her home and promptly attached her to the arms of *Slick's* couch.

7 OCTOBER 1992

I cast my crutches to the side, three months ahead of schedule. I also convinced Dade; I would make an excellent manager for the Hotel California.

# CHASING NEON

VANCOUVER - SEATTLE - VANCOUVER

7 OCTOBER 1992-JANUARY 1993

7 OCTOBER 1992

SEATTLE

It was time to celebrate, and my work passport had been stamped: **MANAGEMENT.**

*"Hey Slick, may I borrow the Sports Family Truckster (a lovely 80s sedan, in pearl white with a burgundy trim) for Spike and me to blast down to Seattle to Chase Neon?"*

The Truckster's gravitational pull kept tugging us toward every Walmart we passed. So, I struggled vehemently to keep it trucking down the I5.

*Man, there sure are a lot of fast-food joints along the interstate.*

*Don't forget, gun-toting citizens.*

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## HOW TO CHASE NEON

**WEAR SOFT-SOLED SHOES**

*All I need to kill you is the desire and a pair of soft-soled shoes. <sup>(18)</sup>*

**IDENTIFY BRIGHT LIGHTS**

**CHECK WINDOW FOR LIQUID ADVERTISEMENTS**

**ENTER**

**SIT**

**POUND BEVERAGE**

**REPEAT OFTEN**

Thieving, and I hit 23 NEON establishments.

On our way to 24, Spike started weeping, *"Lindsay, your life is on the upswing... I'm dying of cancer."*

*That was fucking, odd.*

## LET'S MEET GREG

VANCOUVER

8 OCTOBER 1992

Once sobriety was regained, we blasted back up the I5 making only five pit-stops, one at a Fred Myers and four at fast-food joints to feed the family who had accidentally jumped in the back seat, we set our new family free in Blaine, Washington.

Back in Vancouver, I dropped Spike off at his home and then rushed to Earl's to regroup. Greg greeted me at the door. From this point on, Greg and I would develop a lasting friendship. Greg is from Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. He is part Slavic, Hungarian, German, I think Croatian; he's educated, bright, and nuts. I found this to be an intriguing mixture.

We immediately hit it off.

He loves scotch, beer, gin, and helium.

*"Pleased to meet you, Greg. You know Spike, right? Well...while we were in Seattle, celebrating my promotion – Greg, Spike told me he has cancer and is dying."*

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He refreshed our drinks.

Our friendship began to grow in leaps and bounds. After one of my birthday celebrations, Greg even bathed me after Big Red plied me with a tequila gauntlet, causing me to go off all over myself like Old Faithful.

Rumour has it he may have given me a tongue bath!

*I'm sure that if his wife reads this (in the future), she will be horrified. I am also confident she will refrain from finding the humour in the previous sentence.*

## KNEE UPDATE

VANCOUVER

JANUARY 1993

*"Young man, I'm impressed. Professional athletes would have trouble getting back in shape this fast." I kid you not.*

Sweet, Doctor Regan called me a young man.

18. I believe I may have borrowed the soft-soled shoe bit from a skit from the television series Kids in the Hall.

**WALLY + DANIELLE**  
**VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
**JANUARY 1993**

I left my gym, Olympic Athletic, on Arbutus Street when I spotted Kevin (Wally) + Danielle striding rapidly toward me. Their arms were planted firmly at their sides, motionless. Their gaits were elongated. They were fiercely focused on the task at hand, walking.

I stopped them. *"Hey Danielle, both you and Wally do not move your arms when you walk, it looks weird, but it sure is hilarious."*

Danielle added an arm sway from that moment forward.

Wally quickly became my new best friend. We met at Earl's, and he joined my touch football team after I had rehabbed my knee for seemingly the umpteenth time.

Not only did Wally and I become good friends, but the three of us also hit it off. I was about to commence my role as the third wheel for the next several years. Danielle became my work date stand-in. I became a fill-in for Wally. After all, he was notorious for never making plans because something better might come along.

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Wally was also a veritable comedy goldmine.

On a night where Greg's life had been tossed viciously into a state of emotional turmoil because he had been dumped, he went to Wally for comforting words. He suggested to Kev he may end his life that night.

Wally momentarily took his stare off the TV, focused on Greg for a nanosecond, and said, *"What? Dumped? Suicide? Look, soccer!"* And then he looked back at the TV as if Greg weren't even there.

Another time during a trip to Seattle, a perplexed look came over his face, and he screamed out at the top of his lungs, *"FUCK. SHIT. CRAP. BULLSHIT. FUCK. FUCK!"*

Pat KM asked him, *"Are you okay?"*

Wally looked back at Pat and awkwardly said, *"Damn Irish flag, never mind."*

And my personal favourite was when Wally was driving my car as a designated driver. Greg and I were wrestling in the back seat when the vehicle went bump, bump, and the road turned green. A tree branch caressed the windshield. Slick sat speechless in the front seat.

Greg and I yelled out, *"WALLY."*

Bump, bump, the road returned to the road with Wally coyly saying, *"Didn't there used to be two lanes here?"*

## KNEE UPDATE

### Flashforward

#### Vancouver

#### January 2000

Wally + Danielle's relationship will lose its lustre as twenty-three turns into thirty.

When it does, Wally will end up on my doorstep?

*"Hey, Lindsay, D and I broke up; I need a place to stay; may I stay here?"*

*"Look, soccer!"*

# COCAINE OFF A HOOKER'S TITS

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

JANUARY 1993-FEBRUARY 1994

**M**y pleading to Dade to become a manager worked. Lucky for me because bartenders who were only capable of sitting were not in demand.

My management style was nepotistic. Within a couple of months, I had turned a dive bar into a bustling, growing concern. Dade, the owner, liked my moxie and kept dumping responsibility on me: ranging from inventory to personnel decisions. I was overwhelmed, so to ease my frustrations, he'd dish out more duties.

One day I would discover the cash to be \$1,000 over, the following day, \$2,000 short.

*"Dade, I'm having trouble balancing the cash. Can you help?"*

He'd say to me, *"Don't worry about it; these things eventually sort themselves out."*

Just after my first anniversary in the role, Dade unceremoniously canned me.

*"Dade, why are you letting me go?"*

*"Lindsay, I'm not sure. You sure do a lot around here. When the reason comes to me, I will let you know."*

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## THREE DAYS LATER, DADE CALLS

*"Lindsay, you've been stealing the nightly deposits. I am going to launch an investigation."*

Apparently, I'd been stealing somewhere between \$1,000-\$30,000 per month. The story varied depending on Dade's audience.

I pulled the cushions off my couch and found a fourth Cheezie.

Law enforcement came calling. Banging furiously on my door at 6 AM, this troubled Slick and our neighbours.

I avoided law enforcement.

The law returned the following day, and I let the Police Officer in.

Detective Gadget began to try to break me, *"Nice place you got here. Beautiful couch: it looks costly."*

I pointed to the phone books for legs and my cat hanging off one of the arms.

He continued, *"Those stereo speakers look high-end."*

I ranted.

*"The speakers are my flatmates. They are five years old. Let me spare your precious time. Last night I ate Macaroni & Cheese, without milk or butter. My bank account reads negative. Barring magic, I'm going to lose my place. My only indulgence is I like snorting cocaine off hooker's tits using \$100 bills for the straw. And, oh yeah, I don't snort cocaine."*

*"Are you willing to take a lie detector test?"*

*"Sir, I don't know what Dade is trying to do? Maybe cashing two or three welfare cheques from the same tenants monthly is clouding his reality even if they are dead. A lawyer told me not to agree to the test, but I'll take it."*

## **TWO DAYS LATER, AT THE POLICE STATION**

*"You're not lying."*

*"Prefuckingcishly!"*

*"Sorry about this. You're free to go."*

Dade hired three people to replace me. He continued acting like an ass by forcing me to jump through hoops to obtain my last cheque.

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Eventually, I demanded it over the phone.

*"Dade, here's what I'm prepared to do. I want my cheque by tomorrow, only what I'm owed. If you don't give it to me, I will enlighten your partner on the hotel practices. You know, things like the shooter bar that doesn't exist. The welfare cheques. I will also phone the Labour Board and enlighten them. Dade, all I want is what you owe me, nothing more."*

He screamed profanities unfamiliar to me into the phone; he also called me a lying, thieving blackmailer. *"I will take you down. I will never give you a fucking penny."*

Slick listened in on the other line. *"Lindsay, Dade sounds like a dick."*

*"Look, Dade, you do know this is all bullshit."*

*"Fucker, asshole, bastard, I will never give you a dime."*

CLICK

## **TEN MINUTES LATER THE PHONE RANG**

*"Lindsay, you can pick up your cheque tomorrow."*

When I picked up the cheque at his partner's office, he made me sign a non-disclosure

document.

From that day forward, my former staff occasionally invited me to the bar in Dade's absence. I never paid for a drink.

## **KNEE UPDATE**

### **FOR HONESTY'S SAKE**

Dade's real name is not Dade. But it rhymes with it starting with *A, B, C, D...U, V....*"

# WAYNE

## VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

FEBRUARY 1994-MAY 1996

Wayne is a great man and a better friend.

With the torrent of the madness of the Hotel California completed with the closing of the CSI Investigation, I landed a career with Mutual Exchange Canada (MEC).

At MEC, I brokered deals between companies using a virtual currency called a Trade Dollar. To simplify it for you, bartering meets technology.

MEC is where Wayne and I met. A portion of our remuneration was in Trade Dollars. Several drinking establishments accepted Trade Dollars. Wayne and I began Chasing Neon nightly.

My role in our friendship was as the conversation starter. If I hesitated, I'd be reprimanded.

*"Lindsay, you're blowing this for us. Go talk to those girls now."*

I'd accept my role. Often, during midsentence, Wayne would join in.

*"Hi there. Do you like expensive things? Do you like travelling? You do. Great!"*

On most nights, Wayne would unassumingly hang in the background mixing in with my support network effortlessly. That was good enough, at least for the time being.

And then —

### RASTAMAN VIBRATIONS WITH WAYNE + GREG: MAY 1996

Greg and I had scored flights to Jamaica for \$290 Canadian. I told Wayne about the deal. He informed us he was coming with us to Jamaica' mon' the next day.

Drive to Seattle - Meet Olympic Figure Skaters and Swedish Girls at the Airport - Red Eye to Minneapolis - Play Xarcon (Video Game) @ Airport - Greg's light beach reading: *The Gentrification of Nazi Germany* - Montego Bay - Taxi to Negril - Countless Red Stripes - Barb B' Barn Hotel.

We were flying by the seat-of-our pants, drunk, sans reservation; I negotiated for the room. The Barb B' Barn front desk clerk started at \$1,500 each for fifteen nights.

I negotiated, *"You can do better. I've stayed here before. What's your current occupancy. Is that the occupancy at the other hotels? You know, we can take our chances up and down the beach.*

Great. \$600 total for the three of us? We'll take it."

It was time to talk to girls.

## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT: WHAT NOT TO DO IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

1. Do not start out blithering drunk.
2. Do not leave friends alone when they are not familiar with the country's customs.
3. Do not invite strangers into your hotel room while blithering drunk.
4. Do not fall asleep (pass-out) on the beach with all your money and identification on you (Greg) or in the chair outside your hotel room's door (?)

Luckily, we escaped unscathed.

## VACATION HIGH LOW POINTS

Greg and I packed three-hundred-pounds of luggage, each.

Wayne brought one blue shirt.

On the second day, we met a hot girl from Ontario. She was hanging with three heavy-set, gruff girlfriends.

*I was interested in Ontario.*

I went to the washroom, and upon my return, Greg was dating her.

*Wayne drank and laughed.*

Something stung me, causing my temperature to spike. The gruff girls disappeared into the jungle with Rastafarians. Greg's gal moved in with us.

*Wayne drank and laughed.*

Greg and *Ontario* checked in on me every twenty minutes with my fever hitting critical. Waking me each time.

*Wayne drank and laughed.*

His shirt began to change colours.

In the spirit of friendship, the following section has been deleted.

*Wayne drank and laughed.*

My health returned. I determined *Ontario* was off mentally, Greg disputed my arguments.

*Wayne drank and laughed.*

## FAST FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

One year later: Greg was studying at McGill University in Montreal. *Ontario* contacted him and said she was dying of cancer and asked him to return to Jamaica to marry her.

Then, in an instant of male bonding, the three of us became more than acquaintances. At the Negril Country Club, Wayne was about to golf for the first time.

Wayne had rented clubs. After twenty minutes on the driving range, a course worker approached us to call us to the first tee.

Wayne casually stated to the worker, *"I think I might be left-handed."*

Greg and I competed intensely on the course.

Wayne not so much, he asked his caddie, *"Is it okay to use a tee on every shot?"*

*"Yeah, mon. Irie, no problem,"* was the answer.

The scent of Ganja wafted through the air.

Wayne asked his caddie, *"Where should I aim?"*

*"Mon. Irie mon. Mr. Wayne, aim for the blue patch in the sky right about, now mon!"*

We became family, sharing life, death, marriage, and birth from that day forward.

## THINKING INSIDE THIS BOX: THE SECRETS TO A LASTING FRIENDSHIP

All that really matters is to be there for the events from the last sentence.

The rest is nothing more than noise.

## ONE LOVE

Mancy was the Rasta version of Keith Richards, born with a spliff in hand. Not a day under two hundred. Wayne, Greg, and I were far off the beaten path in a jungle cottage. Mancy and four of his Rasta buddies were packing gigantic *spliffs*. With each toke, the air filled with the fragrance of *high*.

*"BOW"* was shouted by one of the Rasta's as he slammed a domino onto a table, breaking it in two.

Wayne pointed at me → and announced, *"My friend has ties with Satan."*

*"Bumba clot, ras clot, we believe in da power of Rastafari, Hailie Sallase. G'wan boi. The devil has no place here. We will git –"* One of the Rastafarian's chanted.

*"BOW,"* another domino shattered. Smoke filled the room in a thick, dense fog. We were

experiencing contact *highs*.

Mancy was babbling in his own *patois* to Greg, a beautiful young Jamaican woman sauntered out of a back room. Reggae music pulsed.

*"You, not de Devil' mon, 'that's good."*

Wayne smirked.

*"G'wan' mon '. You like. She's sweet like candy. Me sista. G'wan boi. Don't be shy. You may have her for 200 J. She is yours. Sweet like candy. G'wan boi. Touch her."*

One of the Rastas offered his sister to Greg.

A blip passed, and Greg refused the generous offer; instead, he walked into the woods, with Mancy following close behind, wielding a machete.

*"BOW, Devil, Rastafari!"*

Another domino shattered. Then "BOW," shattering pieces flew through the room.

Greg and Mancy returned; Mancy had taught Greg how to cut hashish.

My hand began to morph into different shapes.

*One love, one heart, let's get together and feel alright –*

The room filled with music, with the volume increasing with each beat.

136 We danced; one hand raised in the air. The three of us + four Rastafarian + Mancy + the Sista, all marching to the sound of a Jamaican God, one-two steps forward - one-step-two-steps back - reaching toward the sky. At that moment, we all became one. Culture married culture.

*One love, one heart –*

## TRIPS END...RETURNING HOME...

Greg and I decided it was best to join Wayne drinking and laughing for the remainder of the trip.

Wayne ate all three of our breakfasts every day, and he drank copious amounts of alcohol. Wayne only weighs one-hundred-forty pounds. His consumption was so massive, deceased alcoholics became squeamish in their graves.

We met sisters from Chicago, an ageing Super Model from Spain, and of course, Jamaican beauties.

My friend network was complete with a combination of new friends and old ones: Life was *GRAND*. The pieces were interchangeable except for the one continuous piece that was barely holding it all together.

ME.

# UNRAVEL

## VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

MAY 1996-SEPTEMBER 1997

**T**here is a saying IF *IT IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE* –  
As soon as GRAND had arrived, it began to be ripped apart.

1. **THIEVING (MAY 1996).** Spike was given the moniker ‘Thieving.’ He stole my bank card and began helping himself to my cash. This was during his battle with The Big C. Who’d lie about The Big C? Our friendship was stamped: **CANCELLED.**

My friends had my back, though. After our friendship ended, Spike wandered into the Planet Restaurant. Wes was managing. He grabbed Spike by the back of his jacket, dragged him outside, and slammed his head into the glass windows.

A few days later, Greg ran into him in a nightclub. Greg walked up to him, kissed him on the forehead and then stated, *“You won’t know when it’s coming, but I guarantee when it comes, it will be loaded with pain.”* And then Greg strolled away.

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2. **SHOULDER PAIN (JUNE 1996).** I visited Doctor Regan because of a pain in my shoulder. He rotated it. I screamed. Three weeks later, he reconstructed my right shoulder.
3. A week after my shoulder surgery, Wes had the urge to find a new home; he left Vancouver and headed to the South Pacific to the island nation of Vanuatu.

### HEY, WHERE IS EVERYBODY GOING?

1. **PHOENIX RISING (AUGUST 1996).** Like Wes, Slick’s tribal roots in ~~Vanuatu, Saskatchewan~~, Phoenix were calling. Slick told me he has a long line of crazy uncles. He introduced me to one of them. Leo. A salvage baron and hoarder. Leo once suggested we should hook up for beers one day. He handed me his business card and said, *“Lindsay, give me a call.”* I flipped the card, examining it. The only thing emblazoned on it was a single word in boldface. **LEO.** Nothing more. Another uncle of Slick’s wanted Slick to move to Phoenix to open a restaurant. Slick left our flat and headed to the land of the rising sun.

2. **DEEP COVER (AUGUST 1996).** Pat accepted an assignment where he'd be deep undercover; he was forced to sever all ties.
3. **LA BELLE PROVINCE (SEPTEMBER 1996).** *What the hell is going on? Am I swimming in cold water? Why is everything shrivelling up?* Greg was accepted to McGill University in Montreal to finish his master's degree.

## AND NOW FOR AN UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENT @ WORK

### VANCOUVER

#### SEPTEMBER 1996

I was well into my third year at MEC, securing a prominent client list. The success carrot dangled within my reach. I was a top performer, and then, Norm Friend, the Sales Manager, called me into his office.

I entered.

He sat gawking out the window.

*"Hello, Norm.*

He swivelled in his chair.

*"Lindsay, Tundi (his wife), is out having fun; she's racing Dragon Boats. She is doing this while I'm all hobbled with feet problems. I can barely walk. But Tundi, she doesn't care. She's out having fun."*

I felt queasy.

*"My heart is breaking. Oh yeah, by the way, we have to let you go."*

When Wayne heard the news, he stormed into Norm's office and quit.

Two days later, one of the company principals offered me a position running a district.

I declined.

# ANUS

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

OCTOBER 1997-MARCH 1988

## ASS SURGERY

"It's probably nothing to worry about. I must remove these growths to assure they're not cancerous," Dr. Aldice said calmly.

Dr. Aldice mentioned *The Big C* and *nothing to worry about* in the same breath.

He continued, "*The waiting time for surgery is six-months, but I think it best we get you in soon; I can get you in tomorrow.*"

*Great, I only must, not worry, for one day.*

## PRE-OP

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Cool, my resting heart rate is 41.

*Lindsay, it might not be as cool as you think.*

That night I went to bed with *The Big C* peeking through the window, smirking.

Cold-assed and on a gurney once more, my nurse rounded the last corner before the operating room. Then, just where the corner breaks toward the operating room, a second nurse was playing a piano, *seriously*. We made eye contact.

She smiled at me and then said, "*Do you have any last requests?*"

Doctor Alice had forgotten about me, which resulted in my hospital stay being one week longer than necessary.

With my ass healing, I realized everyone important to me was Keyser Söze'd as quickly as they arrived.

I began to flounder.

*Guilt* chimed in, telling me to quit feeling sorry for myself. *Guilt* said people are simply living their lives. People come and go all the time, *Guilt* said.

I told *Guilt* to fuck off.

## RECAP

After Gail kicked me to the curb, it took four years to construct a solid friendship network, which unravelled in less than two. Apart from Wally + Danielle.

Even with my ass being deemed cancer-free, I was once again struggling. Work was woeful. I was forced to take menial jobs to survive. Love was absent. I was, quite literally, fucked.

## A BREAK

### MARCH 1998

I landed a job at a software company called Timeac, selling Point of Sale Systems to bars and restaurants.

I sold a system to Judy and Dale, the owners of the Sandpiper Pub in White Rock. They offered me a bartending job. So, I quickly turned it into a management position.

Life was trending upward once more!

# RUSSIANS, CLOWNS & DRAG QUEENS

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

20 JULY 1998

Monday nights in Vancouver are usually sleepy. On this Monday, the summer heat turned the night into sweltering. With my living room approaching the temperature of the sun's surface, I decided to hazard a night on the town alone with my shadow instead of melting into my sofa, sweating profusely.

One, two, three, bars into my night, I entered the *Odyssey Nightclub*, and the Odyssey caters to GAY.

I focused my GAYDAR toward the dance floor — *I'm not sure I have GAYDAR?*

Anyway, I drew undisputable conclusions from my focus.

## THINKING INSIDE THIS BOX

GAY — STRAIGHT — IN BETWEEN — WHO CARES?

### DANCING STYLES

- **STRAIGHT:** Stiff in movement, shoulders shrugging, hands planted firmly on the hips.
- **AT EASE WITH SEXUALITY:** The groove flows loosely with every step.
- **FLAMBOYANTLY GAY:** Hands gleefully raised above the head, always?

Just as I finished my thesis, a handsomely attractive, deliciously slim girl; approached me. She took a shine to me, plying me with drinks. She invited me to accompany her to a raging party. Her name was Carla.

I accepted her invitation.

We flagged a cab. Carla and I exchanged smiles. Upon closer inspection, I noticed Carla had an Adam's Apple. I chuckled blushing; she asked why I was laughing.

"*Because I just noticed your Adam's Apple,*" I answered.

"*Honey, I'm in drag,*" she replied.

We crisscrossed streets and alleyways as the cab driver followed the instructions Carla

gave him. Then, after about thirty-five minutes, we arrived at our destination, which happened to be about a five-minute walk across the Granville Street Bridge from the *Odyssey*.

Carla paid our driver. We hopped out of the cab at the back of a nondescript white warehouse. Carla tapped an elaborate code on the back door. After three minutes passed, the door finally cracked open + a bearded man sporting white overalls emerged from the darkness. He spoke with a strong *accent* – which was Russian, I was informed of this fact, later.

While I waited patiently for Carla to negotiate our admittance, a cab rolled up to us in the laneway. Three men in clown suits jumped out.

Pounding music filled the warehouse, and attractive, scantily clad people danced.

Carla excused herself to retreat to the washroom. She asked me to guard her bag. In her absence, a continuous line of individuals glided up to me and asked me when Carla would be returning.

One hour passed. I put my thesis cap back on: Could Carla be selling drugs?

Carla returned.

With my senses overloaded, I decided: it was time to go home.

While walking home, I wondered if the night's mix of characters would make an excellent title for a book or movie?

**M**y trip into the *Odyssey* brought me to an understanding, our collective lives take a wide berth and often lean against one another like the stories of lost souls in voluminous books stacked against each other in a library. It is the responsibility of the lost to support one another, to make every day of a life vibrantly colourful. Carla and my stories may seem light years apart, but for some reason, on this steamy Monday night, they crossed paths and became intertwined.

A million thoughts blasted through my cranium. Meeting Carla may have been a fleeting, one-of-event, but with perfect clarity, my mind rested in the realization, we would likely cross paths again.

# NEW FLATMATE + CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

21-24 JANUARY 1999-DECEMBER 1999

## CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

PHOENIX ARIZONA

JANUARY 21-24

I flew the friendly skies to Phoenix with Wayne + Kevin to visit Slick. Surprisingly (19), we managed to get sauced during the three-hour flight.

Slick retrieved us from Sky Harbour Airport and zipped us to the Armadillo Grill restaurant, where he plied us with drinks.

## NEXT UP

At a strip club: Slick bought me a lap dance.

*Wow. You are gorgeous. Your body is smoking hot. I can't look. I'm not that guy. Corrie, you are wrong; pig dog isn't who I am. This feels uncomfortable. Why is this a thing? Sorry, (20) you are devastatingly beautiful, but I can't gawk. Would it creep you out if I looked into your eyes? (21)*

After I was spent looking deeply into my dancer's soulful eyes, Rick continued zipping us places, this time to his beer league hockey game, where he bombarded us with more drinks. After the match, zip, his home.

*"Guys, what would you like to drink? I have Crown Royal!"*

Before he poured from the purple cloak, let us back up for a second. Then, when Slick pulled his Jeep into his carport constructed with steel girders, I stumbled out of the Jeep and was unceremoniously greeted by one of the girders.

## SEED PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

Jeep Doors swing wide open.

Be careful when exiting Jeeps.

Hammering your head into a steel girder while exiting said Jeep is incredibly painful.

Don't bang your head into steel beams.

THUD  
THUD

"Was that my Jeep's door?" Slick asked.

"And Lindsay's head," Wayne answered.

## CONCUSSION PROTOCOL STATES

### Concussion Protocol States

#### Do Not Let The Concussed Person Sleep

I slept like a baby.

A wise man once said: To want what you can't have in life is the most significant pain of all.

I fervently disagree. Slamming your skull into a steel girder while drunk may be worse.

For the next three days, with a fresh goitre on my forehead, I stumbled around in a dense fog. My arms were covered in goosebumps with the thermostat cranking up into the high 80s Fahrenheit. And I seemed to have misplaced my shoes for most of the trip.

On our final day, before flying away from the land of the rising sun, Slick encouraged one more moment of bonding.

"Hey guys, I'm not going to shower today. Want to grab a hot tub?"

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## NEW FLATMATE

### VANCOUVER

#### DECEMBER 1999

"I'm breaking up with Danielle. Can I stay at your place for a month?" Kevin asked me on the phone.

"Sure, Kev, your welcome to stay as long as you need."

"Thanks, Seed, I wouldn't be able to stand living with you for more than a month." ~~(??)~~

Friendships that turn into flatmates tend to only one outcome: EX.

Danielle + Kev's breakup, ~~their~~ breakup, would impact me significantly.

19. Were you surprised

20. My sorry was mute; I know the dancer could not possibly be reading my mind.

21. Yes.

22. Kick him out now.

**14 MONTHS OF RELATIVE CALM**  
14 MONTHS OF RELATIVE CALM

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**MUSICAL INTERLUDE**  
MUSICAL INTERLUDE

## 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.

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