

MY **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

AMSTERDAM

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?

ESCAPING THROUGH TRAVEL

ESCAPING THROUGH TRAVEL



AMSTERDAM

15-17 OCTOBER 2003

Life is joyful.
Life is emotional.
Life is fucking hard.

Life is many splendid things!

Does it have to be?

Fragile, emotional, and fucking hard, that is?

Lived to the fullest, there is no avoidance of this ragged collection of realities; they're inevitably coming our way.

You may think darkness engulfs us as we cast our plotlines.

I think dark is part of the journey. Manipulating life toward happiness while suppressing misery is what lifts us to fulfilment before the inescapability of death. Manipulation may help us feel we did the best we could.

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We must come to a point in life where we define the things which matter.

This trip represents my journey to empty my tank full of dank, dark, depressing misery and then refill it to recapture the joy within.

My journey is self-exploratory. It is endless until, of course, death. Every act works delicately toward critically exorcising my demons to bring me to a celestial blissful state.

Montreal, New York, and London offered: a taste of escape. They acted as band-aids, inspiring me, letting me ignore pain.

What's next is about to drop some valuable insight into what, in my opinion: LIFE is all about.

My discovery may be glaringly obvious; if it is, allow me some leeway, remember I'm blind in one eye; therefore, it may take me a little longer to see the whole picture.

HIGH FLYING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2003, CONTINUED

"We are now boarding Easy Jet Flight 123 to Amsterdam.

EJ Airlines doesn't assign seats.

Get out of the way Granny, that seat is mine.

A Dutch chap asked if he could have the window seat in our row.

"Sure, my name is Lindsay."

He ignored me, pulled out a Bible, and pretended to read.

EJ formula for success.

FORMULA PART 1

FLYING EJ = NO FRILLS

Except for the souvenir *In-Flight Magazine*, passengers pay for everything.

I liked the magazine. I didn't like the pages being stuck together because someone didn't want to pay for a barf bag on the previous flight.

I asked for a replacement.

FORMULA PART 2

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The further you book in advance = the flights become closer to free!

We booked one day in advance. Our flights came in around \$100 Canadian. If we knew our itinerary earlier, we could have landed the flights for approximately \$15 Canadian, or the equivalent of two super-sized Big Mac meals.

I snuck into the cockpit where I heard the co-pilot saying, *"I don't care how many chicks you've banged; you're still a monkey. Just fly the plane."*

Hmm, I wondered, maybe that's how they keep costs down?

The FAs worked the aisles in shocking orange uniforms, which blended with the stunning orange interior of the plane, and reminded us of, Burger King.

The man next to me began reciting bible verses. The safety instructions were full of the hard **Hs** and **Ks** of the Dutch language.

"THE Kurrent. Amsterdam time is 8 PM. Thank you for flying FligHt 100 tHis evening. The temperature is 16 degrees. Every tourist in Amsterdam is currently Half-baKed and watcHing porn. Have an enjoyable stay. If you think our language is Hard (?) – wait till Germany. SchHmetterlings

WELCOME TO AMSTERDAM

We touched down at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam.

AMSTERDAM

For the first time on the trip, a home was booked; the *Hotel Victoria*. If my memory serves me correctly, it cost in the vicinity of one billion €.

We slid effortlessly into the customs line. Frequent fliers were pressing their faces against a machine in a separate line. A light would flash, welcome to the Netherlands, entry granted.

We glided to the luggage carousel. My luggage needed Jenny Craig; Dave's was in rough shape.

Perhaps, the pilots thought, Dave was transporting bananas.

We patched his luggage together with duct tape.

LONDON CABBIE PART 2

Dutch cracked in the air all around as we walked in concentric circles.

We wanted to go to our hotel, but we'd forgotten how to move. A cataract of confusion came over us. A cab to the hotel was to relieve our puzzlement.

Our bags were secured in the cab's trunk when the battle ensued. Dutch profanity flew by, forcing us to duck hard **Hs** and **Ks**. The words pierced our near virgin Dutch exposed ears.

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Schiphol is a shiny happy airport. Out on the street, the happiness ceased. Our taxi driver was engaged in a drag-it-out battle with another driver over our business. Veins were exploding from his skull. He finally transferred our luggage into a second cab when he was finally defeated.

As we pulled away from the curb, I glanced back: A *Gnome* was ripping into the flesh of our first almost-driver, as he desperately tried to protect himself, armed with only language and a bong.

"Hotel Victoria, please."

The language barrier eliminated small talk.

The radio blared.

Papi, Papi, Papi Chulo.

Papi, Papi, Papi, Chulo.

An infectious tune we never understood a single word of the first song blended into a second.

Is this the Odyssey?

It's here for you. For me.

Just listen for the magic key.

Just listen, let your love be free.

Amsterdam was greeting us with songs.

We paid 50€ for the fare. Later we found out the train from the airport to our hotel was 10€ for two.

Just listen, let your love be free.

We weren't going to allow money to bring us down. We were in Amsterdam, after all.

RUMOUR HAS IT: THE ONLY WAY TO GO IS UP.↑

LEVELS 109

The elevator ride up one flight –
fifteen paces forward –
down three steps –
turn seventy-five degrees left –
four paces sideways –
up four steps –
turn forty-five degrees right –
up three steps –
down two steps –
seven paces forward –
down two steps –
five paces forward –
up five steps –
sixteen paces straight –
turn ninety degrees right –
Room 109 –
insert key –
we're home!

I looked out the window. We were on the first floor.

INNER EAR

Dave grabbed the remote and turned the tube to a sports channel. The Dutch-speaking announcers were bantering back and forth a theory on how Dave looked finished. They continued to opine although my life was in the shambles, I was putting up a classic fight.

The announcers flashed to the future, envisioning beautiful Italian leather and lesbians.

I let Dave lie down.

I hit the *Orange Tree Bar*; I think that was the name. It was just around the corner from our hotel. After *Google Street Viewing* it, I believe it may have been called *Jupiter*.

Anyway, it's irrelevant. I was going to be drinking in a different dialect.

I sat at the bar and pointed at a draught tap; pint one arrived.

I attempted to talk with my Barman, Garth, who spoke little English, but tried gallantly. I, on the other hand, speak zero Dutch. So, I choose to speak loudly in painfully broken English.

Two men from Ireland sitting on my left laughed at my efforts.

Garth tilted his head to the right and started panting.

Two hours passed. I successfully pointed at the draught taps four times when Dave joined me.

I introduced Dave to Patrick O'Malley and Patrick O'Callaghan.

I whispered into Dave's ear, "*Listen carefully. The Irish speak English, right? Do you understand what they're saying?*"

Garth refreshed our drinks; he had never left his neighbourhood in Amsterdam, something to do with his inner ear.

"Garth, where is the Red-Light District?"

He pointed behind us.

And then, without lifting a muscle, the environs began changing. We floated through the walls of Jupiter. The world shapeshifted; the bar transformed into the hotel; we became holograms soaring effortlessly through the air. We were transparent; we melted through the walls, bending down the hotel's hallways. We came across Anne Frank and Vincent Van Gogh. They were sipping on Orange Whips, flipping through porn, and eating dill pickle chips. Anne demurely whispered into Vincent's detached ear. Too quietly for us to hear. Vincent's Whip was spiked with Absinthe. He reached for a knife and screeched, "*Damn plastic.*"

All too real, Anne + Vincent turned toward us and gave a knowing wink. Then, in a flash, we landed outside in the crisp, clear, fragrant Dutch air, right at the end, or start, depending on how you swizzle your stick, of Amsterdam's infamous Red-Light District.

Four paces forward

One step up!

LOGISTICS

Finally, my area of expertise –

Amsterdam brims quaintly with history. It's a colourful treasure trove for lovers of architecture. Historical yet innovative, it has 650 gable stones and one skinny bridge.

Digging into the recesses of my brain, historically, it was founded by two anglers and their seasick dog. Legend has it the dog jumped ship to empty its upset stomach, and Amsterdam was born.

Does anybody know what a gable stone is?

We decided upon food before the red lights.

FIRST STOP

Lord Mike's Bar. Mike greeted us at the door and then rushed to the bar to make drinks. Unfortunately, we were too late for food, so he ordered a pizza in for us.

We met a delightful quartet from Farnborough, England, Martin, Andy, Richard, and Fat Tony.

I whispered to Dave, *"Listen carefully. The English speak English, right? Do you – ?"*

Martin asked me what I do for a living?

I said, bartender and bar manager.

He was chronically glazed over, including his hearing. He smiled brilliantly and said, *"No shite."*

Bartender and bar manager had transformed into Boeing. He, too, worked at Boeing. He asked if I'd been to the plant in Farnborough.

Not wanting to disappoint him, I decided I work at Boeing, and Jack from corporate had given me a tour of the Farnborough facilities.

In the meantime, Andy and Richard interjected, *"When I hold my right hand on the left side of my body, does it become my left hand?"*

Fat Tony sat transfixed on a spec floating in the distance.

Martin beamed with joy because he was meeting brethren from afar. He promised to one day visit Seattle. His excitement peaked when he found out I worked in logistics.

Fat Tony's head swayed from side to side.

The pizza arrived. Slices of pie, magically, flew, to be inhaled wholly by our friends.

Fat Tony suddenly grew sunglasses, which baffled me because I hadn't smoked anything.

Lord Mike asked us the reason for our trip.

"It all started March 3 – "

Lord Mike replied, *"Are you okay? How could you be, okay? How old are you, Lindsay? Thirty-two. Dave, I'd guess you to be twenty-seven."*

Fat Tony began to pixelate.

"Dave, I don't think our pizza was a regular pizza."

Seven paces out the door –

turn ninety degrees left –

Six paces forward –

Up three steps!

PORN

"Dave, hold me. Why are those slutty mannequins in the windows staring at us? OMG. One of them moved?"

Welcome to the Red-Light District.

The mannequins were alive.

Temptation. Temptation. Temptation.

We strolled by the window after window. Guilt and Stigma were absent.

We gleefully strutted over a myriad of canals.

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The scent of cannabis filled the night air.

I began hallucinating. Families donning wooden shoes were navigating the waterways using their shoes for floatation.

"Lindsay, I think you are drunk. Do you think we should pursue sexual gratification?"

We popped into a pleasure shop.

Dave queried the breathtaking attendant, *"How much for a blowjob, hand job, a threesome, a six-some, two clowns, a donkey and an albino midget?"*

Is it creepy to shop for porn with a friend?

Yes.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not anti-porn. I enjoy sex, I think. For some reason, I had reached a stage of porn abstinence.

Flashback to when I bought my first digital camera.

FIRST PICTURE: A FLOWER

SECOND PICTURE: FULL BLOOM

Since we're flashing backward, why don't you hop in the Wayback Machine with me?

THE SETUP

The Setup

I'm thirteen. I rifled through one of my brother's book collections.

Cool, *The Joy of Sex*.

SLOW MASTURBATION

- Have your partner straddle your chest.
- Naked
- I started rising.
- Once comfortably perched, have your partner manipulate.
- Slowly at first. Back and forth.
- Have your partner increase the speed.
- And then –

I couldn't wait to find a partner. I glanced at my hands and drew a lusty happy face on one of them. I named it Kitten.

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Have I shared too much?

Do you remember your first time?

I practised extensively, perfecting my grip. I started buying sexy hand-teddies; I wanted more. So, I lifted my mattress and, to my joy of solo sex, found: Playboy, Penthouse, and Swank.

Slow turned to fast and then back to slow, and I became more excited by the stories than the pictures.

I never thought this would happen to me –

One word filled my loins with desire. I wouldn't allow my sexed-up digits to caress (ewe) me until it appeared; for penis's sake, the word came up often.

Solo adventures continued. One involving warm summer nights, neighbourhood nudity, and running. I've repressed my recollection of most of these to avoid the need for extensive counselling.

My porn experiments took a drastic turn one day, solo had found company.

I never thought, began happing to me, all the friggen time.

Day + Night + Afternoon + Morning + In a Car + In the + *with* + right up to today (insert today's date), and a couple of days ago.

Once I put the magazines back under the mattress, I've been living a life full of porn, with

me being the principal player.

How much for slow, fast, slow, fast, oh, while running naked on a hot summer night?

I wrote this last little bit naked while sipping on a Mojito. Both of my hands were on the table most of the time –

NIGHTCAP

With porn freshly stroked off our agenda, we returned to crisscrossing canals.

We rounded a corner stumbling into *Crack Land*. Scores of lost souls lined the street. Crack defies boundaries and logic; it disgusts, it doesn't discriminate. In a foreign tongue, it sounds more hostile.

We were surrounded by the lifeless faces of the living dead; the individual spirit is washed away with each hit; all became one. Black hoods covered sad faces hiding sad stories sharing common threads. Further, into the street, the carnage multiplied. One turned into two turned into –

Ghouls darted out from darkened storefronts.

"Give me money. Money. Money."

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We pulled our arms together, palms facing outward; we extended and parted in a breaststroke-like fashion, pushing the heartache aside with each stroke. The gloom was stifling. Liberal became bankrupt of morality. Amsterdam was no longer quaint; it was toxic; it was ugly.

We continued pushing forth.

"Money. Money. Money. Help me."

Bright reddish-orange flashes of light flickered. Plumes of smoke rose around us; I wanted to escape.

We crossed a bridge and retreated to the outskirts of doom. Young girls were frothing at the mouth close to an overdose. Injections were taking place, visible to even the blind.

Hundreds of corpses were standing in FORMATION across the canals bridge. Decked out in black. Hooded. In unison, they collectively made the popping sound of lips pursing together as they drew on their pipes, embers would flash, the whites of their eyes would intensify, the once-crisp fragrant night air filled with waste. Satan's Choir continued its toxic symphony, pop, purse, flash, smoulder, repeat, to the beat of a slow death groove.

We passed a line behind a velvet rope. The line was long.

Occasionally an ember would flicker out, expire, fading into the star-filled sky.

Two willing replacements carried the tragedy forward with unbreakable fervour. This symphony plays out daily, worldwide.

"Money, money, give me your money," a young girl pressed relentlessly.

Dave took her into a store and bought her two chocolate bars.

He then said, *"Please, turn away. Sweetie, if you cross that bridge, you'll likely never see this side again."*

She took her place in line.

We staggered into a bar outside of *Crack Land*, filled with Londoners. We quickly deduced *Amsterdam's Red-Light District* is geared to entice tourists into thinking they have a genuine Dutch experience. It tricks you into believing you're living on the edge rebelliously, pushing the envelope.

If you want to stand out in *The Red-Light District* and be a rebel, don't get fucked-up, have tea instead.

Absinthe in front of us then consumed, the Londoners accosted us, trying to talk us out of our clothing. They wanted us to join other Londoners at the bar, dancing.

SEED AMSTERDAM RED LIGHT DISTRICT AFTER THE FACT TRAVEL TIP

- Stay away from the *Red-Light District* after midnight.
- It can become scary.
- Go figure, tourists fuelled-up on booze, porn, and illicit substances, which are illegal in their homelands, who'd-of-thunk: scary, could be an option.

DAY 9

AQUA MAN

THURSDAY OCTOBER 16, 2003

When I woke from my dreamless forty-winks, David was deeply in REM the following day. Not to disturb him, I decided to hit the gym.

UP↑

DOWN↓

UP↑

DOWN↓



Nine...ten...ripped; it was time to refresh in the pool. I can't swim. I can only tread water violently. Bystanders usually feared for my safety; occasionally, tossing me a life jacket. Little did they know, my swimming burns more calories than when swimmers swim?

Once in Jamaica, while snorkelling, a guide called out to me, "Come back to the boat 'mon.' 'Mon,' do you have a family? No. Boi, do you want to have a family? Don't be such a Ras clot."

He tossed me a life jacket.

On another occasion at an outdoor pool in Vancouver, I asked a lifeguard why my calf muscles cramp when I swim?

He replied, "*Sir, what you are doing is not called swimming.*"

I'm not afraid of water, maybe not a good thing.

Let's go WAYBACK again. Our family was on vacation in Banff. The hotel pool was thirty feet in length, shaped like a football. Loving swimming and not being able to swim are likely tragic pairings.

My parents watched from a balcony overlooking the pool. There was nary a lifeguard on duty. I swam, showing off to my parents. I had trudged umpteen laps, painfully, before they noticed me.

With my parents' eyes upon me, I started again. Lap 1. Lap 2. Lap 3. I began to struggle. Lap 4, partway through the deep end, my body shifted from horizontal to vertical. I sank, hitting the pool's bottom, eight feet; I was five foot two. I'd spring back to the surface, mouth agape, filling with chlorinated water. Each time I'd surface, my arms flailed frantically; my parents were calmly waving at me.

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It took seven *bobs* before my brother Brian jumped to my rescue. I grabbed his head. I pushed him down. I climbed onto his shoulders, kicking him in the face. I used him as leverage lunging myself out of the pool. I lay on the edge of the pool, gasping, spitting water out of my mouth.

Brian saved my life.

I eventually expelled enough water to fill the shallow end. I looked at Brian, still gasping, and said, "*Why did you get in my*

way? I was okay."

I glanced up to Mum and Dad; they were still waving.

Taking the WAYBACK Machine seven years forward, I was at a High School Graduation after-party in a friend's backyard. I managed to pack on a few pounds of muscle in seven years. I still couldn't swim.

Completely sober, I jumped into my friend's pool. I began swimming laps; my friends

were the opposite of sober, completely. Then, during lap 4, I shifted to vertical. John Reynolds and Bill Wallace put down their beers and came to my rescue. So, I kicked them both in the head and lunged to safety.

When I regained my ability to breathe, I looked at them and casually asked, “*How does chlorinated beer taste?*”

LAUNDRY DAY

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2003

Weather-wise the summer of destruction was perfect. The fall of escape was following suit; brilliant sunshine greeted us once more. I shook Dave awake. It was time for a hearty Danish breakfast.

Dave needed to do laundry. If only he hadn’t deigned ⁽⁷²⁾ to accept my suggestion to pack more, he could have escaped this necessity.

Dave gently set his luggage in the chair beside him as we ordered breakfast at *Ristorante Tivoli*.

MONTREAL: BURGER KING

NYC: MAUI TACO

LONDON: CRAP

AMSTERDAM: ITALIAN.

Our stunning server delivered our feasts. I told Dave I thought I was in love.

Dave suggested: I tell her.

We took Dave’s laundry sightseeing. Amsterdam in the daytime on a crisp day is spectacular. We ventured down maze-like cobblestone streets. The architecture is fantastic. ⁽⁷³⁾ We crossed what seemed to be an infinite number of bridges. We snapped a photo at a sign emblazoned with: HOMO MONUMENT

Dave decided he wanted to live in Amsterdam. I told him to give it more time. Dave cursed his luggage, I snickered.

That-a-way was successfully suppressing the past. The canals’ waters represented pathways to endless possibilities. ⁽⁷⁴⁾

With luggage dragging behind him, Dave neared defeat.

I laughed because I could change three times per day and still not wear the same thing twice.

Before we made it back to the hotel, we needed to find the train station to inquire how much it would be to travel to Munich. We were going to meet Greg there for Chinese food.

AMSTERDAM

Two men walked toward us, holding hands. ⁽⁷⁵⁾

"Do you guys know where the train station is?" I asked.

They paused, and then one of them replied, *"It is back there one block."*

They turned around and began pointing, then hastily stopped, called us *"fuckers,"* and walked away.

The train station was directly in front of us in plain view. It was also directly across the street from our hotel.

MISTER COCO'S

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2003

Dave opted for downtime.

I chose to solve our travel conundrum with movement.

The internet café basked in bright orange.

The EJ pilot behind the counter offered to help me turn my computer from Dutch to English.

He told me my voice was erotically charged and tantalizing.

His gracious effort was futile.

I gave up on the information SUPERHIGHWAY, beaten but not defeated, I believed the travel solutions would fall from the delicious night sky.

MISTER COCO'S LOUSY FOOD AND WARM BEER

This place sounded promising, the warm beer would most certainly, unlock the puzzle.

"Hello, lovely bartender Andrea. You're from Montreal. I'm from Vancouver. What, you don't like Vancouver. You got married there. You don't like Amsterdam. You think Vancouver + Amsterdam is marginal at best. Well, aren't you special? Sure, I'll have another beer."

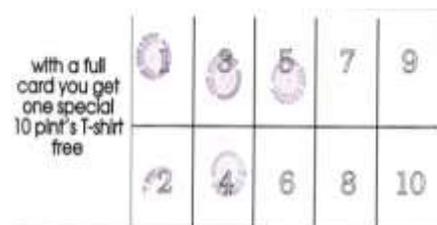
One beer, two beer, three beer, four, shift to horizontal; it was time to go wake Dave so that he could meet Andrea.

BULLDOG

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2003

Did someone say bong?

When we exited *Mr Coco's*, thanks to Andrea, I floated at a forty-five-degree angle. It was time for a genuine, Amsterdam experience.



TWENTY PACES FORWARD —

CROSS A BRIDGE —

NINETY DEGREES LEFT —

TWELVE STEPS FORWARD —

EIGHT STEPS UP↑

I was about to lose my bong virginity; Dave selected the hardware, along with pliable ingredients, and I, bought pints.

If I pounded ten, I'd win a Bulldog t-shirt.

Sounded doable and, not to mention, healthy.

Gurgle. Gurgle. Percolate. Suck in.

"Dave, are we crack heads now? OMG. The walls are growing tentacles."

I guzzled pint number one.

Gay Willie Nelson dropped by our table to say hello, giving my camera the finger.

The bong gurgled and percolated more; I sucked in.

Pint four flew straight from the draught tap into my mouth.

A Dutchman was flying in the air past me. I anchored him to our table. He told me Tiesto was the most fabulous DJ ever. I laughed uncontrollably. I don't know why. I then pressed my thumb and forefinger together, trying to squish his head. ⁽⁷⁶⁾

My night was done with another suck and five beers short of winning a shirt. The hamster driving the wheel in my brain was having trouble.

Backstep to the hotel —

retrace the entry —

insert key —

fall into dreamland.

David, on the other hand, wasn't done —

sixteen steps forward —

two steps up↑ into a bar —

exit —

fourteen steps forward —

six steps up↑ into another bar —

exit —

twenty steps forward —

twelve degrees up↑ into→→→

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2003

– a wrinkle in time.

Clothing discarded, Dave immersed himself into a hot tub, greeted by a devastatingly beautiful blonde Dutch Goddess. Vibrant colours and scents tickled his senses. Red, blue, yellow, and green flashed around him. Lavender and the sweet smell of exotic spices tantalized his sense of smell. He began to caress. She stroked his face with the soft blades of her hands. His arousal intensified. She ran her mouth gingerly across every inch of his body, teasing him as she ever so gently brushed over –

They engaged in a seemingly endless kiss with their tongues melting together. David ran his tongue over her neck; it tasted like chocolate. They kissed again. When their lips parted, a donkey, and albino midget, whisked by, not before stroking Dave's now glistening body with their tongues. He kissed beauty again and again and again. This time the intensity of their arousal was greater. He pulled away. She was gone. In her place was a bearded man.

The bearded man *poked* David by suggesting David wanted his hot daughter.

Dave sat mystified.

The bearded man kept taunting. He dared David to kiss him, saying, if he did, she'd return.

David kissed.

The bearded man laughed.

Dave kissed again.

The bearded man said, "*One more time.*"

David did.

Beauty remained absent.

Dave jumped out of the hot tub. He attempted to hide his arousal with his hand. Six steps from the tub, he looked back. The bearded man was gone. Beauty had returned. She motioned for him to come back into her arms. He stepped forward and tripped. He fell violently to the ground. With his arousal about to smash into the asphalted floor, magically, a small (large) hole appeared in the pavement, his fathering future saved. David lay on the ground, his face masked in puzzlement, sweat dripping from his brow. He felt a tongue from beneath the hole stroke his. Please *let it be the donkey*, he thought.

A moment later, a second tongue joined the first; Dave gave in.

"*Dave –*"

AMSTERDAM TO MUNICH
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2003

“ – it’s time to get up. You’ve been sleeping for six minutes.”

9 AM

It was time to move on to Munich, but we had yet to decide how.

“David, what? The morning-after pill doesn’t work on guys. Are those grey hairs stuck to your chin? What the hell did you get up to last night? Hey, why don’t we rent a car?”

“Good morning European Car Rentals. We need a car for twenty-one days?” I looked toward Dave and mouthed; I’m fucked. “Great. We’ll pick up the car in about an hour.”

“Lindsay, how did the call go?”

“Was I just on the phone?”

Two hours later, we bellied up to ECR’s rental counter.

“We need a CD player – I brought a whack of CDs.”

“Dave, what’s going on? I can’t blink.”

“Me neither.”

“Thankfully, the bong erased the booze scent. Why can’t I blink? Dave poked me in the eyes. OUCH. What the fuck did you do that for?” I slugged ⁽⁷⁷⁾ him in the arm.

Blink, damn it, blink.

“Oh shit. Dave. Look at the sign behind the counter. Crap. Focus. We must focus on blinking.”

WE WILL NOT RENT CARS TO PEOPLE WHO CAN’T BLINK
ZERO EXCEPTIONS

“Dave, I think it’s best you do the talking.”

Dave pulled out his credit card. He told the clerk I’d be the driver.

“Here are your keys, sir. I’m renting you a sparkling new Citroen.”

“Does it have a CD player? I brought a whack of CDs.”

I hopped in the driver’s seat. *“Great, a CD player. I brought a whack of CDs.”*

“Sir, is there something wrong with your eyes?”

“Dave, we must get out of here, now. Crap, a standard. I haven’t driven a stick in years.”

Gas. Clutch. Stall. Gas. Clutch. Stall. Rev. Go. Freedom.

"Dave, they rented us a car." We smiled. "Today, we will likely die."

As we pulled away from ERC, we both started blinking uncontrollably.

Relearning how to drive *stick* in Europe, at speed, was going to be –

BULLDOG

NAVIGATE

AMSTERDAM TO MUNICH

FRIDAY OCTOBER 17, 2003

With our luggage securely stowed in the trunk, steering wheel in hand, it was time to hit the open road.

If we only knew where Munich was?

My shutter-less mind wasn't assisting one iota.

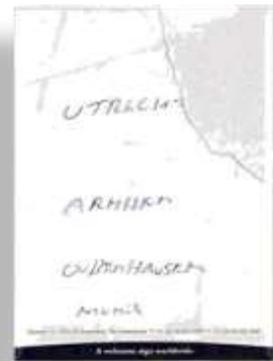
We asked a bellman at our hotel for directions.

He smiled. Then without speaking a single word, grabbed a piece of paper and wrote (look right → → →):

He handed me the paper. He then pointed at each word. Finally, he stopped in Munich. He looked up at me and smiled.

"Seed, can we stop somewhere today so I can do laundry?"

I blinked: NO.



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AUTOBAHN

AMSTERDAM TO MUNICH

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2003

Van Gogh and Anne Frank stood arm-in-arm, sipping *Orange Whips* as they guided us out of Amsterdam. Or was it two anglers and their seasick dog?

I found several missing pieces of me in Amsterdam. Escape clutched me. While I was in its grasp, it reminded me the most tragic thing in life is quitting.

- Experimentation in moderation adds spice.
- The excess must never replace compassion.
- *Mister Coco's* beers don't count toward a Bulldog t-shirt.

And Europe is different. ⁽⁷⁸⁾ The highway was waiting. ⁽⁷⁹⁾

Most countries in Europe suggest a speed for travel on the highway. Most drivers ignore the recommended rate and travel at their own pace.

Gridlock greeted us for the first two hours. When we stopped for petrol and snacks, Dave bought a map. I showed a man at the pumps our note; he extended his arm and pointed ninety degrees to the left.

Back on the highway, the gridlock eased.

Amsterdam to Munich is slightly more than 800-kilometres, around nine-hours if you push the posted speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour.

On the German Autobahn, I cranked the Citroen *to 215-fear-stroking-kilometers-per-hour*. I had only driven that speed once before. On this day, my emotional crap was escaping my body. I refused to slow down.

I believed the Autobahn would be a superspeedway with banked corners, but I was wrong. It was no different than highways back home, with a few exceptions:

LANE 1: Transport trucks travelling around 100.

LANE 2: (the slow lane) Cars and trucks cruising between 160 and 180.

LANE 3: 200+++ which was where we belonged –

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– of course, it was. I was sleep-deprived and still altered. I floored it to the point where the pedal couldn't go further. I clamped the steering wheel tightly. My knuckles turned white. Sweat formed on my forehead only to be instantly cooled by terror. My soundtrack was our only salvation. David Usher was leading us down the highway in song.

*Cause this is my way out of it tonight.
This is my last chance to ease the fire,
And this is my way out of here tonight.
How about you, how about you?
Far off from a dream that I used to know.
All my friends are there to watch the world unfurl.*

There was a bearded man coiled into a ball in the back seat.

I couldn't slow. Porsches, Audis, Volkswagens, and Mercedes would blast up on our French ass. They'd flash their lights. I was forced to merge into Lane 2 without stumbling to death Lane 1. Once passed, I'd whip back into Lane 3; relax, check the mirror, only to be flashed once more. I'd merge into the middle fracas once more.

Toll booths sprouted upon us out of nowhere. I'd drop from speed in a flash after assimilating to the frantic pace; stopping proved to be a significant challenge. I'd panic when we'd drop below fifty.

Released from zero, I cranked up the pace again, re-entering the race.

*Standing at the edge, the edge of it all, standing at the edge, the edge of it all.
Cause this is my way out of it tonight.
And this is my last chance to ease the fire –*

David's fear rendered him on the verge of desperation. Dave's nerves were fraying. Leading us to peril, to the edge of it all, to our way out of here. David gripped the handle above his head, so firmly his knuckles melted into his palm. My fear fed off his fear. Doom was pending.

I asked him what he was doing.

On the verge of tears, Dave confessed his *fear* to me.

I told him I understood. I stressed his fear was making me nervous. I said to him while feigning confidence, *"Today, we likely are going to die in a horrific high-speed crash. It will be quick and painless, so there is no need for worry. IF YOU DON'T RELAX, the chances of death will increase dramatically. Please, I beg of you, recline your car seat; listen to the music and fake sleep."*

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The music suddenly stopped, and the car shouted at us in hard German.

**VORSICHT AUF DER A9 RICHTUNG MÜNCHEN ZWISCHEN DREIECK
HOLLEDAU UND KREUZ NEUFAHRN 10 KM STAU!!!
FAHREN SIE VORSICHTIG**

Dave freaked out.

I freaked out, a tad bit less.

The bearded man was still sleeping.

The music returned.

*Took another pill to find my way,
I hope that you'll be there.
Cause this is my way –*

Exasperated, David calmly pulled his harmonica and a revolver out of his bag. He mirrored a few notes of the song and then raised the gun to his head. David pulled the

trigger: **BANG, his body collapsed into the seat, blood spattering against the window**, drawing legs against the fast-passing German backslash. He lay limp. His knuckled palm was a permanent reminder of the terror that befell him. He looked peaceful. Bloody but peaceful.

My grip loosened as I continued toward Munich; super-charged sedans were flying by, much like the shooting stars above.

Munich was nearing and –

NEWS BAR

NEWS BAR

MUNICH

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– David opened his eyes. The revolver was an illusion. He only suffered a flesh wound created by fear and navigated our way to Munich's centre.

We sipped on German gold and phoned Greg. I excused myself for a washroom break when I returned; my brilliant friend and brother at heart greeted me. A smile graced his face.

Greg's arms were wide open.



WELCOME BROTHER!

65. The word deign in the past participle form was provided by JC at an after-party. An after-party is simply: A party, after a party.
66. That was a waste of four words.
67. Did you just puke? I did.
68. It really doesn't matter that they were holding hands. Typing it showed a moment of immaturity and homophobia. Typing the last line highlights a willingness to evolve.
69. This may or may not be a Kids in the Hall reference.
70. That was the first time slugged used in a sentence since 1974.
71. Would you like to see my Mensa Card?
72. Highways are living things lying in wait.

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.