

MY LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE
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MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR
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BY LINDSAY WINCHERAUK

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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?

TURN
TOKI

VENICE + FLORENCE
A VENICE + FLORENCE

DAY 15-16
DAY 15-16

22-23 OCTOBER 2003
22-23 OCTOBER 2003

BYE BYE —
BYE BYE —

One, two, three...one hundred, you better look out, because here I come!

I need to hide; I hope this place is good enough. Escaping reality provided a pleasant break. This place looks terrific; I'll never be found in here.

I was.

Fucking reality. Leave me alone.

I can't.

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We were less than one-hour away from my tearful goodbyes with Greg and Silvia when I realized I was the furthest away from home I'd ever been. Home no longer existed; with each click of the odometer and every beat of my heart, home was becoming a distant toxic blur.

Biff, Seed looks finished, defeated; his eyes seem vacant.

Driving away from Greg made me realize how lonely I ~~was~~ am. My once endless string of friends was snipped, with actual friends now coming in at single digits. I had yet to process the previous day. I was only *one day* old.

Greg, Silvia, Wayne, Fiona, and Dave provided hope where a family once was.

Without them in my life, well, I don't want to go there. So, I will say that I have a chance with them.

I know, *Drama Police*, a tad dramatic, but c'mon, my fucking parents came back to life, and one of them hung around in the background assuming a different role, AND she did a horrible job at it. Maybe it has been a phenomenal award-winning performance.

Accepting the award for neglectful and harsh parenting —

With the Citroen cranked over 200 kilometres per hour — my hands no longer clasped the steering wheel. I was steering with only one finger. This upset Dave. His voice quivered. "*Seed, you're scaring me. We're going 200. Don't you think you should hold onto the steering wheel?*"

"One finger is plenty, Dave."

He whined: *Seed; we're going two hundred.*

On July 19, 2003, after four months of relentless trauma, survival, or destruction – became my challenge; I desperately needed a reboot.

Everything with meaning crashed. With each crash, my direction would change, and before I could attach significance to the trauma, another trauma would pay me a visit. The news about my parents paralyzed me.

My father was a mystery? My mother –

Could you find somewhere else to stay? We need your room and the house, for the relatives – Lindsay who...?

One might think she would've overcompensated for giving me away; she didn't.

Fifteen days into our trip, for all intent and purpose, with the intensity cranked up, it was over for me.

I wanted to fucking die.

Maybe that's why Dave wasn't fond of my driving style.

I did owe it to him to try to keep it together. I just wasn't sure how?

Silence, alcohol, drugs, sex, all viable...?

PERHAPS A COMBINATION

- A quiet yet aggressive blowjob→
- performed by a vivacious blonde flight attendant→
- while I popped ecstasy like they were Gummy Bears→
- washing them down with swigs of Jack Daniels as a school bus full of *Catholic School Girls* wearing tartan skirts drove by→
- with the car hitting speeds of *250 kilometres per hour*→
- did I mention: I was driving a convertible? →
- no→
- okay, I was driving a convertible→
- with the top down→
- finally, as I came in the FA's mouth→
- a devious grin took over my face→
- I looked over at the bus, *slow down, driver, haven't you seen high-speed fellatio before?* →
- the schoolgirls were pressing their faces against the bus windows→
- when my friend raised her head from my lap→
- *cum* dripping from the corner of her mouth→

- I smirked with the devious grin still adorning my face→
- and waved→
- all the while, Dave sat silently in the back seat.

Reality: sort of, Monique did work for Air Canada.

I searched the skies for positives, convincing myself the news couldn't have come at a better time; I became a liar to myself – being part of a loving, caring family would've been better.

I convinced myself travelling at excessive speeds through Europe while sleep-deprived was for the best.

I convinced myself if I found out back at home, the clock would have been ticking –

Both your parents came back to life, and they didn't want you? I'd get over it in four days if that happened to me.

My thoughts raced back and fro between *Wow, look at that castle.*

(AND)

How could they do this to me? Dave, the mountains are impressive; watch how the villages blend into the countryside. History certainly lives here. If she didn't want me, why did she have me? Bitch. Wow, lake, castle, villa, village, mountains –

Do I let them know, I know?

I was *infinitely* conflicted. This continuous loop kept tormenting me. Fortunately, I brought a whack of CDs to help alleviate the pain.

As the breathtaking beauty of the Austrian/Italian Alps, *remarkably like Bellingham*, roared by, screaming out the realities of the past, my spirits bottomed out. But, in an instant, I understood I may never be okay.

We passed castles. We drove through a never-ending string of villages. We climbed toward the heavens only to be greeted by an early fall blizzard. At the crest of the ascent, the mountains folded into long sweeping corners showcasing incredible vistas reaching out to the valleys below, only to climb back toward heaven again, soothing my soul. Europe, likely, saved my life.

Venice was only minutes away. As the sunset in the sky, Venice came alive. Pillowy-soft-clouds hung low in the night air, tempting us to reach up and grab them. The clouds danced in harmony. Their colours were vibrant: a soft, inviting white covered their edges, blending into a soothing dusty rose, eventually seducing us with deep intoxicating strawberry pink.

Venice welcomed us, offering solace, providing a place to let my heartache drift away.

PARKING

*If you're not part of the future,
Then get out of the way.*

I placed my worries on hiatus, and John Cougar sang our way into Venice.

"Dave, we should drive close to the hotels and park the car."

Dave *howlingly* laughed at me.

I promptly parked the car at the bottom of a canal with Dave locked inside.

Once safely parked at the top of Venice's massive parking complex, we crossed several bridges looking for a hotel. When we hit 75€ for the night, we took it.

It was time to retrieve the luggage. I hoped mine had read the *Jenny Craig Pamphlet*; I had placed it inside it.

VENICE @ NIGHT

Crossing the canals, we saw a collection of cafés inviting us to taste Italy. Lights from the cafés and parked boats beamed into the galaxies in a kaleidoscope of colours, all-dancing a slow seductive Venetian waltz.

302 In this land of 98% Catholic descent, we had *Hail Mary's* on the tip of our tongues. We were ready to repent. Before repenting, I had to drag my bulging bags over water-soaked maze-like streets to our home for the night: *The Hotel Tivoli*.

Mr. Cougar may be right. Venice may still be on her feet; however, she's obviously been dying for decades. The lagoon that has been her natural protection from invaders for centuries was now ironically beginning to swallow its mystically historic buildings, inflicting permanent damage, issuing tickets of disrepair.

Its pending demise, for an instant, helped me forget about the living death of my family. Like its twinkling night lights, I found my spirits starting to reach for the galaxies. Except for my excessively obese luggage, I was going to be okay for this evening. Venice is, after all: The Divine Republic, and even with its pending doom, its beauty shines through. There truly is no place like it on earth. A collage of *116-canals* dissected by *409-bridges*, as grandiose buildings rise on each side, transporting us back through the centuries.

As we casually sauntered to the hotel, my cares drifted through the sweet mist of the early evening air. I think it would be apropos to share astute words on Venice from one of its most famous patrons, Henry James.

Dear old Venice has lost her complexion, figure, reputation, self-respect, and yet, with it all, has so puzzlingly not lost a shred of her distinction.

CURFEW

It was time to eat, drink, and find: a quiet relaxing speed reduced –

The desk clerk informed us we must be back at the hotel by 11 PM, or we'd be locked out. It was 6:30.

Rudimentary math meant we'd have a little more than four hours to eat, drink; and find –
75€ translated into a strict curfew?

We pushed forward, eating, drinking, and getting lost, in the maze that is Venice. I dropped Dave back at the hotel for downtime at 8 PM. I then headed out to unwind on wine and Italian beer. I found a smashing pub. I retrieved Dave at 10 PM.

We settled into the smashing pub full of young, saucy, hot exchange students. Curfew was upon us just as we headed into a speed-reduced zone. I rushed back to the hotel. Curfew extended. At midnight, extended to 1 AM. At 1 AM, it was –

Ah, that feels nice. Much better, don't you think? There are no school buses in Venice; they're called school boats, and another thing, the tops are always –

ATKINS DIET

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DAY 16

VENICE

OCTOBER 23, 2003

Morning sprang upon us with a sweet dewy mist decorating the air. We hit Venice's charming streets searching for sushi.

After clicking through an extensive list of criteria, we finally picked a restaurant because a girl in the window had hair like Corrie's.

We ate Italian!

The pasta melted in my mouth. Corrie's hair led us to a phantasmagorical dining experience.

At the table next to us sat a gathering of Americans. A lady much like the one on the bus flagged down the server.

Her fingernails scratched the chalkboard, she squealed that she was on the *Atkins Diet* – her nails slashed more.

From behind the bookcase façade, Don Vito Corleone appeared, riddling granny with round-after-round of smoking-hot-lead. Once finished, he reloaded, firing ten more rounds into her slumping body. Upon completion, he took a plate of rigatoni and stuffed it down her throat.

Don't worry, she tripped, right?

Post lunch, we explored. Gondolas sat canal side, painted brilliant sky blue and vibrant candy apple red.

I told Dave I loved him.

He refused to go on a boat ride with me.

Venice began weeping, and I believed it was crying for me.

Venice is one of the most remarkable places I've been. Venice is photogenic – it never takes a bad picture.

Dave wanted ice cream. I snapped a photo as he lapped it up. The image captured him as a five-year-old boy on his first day of school, his mother at his side. She comforted him with gelato. David's face was covered by a grin from ear to ear with his first lick.

It was time to say farewell. It was time to visit the birthplace of the Renaissance; I owed it to myself to find a way to enjoy what was next. My past needed to be my past, nothing more.

We were about to wind our way across mountain roads and penetrate long dark tunnels. I was about to discover, self.

With the speedometer hitting 200, the slow death of Venice lingered in the rear-view mirror.

DRIVING IN ITALY

Venice to Florence is 260 kilometres, in North American driving time: approximately three hours. In Europe: eight glances in the rear-view mirror, one CD, Dave wetting himself, a stop for Panini, gas; and a leak, then, gridlock.

In North America, we are over-freewayed. Motorists whisk from city-to-city bypassing undesirable areas by avoiding off-ramps. Shiny glass towers riddle city centres devoid of historical significance, at least not yet. They're products of progress. Whereas, in Europe, every building seems historical.

One CD from Venice to Florence, two CDs while sitting on the highway on the city's edge, what's better: freeways or history?

Imagine little Timmy waking up in Rome. He looks at his father and tells him he wants to create something unique.

His father tells Timmy, *"We already have the Coliseum."*

Back home, I get to be part of the history-making process.

While we parked on the highway, I decided to jot down a brief overview of Florence (Firenze).

It's known as the cradle of the Renaissance.

Florence's museums showcase over 30% of the world's famous artworks.

Its historical significance brings both rapture and frustration as people flock to glance at the masterpieces.

We'd soon discover the historical significance is the reason for the gridlock.

We asked David Usher to save us.

*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.
This is my last chance to ease the fire –*

Being stuck in traffic, licked. FINALLY, it began to flow. David navigated our way into the city. I'm blind in my oncoming traffic eye, traffic started to oncome.

Four lanes suddenly turned into what seemed to be a gazillion. Cars zoomed by us from all sides, including from underneath our car. Speed was whatever was deemed okay; I closed my eyes – I opened my eyes. Dave was holding a revolver to his temple.

Suddenly, the horror intensified when we approached a roundabout. Every resident of Italy converged upon it at the same time. ~~Two~~ A gazillion lanes turned into lanes to the infinity. Cars, busses, trucks, salivating albino midgets & donkeys, a guy named Luigi, Pavarotti (he took up five lanes), scooters, *fucking scooters*, and several Hearses picking up the carnage of tourists filled them.

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I turned my head, positioning my functioning patch-free eye in the centre of the windshield. It didn't help. I glanced at Dave; he was knitting a sweater. Three bikes passed through the car's back seat, waking the bearded man. Roundabout navigated, we turned down the first calmed street, parked, and lay on the sidewalk, shaking; unscathed, the car that is.

I looked at David; he was trembling. I told him we couldn't go to Rome because there'd be too many Italian drivers there.

We decided to look for a hotel, a good thing because Dave needed a nap.

Dave continued wobbling – he asked me to hold him – I told him to hold himself.

We began to move, finding four hotels. The fourth one fits our budget. It was named *Hotel Golf*. The room keys had a golf ball attached to them. They bounced.

Once checked in, I told Dave: he could let himself go.

I went to collect the car. We had parked eighty yards from the hotel.

Back in the room, Dave lay down, and I, on the other hand, went searching for beer!

CATHEDRAL

Instead of finding beer, I stumbled upon *Brunelleschi's Cathedral Dome*. I was in awe. We had visited amazing houses of worship in NYC, Amsterdam, and Munich. Places meant to provide hope and solace. Each house of the Lord was beautiful with intricate details and an infinite number of hours of painstaking work by devoted artisans and masons seeking perfection. Firenze's Cathedral is unparalleled in-depth, effort, and passion.

I questioned the idea of whether God needs palaces built in his honour for people to worship him.

I was conflicted, my emotions taxed to the max, my spirituality in question.

THINKING INSIDE THIS BOX

A SEED INTERPRETATION OF SPIRITUALITY

What is our purpose in life?

What is God's message?

Does God even exist?

About thirty people stood in front of the Cathedral, snapping photo-after-photo as if they were gaining a deeper understanding ⁽⁸⁰⁾ of faith. This frustrated me.

God wouldn't have hired the artists and contractors to build his houses of worship, would he?

God's message is kindness, love, and unity, isn't it?

Do we need Palaces to worship?

I marvelled at the beauty and became lost in the opulence; my mind raced.

We're failing each other at alarming rates. Aren't we supposed to share love and come to the exact definition of what's paramount in life, **KINDNESS**?

As I strolled away from the Cathedral, I realized my religious ignorance, maybe my spiritual awakening, caused me to continue questioning the course of man.

Indeed, if God exists, opulence wouldn't be part of his message. Isn't excessive wealth, and weren't the magnificent houses of the Lord built by the wealthy to control the commoners?

Weren't the egos of nobility, placing riches above God's; if God exists, message?

We don't need the houses of the Lord to find God's message. We just need to dig deep into our souls.

BE KIND
BE KIND

Treat family like gold. Embrace friendship. Don't envy celebrities. Wealth can't be the sole goal of living. And attempt to live by these simple rules. Bookended between:

BE KIND
BE KIND

I feel the Lord's Message has been lost in man's ego and by the presence of greed.

I collected a few pieces of me in this historic place. More important: I accepted I might be walking down the right path.

If that makes me different, so be it.

80. How could I possibly know what the gathering was gaining (deeper understanding)? Precisely.

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.
