

MY **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

LET THE TRUTH SET YOU FREE

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.

LET THE TRUTH SET YOU FREE

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?

SQUARE PEGS. ROUND HOLES.
2007 BE BE? BOUND HOLES?



LET THE TRUTH SET YOU FREE
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2004 + 2005

(WITH TWO FLASH FORWARDS TO 2006)

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VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

30 JUNE 2004

I found the courage to talk to family about the truth. I no longer wanted to carry the burden of knowledge alone. Nearly one year had passed with me knowing the truth. For weeks, I tried to contact Jim, my oldest and closest ~~brother~~. My calls were unreturned.

Not to be denied, I called once more. Robyn answered. When I opened my lips, a waterfall of words came pouring out.

"That's right; she's, my mother. It's messed me up. I understand if you need to talk to someone about this. I don't expect you to keep the news secret. Have your dad call me."

"Lindsay, I won't say a word."

I knew she would.

I tried calling one last time, my ~~brother~~ Jim answered.

"Hey, Lindsay, did you catch the Eskimo's game?"

"Stop it, have you spoken with your daughter?"

"I have. I'm sorry. The news was devastating. I cried when Robyn told me, you know the truth. Lindsay, Mum + Dad wanted to tell you. They didn't know how. The rest of us thought they would have."

I tried to remain calm. *"Jim, I'm trying to understand. I don't blame anyone. The news shattered me. Jim, I found out at the end of a series of traumas. I was an emotional wreck. Alone."*

I repeated the words of the civil servant.

"Could you phone your parents and ask them who your real parents are? Jim, I cry every day. I'm coping, but I'm a wreck inside. I loved Priscilla. The inheritance saved me. I bought furniture, paid off debts, and travelled to Europe. I had to go, or maybe die."

I asked him for help and support. I told him how diligently I worked trying to finish my first book. I said I needed help: financial help.

Without giving it a second thought, he coldly said, *"We can't help you."*

"That's okay. Money wasn't the reason for this call. I called you because I am alone, scared, broken; I struggle to understand. My parents came back to life. Nobody can understand. I wanted it to be anybody but Bernice. I hoped it was a young girl who had made a mistake. Bernice was twenty-three. What's wrong with her?"

Jim then dropped another bombshell. *“Bernice, had a baby girl four years after you, she gave her away?”*

Great, I have a sister.

The news didn’t make me feel better.

“Sorry, we can’t help you. You will always be my baby brother.”

“Jim, this isn’t about money. I can’t be your little brother anymore. Everything has changed. I don’t want to deal with this alone. I watched your parents die. I’m trying to understand. I’m trying to understand. Lights are starting to go on. I never understood growing up why ~~Dad~~ talked about Don after my football games and not me.”

Jim raised his voice.

“I don’t want to hear shit like that. We were all raised the same way.”

I pleaded with him, *“How could we have been? Before I arrived, you were gone. They didn’t want another child. I’m just trying to understand. I hope we weren’t all raised the same. Your parents were seventeen years younger when they raised you.”*

I could hear the angst in his tone.

*I don’t want to hear one fucking bad thing about **MY FATHER**.*

CLICK

My ~~sister-in-law~~, Jim’s wife, Charlotte, attempted to mend fences, a valiant effort; however, my fence, wasn’t broken.

I remained alone.

I e-mailed my ~~sister~~, Beverly. Asking for help – explaining how I felt. I think I was testing them, reducing things to a monetary level as I write this. I hope the associated thoughts are wrong, baby brother, priceless until he needs help, then, well honestly, I was \$\$\$ broke.

E-MAIL FROM LINDSAY TO BEV + G

14 JULY 2004

I took the liberty of editing portions of the following e-mails

I thought I would drop you a short letter about events which have taken place in my life over the last year. It has been one of the most challenging years of my life. Somehow, I made it through to this point, not bitter and jaded. I’m reasonably happy. I have a bright future.

The following is an outline of the past year –

– here you have it – very confusing – incredibly emotional. Many things are going to take me a long time to come to terms with

– I can't explain how much the family stuff affected me. A civil servant broke the news.

– I do not ask you to understand what that would be like, because quite honestly: I can't even tell you how I feel –

I know things like this happened in that period.

– this is my life. I think some people have forgotten that – very few people spend their childhood watching their parents die. ~~Dad~~ started getting sick when I was fifteen, earlier, actually. I spent five to six years of my life going to the hospital to watch his sickness. I would not have done anything differently if I knew the truth. I still loved them regardless of circumstance. I know this period was tough on everyone – I do not deny that; however, for the most part, Brian and I were too young to witness the day-to-day sickness.

As for my upbringing: grandma & grandpa did the best they could, considering their ages and the fact they had to work right up until they got sick. –

– my upbringing was not all positive. Remember, I witnessed how ~~Dad~~ treated Brian.

I am not interested in hearing why this took place or how my upbringing was the same as everyone else.

I now must deal with my biological father's request to meet me. I also must know that my mum and dad are still alive and did not want me. I must also deal with the fact everyone in my life has changed. I know some may think nothing is different. That may be okay for them, but for me, everything changed.

I can't pretend. I feel like I have been lied to and betrayed. After all, it is **MY LIFE**. A civil servant should not have been the one telling me.

As for highly positive changes: The news gave me an understanding of why things have been specific ways. Amazingly, through this, I have stayed focused and worked harder than ever – I used every ounce of energy and every cent of what Priscilla so kindly left me toward finding what I want to do with my life. I know I am doing the right thing with certainty, and I am close to great success.

– I spoke with Jim; he said he could not assist. I have some friends...

...ask the family first. I believe that is what you are supposed to do. I need to raise \$4,000 - \$5,000 – funds are to keep my project moving forward.

I have no expectations. You can help (even if it is only partially), or you can't –

– I want you to know it took courage to write this e-mail.

As for the family stuff: I need time to figure out my emotions; I could be screaming, yelling, stomping my feet, and feeling sorry for myself.

I am just trying to understand an incredibly confusing situation.

Much like, I was not there to watch Bernice - Sadie - You - Jim and Don's childhoods – I can't comment –

For the most part, you were not there for me, so it is unfair to comment on – mine. The seventh child, raised by older parents, that didn't want me – not the best. I am not saying they did not love me, or I did not love them. I am saying: it was difficult.

Anyway, I hope you have read this with an open mind.

Hugs,

Nephew Lindsay

P.S My nickname is *The Seed*.

REPLY FROM BEV (87)

Dear Brother Lindsay,

Yes, brother Lindsay. This is how I think of you and always will. I hope you read this with the same open mind you asked of me.

First, I will tell you what went on in my life during the time frame and a bit longer since we have not kept in touch the way we should have these last years.

We moved. Three years ago, with the hopes of early retirement since Garth (Husband) is not in the most excellent health. High Blood Pressure. High Cholesterol. Diabetes.

I am sure you will be happy to know that he quit drinking. About five years ago, and life is much more pleasant for both of us, living with an...was not pleasant, but somehow, I managed, primarily by sticking my head in the sand and pretending.

Things have been trying with both Shannon and Aimee (daughters), but they are on their own, and it is time for them to look after themselves.

Just as you could start your own company with the inheritance that Priscilla left you, we had the opportunity to close our business and enjoy retirement, hopefully.

Now, to the more serious matters. I can't imagine how you felt when the clerk told you the parents you thought were yours were not. This is something that should never have happened, but it did. Now, as a family, we must deal with the consequences.

First, remember what things were like forty-four⁽⁸⁸⁾ years ago. It was not acceptable to be an unwed mother to raise a child. I genuinely believe Bernice took the only choice she had. And the option allowed her to keep you in her life. The decision not to tell you was not hers but Mum + Dad's. I had always hoped that Mum had told you before she died, again things were taken for granted, with hopes that they were done with everyone's best interest at heart.

I also thought both Brian and Donald knew, but I now find out that they didn't.

I have spoken to Bernice + Sadie by phone to let them know that you know the truth about your birth parents. I really hope you find the strength to at least talk to Bernice about this and get her side of this, for she is the one that knows exactly what happened.

Lindsay, you were raised as my youngest brother, and that is what you will always be. My fondest memory of my wedding is you like the ring bearer, saying, "*Abe, you dropped the pin.*"

Boy, you were cute.

I hope you find the strength to deal with this. Life just makes us stronger.

YOUR LOVING SISTER

BEV

P.S. PLEASE KEEP IN TOUCH, I WILL TRY AND DO THE SAME.

→→→

My REPLY

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18 JULY 2004

Hello Bev,

Thank you for responding. I like that you acknowledged you couldn't comprehend what I must be feeling. It shows you trying to understand or understand it must be difficult.

I am also glad you shared the challenges of your past with me. I feel it shows how strong a person you are. Garth is fortunate to have you. Sticking your head in the sand may have been the only option. I'm glad Garth is doing better.

As for the decision, not to tell me, you are right, the decision was in the past. Nothing can change it, and right or wrong, it must now be dealt with. But ultimately, it is mine to deal with and come to terms with. In time, I will make what I feel is the right decision.

As for me, everything changed. I cannot pretend it is the same. I cannot act like I do not have a different mother and father. I think I have a tremendous opportunity to understand who I am. I try to look for positives, and as mentioned before, I loved Mum & Dad (grandma & grandpa). I know they did the best they could in a trying situation. It wasn't fair to them or me. After all, it is **MY LIFE**.

Also, as mentioned, some things about my life growing up were difficult. This information at least helps me to understand why. It was not a reflection on grandma & grandpa, but more on a difficult situation. I am sure they didn't want to work as late in

life as they had to. On that note, no one in the family knows what it was like being the youngest of seven, raised by aged parents.

When I sent you the e-mail, I illustrated the challenges. I, in no way, feel sorry for myself. In general, my life is excellent. The fact I could come out of extreme situations caring and loving, without pointing fingers, or going poor me, is a real testament. I turned out rather well. As for life making you stronger, I think you are a strong person deep down, or you're not. Life doesn't build character; it reveals it. I have a lot, as do you. Bev, your e-mail shows what a fantastic person you are. It shows you care. That means a lot to me.

As for Bernice, I am not sure how to handle it. I know your perception is different than mine. I have a tough decision to make, and in a way, I think the full responsibility of this should not be my burden. Some of the memories were not good, and with this knowledge, let's say: it is very disappointing; I will not give specifics. Those are mine to find a way to come to terms with, probably mine alone.

As mentioned before, my life is fantastic. I have had bumps along the way; yet, I am happy, have a great attitude, and the best times are ahead. But, despite these extreme situations, I would not change one thing about my life.

Like said, I have been a *best man six times*. I am the *godfather* to a good friend's child – and I have made several personal accomplishments during the past year. I am immensely proud of these facts.

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Anyway, that is all for now.

Thank you for being honest.

Many Hugs

All the Best

Your Nephew

Lindsay

87. The e-mail was initially in ALLCAPS. I took the liberty to make it more readable.

88. How the fuck could I understand what it would have been like 44-years ago. I was a fucking baby. My reply was all B.S. I needed to be angry, but I was weak.

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.