

My **LIFE** ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS MY MUM

A META-MEMOIR



BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

MY LIFE ON THE SLUSH PILE



A story about finding yourself after accidentally discovering your life started with a lie.

Not every day do you meet someone who watched both of his parents die from The Big C and laid them to rest, only to discover sixteen years later that they weren't his parents after all!

It's like being reborn as a whole different person.

ABOUT A BOY



A boy is born in a secret place. A dark place. A sad place.
His Mother is his Sister. Making her his Sister + his Mother.

His Father is his Grandfather.

His Grandmother is just his Grandmother.

His Brothers used to be just Brothers. But then it is discovered they might be Uncles as well.

That turned them into Brunkles.

His Sisters used to be just Sisters. But then it is discovered they might be Aunts as well.

That turned them into Sisaunts.

The boy is never meant to know the truth because his birth brings with it, shame.

How could any of them be, okay?

Especially, the boy and his Grandmother?

SQUARE PEGS. ROUND HOLES.
2017 BE BE? ROUND HOLES?



2004 + 2005

(WITH TWO FLASH FORWARDS TO 2006)

HELLO FATHER

VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

1 AUGUST 2004

WELCOME BACK TO 2004!

I cannot guarantee there won't be another jump to the future in the following few pages.

I spoke with my father for the first time today, I'm forty-four.

When I came home from the gym, I made the call. Then, without rehearsal, I improvised. I was terrified, with my heart pounding in my chest, skipping beats with increasing frequency.

What if Elmer rejects me?

What if he doesn't?

Life can be fucking confusing.

Why was this burden falling on me?

Quit feeling sorry for yourself.

Fuck off, Drama Police.

Maybe, I stumbled upon the truth so that I could tell this story to let others know they too can survive.

That must be the case. I need to survive. If I don't, I risk becoming another sad, boring story, serving little purpose. I once read that for a story to be worthy of an audience, it must be more prominent than 'I' – without question: mine is, that's why 'I' will type the following words.

I picked up the number supplied by Madeline. 1-403 67–

– *please let it be an answering machine*, I hoped. That would provide an easy way out, dumping next on someone else's shoulders.

A man with a gravelly voice said, "Hello." His voice sounded experienced. His voice seemed as if he's lived a hard life.

My hands were perspiring, and I skipped hello and muttered, "I think there may be a chance that I am your son."

Those words were the strangest I've ever said.

To be repeated to a man on a park bench in the future.

My heart dropped to the floor below.

I now understood surreal. I spoke to my father for the first time – nineteen years after watching the man. I thought was my dad, die.

I must have paced six miles during our *one-and-half-hour* conversation. The conversation was a blur.

He has two sons.

That means I went from the youngest of seven to an only child to the eldest of two, and now, I'm one of four in birth order. These changes occurred in slightly more than one year.

Elmer began sharing his life with me.

"My youngest son has a drug problem. When I was young, I was a womanizer." His voice dropped. "My wife. My dear wife. She had a problem with alcohol; we both did. I couldn't help her. The addiction was going to kill both of us. She was my love. I had to leave her. It broke my heart. I couldn't help her. My demons were crippling me."

I could hear the relief in his voice as he shared.

"For a time, I wanted to die. I drank and drank and drank, hoping it would kill me. It never did. It ripped everything apart, crumpled it up, and destroyed." His voice cracked. "I had to choose between leaving and dying? I live daily with the heartache of abandoning her. I will take that with me to the grave."

I felt connected. I thought Elmer was letting me know he understood my suffering. Here, his son, a son he was never sure of, calls out-of-the-blue. So, where do we start the conversation?

I think he started from the only place he knew.

"My wife died on the day I left. That's what I told people. That is the only way I could get by; she lived five more years before finally succumbing."

Fifteen years have passed since her death, bringing us to today, Elmer continued to tell his story.

"I found clarity from the decisions of the past. I inflicted great pain on my life. I alone had to face my shortcomings, my limitations; it was the only way to release myself from the guilt."

I couldn't find anger, I simply listened.

"I tried to do the honourable thing with Bernice. She accused me of getting her pregnant. So, I was willing to be a man and accept responsibility. She refused my offer."

I began to cry.

"Elmer, I don't want anything from you. I was incredibly nervous to call you; I wasn't sure if it was okay, I am messed up. I found out by accident one-year ago. It's an awful feeling trying to understand this whole situation. I don't expect anyone could, I don't."

I don't think there is a book, psychologist, or psychiatrist on the planet who could prepare you for a moment like this. I was talking to a man I thought I had watched die decades before.

My spirit folded in half; emotions taxed. A short conversation couldn't undo or explain forty-four years.

"We were drunk the night you were...a one night."

Reality bites.

"I told Bernice I'd marry her. She pressed me to take a test; I never heard from her after that."

Our conversation was both pleasant and unpleasant. My father was a man of character. The more I listened, the more I wanted to hate my mother. The more I heard, the more troubled I became because I wasn't the most crucial part of the fucking equation.

I don't apologize for my anger.

361 After talking to my "birth father" for the first time in forty-four years, three questions sprang to mind.

1. How do you end the conversation?
2. Will it ever start again?
3. What do we do now?

His words comforted me.

"Elmer, I guess we need to find out if you are my father? If you are, we'll take it from there. If you are not, at least we shared a pleasant conversation."

"Sounds reasonable, Lindsay. It is time for the adults involved to deal with this. The adults, including me, have done you wrong. I'm sorry."

August 1, 2004, I spoke with my dad for the first time. Our conversation was more profound than any I had with my father I watched die.

My heart breaks.

I need my family to understand my pain.

What if he's not my father?

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.