

LINDSAY WINCHERAUK



ON THE SLUSH PILE

MY SISTER IS
MY MUM

I DROVE A DEAD MAN TO WORK

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.
2007 BE BEE? BOUND HOLES?



I DROVE A DEAD MAN TO WORK
I DROVE A DEAD MAN TO WORK

LETTERS TO ED

+

SPARE PARTS

I DROVE A DEAD MAN TO WORK

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VANCOUVER BRITISH COLUMBIA

7 MAY 2006

DEAR ED

FYI: I've kept my cranium clean-shaven since our last correspondence. Life keeps ticking along. I'm swamped trying to earn enough money to survive by working two jobs:

JOB 1

TRADES LABOUR CORPORATION (TLC)

Driver. Driving construction workers to job sites.

JOB 1

CHINTZ & COMPANY (HIGH-END FURNITURE STORE)

Chintz & Company (high-end furniture store)

Shipper/Receiver.

Bartending would have been my job of choice. I was damn good at it; the bar provided me with a stage; I loved performing and bringing people together. Now in my forties, I guess the age factor erased that option. Oh well, I can still drink in bars!

Driving for TLC requires me to wake each morning before 5 AM. Waking before 5 AM sucks; it is nearly impossible to get used to rising at that ungodly hour. It leaves me out of sync with the rest of society, dinner at 4 PM, drunk by 5:30, hit the sack by 9, my midnight. At least being out-of-sync showers me in individuality. I often walk alone.

Mondays are the worst; this Monday was to be unavoidably calamitous.

I rounded the second last corner before the office. Emergency vehicles were racing toward me; a car similar to my non-descript beige Toyota Corolla had been t-boned by a large truck. It spun through the intersection of Quebec Street and National Avenue, finally coming to rest one-hundred feet from the point of impact.

I was first on the scene. I stopped twelve feet from the mangled wreckage. I looked to my left to see a middle-aged man slumping over the steering wheel of his car. I could see his

neck pulse faintly, his eyes went blank, becoming vacant, he died.

Tears rolled over my cheeks, breaking at my chin, dripping onto my lap.

Soon, I would be driving a dead man to work.

My first run was four workers to two different construction sites. I had never met them before. During the drive, we engaged in *lightly flavoured* small talk about the never-ending rain and teleportation.

The conversation u-turned from *light* when one of the workers expressed, he was in a rut. He said if his life didn't turn around by the seventeenth, his birthday, he was going to go to the highest point on a bridge and jump. He shared his disturbing story before he even shared his name. His name was Ken.

Struggling for words, I asked if he could do it during *off-hours* to avoid screwing up traffic. Unfortunately, my attempt at adding levity failed miserably.

I desperately tried to treat his words as if they belonged in a normal conversation. So, I asked him what was stewing in the rut destroying him.

"*What's so tragic that you want to end your life?*" I asked.

My job has deposited me in a place where such conversations are commonplace. Many of the workers I transport have been marginalized and struggle for survival.

403 Ken told me his debilitating mental state was a product of the death of his parents, his wife leaving him; and arriving at midlife alone.

If you listen carefully, you can almost hear self-righteous people yelling:

Take responsibility for your life!

I've come to understand that it's not that easy for most people.

I could tell by the calm resignation in his voice and the emptiness in his eyes, he was serious.

He experimented with crazy drug concoctions.

Sprinkle CRACK and DOWN into the rut and stir vigorously.

His voice began to tremor when he added, "*Down is heroin.*"

His desperation caused me to consider whether I could ever pull the proverbial trigger. Ed, I'd like to say the answer to the question was an emphatic *no*.

Unfortunately, I think most of us, when life brings us darkness, are capable of doing unthinkable measures, like suicide.

I tried once, but I failed miserably.

Let's hop into the Wayback Machine and travel back to that tragic moment.

WAYBACK

JULY 1991

The love of my life dumped me. How often have you heard 'love of my life' and 'dumped' in the same sentence?

Ed, why do we punish ourselves by holding onto a love that is no longer there?

Is being friends with someone who doesn't want you an accomplishment?

We've been through so much together. Oh, you've replaced me. Tell me all about your news...oh, please.

After my breakup, I sank deeper and deeper into misery. I believed I couldn't go on. The weight of my anguish was crushing me. I needed to end the pain. I phoned a Crisis Hotline for help. And then refused to accept the advice.

I decided to take the misery into my own hands. I filled my bathtub with tepid water and climbed in. My left hand pushed the back of my head under the water. *I gasped.* Before I surrendered, my right hand came to the rescue.

I stepped out of the tub and collapsed onto the floor in laughter.

The healing process began at that precise moment, and this time: I won.

If I had succeeded with my selfishness, you wouldn't have read the last line.

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FLASHBACK

MARCH- OCTOBER 2003

In March 2003, a series of traumatic events knocked at my door and entered my life, each one pushing me closer to an emotional breaking point. Each trauma introduced a new low point.

Ed, I desperately needed to escape. So, I decided to travel to Europe with my buddy David. In October, we embarked on a thirty-one-day trip. I needed to find my happiness.

FLASHBACK TO EUROPE

DAY 15

OCTOBER 22

MUNICH

On Day 15, I hit an all-time low. I became privy to a dark family secret, one my entire family cloaked in secrecy, even the family pets.

Since July, I struggled with a revelation about my parents, placing my very identity in

question. It was consuming every ounce of my spirit. On this crisp fall day in Munich, my foundation was shaken more when my dear friend Wayne called from Vancouver. He read the contents of a letter revealing a secret about my family. I was now being challenged to change the course of my life. I needed my family more than ever before; I just didn't know how to tell them I knew they had participated in a lie?

I believed I had sunk as far as I could; that all changed on Day 19 in Nice.

FLASHBACK TO EUROPE

DAY 19

OCTOBER 6

NICE FRANCE

Sunday morning in Nice brought with a warm, overcast haze. I crawled out of bed at 6 AM, sleepless from the night before. Sleep had become torturous because my past kept swirling in my head.

I walked to an internet café with my head and spirit slumping.

When I opened my mailbox, one email greeted me. It was from my ex-girlfriend, Trish.

Dear Asshole,

I hate everything about you.

You suck, I love my new man more.

He's far better than you

Blah, blah, fucking blah.

Trish twisted the dagger by finishing with.

I hate you.

Trish

I left the café in tears.

My life up to now had been a rollercoaster ride of extreme highs and lows. I learnt to mask my pain with humour.

For the first time in my life, I couldn't find a comedic way to cope with my pain.

PAIN + PAIN + MORE PAIN + TIME = COMEDY/ (PAIN (CUBED)) = DESPAIR

My next comedic performance: CANCELLED, maybe forever.

I DROVE A DEAD MAN TO WORK

FEBRUARY 17, 1991

ST PAUL'S HOSPITAL - SASKATOON

Three days after reconstructive knee surgery, I pleasantly hallucinated on a morphine drip. My nurse came in and upped my dosage. Fifteen minutes later, she returned to remove a drain inserted on the outside of my left knee. Then, she tugged vigorously on the drain; it wouldn't budge – she pulled again – when the hardware finally came out; it felt like a wire brush was tearing my veins to shreds. I screamed **FUCK** so loudly it ricocheted throughout the hospital, sparking coma patients awake.

On this day in Nice, the pain I was experiencing was far more agonizing than knee surgery. My life was spinning out of control.

I walked away from the internet café, stumbling with every few steps. A brick appeared out of thin air and landed on the pavement before me. Brick after brick were stacked upon each other by invisible hands in rapid succession until an impossibly high wall was built.

I sank further into depression. I needed to find the strength to climb over the wall. I needed desperately to move forward, but how?

With this new revelation disrupting my life, life had become: Stranger than Fiction.

Tears continued spilling from my eyes as I staggered down Nice's promenade. I wondered if I'd be better off dead. *That would teach them*, I thought. I was facing two ethereal doors:

DOOR 1
DOOR 1

Life and all of its struggles, good and bad.

DOOR 2
DOOR 2

DEATH.

I sat down on a bench and looked out at the Mediterranean, tears pouring from my eyes. My mind flashed to an episode of "The Simpsons:" Moe's college professor asks Moe if he has a cure for cancer. He then walks into a lake, taking his own life.

Moe watches from the shore and says *Professor, don't you want to take off your shoes? Oh... Oh... oh.*

I contemplated doing the same and having my bloated corpse spat out of the

Mediterranean days later.

I wanted to go home. I just wasn't sure where my home was anymore. The house had always meant where I grew up; however, with the truth about my family, was that place ever truly my home?

The previous night: night eighteen of the trip, was blissful. Dave and I met Steph & Arno. They used to be a couple. They speak French. Do you remember?

This rendezvous with Steph and Arno led to the night stopping just shy of casual sex. I'll spare the details. I believed: casual...would have spoiled the moment.

Instead, I bid them adieu and hopped back on the despair train.

I had cried every day for more than four months.

I returned to the hotel to wake Dave; it was now 9 AM.

Two blocks away from the hotel, I came across a well-dressed man wearing a driving cap. He was standing in front of a taxi. My eyes were nearly swollen shut. I peered at him through droplets of tears.

Time stood still.

I glanced over my left shoulder. The man was crouching beside the taxi. My vision was blurry from crying, like a drinking & driving advertisement where you look through a series of empty beer glasses lined up in a row. My crying marathon continued.

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The Academy Award for entering an Emotional Wasteland goes to –

And then, SMASH.

The man smashed out the car's passenger window directly in front of the taxi. He looked at me, pressing his index finger against his lips, and shushed. He started running. He was clutching a purse.

I chased after him. I shouted at him in French. Since I don't speak French, I made loud, incoherent sounds in a non-existent language.

When he rounded the corner and saw me running after him, he realized: I was about to catch him, so he threw the purse into the air. I caught it. He scurried away like a rat.

I dropped to the ground, panting; I was now clutching the purse.

I strolled back toward the car.

"*Poulet Vous policia, cell phone,*" I called out to the people on the promenade.

Eventually, I found someone who cared. I spoke to this good Samaritan loudly and clearly to make my English understandable.

Two more good Samaritans joined us. They called the police. By this time, my tears had slowed to a trickle.

We're supposed to take care of each other, aren't we?

A tall, handsome middle-aged woman approached us, with her husband (?) in tow. Her voice broke with emotion as she listed the items in her purse. She told us they were flying home in less than two hours.

Her purse contained: passports, cash, and credit cards.

Everything is okay. I have your clutch. I chased after the man who stole it from you —

As I uttered the last word, my eyes began to well up with tears again.

Gratefulness beamed on the handsome woman's face as she thanked me; I handed her the purse and ambled away.

I need to find out how to be happy. When I arrived back at the hotel, I shared the story with the desk clerk. He didn't care.

I shared it again with Dave. I told him about the '*you suck*' message.

He suggested: I stop sucking.

I'm a good, kind man. This day confirmed that truth.

I must find a way to deal with my family members who kept the dark family secret from me. I might have to let them go. I need my pain to stop. I don't know how to cast them aside. Maybe it's not my decision?

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Day Nineteen in Nice taught me I'm capable of things far more significant than I ever imagined.

Don't worry about me too much, Ed. I am going to be okay. I'm not sure when the clouds will part. But my gut tells me, one day, they will.

Did I think about ending my life that beautiful misty day?

Sure. It would have been easy to end it all, just swig down some pills. But I didn't have the strength.

No, I guess what happened is that a stronger sense of purpose came over me. And besides, I'm not sure taking the easy way out is what any of us are supposed to do?

Isn't the easy way, just wasting valuable lessons about life?

Ed, I'm getting closer to blasting the door open to my past and revealing the dark secrets I've been hiding from you. Be patient with me. The truth shook my foundation to the core. Before I get into the story about Europe (already told) and the rest of the trip, I want to tell you more about my drive with the dead man.

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.