

DEATH SAUCE

A Love Story

EATING TOWARD TOGETHERNESS



GRANDMA SAYS

Wait one hour after eating before attempting to change history.

BY **LINDSAY** WINCHERAUK

Jarrood fell hard for Bub. He crumbled like a pastry held in Bub's delicate hands. Bub's large dark soulful eyes sent Jarrood into a state of helpless bliss. Bub's voice melted him. He longed to press his lips against Bub's supple lips; Bub's lips often tasted minty. Bub's beauty and tranquillity confounded Jarrood's balance. A gentle touch and Jarrood would feel the ground beneath his feet open wide, swallowing him, capturing him in the here and now. They came from lightyears away – nevertheless, Bub's warm breath on the nape of his neck immobilized him. They'd been together for more than nine years. Still, every time the sun peaked through their bedroom's window, casting a beautiful silhouette over the curvature of Bub's shapely figure – Jarrood fell deeper, risking never being able to return to where he once escaped.

PENELOPE + THE VEILED TREE
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Denial made sense. Escape came by hiding from reality. Gloria's death should have been the final straw.

The crisp autumn air turned into winter.

Christmas arrived.

Penelope threw a gala Christmas Dinner.

Something inside of her, perhaps; selfishness for a life she never knew of, instilled deep into her psyche a need to offer a place of belonging during the holidays for those who had long lost a home to go home to, a place judgement-free – if, only for one day.

The devastation of death, death, and deception, only to be followed by death, should have floored Penelope, but shockingly, for a moment, Penelope felt whole. Her life cried out: deal with the past. She would have nothing to do with it.

The calendar flipped to 2017. Penelope became numbed – at times drunk – pressing forward with nary a care in the world. Penelope's life was richly draped in a tapestry of "larger than self" – she preferred it to only be about self.

January flipped into February – morphed into the new beginnings of March – and then into the downpours of April –

WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2016
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Penelope's legs swelled to an Ungodly level. A level 10 pain rolled through her joints, endeavouring to destroy her. She continued to work. Her coworkers and employees were at a loss for how to handle Penelope's usually cheerful demeanour turning sour, so they chose not to look, not to acknowledge. In reality: they likely couldn't give a damn.

The lack of acknowledgement was when Penelope began to feel the most alone. It's when the string of deaths became real. It's when Penelope could avoid no more, and it's when Penelope became *more-than-fragile* with her demise flickering in a not-too-distant horizon.

Penelope became riddled with fear.

A trio of medicines was prescribed, including chemo pills. A pill caddy was reluctantly

purchased only to be softened by Penelope seeing pill caddies for athletic supplements in Health Food Stores. Denial lurked only to be pushed aside by debilitating pain. Penelope never missed work, nor did anyone suggest she take time off. Her mother died, and the lack of understanding by colleagues disgusted her. Not knowing what to say or how to act, screeched all Penelope would ever need to know: love and support come in small numbers.

Penelope desperately longed for home.

In Penelope's blindness, Harold Court silently comforted without condition. He never wavered in his love of Penelope. Harold Court is a hard man. But if all truths are told, perhaps; hard, is a lie – could Harold Court really be – a man layered in kindness?

Pop a pill. Pop a pill. Pop another pill. All food began tasting like chalk. Penelope's gargantuan-sized legs are un-swelled. A regiment of opioids mixed with various colourful pills seemed to do the trick. For example, 4 pills – 3 pills – 2 pills – 1 pill – cold turkey, weaned off addiction before it kicked in. Three weeks passed, and the legs began to become pumped up again. 4-pills – 3-pills – 2-pills – weaned off before becoming a statistic. The swelling subsides.

"Harold, this marinara sauce tastes like chalk. Don't worry, I will wash it down with a lovely aromatic chalky chardonnay!"

Penelope masked her challenges by immersing herself in work + a burning creative side relentlessly stoking the fires to create a great piece of writing, much unlike the previous sentence. A sentence is probably destined for a rewrite.

Anyway (again), work, well –

"How was your weekend, Penelope?"

"Rough, my esophagus closed, and after a single bite of dinner on Friday, I barfed my guts out with a pain shooting through my throat. I puked for most of the weekend. The volume of barf – "

"Yeah, my weekend turned out to be rough too; my kids were a nightmare, I didn't get much sleep."

"And mine," another colleague chimed in, "I had a tummy ache."

Penelope gave up.

Pop a pill. Pop another. Life goes on. Evading the past worked. "Don't look" became her mantra allowing Penelope to traipse through the days pretending everything had been resolved, and everything was okay, not to torment, not destroy.

Don't get me wrong, Penelope's life had become filled with suffering. Penelope is an

extroverted introvert with a deliciously dry sardonic wit fed by interaction with people who, for the most part: live life with blinders on.

"Can you believe what's going on in the political landscape these days and the putrid divisive words falling out of a world leaders' mouth daily?" Penelope offered.

"A lot of people love him."

And with those lame words spewed, Penelope realized she was the only one capable of having a conversation. Loneliness ensued.

Harold Court sat silently in concern for Penelope's well-being. He gently encouraged her creative pursuits. He constantly ensured she kept eating.

FRYING PAN FOOD TRUCK

BURRARD STEET, VANCOUVER BC.

Suppose you asked baby chicks (baby is redundant) what they want to be when they grow up. In that case, I'm sure most would answer I want to be scrumptiously spiced and dropped into the sizzling fryer in The Frying Pan Food Truck (Korean). Until I become golden brown crispy perfection, erupting with juices that dribble pleasure out of the corner of your mouth!

Seriously, you'd probably want to lick the dribble off my face – seriously.

BEST CHICKEN (SANDWICH) SANDWICH EVER!

A relative calm finally arrived. Penelope, except for her pill regiment, and the constant swelling and un-swelling of her extremities. Penelope was finally able to breathe in the sweet fragrant air as spring sprung into the sweltering of summer. With her past simmering on the back burner, 2017 drifted by death free, but of course, Penelope feared for her own mortality, but thankfully, *Denials* engrossing beauty buffered reality. Pint after pint after pint didn't hurt, perhaps to one day, become a potential problem rising later as social teetered on the edge of necessity.

Penelope's calendar became littered with new days to impact her psyche upon each of their arrivals.

Her first father, Jack's death anniversary.

Her first mother, Marie's death anniversary.

Her (real) mother, Beatrice's first death anniversary.

And her sister Gloria's first death anniversary.

Each time an anniversary arrived, Penelope sank into the solitude of misery, unable to express her emotions in a climate where everyone seemed to be self-absorbed. So, as quickly as a day landed, reminding her of what she'd never completely dealt with, Penelope chose to look away.

Christmas arrived. Another successful gala dinner with Harold at her side was a rousing success; life looked brighter. With the new year came new beginnings. Penelope was on the verge of launching a creative literary career. Her words inspiring to others, purifying to her.

And then, at work one day, Penelope whimpered, "*I feel like collapsing.*" The next day, "*I feel like collapsing.*"

Penelope met up with friends later that day, telling them, "*Somethings wrong with me. I don't feel stable.*"

A hospital visit was advised, and Penelope chose home instead.

With her face pressed up against the glass of a pasta restaurant, lips locked to the glass, diners filled with fright, Penelope could no longer ignore the need for medical attention. She unhooked her lips from the restaurant and continued stumbling right for the last three blocks home. Upon seeing Penelope, Harold's face took on a look of grave concern. He grabbed her a glass of water. Penelope picked it up and proceeded to dump it onto her lap. He grabbed another drink. Penelope poured it onto her lap again – the signal from the brain to hand failed. Penelope went to bed.

FRIDAY, 5 JANUARY 2018

Penelope woke up, still alive. Penelope stumbled to the pharmacy to refill a prescription, continually tripping right. She debated going to the hospital. She tripped right – again and again and again – until she frightened a small child in a stroller as she glanced by.

The hospital won.

Nine hours later + innumerable tests later, Penelope's reality had become lost in a catastrophic brain injury. If the hospital had not won on this day, Penelope would have been no more, + this story would have arrived at – NEXT – *the adventures of Jarrod, with Penelope no more.* But fortunately for you, Penelope still is!

TAKA RAMEN

Vancouver BC

Ready. Go.

The first slurp of delectable broth explodes with flavour with a beautiful mouthfeel, like a saucy, soulful jam, with a tickle of sweetness caressing the senses. Yum. Pause. The savoury fires into a gender-neutral kick in the junk. The heat intensifies. I want more. I'm in pain—a good pain. Tears start pouring from my eyes. I hallucinate.

What's the late Brittany Murphy doing here?

Begin by putting your tears into your broth?

BRITTANY MURPHY

The Ramen Girl (Movie)

I slurp more. I can't stop. The more I cry, the more I desire. I have a problem. Not to make light of addiction—I'm addicted. My insides are being crucified, but I can't stop. I must stop.

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PLOT TWIST

One Week Later

I'm found in an alley by a dumpster—chopsticks, spoon, and a bowl of Ramen gripped tightly in my arms.

Get away from me. It's all mine!

A bleeping catastrophic brain injury laced with self-doubt, denial, sadness, anger, + depression—could it possibly be the end of the road for Penelope?

Her marching orders were given. Two, three, four... umpteen doctor visits filled her days. Her pill caddy became filled to the brim.

One pill caused massive weight gain.

Another retention of water.

A third, mood swings.

A fourth, ripped Penelope's insides apart much like the alien in alien but only teasing the expanding girth of her belly, never breaking through.

A fifth—

The colourful pill smorgasbord had three purposes.

1. Keeping the intense pain rolling through her body under control.
2. Calming her vitals to levels in a safe range as opposed to death being imminent, and→
3. (See 2) keeping her alive.

Penelope liked alive!

Foolishly, she never missed work; on a positive note, she now knows what a phlebotomist is!

ANOTHER WEEK. ANOTHER DOCTOR.

“Slap this on. It will monitor – You need to wear it for a week.”

“Breath deeply; you cannot move inside the machine. The sound it makes can be unbearable. If you’re claustrophobic –”

“This might sting a bit. I suggest –”

THURSDAY, 17 MAY 2018

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Forty-three... Penelope sat in the Neurologist’s office; specific brain surgery would be on the docket soon.

Lift your leg, stand on one foot.

Now the other.

Juggle these kittens.

Do a headstand. Sing.

Well, Penelope, I’ve got some good news and bad news. Hell, just news. You suffered a stroke. If you had not gone into the hospital when you did, you’d have died. The basket of meds has been keeping you alive. You must keep taking them. The tests revealed you are genetically predisposed to shrinking arteries in the brain, a pinhole, so to speak. Surgery is not an option. The meds should keep things under control. I don’t think we will ever need to meet again. Take your meds, and you should be fine.

→ Or die, flickered in Penelope’s mind.

Penelope doesn’t want to - “or die.”

Penelope never missed a day of work. Penelope is –

Penelope plopped down onto a bench close to the doctor's office. Her eyes pierced into the ocean below. Tears flowed. She pulled out a pad + pen. Words poured from the sword onto the pages.

SUSHI MUGEN 2021.10.06.14

Davie Street, Vancouver BC

That was undoubtedly heavy. I'm famished. Shall we take a break and grab a bite?

Do you want to grab sushi?

Nah, I hate raw fish.

What decade are you from?

I never went for coffee in high school because I didn't drink coffee. My popularity suffered because of it. I swore never to be that stunned ever again."

Okay, I'll go for sushi.

Wow, sushi restaurants have more than raw fish – who knew?

Everyone, literary, everyone, apart from those who say they don't understand basketball.

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And also, those people who don't eat ramen because they don't like... soup... a little disorganization in the cranium is perhaps their diagnosed infliction."

Thanks for twisting my arm. Sushi Mugen is inviting – beautiful room, mouth-watering presentation. The tastes check all five boxes on the flavour spectrum: sweet-sour – bitter – salty – umami in perfect balance. I want more bleeping sushi!

Do you want to go for ramen?

You hate soup. And besides, we just ate.

Okay, Chicken Noodle, another time, I want more chicken and the flaming salmon sushi.

Seriously, the Sushi comes with fire!

Don't call me Chicken Noodle.

SUSHI MUGEN is a delightfully flavourful addition to the Vancouver Food Scene!

Eat There

Do they have soup?

Udon for your soul!

Hey, is that Belinda over there hiding behind her menu?

I think it is.

Shall we invite her to join us?

Maybe not. I think there is blood trickling from the corner of her mouth.

10 JULY 2018

How did we get here?

The simple answer: I write, you read!

Penelope's deep thoughts are not only her gift to the world; it is also her curse.

Penelope's morning ritual includes checking the mailbox on her way to work. She opened the box and immediately became overcome with joy. A letter sat inside. Not a bill. Not a bombardment of advertising. Instead, something personal, official, stuffed with closure, something from her once sister, Hattie.

Penelope quickly peeled the envelope open. The contents of the envelope comprised a letter from a law office. Attached to the letter, she found a brief note from Hattie.

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This is all the information I have.

Love, Hattie

Penelope began quaking, and her blood raced through her veins, sending tingling sensations through her.

She felt faint.

She cried.

She tried to fight her emotions, but the tingling intensified.

For the first time in her life, a family member signed "love."

Upon further examination, she discovered Beatrice's Life Insurance Policy + Last Will & Testament tucked under the note. She braced herself against a tree and slid to the ground, consumed by emotion.

My mother thought of me, she thought. Tears continued to pour from her eyes. My mother thought of me.

But just as quickly as the happiness of being finally acknowledged delivered her to a sad but blissful place, with further inspection of the

contents, the ecstasy was blasted off the emotional pyramid, only to be replaced by debilitating despair. Beatrice died twenty-two months ago, and the letter was the first contact with family since. Penelope initially thought love had been delivered – wrong – her name wasn't mentioned on the Policy; unless her name was "only child." *Of course, Hattie had no choice but to send Penelope this coldly legal document.* Hattie tried to mask the icy cold with a charade of "love" – her gesture reeked of insincerity. Twenty-two months after her sister died → Hattie had a legal responsibility to settle the estate.

Penelope read through her mother's chicken-scratched Last Will & Testament, searching for solace. Six pages and nary a mention of her name. Beatrice's stocks, remaining cash, and possessions were all about to go to Hattie. Penelope didn't care about money or possessions – she hoped for non-existent closure – a connection, a sign of being wanted.

She read the Will once more.

Anger replaced sadness only to be replaced by a burning desire for the Policy to be several hundred thousand dollars.

She thought her mother was haunting her from the grave; the least she could do was make it rain cash.

55 Penelope called the Insurance Company.

Hello, could you please tell me how much the Policy is for?

\$2,500.

A lifetime of abuse through neglect and secrecy, and in the end, closure comes in at \$2,500.

Penelope quickly realized "love" never existed; it was only used to say a giant **FUCK YOU** – here's your pittance because I couldn't legally take it from you!

How did we get here?

Penelope Court had a rough two-years +++

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.

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.

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.
