

MY  
DAYS



JULY  
2023

LINDSAY  
WINCHERAUK

Lindsay Wincherauk

**JULY 2023**

2

ARE YOU THERE SAM  
ARE YOU THERE SAM



3

**D**arkness is my pain. I must keep moving. A homeless man's gravelly voice rises from the asphalt ten stories below. His words used to grate. Now, they tell a tale of a society on the verge of crumbling. I wake up sweating. I go to the washroom to relieve myself. I'm terrified. I need to be walked back to bed. Nobody can help. I must find strength in myself. I must find a way to trample down the darkness. I must observe, find a different path, never quit, and find the light.

Yesterday, I was still trapped in the quagmire. I avoided the Fitness Asylum. I still read. I managed in my depressive state to surpass 23,000 steps. If I can only beat depression, I will become an unstoppable rising beacon.

I come across Eric. He's protesting in front of the Police Station. He's holding a sign saying he was chased for 26 blocks through city streets. The sign finishes with "MENTAL HEALTH." Most people would ignore him.

**Stop**

What is this about? I ask.

He tells me about being chased by several men for 26 blocks. He tells me a story about calling the police for help – and when they finally came, they STAMPED MENTAL HEALTH on his file and told him they could do nothing for him. He cried out for help, and he was immediately stigmatized as crazy. Shamefully, I didn't dig deeper into his story. I know Eric has spent over 30 days trying to bring awareness to what happened to him.

### We Chat

We determine the world must change the verbiage we use when discussing each other.

Some people might judge Eric. Initially, that's where I was leaning. But, after I spoke with this young man for a few minutes, I must applaud him for finding the courage to stand up for something vitally important. Kindness. Empathy. And the removal of stigma.

Once dubbed with MENTAL HEALTH – there are few paths for escaping into whatever you deem a better future.

Some people want a job; others a million dollars, maybe a new car.

We don't get to decide for each other – our journeys are unique.

4

### Walk

My mind is stumbling through despair.

I sit with friends.

Names irrelevant.

The day's topic is about how grocers are losing tons of money through theft because of the switch to self-checkouts.

One friend says a man punched in the code for peanuts instead of Brazil nuts, saving himself \$32.00. I doubt the veracity of this story.

The conversation turns dark.

If he did this several times, one of my friends says, he could feed a family in Ethiopia.

Why is this turning racial and cultural? I ponder.

The other man says, China.

I want them to stop. I ask them if they knew the Steam Clock was installed in Gastown to stop unhoused people sleeping on steam grates to keep warm.

They look befuddled. They continue.

One of them says, grocers are now stopping people from leaving stores to check their receipts.

I say that is offensive.

They disagree and ask why?

I'm surprised they asked.

Let me tell you several reasons. I say.

1. They eliminated jobs to make more money.
2. Underpaid security guards are having to judge which of us are potential thieves.
3. And most important, if someone is reduced to the desperation of stealing food, maybe they are just hungry.

And besides, I add, when I went to the local grocer to tell them one of their products caused me to become violently ill with food poisoning, they didn't care.

Walk

Crap, Sam is approaching me.

For the story's sake, I am now Carlos.

Sam sees me.

**SAM** (cheerful)

Carlos, it's great to see you!

**Carlos**

| inaudible |.

**SAM** (leaning in)

What's it been over three years?

**CARLOS** (agitated)

I can't talk to you.

**SAM** (sympathetic)

Come on, Carlos. How are you?

**CARLOS** (angry)

What a ridiculous question.

**SAM** (defensive)

Look, Carlos, I had nothing to do with you being let go.

**CARLOS** (sarcastic)

That's An odd thing to say.

**SAM** (persuasive)

Fernando had to make a difficult decision to protect his company.

**CARLOS** (furious)

Sam, I don't want to talk to you; you make me sick! You're trying to tell me Fernando needed to protect his bottom line, but at what expense, J, and my life?

**SAM** (trying to explain)

The company needed to free up money.

**CARLOS** (bitter)

By getting rid of me. Wow!

Sam realizes the conversation is becoming more heated and decides to back off.

**SAM** (apologetic)

Carlos, I understand you're upset. I just thought we could talk and maybe find some common ground.

**CARLOS** (defiant)

There is no common ground between us, Sam. You were always Fernando's pawn, and he threw me under the bus without a second thought. Fuck, I should have known better; you always boasted of your weekends binging at Fernando's house.

Sam sighs, realizing that the conversation is going nowhere.

**SAM** (resigned)

I'm sorry you feel that way, Carlos. I hope one day we can find a way to move past this.

**CARLOS** (angry, hurt)

You are all monsters. I gave almost fifteen years to the company, and you had me replaced by one of your childhood friends. I thought of you as a good friend. How stupid of me. You even had me train your fucking friend. Fuck.



**SAM** (defensive, attempting to explain)

Carlos, it wasn't personal. It was a tough decision, but we had to cut costs. The company was losing more money than we could handle. And the pandemic...

**CARLOS** (disbelievingly)

If the company lost more money, why didn't you let go of your childhood friend or even take a pay cut yourself? You know the sacrifices I made for this company, for you!

**SAM** (frustrated)

Carlos, I understand your feelings, but it's not that simple. We have to consider the entire company, not just one person.

**CARLOS** (raising her voice)

Consider the entire company? What about considering the humanity within the company? Where is the loyalty, the trust, the respect that we all shared? And fuck, I was about to turn sixty; what do you think would happen to me. All with a pandemic beginning to rage.

**SAM** (defensive, trying to justify his actions)

Carlos, we're in an incredibly competitive industry. Sometimes tough decisions had to be made for the survival of the company. It's just how the business works.

7

**CARLOS** (passionate, trying to appeal to Sam's conscience)

But Sam, we were more than just employees. We were a family. We believed in something greater than just making money. I am disappointed that your only priority is money, nothing more. I know it is an incredibly competitive industry, fuck, after you let me go, you went to a great extent to BLOCK me from ever working in the industry again.

**SAM** (defensive, becoming more assertive)

Carlos, the world is changing, and we needed to adapt. We can't operate on idealistic principles alone. Profitability is vital for the company's survival; unfortunately, sacrifices had to be made.

**CARLOS** (defiant, speaking her truth)

Me.

I have gained clarity on who you indeed are.

**SAM** (miffed)

You're wrong,

Carlos. Plain and simple.

**CARLOS** (defensive)

Am I? Tell me how you didn't monitor everything I wrote and then tried to weaponize it against me. Fuck. I had life-saving surgery, and we were supposed to be good friends, and you couldn't even find the courage to reach out and see if I was okay.

**SAM** (sincerely)

I couldn't.

**CARLOS** (confused)

Why?

**SAM** (admitting)

Because I am still working for Fernando.

Carlos's eyes widen in shock.

**CARLOS** (genuinely hurt)

I can't believe this. I thought we were friends. How could you do this?

**SAM** (regretful)

I made a mistake, Carlos. I was wrong not to be there for you when you needed me. But it's not because I don't care about you. I didn't reach out because I was scared of the consequences if Fernando found out. I let fear cloud my judgment, so I am genuinely sorry.

Carlos's anger starts to soften, replaced by sadness and disappointment.

**CARLOS** (sighing)

You were never a friend, then. Friends are there for each other, no matter what. I thought we had that kind of friendship, but obviously, I was mistaken.

**SAM** (pleading)

Carlos, please, give me a chance to explain. I know I messed up, but I want to make it right. We can't change the past, but we can work towards a better future. I value our friendship.

Carlos pauses, contemplating Sam's words.

**CARLOS** (resigned)

Value our friendship; what's it been over three years? Do you even know what the fuck you are saying? This hurt runs deep. I can never trust you again. Just know that I'm not ready to forgive or forget.



**SAM** (nodding)

I understand, Carlos. Take all the time you need. I'll be here when you're ready to talk, ready to listen without judgment.

They share a sombre moment of silence.

**CARLOS** (softly)

I will stop here because I don't want to say what I think of the lot of you. You even monitored everything I wrote.

**SAM** (sincerely)

You wrote some mean shit.

**CARLOS** (through gritted teeth)

Yeah, fiction and all of you were so paranoid you think the only monsters roaming this earth are you. You played a huge role in destroying J and my life. I actually think you played the most significant role. Who fucks over a friend because of greed and entitlement. You don't have to answer.

**SAM** (softly)

I was just...

**CARLOS** (cutting off SAM)

I know, being what you are.

**SAM** (sighs)

Stop.

**CARLOS** (angry and persuasive)

CARLOS, it's not great to see you.

**SAM** (looking down) I never meant for things to turn out this way, Sam. I never wanted to hurt you or J.

**CARLOS** (frustrated)

Then why did you? Why did you let it happen?

**SAM** (defensive)

I didn't let it happen. I made some bad choices, and I take full responsibility for that. But I never intended for any of this to escalate to such an extent. Greed and entitlement got the best of me, and I lost sight of what mattered.

**CARLOS** (bitter)

Yeah, well, your choices had consequences. Consequences that J and I are still dealing with. You can't just expect us to forgive and forget.

**SAM** (desperate) I understand that, Carlos. And I'm genuinely sorry for the pain I've caused. I wish I could go back and change things, but I can't. All I can do now is make amends and learn from my mistakes.

**CARLOS** (slightly softened)

You can't fix what's broken, Sam. Not easily, anyway. It's going to take time and effort, a lot of it, to rebuild what was destroyed.

**SAM** (nods)

I know it won't be easy, but I'm committed to doing whatever it takes to make things right. I don't expect forgiveness immediately, but I hope that you and J can find it in your hearts someday to...

**CARLOS** (reserved)

Oh, fucking, please. Maybe someday. But for now, it will take more than words to regain our trust.

**SAM** (determined)

I understand that. And I'm willing to do whatever it takes to prove to both of you that I've changed. I won't let greed and entitlement consume me anymore.

**CARLOS** (sternly)

Good.

**SAM** (sincerely)

I promise, CARLOS. I won't let you down again.

They lock eyes for a moment, the tension slowly dissipating as both individuals contemplate the possibility of forgiveness.

FADE OUT.

||

Grammarly Readability Score = 80.

Grammarly Readability Record = 99 (May 1, 2023)

## A 60ish-Year-Old-Man Gets Vaccinated



Are you looking to get vaccinated?  
Yeah, they just said, I could right now.  
Don't, the vaccine could kill you.  
Who are you? Fuck off, Dink.



Hello, I will be poking you.  
Nice. A scary man said I'm going to die.  
We all die.  
That's not comforting.



I hate needles.  
You're the one. That's the first time I heard that.  
What are your qualifications?  
Are you a responsible junkie?



That's rude.  
Probably. I'm just nervous. Scared.  
Don't be big man.  
What? Anyway. Here's my arm.



I can't look.  
Take a deep breath. Breath out.  
All done. That wasn't bad, was it?  
You are my hero.  
Do you know where I can score a fix?



### SIDE EFFECTS I EXPERIENCED

An Ouchy Arm + Body Aches.  
Mild Headache + Overheating.  
An Erection. [NOT]  
Sleeplessness.  
Levitation.