



a sequel

chasing neon

the plot line

fuse

Chapter 1	Off/On
Chapter 2	49
Chapter 3	Crush
Chapter 4	Gay Bar: Episode 2: Breaking Free

splice

Chapter 5	A brilliant Friend writes: attempt three
Chapter 6	Flow
Chapter 7	Approximately: \$153,800
Chapter 8	Dream Abyss
Chapter 9	Contact
Chapter 10	Wayne - Greg - Jay Lee - Me
Chapter 11	Kilian Henry
Chapter 12	Ray Robertson
Chapter 13 14 15	Angela (Slovenia)
Chapter 16	Piddleburg

amperage

Chapter 17	Energy 1090
Chapter 18	50
Chapter 19	2G/John

chase

Chapter 20	Jay Lee 2
Chapter 21	Where am I going with this?
Chapter 22	Greed

shine

Chapter 23	Appeal
Chapter 24 25	9.0
Chapter 26	Lindsay + Lindsay + ING
Chapter 27	Pitcher Butte

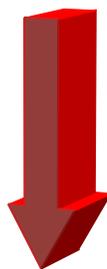
glow

Chapter 28	Ritchie's Recovery vs. Rebecca Black
Chapter 29	Sobriety lost found
Chapter 30	How about one of these babies...
Chapter 31	Gay-rrriage
Chapter 32	Where are you now?

Bonus

Extra surge	Poutine
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follow me



start reading

30

How about one of these babies...

Beulah Home

Finlay, Mary:

Mary Finlay was a missionary from Staynor, Ontario when she came to Edmonton in 1909 to help at the Beulah Mission. The mission sheltered newly arrived women, and later helped unwed mothers.

When her husband died in 1921, she became the superintendent of Beulah Home. She retired in 1964, when the province took over the home. During her tenure, Finlay helped care for some 5,300 single mothers and their children.



The following dialogue is borrowed from [What Sorts of People Blog](#)

manypetunias says:

I've been looking into how "problematic" reproduction was managed in Alberta in the last century, and have come across some of the files from the Beulah Home (for unmarried mothers) in Edmonton in the early 20th cent. They referred a few repeat clients to the Sterilization Committee. And the comments attached to these clients suggests a circular definition of "feeble-minded" ---a woman (or girl) who gets pregnant out of wedlock more than once is feeble-minded because only a feeble-minded woman would fail to learn her lesson and get herself knocked up/be taken advantage of more than once.

These repeat clients were understood differently from the naive and innocent "child-mothers" who had made terrible mistakes, which was the way most of the Beulah Home clients were construed in the surviving documents. At the risk of playing devil's advocate, I do understand the position the Beulah Home people were in with some of the repeat clients, esp. quite young women who had three or more, unplanned pregnancies and were obviously being victimized at home or elsewhere. Beulah Home had no way of offering any meaningful help to these women; the only thing they could offer was a trip to the Sterilization Committee

as a weak form of damage control; no information as to whether these clients were actually sterilized (although I assume they were) or whether the sterilization happened without their consent.

claudiamalarcida says:

December 16, 2008 at 10:01 pm

Thanks for this comment---it stirred some things up for me, both personally and as a researcher. In terms of "a weak form of damage control," I realize that people and systems operate within their historical and political constraints, but still I do feel it is reasonable to stand judgment on these actions and on the actors who performed them. Sterilizing young 'wayward' women rather than protecting them, educating them or serving their need for reproductive control seems more than just a mistake in judgment or the best solution to a bad problem. Making victims of abuse sterile doesn't stop the abuse; it just makes it invisible, and removes its outcomes from the public purse. I suspect that in Michener Center, sterilization occurred for at least some long-term residents because it saved a few staff and 'higher-grade' (not my term, but the institutional lingo) residents from being caught as sexual predators.

I'm guessing the records at Beulah indicate some compassion on the part of administrators and social workers whilst making these determinations about these 'troubled' young women. I've interviewed ex-workers at Michener, and read documents in the archives written by them, and they often indicate fondness or at least a sense of high responsibility toward their charges and a seemingly compassionate view about their care. That being said, when I've spoken with survivors, their memories seem quite different, and they rarely (there are exceptions, I know) have maintained anything like a relationship to the institution or its workers once they got outside the doors. In other words, there are separate realities going on here---and this is probably why subaltern studies are necessary!

The concept of following the path of least harm by sterilizing or institutionalizing in these situations brings to mind my dear mother's (seemingly constant) admonition that the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

beulahbaby says:

November 25, 2009 at 10:10 pm

I am very interested in the comments regarding Beulah Home in Alberta. And I would love to hear more about the location of records because I'm starting a group for people adopted from there. I have to say that I was quite surprised to see these comments as the information I have been able to obtain so far would indicate that the staff were much more considerate of the birth mothers than this would indicate.

beulah baby 2 says:

November 28, 2009 at 3:52 pm

I am also interested in the comments about the Beulah Home. I was born there. My mother had a daughter before me lost to adoption, not born in the home, and a son after me, lost to adoption, not born in the home. She was 24 when she had me. I wish I could find someone who would have been in the home at the same

time she was, Jan 1955, so I could find out how she may have been treated, how all of the mothers were treated, and if she looked after me for the 16 days before I was placed with my adoptive family. My mother remained in the home for an additional 2 days after I left.

manypetunias says:

December 7, 2009 at 6:46 pm

Hello beulahbabies,

I've dug through the existing archival work on the Beulah Home---some of this information may be of interest to you. The BH's records, including names and dates of women who were clients, is in the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton (file GR1978.0050), but all identifying information is protected under FOIPP, so it would be very difficult to track down a specific individual. If you want general information---you can ask archive staff for files PR1993.0359 and PR 1971.0047.

From my reading of the general files, which contain no identifying information on the women, I can tell you a few things:

Beulah Home was founded in 1912, as one branch of the Beulah Rescue Mission, which operated three other sites in what was then downtown Edmonton. The whole operation was run by the Edmonton Evangelical Association, an EXTREMELY religious Protestant organization.

The Home was founded in response to concerns that young women who found themselves "in trouble" would be rejected by family and polite society, and would turn to prostitution. BH was located on what was then the very outskirts of the city; on what I believe is now 137th Ave, in order to keep these women away from the "temptations" of downtown.

Records from the early years describe the women as "lost souls" and as "no more than children themselves." The staff placed a tremendous emphasis on "saving" their clients and "rescuing" them from the path they were on; but the general tone of these statements is more of pity and maternal compassion than of punitive judgment, as was the case in many other homes for unwed mothers of the time.

The clients were portrayed as victims of unscrupulous men, who strayed from the path of virtue because they did not have enough spiritual strength to withstand temptation. The literature produced at Beulah stresses the importance of setting girls on the right path, so that they could move on from the unplanned pregnancy, which brought them to Beulah, and have a chance, to someday, become "legitimate" wives and mothers. Marriage-ability was the ultimate goal, and the newsletters and fundraising materials contain pictures and stories of former clients who returned with their husband and (legitimate) babies to visit the home, as well as copies of wedding invitations sent by former clients.

The majority of the clients in the early years were young unmarried women who were working in Edmonton, with a few younger women from outlying rural areas.

Although Beulah Home literature describes them as "child-mothers," from the one record of ages I was able to find, only 20-25% appear to be under 18.

The religious element diminished markedly in the 1950s, with more emphasis placed on providing educational opportunities for the women in the home, such as high school correspondence courses and other forms of training, rather than (or in addition to) endless religious services. Marriage-ability also receives much less attention than general preparation for adult life.

I don't have much material from the 1950s; the decade of interest to you, but I do know that over the course of the 1950s fewer and fewer babies were boarded in the homes for extended periods, and more and more were adopted right at birth, and pregnant women stayed for shorter and shorter periods. In 1960, the old Beulah Home closed and a smaller one opened where women could come right around the time of birth. Sometime in the late 1970s/early 1980s (exact date is not clear), the Beulah Home ceased operation altogether.

The following dialogue is borrowed from Adoption.com

Hi Tara,

Thanks for your post.

I was hoping that someone that had been there in the mid 50's, Jan - Mar '55, might have answered. My birth mother was there then, I have found her, but she denies me, so, I was hoping I might find someone that would have remembered her. If you were able, I would love to hear about anything your aunt remembers. Thanks for your time; it's much appreciated.

Boey :0)

Hi Boey,

My aunt has since reunited with her bson. I am sorry that your bmom is denying you. Bmom's from her era were told to forget and "move on." Not that they did that, but many didn't tell anyone after it happened, including my other aunt who also was at Beulah Home and gave birth to a little girl. She denies it ever happened. I'm sorry. Chances are you will have a hard time finding someone who knew your bmom as the girls were given "new" names and were forbidden to talk about their lives at home. The one thing that stood out from the stories my aunt told me about her time there was that the girls were made to care for their babies for two weeks after they were born as punishment for becoming pregnant out of wedlock.

I've been trying to find some information on Beulah Home in general...

The following text is borrowed from Russians Clowns & Drag Queens

July 16th, 1960

A historical account of the birth of

Lindsay Wincherauk

A reasonable hand drawn facsimile



It was a stunning day; the sun was shining brightly on the Alberta prairie. Something wasn't right. It should have been a day of tremendous celebration. Instead, it was a day shrouded in secrecy.

"No one can ever know. It will bring us shame. This is our

worst nightmare. Our family will be ridiculed," Nicholas, said in a whispering voice to Rebecca.

With tears in her eyes, Rebecca, responded, barely remaining composed, "It is not fair. Who will take care of the child? Nick, she is our daughter. We have to support her. Someone will have to look after..."

Tears were pouring down her face. Her heart was shattering. This was no way to celebrate a new life. It wasn't a celebration at all. No fan fare---no cigars. She knew what they were doing was wrong. She couldn't stand the lies, the secrecy.

They'd kept the birth a secret for the past ten months. When Bernice got to the point she was showing, she wasn't allowed to socialize. She became a recluse. She didn't want the child; however, there was no alternative. Abortion was an unthinkable sin. She didn't want anything to do with the child's father. She wasn't even sure who the father was.

Bernice had been lying to herself. She was rebelling. It was difficult being the first child, a child who much like the one being born today; wasn't wanted.

Nicholas wanted a son. In those days, fathers wanted their first born to be male. It was a sign they were real men. Bernice was a disappointment. She knew it and rebelled. She wanted her father to pay for his lack of love. She had gone too far. She was twenty-three. She should've known better. Getting pregnant wasn't payback, in reality, it shown an intensely bright light on the fact she would never be good enough.

That was excruciatingly clear when the first son was born, James. He was the fourth child of Nicholas and Rebecca. The bloodlines could be continued; James was revered by his father. Treated like a God. Nick made it perfectly clear to everyone.

Nick loved his daughters. He didn't know how to express it. Unfortunately, for the girls, Bernice, Sadie, and Beverly, he did not suppress his exuberance at the birth of his first son. They wore the pain on their faces daily. It ate away at their esteem. Rebecca did the best she could to hold them together. She let them know they were loved. Despite her efforts, the girls were scarred. Those scars were going to travel with them throughout their lifetimes.

These facts didn't excuse Bernice from the mistake. From the moment she made it, the course of her life was going to be altered. She was considered a failure in the eyes of her father. That destroyed her soul. Her ultimate payback was giving birth to an unwanted child. She was leaving the babies destiny in the hands of Nick.

Ultimately, it was going to be Rebecca's responsibility to hold the family together. The only problem; she was a broken woman. Her first child was giving birth and no one could know.

She wanted to rejoice, instead, she participated in the lie.

She envisioned a celebration. This day resembled a funeral. It wasn't the start of a brilliant life. It was in a sense---the end of a family.

"It just does, from this day forward, we will tell no one. I will figure out what we are going to do with the baby. Once I do, we will never speak another word, EVER. Bernice has shamed us. I won't allow it to fester," Nicholas said with

sternness, voice cracking.

A doctor entered informing them a boy had been born. His mood was sombre. He felt tremendous shame. It was supposed to be a bright, lively, July day. It seemed to be the longest, darkest, dreariest, winter night, imaginable. No smiles, just a quiet, "at least everyone is ok."

Complications may have been a blessing.

The baby was whisked away to another room; no bond formed. She was having the child to spite her father. She had great disdain for her child. Giving birth did not satisfy her need for validation. It cemented the fact she will never be good enough.

For the child, the decisions made that day, were going to create unexplainable vagueness in his life. It was going instil a feeling of never belonging.

The new baby was placed in a room with three other babies. No one was looking in on them. Everyone in this dark secret place was wishing the nightmare would end. In reality, it was just beginning.

From that day forward, everyone in the family had made a decision---participation in a lifelong lie. To divorce themselves from reality; ultimately, the lie was going to impact only one person, the baby boy. It was his life. Life for him was starting behind the largest obstacles possible. Life was going to be a tremendous struggle. For those participating in the lie, they choose to give up a bit of their souls that day, as for the baby...

Finding me

Apparently, I can draw. But reasonable... well, of course it wasn't fucking reasonable. However, it appears that I may have nailed the beginning of me.

Why did I have to start looking again?

What drives me?

You don't have to answer; the questions are moot.

Kilian Henry was born on April 4th the same birthday as my beloved Jay. Kilian has loving parents, Greg and Constanze, unmarried; yet, his birth wasn't shrouded in secrecy or veiled in disgust, layered on by religion and the pressing eyes of countless tragic souls who stand in judgement.

I'm not sure what emotion I'm supposed to have now. Now more than ever I feel a need to find out more. I need to talk about my existence. In lieu of that, I don't know who to talk to or who'd understand, care for that matter. My beginning was incommensurable for all involved---my presence is their punishment until each one of them die. I'm sure they don't care, how could they, they're absent from reality. Skewed in denial---I ramble; I don't know what they are skewed in, or by.

Kilian's birth is a celebration. Mine...

I'm disgusted by my need to find out more about me when my main concern should be what's happening in the moment. In the moment, a new life is beginning. I need to share in the excitement and joy of my dear friend's life changing course forever more. Greg will be an amazing father, without question. I'm sure he must be terrified.

I'm a Beulah Baby, what the fuck does that mean?

Where was I for my first five years?

I don't have a single recollection... a dense fog has swallowed every memory until my first one at age five. "Lindsay, Lindsay, Lindsay... you're not one of us."

They weren't lying.

Visiting my birthplace: May 9 2013

Coming soon...