

# LUNGING INTO THE UNDERBRUSH A LIFE LIVED BACKWARD

A memoir by  
DAVID HOMÉL

## EXCERPT

I was stuck with the self-definition of a person in pain, that idea of noble suffering that was so compelling, but ridiculous once you stepped away from it. Now I had come to a crisis point. The locking up of my knees and the terrifying paralysis in the night were beginning to unstick me. It was about time.

There were echoes of my Toronto years in my wife's complaint. I had heard these things before. Was I really going to go on not learning anything from the people around me?

I cast around for psychological causes for what was happening. Was I living in a rigid, clenched manner, were my legs unable to carry me to where I thought I wanted to go? Were they afraid to take the steps I longed to? Yes. No. Maybe so. Like everyone else. I was living as I always have, as most of us do, wanting this thing, then that, choosing both, but truly choosing neither, the result a kind of hovering state that might be considered cowardice, or simply upholding the reality principle. But that habitual emotional state could not explain what was happening to me physically, unless I was prepared to step into the category of hysterical men.

Locking, freezing, barring—these are the words that describe the phenomenon. There is an initial feeling of paralysis that turns out to be temporary, because the joint regains its movement once it has worked itself out of its plight and can bend. Those descriptive words do have an emotional weight. You may live feeling frozen, you are barred from yourself, or barred from what you want, you are living a life locked in, or locked out.

I appreciated those poetic, emotional descriptions. They served a purpose. They exempted me from doing anything positive to lift myself out of physical incapacity and dysfunction. But it was time to do something more than make jokes about the warranty running out if I wanted to walk down the street with a firm step.

ISBN 9781773900797  
\$21.95, paper, 246 pages  
[www.lindaleith.com](http://www.lindaleith.com)