
Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:21:13 GMT

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Tuesday, September 25, 2068, 3:00 p.m., Tracy family graveyard, Kansas (8:00 a.m.,
Wednesday, September 26, Tracy Island)

I will remember you
Will you remember me?
Don't let your life pass you by
Weep not for the memories.

Jeff led the family, dressed both somberly and formally, back to the graveyard. They had worked until past sundown to cut up the oak and the two uprooted cypresses that had served as part of the windscreen. That morning, Jeff called in Ken and his crew, and between them and the Tracys, the graveyard was made presentable for the afternoon. There was still work to be done: parts of the fence needed replacement, and several of the older gravestones would need repair or out-and-out replacement. The latter made Jeff sad; one of those that was totally smashed by the fallen oak was that of Seamus himself.

"You know that Grant's father made rubbings of all the old stones in the cemetery before he died," Emily told him. "They're in a safe-deposit box at the bank. New stones can be cut and engraved to match the old ones."

His mother's words were comforting, but only just. The losses in the graveyard left Jeff feeling bereft, as if a part of the family's history had been lost.

Today, they wandered through the graves, telling the children what they knew of the various people who were buried there. The fragrance of honeysuckle permeated the air, borne on the breeze, all the wind that the remaining Leyland cypresses would allow to hiss through their trimmed branches. The vine was bunched along a length of wrought iron fence that had been spared, and bees buzzed busily among its blossoms. Small clumps of bright zinnias raised their petaled faces toward the sun, visited by butterflies flitting their way from flower to flower. A few marigolds were blooming here and there, orange and yellow blossoms showing bright against the dark stones. Marion had planted them both earlier in the year, and the mowers had spared as many as they could.

Jeff carried a sheaf of yellow roses to place in the vase that stood at the foot of Lucille's grave. The stone was etched with the words, "Lucille Anne Tracy, October 25, 2010 -- September 25, 2045, Loving and Devoted wife and mother. We will remember you." Dianne slipped her hand in Jeff's and squeezed it as he closed his eyes against the moisture that had suddenly collected there. He squeezed back, and gave his new wife a shaky smile. "I think I'll take a walk around, then come back to pay my respects. Give the boys a chance to say what they want to."

"Would you like me to walk with you?" Dianne asked softly, not knowing if her husband needed time to be alone with his thoughts.

Jeff hesitated for a moment, then nodded. "Yes. I would."

Dianne smiled, and squeezed his hand once again. He took it, kissed it, then put it in the crook of his arm as they walked off toward some of the older graves.

Emily sat on a wrought iron and wood bench near her husband's grave. Alan carried a hanging basket of red geraniums for her and Gordon followed with a tall, decorative hanging hook. He pressed the straight ends of the hook into the soil, and made sure it stood firm. Then Emily took the basket and hung it up. "There. Red geraniums for comfort."

She turned to her grandsons. "You two help keep an eye on Tyler and Alex now. I want a few moments alone with Grant."

"Okay, Grandma." "Sure, Grandma." Each gave her a kiss on the cheek, and went off to obey her commands.

She sat down heavily again on the bench. "Well, Grant, we're back for a bit. It's a nice day, but Lord, did we have some work to do when we got here. Never thought that the Lord would test us as much as He has this year, but I guess He's had a purpose in it all, if only to teach me that I can't fix everything." She paused and sighed. "The house is gone, Grant. A tornado up and took it away. So little was saved... but then, there wasn't much left there to begin with. Nothing but a few keepsakes, and the memories. Still, it was our anchor, our reminder of where we'd come from, and where we could come back to."

She paused again. "We nearly lost Jeff, too, Grant. A helijet accident in New Hampshire. He hovered on the edge of life and death; it was due to the boys' strength, and Dianne's skill, that he didn't slip over the edge and join you and Lucy. He's healed now, in more ways than one." She shook her head slowly. "God's put us through the wringer this year, darling. But He's blessed us, too. Nothing has come our way that we haven't been able to face as a family - and a bit of help from Him."

Each of the boys in turn came to Lucille's grave while the others were spread throughout the graveyard. Scott crouched down before the stone and kissed his fingers before putting his hand on top. "I wish you could see Dad now, Mom. He's moved on, and is happy. I'm doing okay, though it's been a rough year for us. Still looking for that special girl, though. Not sure if I can find one like you."

He paused and smiled, glancing off toward Cherie, who was seated on the grass by a group of zinnias, sketch pad in hand. "It's different having a sister in the house, Mom. I kinda see why you and Dad kept trying; girls are special in their own way. But it's okay that you and Dad only had boys; I don't think I could send a sister out to do what we do." He looked around, and saw Virgil glancing his way. "I think someone else wants to talk with you, so I'll go see what my sister's up to. I love you, and I'll see you again next year."

Scott got up and went off to sit in the grass by Cherie, and Virgil walked up, hands in his pockets. "Hello, Mom," he said quietly as he crouched before the stone. He smoothed his hand over the top and traced the letters with a finger. "I'm sorry I didn't come out to visit last time I was here, but it was kind of hectic. The house had been destroyed by a tornado, and Dad's new wife was almost killed by one, too. We were all scattered hither and yon, and well, we were focused on the living,

and not those who had passed on. Maybe if I'd come out, we'd have seen what needed doing here, and not had to work so hard to clean this corner up." He rotated a shoulder. "I'm sore in spots I'd forgotten existed."

He smiled a little, then sobered. "We almost lost him, Mom. A damn snowstorm nearly took him from us. What is it with us and weather, anyway? Heavy rain took you, a blizzard nearly took him... a tornado ripped up our roots..." He shook his head sadly. "Listen to me, still angry at it all. You should see my paintings -- all dark colors. And my latest compositions; I'm almost afraid to play them because Scott would be on my case, wanting to know what was wrong."

He paused again. "Okay, change of subject. I've met this girl. Her name's Elise. She served with Scott in the Air Force, and was piloting the helijet Dad was in during that blizzard. We became friends, and now... well, it looks like it may become more than that. She's a spitfire, and fun to be with, and I hope... I hope there's a future there." Smoothing a hand over the gravestone again, he smiled. "I'll keep you up to date on things, okay?"

A shadow fell over Virgil and the headstone, and he glanced up quickly, then back. "Looks like someone else wants to talk to you. Love you, Mom. See you again soon."

John squeezed Virgil's shoulder as the latter got up. "Thanks, Virge."

"No problem, John. I'll go see what Alex has found."

Virgil walked off as he'd come, hands in his pockets, but now whistling an unfamiliar tune. He headed toward the spot where Alex held something in his hand, showing it to Tyler.

"Hi, Mom." John chose to sit, cross-legged, before the headstone. "I'm sorry I didn't get out here when we were at the house last; there was so much going on, too much, really. The farmhouse was taken by a tornado; nothing was left but the basement. Half the barn went, too, but left behind a momma cat and her kittens." He smiled and chuckled. "You won't believe it, Mom. Grandma insisted we bring them home. They've been living in her suite; she says the kittens are ready for new homes. I'm thinking of asking for one." He leaned over to whisper, "Don't tell Dad; but I'm going to smuggle it up to Thunderbird Five. See how a cat does in space."

Chuckling again, he sat back. "We've got a lot of new people on the island; they've been a big help with the organization. I'm getting to know some of them really well. There's Dom; he's got a little guy named Josh. Luke is new. You should see the way he carves wood; he makes it an art form. Callie's a sweetheart. We had a bet on about the Final Four in college basketball." He paused, then sighed. "There was a girl that I thought I..." He ran a hand through his hair. "She wanted more than a friendship, and I wasn't ready for it. I'm still not, for that matter. She's gone now, anyway. I couldn't give her what she wanted, and someone else could." His voice dropped when he added, "I wish her well."

He glanced around him, and spied his father and Dianne standing near his great-grandfather's grave. Jeff's back was to him, and Dianne had an arm resting across it from behind, reaching up toward Jeff's shoulder. He smiled. "I hope you don't mind that Dad remarried, Mom. He's needed someone to light up his life again like you did." Kissing his fingers as Scott had, John laid them on the top of the headstone, then hauled himself to his feet. "I'll see you again soon, Mom. Love you

always." With that, he walked off in the direction of his grandmother, who smiled at him and patted the bench next to her.

Gordon and Alan came up together, both fidgeting a little. Ever since they were little, they'd made the journey to their mother's grave, but it was an obligation that neither really enjoyed. Gordon's memories of Lucille were fuzzy; snatches of music, an occasionally remembered smile, laughter in the bathtub were the clearest. Alan's memories were fewer still, and even more fuzzy, so much so that he didn't know where his own memories ended and his brothers' recollections, told to him in quiet, private places so as not to upset Jeff, began.

"Hi, Mom." Gordon brought a small bouquet of white and pink carnations. He didn't dare put them in the vase with his father's bountiful and beautiful roses, so he just laid them on top of the stone. His grandmother had told him all about the meanings that some of the flowers and trees that were planted around the graveyard. But he wasn't into such things, and the carnations seemed to be appropriate. "It's a nice day to be here. We had a lot of work to do to clean up the graveyard; a tornado ripped up some of the trees, and the fence was smashed."

He shifted his weight from one foot to another. "I've been good, though I got into a couple of scrapes that injured my back. Mo... I mean, Dianne was really strict with me about getting well. Dom -- he's the new nurse -- taught me some yoga positions that help." He laced his fingers together. "We've got some new people in IR. One's a firefighter; her name is Cassie. Haven't gotten much of a chance to know her; she hasn't moved in yet. Brandon's another; he's an aquanaut and has been a great help to me." Gordon glanced at Alan. "I guess Alan wants to talk to you now." He sighed. "See you again, Mom." He motioned toward his brother, and went off, hands in his pockets and head down.

"Hello, there." Alan rocked back on his heels. "I usually don't know what to say to you when we come, but you know that already. I say it every year, don't I?" He sighed. "I guess the first thing I should tell you is that I broke up with Tin-Tin. I told Penelope that my life was too dangerous to have someone in it... which it is! I felt I had to break up with Tin-Tin to keep her safe." He shook his head. "I was being a jerk; something I've been told more than once by more than one person." He shrugged, then smiled a little. "Gordon told you a little about Brandon and Dom. Well, I guess I should tell you about the other new nurse -- Nikki." He chuckled. "Never thought I'd fall for someone like her. We didn't start off too well, mind you. I guess my 'chauvinistic ways' made her mad or something. But... there's something special about her. I don't know whether it's her eyes, or the way she holds her head up, or even the way she beats me at basketball. I've just grown to really enjoy her company."

He paused. "When the tornado took the farmhouse -- it's gone, by the way, in case no one told you -- and tore up the graveyard, it also took out Thunderbird Seven. Mom... I mean, Dianne... Dom, and Nikki were on board. I wasn't here; I was in space, helping to separate a couple of satellites, but when I heard about it, I was scared. Not as scared as I was when Dad's helijet went down... that was a whole different kind of fear. But I was really scared. Scared for Dianne, because she was hurt the worst, but also for Nikki. I mean, we'd just gotten to be friends and... I thought we could become more. Then she's in the hospital." He paused, and said thoughtfully, "Maybe her life is the dangerous one." The idea made him quiet for a moment, then he perked up. "But she's okay now, and well, that's the news in my life. Maybe next year I can bring her and introduce her."

A hand fell on his shoulder, and he turned to see his father standing behind him. "Everything okay, son?"

Alan nodded. "Yeah, Dad. Everything's okay. You want to talk to her now?"

"Just for a minute."

Dianne stood back as Jeff took one yellow rose from the bouquet, and moved close to the gravestone. Alan stepped back, then turned to Dianne and hugged her tight. "Thanks, Mom," he murmured in her ear. "Thanks for showing me what a mother's all about. I love you, y'know."

"Oh, Alan," Dianne said quietly, a bit of shock in her voice at his comment. She sighed, a grateful sound, and hugged him back. "I love you, too, Alan. And I'm proud to be your mom, even if I didn't give birth to you."

In the meanwhile, Jeff crouched before the headstone, and traced the two entwined hearts that were engraved between Lucille's name and statistics, and the epitaph. "Thank you, Lucy," he whispered. "You gave me far more than I ever gave you. Every day of our lives together was filled with love, even when we fought or were angry with each other. I have mourned for you for a long time, but my mourning is through. I'll always remember you with love, and cherish the memories we made together. But now I have someone new to love and cherish, and I wouldn't have her if you hadn't shown me how to open myself up and love unconditionally." He let the soft tears roll down his cheeks. "If you can see me, see us, from where you are, I hope you understand how happy I am now." He kissed the rose and laid it at the foot of the headstone. "Yellow roses say 'I miss you', and I have missed you. Now I'm moving on."

He took out his handkerchief to wipe his eyes and face, then put it back in his pocket and stood. His gaze swept the graveyard, rested briefly on the gently smiling face of his wife, and glanced toward his father's grave, where his mother sat, John and Tyler beside her.

Gathering Dianne to his side with one hand, he headed for his mother. Scott, noticing this, whispered in Cherie's ear, and began to help her gather her pencils and other supplies together. Virgil, who was with Alex, examining an insect he'd found, nudged the boy, who let the bug go. From all corners of the cemetery they came, converging on the spot where Emily sat.

"Well, son," Emily said, beginning to rise. "I'd best go pay my respects to Lucy before we leave."

"That's fine, Ma. Just come right back. I've got something special in mind."

Emily gave Jeff a quick, puzzled look as she went off to visit her late daughter-in-law's burial site. Jeff rubbed a hand over his father's headstone and smiled. "Wish I had more to say, Dad, but I miss you, and I wish you were here. You'd have three new grandchildren, and I think they would have loved to have you as a grandpa."

--remembrance part 3 by Tikatu on September 14, 2007
