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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:21:52 GMT

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When it was clear that Emily was finished paying her respects, Jeff had Scott and Virgil move the bench over to Lucille's grave site, and place it at the foot of the grave.

"What's this all about, Jeff?" Emily asked.

"Sit down, Ma. You too, Dianne, Princess." Once the ladies were seated on the bench, and his sons were ranged around them, some standing, the young ones seated on the grass, Jeff stood before them. "Do you have the envelopes, Princess?"

"Yes, Dad." Cherie opened her art bag and pulled out some manila envelopes, which Jeff retrieved.

He returned to his place, shuffled the envelopes, and cleared his throat. "Yesterday, we were talking about the history of our family, and how much of it has come down to us from journals." He gave Dianne a smile. "A few weeks ago, during another anniversary, Dianne had her wedding album out, and was remembering her special day with Rick. I brought out my wedding album, too." He looked slightly embarrassed when he admitted, "It was actually Grandma's copy as, at the time, I had no idea where mine had gone."

Dianne smiled and chuckled a little, and Emily said, "Now I know what you wanted the album for."

"Uh, yeah, Mom. That was it." Jeff huffed once, then cleared his throat again. "In any case, I realized that there were a lot of things I hadn't thought about for a long while in regards to Lucy, memories I hadn't revisited because I thought they'd be too painful. And, in doing so, I was... well, I was robbing you boys of parts of your family history." He looked down and swallowed. "So... I went looking for that history. I found my copy of the wedding album, and it's now sitting next to the one from Dianne and Rick's wedding, and the one from our wedding. I went looking for the photo albums and storage disks, and had them copied to data chips -- and to archive paper, so they could be viewed by everyone."

He paused, and his voice lowered. "And I also found Lucy's journals." He drew in a deep breath in order to compose himself. "They were hard to read at first; I kept hearing her voice and getting lost in the memories that the entries prompted." Rubbing the back of his neck, he smiled sheepishly. "Not to mention finding out what she thought of me when we'd had an argument or I'd displeased her in some way."

Now everyone chuckled, except the little boys, who were glancing up at their mother with questioning looks. Jeff cleared his throat again, and the laughter died down. "In any case, I went through and found some of the things Lucy said about you boys, some of her hopes and dreams for you, and I've tried to match them up with a picture of you with her, one that you can frame as you please. I'd like to read them here, as from her lips." He put on his reading glasses, and selected one of the envelopes, tucking the others under his arm. "I'll start with Scott."

Scott started, eyes growing wide, fixed on his father as Jeff pulled a piece of paper from the

envelope and began to read.

"Today... today I became a mother. It's an indescribable feeling and one I know I'll never have again. When I look into my precious Scotty's eyes, my heart is filled with love and joy and a deep warmth. Much like when I stared into Jeff's eyes on my wedding day, but different, too, because this little baby is part of both of us. He is Jeff, and he is me, and he is himself. If I could have one wish for him, it would be that he would grow to be like his father, bold and fearless and caring and full of laughter. Already I see the fearlessness in him; it doesn't matter who is holding him, he doesn't complain -- unless he has fair reason to do so, like hunger or a dirty diaper. He will always be special because he is my first child, my first son, and he will never lose that specialness, no matter how long I live."

Jeff stopped and drew in another deep breath, then opened the envelope again, and pulled out a picture. It was of Lucy and Jeff in the hospital, with newborn Scott wrapped in a blue blanket with a tiny blue cap on his head. Lucy was holding him so that she looked in his face, but Jeff had leaned over to put his lips gently on the baby's head. Putting the picture on top, Jeff handed the envelope and the paper with the journal entry in it to his son. Scott looked at it for a long time, biting his lower lip. Then he met his father's gaze and, his voice thick, said, "Thank you, Dad."

"You're welcome, son." Jeff took out another envelope, and smiled a little. "Virgil is next."

Virgil stood straight, a slight smile on his face as Jeff began to read. "Virgil, Virgil, Virgil... what am I going to do with the boy? He's always coloring on the walls, banging on the piano keys, and dancing when I play. My mother says he looks like me, and when I tell her what he's been up to, she smiles and says, 'That sounds familiar. You did the same thing when you were his age.' He has so much energy, and gets so frustrated when I take away the crayons, or close up the piano. I asked him what he was drawing today. He said, 'Daddy!' Now that I look at it, it does resemble Jeff a little... with blue hair and a purple face! I guess I'd better cherish this little artist, and try to channel his obvious talents into more structured pursuits -- before I wash the paint clean off the walls!"

The comments made the little group laugh, and Virgil blushed even as he smiled. Jeff took out the picture of toddler Virgil, his face a study in surprise as he was caught red-handed with a fat crayon pressed to the wall. His mother was squatting down beside him, her hand over his, and she was trying hard to look serious and stern, but not completely succeeding. Jeff handed it over and Gordon peered over his shoulder to look at it. "Nice to know I'm not the only one who misbehaved!"

Virgil looked up, smiling again. "Thanks, Dad. I'll be sure to frame this one."

"You do that." Jeff selected a third envelope, and opened it, saying, "This one is John's."

John's eyes widened, and he stood a little straighter as Jeff read. "I went looking for John tonight at bedtime, and couldn't seem to find him anywhere! I was beginning to worry when I heard Jeff's voice out on the back deck. He was talking to someone in those deep tones of his, and when I listened a little harder, I could hear John responding, asking a question. I didn't want to interrupt them; Jeff has precious little time to spend with the boys as it is with the company and all. So I sneaked out onto the deck as quietly as I could. It was a heart-warming sight; John sitting on Jeff's

knee, both of them looking up at the sky. John was asking questions about the stars, really intelligent ones for a three-year-old, and Jeff answered, sometimes drawing something on a piece of paper, and shining a flashlight on it. He was teaching John the constellations, and it seemed John couldn't get enough of it. Finally, he yawned, and I cleared my throat. Both of them were startled to find me there, and I reminded Jeff that it was past John's bedtime. Jeff grinned, then picked John up and put him on those broad shoulders of his to carry him inside."

Jeff paused for a moment, swatting a pesky fly off the paper. His audience began to stir, and Jeff looked up. "There's a little more here."

When they had quieted, he continued. "Jeff has a special bond with Scott... they are so much alike in so many ways. Virgil and I share a similar connection. I was so afraid that John would be the odd man out, but I see that this isn't so. Jeff and I can both relate to him in different ways. He's not missing out; he's got the best of both of us. I hope this continues, especially once the next baby gets here."

The picture that Jeff showed them was one of a preschool John sitting on his mother's lap, both of them looking at a book... one that was definitely about stars. John smiled softly as he took the papers from his father. "I think I remember this book, too."

"You would," Alan said as he looked at the picture with John.

"Can I see?"

"Come on over here, Tyler, and see what I looked like when I was a little kid."

Tyler got up and hurried to John's side. "Huh. I never knew you were ever that little."

Everyone laughed, and when it wound down, John looked at his father with gratitude in his eyes. "Thanks, Dad, for everything."

"You're welcome, John."

Jeff coughed a little, and shifted from one foot to another. He was used to making speeches, but they'd been there a while, and his throat was getting dry. He pulled out another envelope, and adjusted his glasses. "Gordon's turn."

Gordon grinned as his father began to read. "Bath time was never like this for the others. In fact, Virgil hated baths! But Gordon? He's happy as a clam in the tub. Never complains, even if a little soap gets in his eyes. He wails when I take him out of the water to dry him off! Em was here today, and kept an eye on the other boys while I got a much needed nap between Alan's feedings. She fed them lunch, and by the end of the meal -- as usual - there was more food on Gordon than in him! When I came down from the nursery, he was wailing because she was using a face cloth to wash him up. I told her just to strip him down and put him in the bath. I swear he does this on purpose; gets himself so filthy that he has to be put in the tub. Of course, she came out of the bathroom drenched from Gordon's splashing."

"Sounds like you were a practical joker even back then," Scott quipped.

"He was!" Grandma declared. "And he only got worse!"

"I expanded my horizons, that's all, Grandma," Gordon said, a pseudo hurt look on his face.

This time the laughter was long, and Jeff waited patiently for it to die down. "There's just a little more here. Bear with me." He glanced along the page and nodded when he found his place. "Maybe getting a little wading pool will help with the 'getting filthy as a reason for a bath' thing. Though I'll have to keep a sharp eye on this water baby of mine; he's totally fearless in more ways than one. I hope that this fearlessness doesn't translate into recklessness later in life; I don't think I could bear to lose him in some stupid accident due to his own actions."

At these words, Gordon sobered. "And what happened? We lost her to a stupid accident."

"It wasn't her fault," Scott reminded him sternly.

"And we almost lost you, too, Gords, to that hydrofoil." Virgil put a hand on Gordon's shoulder.

"At least she wasn't around to see that." Gordon sighed, and glanced up at his father. "What does the picture look like, Dad?"

"Here it is." The print was one of toddler Gordon sitting in a plastic wading pool, looking up at the camera, grinning, a boat in his two pudgy hands. Lucille was in the process of putting a hat on him, and her face was in profile. She wasn't smiling, but she wasn't frowning either. She just looked preoccupied.

"It's the best I could find to fit the journal entry," Jeff said apologetically.

Gordon smiled slightly. "It's fine, Dad. Thanks for doing this."

Jeff just nodded, then he opened the last envelope. "And this is about Alan."

Alan took in a deep breath as his father adjusted his glasses again and started to read. "I thought I'd feel jaded by now. Five babies, five sons, but when I look at Alan, I still feel that wonder. It's not the same as it was with Scott when everything was new; I've given birth five times now, and some of that seems like old hat. But the tiny fingers, the way they curl around mine, the long, long lashes, the tiny feet that kick as he squirms without thought... all of these are still a wonder to me. Even as a newborn, Alan has a personality. He's a mama's boy, it seems; if anyone else other than Jeff or myself holds him, he wails until he's handed back to one of us. He even did this for Jeff at first, until Jeff cooed to him in that deep voice of his and he recognized the sound of his daddy. But he's happiest in my arms, which may cause trouble, especially considering that Gordon's only just turned one. It's going to be hard giving all my boys the attention they need and deserve, and, as much as I'd love to have a little girl, I've convinced Jeff that this will be the last one for a while. Maybe a couple of years down the road, when Alan's ready for preschool. But until Em brings the boys to visit tomorrow, the world consists of Jeff and me and Alan. Which is as it should be for now."

Alan's eyes were closed, and his face was angled downward when Jeff finished. He sniffed, then

raised moist eyes to his father. Jeff pulled out the picture. It was almost a mirror image of Scott's; Jeff was the one holding the baby to look him in the face, and Lucille was the one kissing the blue-capped head. Both looked older; Lucille in particular had laugh lines at the corners of her eyes that weren't there in Scott's picture. But they still looked very much as if this child were the center of their universe.

"I... I don't know what to say. Thank you, Dad," Alan murmured as he took the envelope from Jeff. Then he stepped out from behind the bench, and embraced his father, squeezing hard. One by one, his brothers followed suit, each telling Jeff in their own, wordless way how much they loved him.

"Now, unless anyone else has something to say, I think I'm ready to go." Jeff offered his hand to his mother, who took it and let him help her rise.

"Can we go eat now?" Alex asked. "I'm hungry."

"Yes, Alex, we can." He tucked Emily's hand in one elbow, and entwined his fingers with Dianne's hand on the other side. "By the way," he called after his sons, who were making their way toward the parked cars. "I brought some of the photo albums along if you want to look through them. We won't be leaving right away tomorrow, so there'll be opportunity now, and when we get back home."

"Thanks, Dad," Scott said, turning to acknowledge the call. He put an arm around Cherie as they wound their way through the graves. Tyler was walking with John, and Alex had latched on to Gordon for a change.

As they reached where the wrought iron gates used to be, Jeff glanced back one last time. "Goodbye, Lucy," he whispered. Then he let go of Dianne's hand and put his arm around her waist, drawing her close.

--remembrance part 4 by Tikatu on September 14, 2007

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