Lost But Not Forgotten: A Mormon Confessional

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I am made up of (sometimes) lost things: 20+ pairs of shoes, 16 New Era hats, 11 Banana Republic chino slacks, 3 Nikon SLR cameras, 3 iPods, an iPhone, and the list goes on. These things are not only lost on occasion but they follow a pattern like the seasons. Yesterday was “Lost iPhone Season,” I almost cried. I am made up of great tasting foods, but mostly I

1 I use my iPhone notes application to start up essays:

Elevators

Why do people take the elevator to go up just one floor? I recently was on an elevator when a lady got on at the first floor and then pushed two. I yelled at her to myself in an angry inner voice “why don’t you just take the STAIRS!” I looked closely, with a stink eye, and realized that she was pregnant.
am made up of lost relationships\textsuperscript{2}. The lost relationships are

2 Baxter, my favorite miniature pincher. My friend Blake sold Baxter, his miniature pincher without consulting me. I loved holding him just to have an allergic reaction.
lost for now but they are not forgotten. I’ve recently started a
photo project\(^3\) to capture my cherished relationships. It’s my way
of not losing them, of holding onto them forever. The end result
is a picture within a picture as they hold onto their own selves,
truer selves perhaps. Gary, for example, never smiles in pictures.

\(^3\) This one is a photomontage of five of my friends and myself. It is 18 pictures
that have been cut and pasted together, like small pieces of my friends. Often
pieces are discarded, but none have been discarded in this picture. Now, I have
lost all of my friends to marriage.
In his engagement picture he looks angry. In reality, he’s always smiling, sort of. I caught him smiling with my camera.

**Almost Forgetting Innocence**

Sunday morning on the lower end of San Pedro, California, I went with my mission companion, Elder Haurunen, to the Brown residence. (I served a religious mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.) We arrived to pick up the family for church. The house was messy and cluttered with dirty clothes. The mom, invisible to us, yelled out, “Go, and let everyone see what trash kids you are!” The kids snuggled close together in the backseat of our car, seatbelts safely fastened. We arrived at church apprehensively. Sitting next to the children in the front pew of the church, tears slowly slid down my face. Hesitantly, almost unworthily, I glanced at the two brothers and the sister. The two brothers wore our white dress shirts that drowned their upper bodies and arms. Their sister wore her dirty dress. Smiles on their faces. Innocent. They were the joy of our Father in Heaven. I think the oldest brother’s name was Bobby. I can’t remember the younger brother’s and sister’s names. I hate myself for forgetting. I hate myself for forgetting names.
Almost Almost

There was this girl I met once. I always wanted to start a story with that sentence. For me the sentence implies: the one that got away. It implies further that I had lingering feelings that are not yet resolved, like the journey is not finished. I cannot start this story with that sentence. I probably should start it with: there was this girl I wish I had met, maybe. I only have a vague memory of her voice, soft.

I returned home exhausted from a football game. It was the first game our team lost in years, and it was against Waiana‘e at Aloha Stadium⁴. During the game I picked up the ball and ran

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⁴ I googled my name and Aloha Stadium and got this picture.
for a touchdown that didn’t count. (It was negated by a penalty.)
During halftime, Coach Beatty slammed his fist against the chalkboard and it almost folded like a window shutter.

After the game, I arrived home. Discouraged? Maybe not. Happy? Probably not. I answered the phone, and for some reason I knew it was her. She didn’t miss a beat. She knew how we lost our game, how I picked up the ball and ran for sheer exercise. I flew like the wind. (I liked to believe so.) We talked about the game and other miscellaneous topics. During the conversation, my mind wonders, “Who is she, really?” We talked for a couple of months (sad, silly, scary I know), and every time I wondered, “Who is she?” She sent me a picture of her once. She had medium long brunette hair to her shoulders and green eyes. She claimed that she was from the Southside of O’ahu, but was originally from Evergreen, Washington. She was a year older than me and was about to attend Stanford. She gave me her Washington number. I called it once and some older man answered. I hung up the phone. I never found out if she was really from Washington or not.

She said I met her at a dance at Kamehameha High School. I don’t remember and somehow I highly doubt it, but who knows. She got my number from a girl named Kalei. I know a Kalei. This
Kalei asked another girl from my hometown and then, voila, got my number. She called me and I answered. I continued to answer because I’m curious. I wanted to find out who she was. She knew all the right things to say to keep me hooked. A mastermind. Well not a great mastermind, but she did her homework—some based on facts and some based on (faulty) assumptions.

Naomi: My name is Mariko.
Me: … (Umm, no. I don’t really like Asians. Why would she think that I would? Well not really.)
Naomi: But I go by my other name, Naomi. I’m half white and part Japanese.
Me: … (Ok)
Naomi: I got accepted to Stanford.
Me: … (Smart, intelligent, hmmm.)
Naomi: I have green eyes.
Me: … (I don’t care for eye color but green is nice.)
Naomi: I’m not a member of the LDS church.
Me: … (How did she know that I was LDS but only dated non-LDS girls?)
Part of me is smart enough to know that she is a figment of my imagination; no, she is a figment of her own imagination. Once my sister answered my phone and said, “Hey Naomi is on the phone for you. She sounds cute!” There was a part of me that wanted to believe her. I recently heard the song “Soulmate” by Natasha Bedingfield. I liked talking to Naomi. It’s funny and almost scary that I have told her things I never told anyone. (What if she was a stalker?) I was totally honest, for the most part. Well honest yes, but I still had a bit of reservation, not much though. Maybe it’s a good thing I didn’t know who she really was, that way she remains a mystery in my mind. Lingering: the perfect soulmate. A mystery, yes, also a friend, a safe friend indeed. And

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5 Now I keep a set of numbers programmed Do Not Answer.  

Do Not Answer

Hansen: Hey I just called you. (Why don’t you just die!)  
Me: Oh did you, it must be on silent.  
Hansen: (He calls my phone.)  
Me: Ringtone plays (Crap!)...Oh I must have been under a building.  
Hansen: Oh...but why does it say “do not answer”  
Me: Oh...[Someone else] must be calling me. (Crap!) I have to go!
then all of a sudden she broke up with me. I didn’t know what to say. I didn’t realize we were dating.

**Almost Forgiving, Never Forgetting**

This is my first attempt to write about my father in three years. Three years ago I would have been too angry but now I think it’s time. I hear that time is the healer of all things.

My father was a great man, mostly. He comes from a once well-to-do family. His own father, my grandfather, was also a great man. My grandfather, to show his love and loyalty for his sick mother, chopped off the end of his middle finger on his left hand. I don’t fully understand the ritual but it was instilled in me that it was a great sign of sacrifice and love; his love, his mother, his left middle finger. I thought it was silly (I picture my grandfather giving my great-grandmother the middle finger, the bird, then cutting it off) but never dared to voice my thought. My father joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when he was a young man and was disowned by his family. To me he was a man of principle, strong moral convictions. He served as a
bishop at the age of 28. On paper he was the perfect father: intelligent, morally strong, and fearlessly courageous.

I stopped writing to take a break and I sketched a portrait of Robbie's late father. His father has the gentlest eyes I have ever seen. I realize Robbie has his father's eyes. His father had an unexpected, unplanned heart attack. I guess it's almost always unexpected. I wish I could have planned one for my father.

About three years ago, in 2005, my father was excommunicated from the LDS church. First his family disowned him, then the church he served and loved disowned him. Quite frankly, he ruined our family, ruined himself, ruined my mother, ruined everything. It felt like everyone knew what happened,

6 Driving with Jeannie, My Mom

Me: (Half joking) I feel so sorry for you.
Jeannie: Why? (Smiling)
Me: (Semi-Sarcastically) Moved out of the house, no money, no husband, stupid children, no grandchildren and you are old...er.
Jeannie: (Laughing with tears) Yeah! I feel sorry for myself too.
except me. I didn’t want to know. I remember meeting a random lady in California during the summer of 2007, who knew my family, knew my father. She offered condolences, and because she knew something about the situation felt it necessary to tell me that my father was foolish. I was offended; I smirked at her. Her words claimed to know my father, but all she knew was what had happened. I didn’t care to remember her name.

I haven’t talked to my father in over three years. Last time I talked to him was at his BYU-Hawaii office. This was before I knew he was to be excommunicated. He had moved out of the house by then, and he wanted to talk to me. I didn’t hesitate to answer his call. I remember my mom was there when I answered the phone. She wore her broken heart on her face. She probably thought he would tell me. We talked for a long time. We talked about how he once kicked me out of the house before my high school graduation. (I almost skipped my high school graduation, but my mom came over to Ali’i’s house where I was hiding and begged me to attend. I thought I had prepared a great Yellow Brick Road speech for graduation. Along the road I met my closest friends and emulated them. I guess I was Dorothy. So I clicked
my heels three times and showed up.) We talked and laughed about other miscellaneous things and then he asked for forgiveness for constantly kicking me out of the house. The question caught me off-guard. I offered him my love first, then my unconditional forgiveness. We hugged, but the hug was half-hearted. We parted. I came home and my mother called me into her room. Her room overlooked Hukilau Beach. The sun was setting and the ocean glistened with sparks of red, orange, and yellow. The constant crashing of the waves soothed me, almost prepared me. Then my mother told me that my father was going to be excommunicated. I asked my mom not to explain any further. I didn’t need to know, I didn’t want to know. She told me anyway. I listened but nothing stuck. I couldn’t listen and I don’t remember much. Surprisingly,

7 I love hugs and kisses, but mostly hugs. But I also love tender kisses on the hands, shoulders, and foreheads. However, I prefer real hugs that take your breath away, but don’t squeeze too hard, just enough.
there were no tears, just complete shock. The waves of Hukilau came crashing down on my stomach and my heart\(^8\) wept\(^9\).

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Me: Mom I'm scared.} \\
\text{Jeannie: Why?} \\
\text{Me: I'm just like him.} \\
\text{Jeannie: You mean you have problems?} \\
\text{Me: No, but I'm like him.} \\
\text{Jeannie: Tell me if you have problems! Tell me if you have problems.} \\
\text{Me: No, I'm part of him. (I have recently learned the meaning of the word transposition. I imagined myself in his shoes.)} \\
\text{Jeannie: It's ok; you are part of me too. (She understood.)}
\end{align*}\]

My father would call me from time to time. I didn't erase his number from my phone. I changed the name to \textit{Do Not Answer}.

\[^8\text{The human heart is responsible for pumping blood in rhythmic contractions approximately 72 BPM, little over 933 million beats in 25 years. My heart stopped to take a break and wept for a moment.}\]

\[^9\text{I love the song \textit{While My Guitar Gently Weeps} by The Beatles. The song does not attempt to console me prematurely. I don't need to be consoled. Instead the rhythm of the guitar recognizes me, weeps with me.}\]
At times I wonder why he didn’t tell me that day in his office, but I know why. For the last three years I never answered his calls. Not because I hate or loathe him, but because if I talk to him I will have to forgive him again, prematurely, without conviction and feeling. And because I’m like him: perfect on paper. Graduated Valedictorian. Check. Started on the State Championship Football Team. Check. Was offered a scholarship to play in Oregon. Check. Chose rather to attend the Lord’s university, BYU. Check. Served an LDS mission and was Assistant to the President. Check. Applied to Law School. Check. Scribble, scribble, nonsense, check, check, check. Well maybe not perfect on paper: perfect is too strong of a word. I was mostly scared, I was a mess, just like him.

My dad stopped calling last year. I started a religious fast early October 2007. I have fasted almost every day, sometimes taking Saturdays off. I love great food and great people. Fasting, depriving myself of food and water, my great love of life, was supposed to heal my relationship with my father, another love of my life. I would break my almost daily fast with dinner. I fasted for other things, too, but mostly so I can truly forgive my father. I didn’t want to hold a grudge; I didn’t want to be held back any
longer, not by him. I stopped fasting; I’d lost approximately twenty pounds. I wrote in my journal February 24, 2008:

I think I’m ready to stop fasting on a regular basis. Since early October, almost every day. Yet it doesn’t seem long enough; I feel like I should keep on. Yet there is a calming spirit that whispers, “It’s enough for now. Let go.” Sometimes

10 Relationship Renewed

Dustin: How did you guys meet?
Me: I had a crush on Alexis since the Pre-earth life.
Alexis: (Light Chuckle) He is lying.

Pre-earth life

Alexis: What does your earthly itinerary say?
Me: It says that I am going to live in Idaho and be Miss Malad. What?
Alexis: You have mine, silly.
Me: Nice, Miss Malad Idaho. I think I have a crush on you. Can I get your autograph? (Switched itinerary). Let’s see, it says I’m going to live on an island, under a tree. Come find me. I hate water, sharks, and coconuts.
Alexis: Ugh, maybe.
Me: I’ll come find you. Wait, it says that we are going to forget everything. Please don’t forget me. I wonder if I can sneak in somehow.
Alexis: I’ll come and visit you when it snows in Baghdad.
Me: Really? Baghdad, as in Iraq? Isn’t that the desert? Don’t forget me.
letting go is just as comforting as holding on. I hear the comforting words of E. E. Cummings, “I carry your heart. I carry it in my heart.” It’s my mother’s voice. I think I’m ready, ready to reciprocate the words to my mother and hand the words to my father with a real hug, heart to heart. I wait for his call.