

Finding Home

When I was a baby my mother often called me bucko.

I am told that my father used to take me to the park where I would chase birds for hours. I don't remember it but I always imagine my dad sipping a hot cup of coffee while white breath flowed out from behind his scarf and gloves. He would sit happily on a worn bench and watch me chase the big black birds away from him and down the crusty white shore of The Great Salt Lake. This was before we were active in the Mormon Church.

When I was almost two we moved from the flat salt of Utah to the golden rolling hills of the bay area. I am told I loved to go to Giants games but I only have one little snapshot of memory from those games: A skinny Barry Bonds runs around the bases while the fog horn bellows above the noise of the crowd; a cold wind rushes through my hair and my parents pull a warm blanket over my bother and I.

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When I four I had a block with the letter 'R' on it thrown at my head by a boy named Charles Alhazen. His decision was logical, as I had just kissed his 'girlfriend' Lindsay on the cheek, whom I had fallen for when she played Mary and I, Joseph. Unfortunately I dodged the block.

Lindsay came to my house one day and asked me to go to church with her. My parents didn't want me to go but I remember them tucking in my white shirt and snapping on my tie the morning I was to go. Soon enough my whole family went to church every Sunday. The only thing

I remember from that first day is a monkey ball rolling alone down the parched street.

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Some fall Tuesday I went to church with some other children to cut out the guts of pumpkins I had grown with my family. A bee stung me on the ear and I cried alone on the dead grass until my mother picked me up.

My first summer in Washington we threw french fries to the seagulls at Ivar's. I could feel something land on my head and when I went up to brush it off it stung me. I ran around the wooden pier in hysterical circles. My parents calmed me down and a nice man with tattoos gave me a cup of ice water to put my finger in.

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I wasn't really sick but I didn't want to go to church because the other boys my age had been making fun of me. I laid in bed moaning best I could until my family left.

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I sat in some sort of waiting room, but I wasn't going to be physically healed, I was going to be spiritually healed. I, a sixteen-year-old boy, had done things so grievous that Satan himself had power over me. The Bishop opened the door and called me in. I didn't want to go but my only

choice was to go through the door, or be sent to hell for eternity. He shook my hand and told me to take a seat. I could feel the sweat rolling down my back.

“Well Scott, what brings you here?”

‘Guilt’, I thought. I said. “I did some bad things that I think I need to tell you about.”

“Well, it is good that you are willing to recognize your failures in front of a proxy for God here on earth.”

I looked mostly at the floor, my legs jumping up and down, “yeah”

“Well what sin have you committed?”

“I did stuff with my girlfriend.”

“Like kiss?”

“yeah, and more I guess.”

“Alright, well it is very important that you tell me exactly what you did so that God can accept you into his arms again.”

“umm, I touched her in places I shouldn’t.”

“Did you touch her breasts?”

“yeah”

“With clothes on or did you touch the skin of the breast?”

My eyes slowly searched the room as a torrent of uneasy bees welled inside me, “I touched the skin.”

I could feel something horrible wrong, my whole self wanted to leave but my feet stayed glued to the floor, “Are you sure you need to know all these details?”

“I need to know everything if you want to be forgiven by God, you must tell me or else the saviors great suffering will have been in vain. Now did you touch her anywhere else?”

“I touched, um I touched her...”

“Vagina.”

“yeah”

“Did you put your finger inside of her?”

I looked at the floor like it was Moses’ brass serpent, “yeah”

“For how long?”

I didn’t know, I looked up at his judging face.

“Did her vagina get wet?”

My body was burning like it had been injected with a hemotoxin, “yeah”

He looked at me with disappointment, or maybe disdain, “Scott, this is not good what you’re telling me.”

“I know”

“Now did you put your penis into her vagina?”

“No!”

“Did she take your penis into her mouth?”

“yes”

“Did you ejaculate?”

“This is weird, can we stop talking about this”

“I just need to know a few more things and God may be able to forgive you. Did she swallow your semen?”

I shook my head, “yeah, why does it matter”

“Did you enjoy it, did it feel good.”

I stared at him, willing my body to move.

“Well Scott, there is not much I can do for you except tell you not to do it again. And you aren’t worthy to go to the temple or take the sacrament. You will just have to hope that God is kind

enough to forgive you these horrible acts.”

“When will I be worthy again?”

“I just don’t know Scott, it could be a long time, God will tell me when you are. Just pray and prey and prey on, or I mean for yourself. Hopefully someday you will be humble enough to accept God’s forgiveness.”

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College took me back to the salty desert of Utah. The first semester was a dream. I made friends, fell in love once or twice and watched every episode of Seinfeld in Phil’s dorm room.

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Phil was opening his mission call. Anxiety and excitement filled the room like a hive of bees waking from the smoke. I was not going to go on a mission but I was happy for Phil. Kara, the girl I loved, leaned over and casual stated, “ I could never marry anyone who hadn’t served a mission.” That summer I drank with my non-member friends and watched porn.

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Sophomore year was a wasteland of isolation. No Mormon girl wanted to date a twenty year old who didn’t have exorbitant tales of heroics and enlightenment from his mission served in a far off land with strange people: People who he came to love. I found myself on a bench staring down a crusty white shoreline with no one to protect me from the big black birds slowly

surrounding me. I ran back to Washington.

My parents said I had to follow some rules if I was going to live with them again. No pornography, No swearing, No alcohol, No girls in my room ect. I saw them as an extension of the churches shackles.

The summer of my twenty-first year was spent in a small worn apartment off of Brooklyn Street by The University of Washington. I lived with my old friend from high school who had defected from The Naval Academy like I had Brigham Young University. One day I decided I was going to stop drinking alcohol. I told myself it was because alcoholism ran in my family but it may have been because my parents are still Mormon and I felt an ever present twinge of guilt in my side. The party that night was an ever flowing estuary of “Scott, c’mon just drink.”, “Scott it will be fun, just have a few.”, “Just play some beer pong man.”, “You’re no fun tonight man.” I moved back to my parents’ house the next week.

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In my room I drank tequila with salt. I pondered how I could float into nothingness, ways to cease my existence. I stumble downstairs unaware of the tears running down my face. My mom looked at me with a worried face from the couch, “Scott honey, what’s wrong?” My mouth couldn’t force any words out of my body so I sat next to her and let her hold me in her arms. She whispered, “It’ll be okay, it will all be okay bucko.”

I feel the weathered bench beneath my body. My family chases the black birds down the soft

shore. They are beautiful against the smooth white lake and sky. I see the white life flowing out of my laughing mouth as my brother sits next to me.

But I tell them.

And they are gone, my brother in Hawai'i teaching and then complaining about the natives he has grown to love. My parents close but somehow gone, I drift north to Bellingham and drown the stinging bulbs in my flesh with sugar turned to ethanol.