Alicia’s Farewell

I have two parents. Four siblings, 48 cousins, 13 aunts, 14 uncles, and four grandparents. We’re still growing too. Most of my cousins are younger than I am. Both of my parents are the oldest of their siblings. They were married first.

It took less than one day for both sides of the family to know that I am gay. Less than one day for 85 people to know that I’m gay. Keep in mind that is a bit of an exaggeration because all of my young cousins’ knowledge is based off of what their parents want them to know. They don’t really ‘know’ yet.

You get the idea. Word spread fast.

It’s not even like it just came up in conversation. My dad’s mother called my mom’s mother to tell her the horrible news. It’s weird to think that one of my grandmas found out that I was gay from my other grandma. I guess if your kids were married you would have some sort of a relationship.

Now imagine that about 79 of the 85 are strictly Mormon. I get to be the first person to break the bubble that they live in when it comes to homosexuality. I strongly believe that I will not be the only one. At least two more will come after me and hopefully I helped pave the path. I’m sure you can imagine how I feel when attending family gatherings. If it comes up, I’m upfront about it. Most of the time it doesn’t come up.

Mormons are happy people. The reason they are happy people is because they avoid the hard topics. Things that are controversial. For example, homosexuality. They know that marriage, sex, and romantic relationships should be between a man and a woman. Hence, why most of my younger cousins don’t know.

Another frowned-upon non-Mormon concept is tattoos. I got my first one while living in Portland. Right before I had moved back home. Right before the farewell family gathering for my angel of a cousin Alicia. This gathering also happens to be the first time that I had been around the entirety of my mother’s family since I came out.

Sometimes I honestly wish that I grew up in a different family. However, that also means I could be in a family that is a lot worse than the one that I got. If it came down to it, I really wouldn’t change a thing about any of them. They wouldn’t be the psychotic family that bring excitement into my life anymore. However, that doesn’t mean that I haven’t thought about the other families that seem to be more accepting than mine.

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Deep breaths. You’re going to be fine. What’s the worst that could happen? You could get disowned by your whole family. Not to mention there is no way that you are going to make it through this whole gathering without someone seeing the tattoo. By the end of the night everyone is going to know you have it. Perfect timing Emily. You’re killing it. Maybe everyone will just keep their attention on Alicia? I mean she is leaving for almost two years on a mission. Shit. This should be fun.

“What have you been up to Emily?”

Well, let me tell you about my life. I am constantly depressed. I moved to Portland to get the fuck out of town and go to school. Turns out it wasn’t quite meant to be. Or maybe I just didn’t try hard enough. So, I moved back home to live with my parents and work for my best friend’s mom. My life is completely pointless, all I do is eat, sleep, and work.

“I just work every day.”

“Oh really? No school?”

“No. I’m taking a break at the moment. Just trying to save some money.”

“Oh.”

I know right! Not going to college right after graduating high school is just a complete disappointment. How dare I work 50 hours a week. Build a strong work ethic and work experience. Save money and take a little time off from frying my brain on a daily basis.

It’s pretty easy to ease in and out of conversations with this many people around. Family and friends, all together to celebrate Alicia following the Lord’s plan for her. My favorite part about bigger gatherings is the ability to slither in between conversations, but most of the time I can sit in the background and observe other people and conversations.

It’s fun having a shit ton of straight cousins. At least my grandma really likes it. Grandpa’s brain is deteriorating so he doesn’t know that I ‘just haven’t met the right guy yet’. While sitting in the corner away from any in depth conversations I can hear grandma asking Ashley about her boyfriend. She’s sixteen for Christ’s sake, it doesn’t matter if he is ‘worthy to get married in the temple’. My favorite is watching people ask my older sister Kayla if she has a boyfriend. Kayla has always been very boy crazy. However, boys are not crazy about Kayla. She has never had a serious boyfriend. At least that I know of. I think she would have told us all if she managed to hook a man. She is the oldest grandchild. Everyone is expecting her to get married and have kids. She is already ‘getting old’ at 24. Poor kid. Every time that we have any type of family get-together she gets asked if there is any boy special in her life.

“Emily come over here.”

Oh shit. Maybe she just wants me to get something for her and doesn’t want to bring up the whole boys and Emily’s confused sexuality. I love my grandma, but man, sometimes I wonder if she thinks about her words before they slip her mouth.

I walked over to the couch that she was sitting on and plopped myself right next to her.

“What’s up grandma?”

“Let me tell you a secret. You are truly the most beautiful granddaughter. Don’t tell anyone that I said that but just know that I have always thought that.”

“Thanks grandma.” I blushed. Why was she telling me this? You’re not supposed to let your grandchildren know if you think one is more superior than the others.

“Have you met Ashley’s boyfriend? He is very sweet.”

Fuck. Here it comes. Do I change the subject? Oh God, someone save me.

“Yeah, I met him for a brief moment. He seems like a nice kid.”

“I’m surprised you don’t have a boyfriend you are just so beautiful.”

“Well grandma you know…”

She cut me off. “You just haven’t met the right man yet.”

Jesus! How many times does she have to say that? Does she truly believe that? Maybe the way I love my girlfriend, and how I love kissing her is all just irrelevant because I haven’t met the right man. Maybe that fact that I have never been attracted to a man is just because I haven’t met the right one.

“Okay.”

That’s all that I can get out. ‘Okay’? Dammit Emily you’re not supposed to make her think that she is right. Time to leave the conversation before you say anything else.

I had to tell her that I needed to get something from my car. Now I’m just sitting outside trying to find something significant enough to bring back inside. I’ll just change my shirt. Say something spilt on it. That’s good enough right? I’ll go with it.

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People are starting to leave. Thank God.

“Emily, can I talk to you?”

I could tell by the way that he said it that he was serious. Greg. He married into this crazy family. He is such a great uncle. So kind. I always looked up to him as a person but also as a spiritual model. Always so kind, never saying anything negative. I hope that this conversation doesn’t change that at all.

“Yeah, sure what’s going on?”

“I just wanted to tell you how much we love you. We are proud of you. My brother just barely came out to me and it has been tearing him apart for decades. I’m so glad that you have come to realize that you are gay and that you were strong enough to come out to everyone. No matter what, I will always be here and so will Rinda. We love you so much.”

I’m speechless. I definitely was not expecting him to be so understanding. I can feel tears coming. Hold it in Emily.

“Greg. That means so much for you to say. Thank you.”

“You are welcome.”