



Above the Market

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#46: When Loss Doesn't Win

"Let it be."

— The Beatles

The call came from an unfamiliar number.

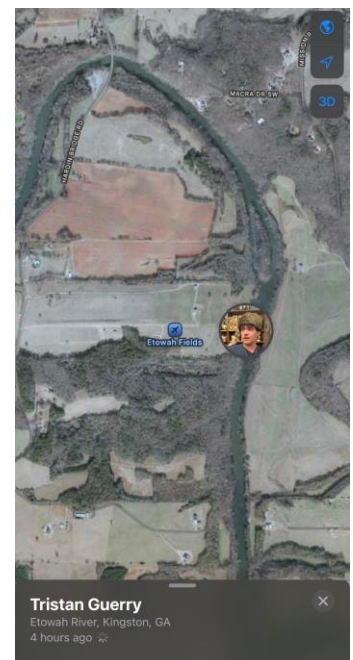
It was my son, Tristan, calling from his girlfriend Melaina's phone, to let me know that his own had just sunk to the bottom of the Etowah River somewhere in the middle of Nowhere, Ga. They had been out kayaking when she accidentally dropped it overboard. Gone in an instant, as they say.

She was flustered. He was calm. So was I.

Luckily, they weren't far from Cartersville (population 23,000 and notably the birthplace of Butch Walker, IYKYK). I suggested he go by the AT&T store there to get a replacement, and to let me know when he was headed home.

That was all. No lecture, no panic.

Melania was amazed – both at how composed he was and how little I seemed to care about the situation. Just to be clear, it *wasn't that I didn't care*. Phones are expensive, especially the latest iPhone model that we ended up getting. And what really stung, financially, was that the accident was not covered by the heretofore reliable phone insurance (apparently disappeared



Last known position of the ill-fated iPhone

phones aren't eligible). Further, the lack of a physical phone wiped out any chance of trading in the old one. That lost trade-in value – the hundreds of dollars we could have applied towards the new phone – was now cooling at the bottom of a west Georgia river.

But in the moment, none of that mattered as much as the fact he was okay. That he had called. That we had the means and the mindset to deal with it.



What struck me later was this: our calm didn't come from being carefree. It came from knowing what mattered.

We didn't like losing the phone. But we weren't lost because of it. We had already decided, long before the phone disappeared into the Etowah's version of Davy Jones's locker, to keep our heads when little things go wrong.

Because they do. They *always* do.

Behavioral finance talks about something called "loss aversion" – our tendency to feel pain from losses far more than pleasure from gains. And it's true; without some emotional ballast, we might overreact, ruminate, or spiral over things that happen, **but don't have to hurt us.**

This was one of those moments – something worth noticing, but not worth unraveling over.

What planning gives us – financially, emotionally – is the ability to respond instead of react. To protect what really matters, even when something valuable literally goes underwater. It's not about avoiding every bump or spill. It's about absorbing the jolts with grace.



I didn't plan for a phone to sink in a river, but I've spent years trying to plan for moments like this. Certainly not to sidestep every loss, but to ensure we don't make them bigger than they need to be.

Because when something goes tango uniform, the real question isn't *what did it cost?* It's **what does it change?**

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