

The Spirit of '76

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WE ARE NOTHING BUT MATTER, configured into a mass of atoms, configured into molecules, and locked irrefutably into a predetermined arrangement of cells by their genetic codes that link us billions of years to the very essence of our nature.

Hewlett had no idea who wrote it; an odd thing to put on the bathroom stall of the Biggie Burger. All forty words were etched into the metal wall with something sharp. A paper clip, or a knife, he thought. Next to it in orange high-liter pen, someone had scrawled: *Science can no more deny the existence of God than God can deny the existence of science.*

Now Hewlett thought both ideas had some truth, so he pulled out a pen and wrote next to them: *You are both right.*

It just popped into his head. Feeling satisfied, he returned across the street to his duties as the assistant manager of the Faircrest Mini-mart.

Back inside, Hewlett jabbed his mop back into its bucket and splashed himself with filthy water. Staring at the mess covering his shoes, he realized a far wittier and urbane response might have been penned if he had just taken the time to think it out. But that could have proved risky. What if he misspelled a word? Then he might look like a fool. Not that anyone would know. But Hewlett would.

As a liberal arts major, he had in his head the fanciful dream of being a famous writer. That was where he met Laurie Larsen and married her four months later. But Hewlett's ambitions meant nothing to his new father-in-law when measured against the financial security of an M.B.A. When he offered to pay for Hewlett's tuition in return for his son-in-law's unswerving faith in his advice, Laurie begged Hewlett to heed his wisdom.

"I know you want to be a writer," she pleaded, "but if he'll pay for your tuition, then do it. Besides, you'll be good at business management. Maybe some day you could work for him."

There is an old saying concerning the futility of arguing with a woman once she's made her mind up. There's also another saying about a man in an Armani suit. Stake president Richard Larsen was on a first-name basis with two U.S. senators and six general authorities. Kodak mo-

ments of these relationships hung on the walls of his office. One with Ronald Reagan more than illustrated his father-in-law's influence and reputation. It alone sat on his desk, facing out for an unavoidable view.

And so Hewlett reconfigured his dream and learned to appreciate the world of business management. In turn he found a sense of gratification just knowing he could assure this important man that his daughter and future grandchildren would be provided with the comforts of life.

Eight years later the Hewlett Moore family sojourned to their annual Christmas visit to Laurie's parents along Salt Lake's East Bench. Such proximity to the patriarch invariably ushered in the annual son-in-law inspection. But this latest one-on-one had the prospect of bearing good tidings and joy rather than criticism. She could feel it, Laurie assured her apprehensive husband. Their lives would soon change for the better.

"So, Hewlett," President Larsen spoke from behind his massive oak desk, "Laurie's been telling me for quite sometime that you want to work for me."

Hewlett had not forgotten. His wife's dream was as repetitive as a Buddhist prayer. Working for the old man would be the financial boon to lift them out of financial obscurity. And more. Much more.

"So how long have you worked at this ... mini-mart?" There was no hint of sarcasm, none that Hewlett could sense. He had been reassured many times by President Larsen that working in a mini-mart was nothing to sneeze at. Nonetheless, he understood the nature of the inquiry. The time had come for Hewlett to move on.

Finally.

"A year and half, President Larsen," Hewlett answered. He could not bring himself to call his father-in-law by his first name. It wasn't done, not when addressing a stake president. Even if you were married to his daughter.

"And you are ... ," President Larsen paused, "the manager?"

"Uh, almost," Hewlett said. "I'm the assistant manager."

"Yes. That. And there are three of those. Right?"

"I'm one of three assistant managers," Hewlett said proudly.

As though he were conducting a temple interview, President Larsen leaned back in his chair, eyes boring into Hewlett's soul. Laurie's father had two things in abundance: Money and Advice. And if the man was generous enough to pay for Hewlett's reeducation, he would be more willing to part with the wisdom that had forged him into a moral and financial icon.

"Tell you what," he finally spoke, "if you make manager in the next six months, I'll bring you on board." Then he leaned forward, eye to eye with Hewlett. "You see, Son, I'm just a little concerned about where your heart is. After a year and a half, a man with a drop of initiative could own

that silly mini-mart top to bottom. So let's see what you can do to prove your worth to me."

The race was on.

Three months later, on Wednesday, Hewlett went back to the Biggie Burger to see if anyone had written a reply. Sensing he had become part of an on-going conversation, he was full of anticipation. Even on a bathroom wall, an intellectual conversation was nothing to sneeze at. And indeed a response did await him, scribbled in black magic marker: *Who gives a shit.*

Hewlett was unappreciative of the profanity and scribbled, *I do!* Then he added after a sudden explosion of creativity, *And who are you?*

Come Thursday Hewlett made his way back during a break to see if anyone had answered his challenge. He found the wall scrubbed clean. Only the first message remained, etched into the metal wall. Dejected, he pushed his leaden feet back to the mini-mart.

Hewlett always found the best bathroom walls full of active graffiti. But when nothing else could be said, no more brilliance offered, the walls would get scrubbed down. Like life itself. Having achieved the pinnacle of your abilities, God would simply extract you with the usual array of diseases, accidents, or crossing your path with the next available serial killer.

On Sunday the Hewlett Moore family went to church and made their home in the back row. It was *their* spot. Every family had *their* spot. Like a side of beef he could diagram the congregation into select cuts. The larger and more fundamental families sat in the middle pews. These were the older and more established families whose church positions equaled their community prominence. You could find them in bishoprics, Relief Society presidencies, and high priest quorums. The smaller but sportier families filled the side rows. These folks were younger and their callings reflected fast-paced lives, zooming to and from softball games and church meetings where they occupied ward committees and served as councilors in ward presidencies. Those in the back rows and overflow section were the more sedate. These were a motley group of ward librarians, Sunday school and primary teachers, and volunteers who labored in the nursery and genealogical library. Then there were those who held no callings. Like Hewlett.

But for all the significance of his rear position, Hewlett found himself more out of sight and mind. Not that he minded the obscurity. Tucked in the back, he felt relatively safe from the bishopric scouting for prayer givers and sacrament passers. Too much trouble was to be had in those missions, especially for a grown man in his thirties. What if he messed up the sacrament prayer or, worse, passed the bread and water to the wrong person on the stand?

No one could receive the sacrament until the highest priesthood authority on the stand first received his ordinance of bread and water. That's what the bishop told him his first Sunday as a deacon. And the man was very clear on that point, almost emphatic. So when little Hewlett proudly handed the bread tray to his bishop, he was shocked to find his service rejected. Frowning and shaking his head, the bishop pointed behind Hewlett to a distinguished gentlemen, regional representative Brenton Fuller.

Hewlett never passed to the front again.

After sacrament ended, Laurie went off to play the ward librarian. Escorting his kids to primary, Hewlett then found refuge in a small, remote bathroom on the far reaches of the building. Seldom used, he would drop the seat and sit. There he could hide from the Sunday school president, a realtor by trade who would roam the halls and herd people to their classrooms. Resisting would only get you a guilt-laden speech about furthering one's knowledge of the gospel. And Hewlett couldn't handle guilt. Besides, expressing your opinion in class would inevitably draw out the resident scripture-chaser with his multi-referenced leather-bound quad and two dozen scriptures memorized for your humiliation.

Even at church Hewlett could not escape the business end of life. Competition also ruled the monthly fast and testimony meetings where a ritual parade of women would express their eternal gratitude for all the wonderful crap their husbands could buy them. Laurie never expressed such gratitude. She would just thank God for her testimony and children and leave it at that. She wished she could do more. Laurie never said so, but Hewlett knew. He just knew.

Waiting out the moment in tranquil isolation, Hewlett took notice of the bathroom stall. So different from other bathroom stalls, he realized, so clean, so pure. At least in other bathrooms you had something to read.

There was nothing impulsive about Hewlett Moore. But when the idea flashed in his brain, he pulled the pen from his breast pocket and wrote on the wall: *No man is better than his fellow man in the eyes of God.*

Would anybody read it? Would anyone answer back? Hewlett doubted. You weren't suppose to write on the walls in church. Notwithstanding his act of vandalism, he smiled contentedly at his bathroom epistle and left.

On Tuesday he drove by the chapel on his way home and another impulse hit him. Making a U-turn, he sped back. Finding an unlocked door, he walked through the quiet halls to his favorite bathroom. The message was gone, leaving the stall seemingly untouched. Staring at the immaculate wall, Hewlett felt ignored and wounded. Taking his pen, he fired back: *We should not tolerate the acts of cruelty we inflict on one another.* He liked it better than his first message, more lofty and intellectual. Surely

someone would respond, he hoped. They had to!

After dinner Thursday night, he slipped out of the house and found the ward building open. In the bathroom his new message was scrubbed off clean. But where his message had been, a white sheet of paper was taped to the wall. On it was written: *Do not write on these walls.*

Finally, a response! But—Don't write on these walls? That wasn't the answer he wanted. It wasn't even an answer—just a rebuff, chiding him like a little child. Grabbing his pen, he furiously scrawled, *Why not?* and then left.

Late Saturday afternoon he returned to find his question scrubbed away once more and a new message waiting him, taped to the wall. *This may be a bathroom, but this is a House of the Lord! Do not write on these walls! It is vandalism!*

Someone smart was challenging Hewlett. Some after-hours busy-body in the building for his weekly leadership meeting. Hewlett knew his counter-reply had to be witty and urbane. After nearly twenty minutes of consideration, he finally wrote: *When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one man to dissolve the social bonds that connect holy men to tyranny. What better place to make that stand than in the House of the Lord. Then Hewlett laughed, adding: Even if it is in a bathroom.* Who could top that? he admired proudly. He hoped someone would try. Hewlett was starting to have some fun. He had found his niche.

When Hewlett and his brood arrived for church the next day, he excused himself and scampered to the bathroom, anticipating a feeble joust to his clever retort. The wall again was cleaned with a new message. But this one came off a computer printer in bold type: *Doctrine and Covenants 88:35 "That which breaketh a law, and abideth not by law, but seeketh to become a law unto itself ... they must remain filthy ..."*

The law? What law?

Hewlett read and reread the note but still could not understand what the message was getting at. Pulling it down, he stuffed it in his pocket. Instead of joining his family, he went to an empty classroom and looked up the reference with his scriptures. After rereading the entire scripture a dozen times, Hewlett remained uncertain. Turning to the topical guide, he then looked up the word *LAW*. Laws were not just guidelines, he read, but spheres of influence, boundaries that held in check the forces of Man and Nature.

The gist of its intended meaning soon became apparent to Hewlett. Laws were the governing factor in the universe. They held life in place, the predetermined matter of the cosmos, the intelligences created before the world was, many whom were the noble and great ones. Like the engraved quote on the Biggie Burger bathroom wall, life was irrefutably locked into a prearranged order.

Hewlett was left to wonder where that left him, sitting anonymously in the back every Sunday. Only Laurie held a calling. Still, telling people you were the ward librarian never had the same momentous ring as announcing you were the Young Women's president. Laurie never groused of her lowly station. But Hewlett knew she wanted more. Even being a Sunday school teacher would be a quantum leap from her current quagmire. Such a position could amplify her net worth in the eyes of her fellow Saints. Were only such fortune to befall himself, he dreamed.

Elder's quorum president. Now there was a plumb role, the pinnacle of a man's service, second only to the bishop himself. Hewlett knew he would make a good elder's quorum president. But he knew there was as much chance in becoming quorum president—even a councilor—as being named manager of the Faircrest Mini-mart. Besides, who would call him? He—Hewlett Moore?

He wasn't the type. Hewlett could admit that himself without reservation. People were types, each one fashioned with particular characteristics. His father-in-law was a corporate success by his thirty-first birthday. His four sons were either working for him or minding their own Wall Street ventures. But Hewlett's own father was a mechanic, dead at fifty-eight with grease and oil still under his nails. Mother had to go to the funeral home and scrub them clean. If Hewlett died the next day, Laurie would have to go down and wash the smell of heat lamp burritos out of his hair and scrub the mop water out from between his toes.

Like father, like son. No crime. No injustice. No lack of humanity. Simply a law of nature. People must follow their destiny, he realized. Why, look at Jesus. He was a simple carpenter's son.

So ... count your blessings, he heard the congregation sing. *Name them one by one—*

Hewlett slammed his scriptures closed. Instead of the usual far and remote bathroom, he stormed into the men's room by the east side chapel doors and scrawled in dramatic words: *Does anyone actually believe that our church leaders are divinely called? Or is it just a matter of who you know?*

Hewlett grinned proudly. This time he had hit the nail on the head. It was even better than his previous take on the Declaration of Independence.

But each time he admired his literary effort, the message seemed less revolutionary and more heretical. Just who was he trying to be anyway—Thomas Jefferson? Feeling panic beset him, he tried wiping off the offending message, but simple toilet paper and spit failed him miserably. In great fear he slipped out of the bathroom and returned to his family.

By the time Sunday school began, people were flocking to see the mystery graffiti for themselves, which was being scrubbed off with hot

water and cleanser. Without fail, the bishop interrupted Gospel Doctrine class and delivered a stirring testimony on the sanctity of church leadership. Following this, the elder's quorum and Relief Society presidents bore their own words of testimony to this fact. This was accompanied by others who stood to concur loudly and to call to repentance the misguided soul who had sought to injure the reputation of their ward leaders. Similar platitudes replaced prepared lessons in the priesthood and women's auxiliaries. From there rumors spread that a special fireside was planned for that evening and that emergency phone calls were being made to the area presidency.

Amid this raging storm, Hewlett sat quiet and calm. Inside he quaked and trembled to the pit of his soul. He thought back on the fifth grade when John Otis bravely pulled the fire alarm and sent hundreds of kids and teachers scrambling into the playground without a care or worry of being caught. John could laugh at danger. Hewlett could not. Such bravado was beyond him. No matter the precautions he could take, Hewlett knew he would get caught. Some way, somehow it would happen.

Hewlett had finally pulled that proverbial fire alarm. Right then, amid the panic and hysteria he had set into motion, he swore never again to write on any bathroom walls. Raising a stink was just too much trouble.

That following Saturday afternoon, Hewlett drove back to the church. He came not to write, for he was through with that fit of insanity, but to collect a few tithing envelopes. Laurie always preferred mailing their 10 percent rather than publicly handing it over to the bishop during church like so many others.

"Why doesn't she just do that in private or mail it to the ward clerk?" she would observe. "Everyone knows what her husband does for a living. You're supposed to imagine how many zeros are written on that check. It's like the Pharisees at the temple."

The analogy was not lost on Hewlett. But he only saw his wife's pious nature as a guise to hide the bitterness. She had endured their financial hardships for so long, the lean years when Daddy's money only went for books and tuition, and the disappointment in making his mini-mart paychecks go the distance she wanted. But her incessant pining for the day his promotion would elevate Hewlett into the bosom of her father was clue enough that she longed for more.

And how could she not want a husband like her own father or to be a wife like her own mother? To have all the perks and benefits of her parents' financial standing, Laurie would become more than a ward librarian. Money meant success and success was the ensign of moral and temporal fortitude. Given the chance, he knew Laurie would gladly become the arrogant scum she loathed. Then she could flaunt that burgeon-

ing tithing envelope and wax eloquent from the pulpit on the virtues of her wonderful husband.

But the tithing envelopes would have to wait. The usually unlocked front door of the building was now locked. As it was a nice spring day, Hewlett slowly walked around the building, trying each door as he went, soaking up the brilliant sun. Going around to the back, he saw two cars parked outside the door by the stake president's office. Even though that door was locked, he rang the buzzer on the wall and waited. And waited.

He stared at a bug crawling on the ground, then instinctively crushed it under his foot even though the poor bug had done nothing. Power, Hewlett realized, that's what it was, the uncommon denominator of the world. Some had it, some did not. The bug did not.

A man emerged from a side room. Hewlett expected him to hold the door open but the gentleman held it against his body, sticking only his head out between the door and frame. He had an older face, distinguished by the gray in his black hair and the silk tie complementing his suit. A man of importance, Hewlett deduced.

"Yes?" the man asked. "Can I help you?"

Perhaps it was the tone of the man's inquiry or the way he insinuated himself in the doorway. Right then an irritability overcame a mild-mannered Hewlett Moore, who stood not in a suit and tie but in a T-shirt and gray sweat pants with a permanent grease stain on the upper right thigh. Even in his Sunday best, Hewlett knew he couldn't counterbalance the moment with polyester pants and bargain basement shoes. Jerking the door out of the man's hands, Hewlett marched past him into the building.

"Excuse me," the man said. "Where are you going? You can't be in here. The building is closed."

Hewlett replied, "If it's closed, why are *you* here?"

The man sputtered then managed a complete sentence. "I'm in the stake presidency. Who are you? Do you belong here?"

"Do you?" Hewlett shot back.

"I'm the second councilor—in the stake presidency," he stated. "What are you?"

"What am I?" Hewlett pondered aloud with biting sarcasm. "I'm no longer a who but a what."

When Hewlett hit the end of the hallway, he stopped. To his right was the bishop's office where the tithing envelopes sat in a place-holder on the wall. To his left were the west side doors to the chapel.

"Sir," the second councilor chimed in again, "unless you have a reason to be here, you need to leave."

Hewlett went left to the chapel doors and pulled them open. The chapel was unlit but enough light filtered through the narrow stained

glass windows to provide a dusky illumination.

The councilor cleared his throat and stated dramatically, "Sir, you are trespassing."

"Trespassing?" Hewlett repeated in disbelief.

"There are rules for using this building. And no one is allowed in here unless they have scheduled business."

Hewlett's voice quaked with emotion as he began walking towards the front of the chapel. But his words flowed with unusual eloquence. "This isn't just a building. This is a church. A sanctuary. Think of me as just one of the village peasants. I've come in from the fields to light a candle and to pray for my soul and the souls of my family. That's the way it used to be. Now you call it—unscheduled business."

Hewlett reached the front of the chapel and looked at the empty seats where the bishopric sat each Sunday. With slow reverence, he walked up onto the stand and sat down behind the pulpit. From his vantage point, he could see the entire chapel and imagine a sea of parishioners staring back at him. "I've never been up here before," he spoke aloud. "It's not that bad. Someone could feel really important up here."

"Sir," the second councilor exclaimed, "I'm going to call the police if you do not leave—right now!"

"You're kidding, right?" Hewlett laughed in disbelief. "Call the police? On me?"

"I am not joking," the councilor said. "You obviously have no business here. Now, are you going to leave or do I call the police? This is your last warning."

With the filtered sunlight pouring down on his suit and silk tie, the man struck a powerful image. This was obviously an influential member of the community. How else could he be the second councilor in the stake presidency? Not by being a busboy or a custodian. Or the assistant manager of a mini-mart. The man certainly had to be a doctor, lawyer, or politician. Maybe he owned a business. Whatever Hewlett did next would have serious implications. Finally, he found the words he was looking for.

"Go to hell."

The man's eyes flexed and his mouth dropped open. "I warned you," he said, backing out of the chapel. "You are trespassing and now I am going to call the police."

The man retreated and silence settled on the chapel. It wasn't long after that Hewlett realized trouble was on its way. When the chapel doors burst open minutes later, the second councilor was joined by another man dressed in a suit and tie. This new face smiled, albeit with a great deal of nervousness. Hewlett recognized him as the stake president.

"Hi," the man said, keeping enough running room between himself and Hewlett. "I'm Jim Carlson. I'm the stake president. I'm in charge of

this building.”

“I thought he was,” Hewlett said, pointing at the irritated councilor.

President Carlson kept his smile and asked, “What is your name?”

“Hewlett. Hewlett Moore.”

“Nice to meet you,” the stake president said. “Now, Hewlett, I know you like being in here but the building is closed right now. Today is Saturday. Tomorrow you are more than welcome to come back when we hold our services.”

“But *he’s* here,” Hewlett said.

President Carlson put a hand on the shoulder of his second councilor. “He has permission to be here. We’re conducting church business. We’re scheduled to be in the building.”

“I don’t think someone has to be scheduled to come into the building,” Hewlett reasoned. “It’s a church for crying out loud. It’s sanctuary.”

“If you need some kind of sanctuary,” President Carlson answered, “perhaps I can help you find a place downtown.”

Hewlett stared back in confusion. “What are you talking about?”

“There are missions downtown to help people in need.”

Hewlett’s inevitable laugh started from a small chuckle and built into a rolling roar. “You think I’m a bum? A transient? Don’t you even recognize me? I came here to get some tithing envelopes!”

“You’re a member?” President Carlson gasped. He turned to his councilor then back to Hewlett. “Then I don’t understand why you won’t leave. You know the rules.”

Hewlett just shook his head in disgust. “You got that right. You don’t understand. You don’t understand anything.”

With that said, President Carlson left, followed by his councilor.

What now? Hewlett was left to wonder. Where did they go? Would they be back? Were they going to call the police? The National Guard? Salt Lake?

He picked up a hymn book and thumbed through the pages. For the first time he noticed the “Star Spangled Banner” in the hymn book. He didn’t know it was a hymn and wondered if hymn books in Germany had the American national anthem—or if they had the German national anthem. Something to think about during those slow days at work, he considered.

Again the doors opened and the lights to the chapel lit up, illuminating the room in a bright Sunday glow. Not only did he see the stake president and his second councilor, but Hewlett saw his own bishop walking towards him.

“Hewlett!” the bishop exclaimed.

“Hi, Bishop,” he answered sheepishly.

“Son, you can’t be in here.”

"Like I told them," Hewlett said, "I don't think I need an appointment."

"You can't just march into the building," the bishop admonished. "You need a reason to be here."

"I have a reason. I want to sit up here," he replied. "I've never sat up here before."

The bishop looked at the stake president then at his councilor. President Carlson shrugged, "He said he came in to get tithing envelopes."

"Well, that's not what he told me," the councilor complained. "He just marched in here like he owned the place."

"I don't think I have to give you or anyone an explanation," Hewlett said. "It's a church. I belong to this church. I should be able to come in if I want."

The bishop made his way up on the stand and sat next to Hewlett. "I called Laurie. She's leaving the kids with my wife and coming up here."

"Oh crap!" Hewlett cried out. Two-thirds of the stake presidency, his bishop—now his wife. Had the world gone insane?

The chapel doors burst open but it wasn't Laurie. It was Ben Miller, his home teacher. "Laurie called me," Ben said, jogging quickly up to the stand. "She's on her way. What's going on?"

"We're having a little trouble," the bishop explained. "Hewlett came in without permission and now he won't leave."

"He's not scheduled to be in the building," the councilor piped back.

The stake president then turned and walked away. "I'm going to go make a phone call," he called out. "I'll be right back."

Ben went up on the stand and sat by Hewlett. "Why are you here?" he asked. "Did you know you're missing a great game on TV?"

"Is that supposed to get me to leave?" Hewlett asked. "I'm not like you. I don't like sports."

Ben's mouth dropped open. "You don't like sports? I thought you liked sports. We always talk sports when I come over—"

"That's because *you* always talk about sports," he snapped. "I've never liked sports. Actually you and I have nothing in common. Never have. Never will."

Ben seemed to go limp in his chair. "All this time ..."

"He doesn't work at the post office, does he?" the second councilor muttered to the bishop. "I think he's going nuts. You know, he swore at me in here."

The doors burst open again. "Hewlett!" came a familiar cry. It was Laurie. "I'm so embarrassed," she whined making her way up the aisle.

"I'm not surprised," Hewlett said. "I've been an embarrassment to you for a long time."

"Can we go home?" she pleaded. "You're making a scene."

"I don't want to!" he snarled. "Is that OK with you? Is that OK with your father? Or should I call and get his permission first?"

"I already called him," she said. "He wants to talk to you. He's on the phone in the stake president's office. I gave him the number."

"I AM NOT GOING TO TALK TO HIM!" he screamed, clenching his fists. "You'll just have to run a line in here 'cause I'm not leaving!"

When the peal of his cry died down, a voice spoke up. "We have enough extra line," the councilor offered. "I could run it in here from the bishop's office then transfer the call."

"Please," Laurie begged. "If you could."

The councilor quickly spun on his heels and started out. "If it'll get him out of the building ..."

"This is insane," Hewlett fumed. "I'm not going to talk to your father. He'll just go on about how hard I should be working to make manager. I know how hard I'm supposed to be working. I don't need to be reminded every day. Maybe it's not something I really want to do. You ever thought of that? Did any of you think of that when you rammed all this down my throat eight years ago?"

"I am not going to be able to show my face at church tomorrow if you don't leave," she could only lament.

"Go ahead. Think of yourself," he answered. "Who cares what I think. Or how I feel."

She was flabbergasted. "What are you talking about? You're not supposed to be in here. Why can't you understand that? I understand it. Ben understands it. The bishop understands it—"

"I only wanted tithing envelopes!"

"You should have told them that. But no, you just marched right on in—"

"I shouldn't have to explain myself," Hewlett demanded. "How many times do I have to keep saying that? I shouldn't have to bow and scrape every time I want something!" He looked into his wife's eyes but found only contempt staring back. He turned to the bishop who still sat next to him. "What do you people think I'm going to do in here? Burn it down? Steal the tithing out of the clerk's office?"

The bishop just laughed and patted Hewlett on the back. "Heavens, no," he said. "We don't think that. It's just that there are rules. We can't just arbitrarily break them. Once you start doing that, you get yourself into all sorts of trouble. We'd have to let in every Tom, Dick, and Harry who wanted to come inside during the week. We can't have that."

"But what if it was you, Bishop," Hewlett asked, "and you came to the door and wanted inside. No one would have asked you a question. They would have just let you in."

"But they know me," the bishop said. "They don't know who you are."

"Exactly!" Hewlett yelled, jumping to his feet. He lashed out and kicked a hymn book on the floor. "Nobody knows who I am! You don't know who I am! Ben doesn't know who I am! Even Laurie—my own wife! She doesn't know who I am! I'm a nobody! I am invisible!"

The doors swung open. Again the stake president entered, this time, followed by two police officers packing guns, mace, and night sticks. President Carlson pointed to Hewlett as the officers made their way to the front of the chapel. "That's him," he said. "In the sweat pants with the grease stain on the leg."

"There's no way my father is going to take you on now," Laurie cried, tears running down her face. "You've ruined us! Forever!"

As he stared at the men in black, Hewlett considered telling the officers his side of the story. Still, he never doubted the police would drag him out. The choice between a businessman in a suit and the slovenly dressed assistant manager of a mini-mart was rhetorical. But, if he had a nice suit, maybe the police would have a harder time deciding who was right and who was wrong. And if he was the manager of the mini-mart and not just the assistant manager, he might stand a real chance of holding his ground. And maybe if he learned to mop and scrub with enthusiasm and get his promotion and go to work for his father-in-law, no one would ever ask Hewlett to explain himself. Still, if he hadn't listened to his father-in-law to begin with and told his wife how he really felt, he'd be writing books instead of writing on bathroom walls. Sure, maybe things would be different then.

Very different, he considered in the warm sun on that Saturday afternoon. Staring at the man insinuating himself in the church doorway, Hewlett politely asked, "May I come in? I need to get some tithing envelopes."