THE PEW

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Helen realizes at church Sunday morning that still, after all these years, she does not have fond feelings for the chapel. She doesn't want to hold on to any grudges against it—she doesn't take it personally. She never has. But there is something about it that she can't let go. Like a lady who had said something mean to you once when you were a kid, when you both didn't know better, about how you were too fat or something, and still after all these years you can't forget about it, even though really, you've forgiven her and you're working together in the PTA and you like her fine. That's what the building is to her, she realized—an old bully. One she ought to be friends with by now but isn't.

She doesn't often think about the old tabernacle anymore—the beautiful old building that used to stand where this new chapel is. But something brings it back to her now. Then she realizes what: today is her birthday, she is eighty-four. The same age Inez Mayfield had been when she died.

Helen looks up at her son at the pulpit. He is the bishop. She isn't listening to what he's saying. She wonders whether he remembers the tabernacle at all. Tommy had been—what—five when they tore it down? Now he is fifty . . . fifty-eight. Or almost sixty. He looks very much like his father, but a little different. A little rounder than Alvin ever had been.

In the congregation, Helen is sitting next to Tommy's wife. Later that night she will go to their house for dinner. They had invited her for her birthday.

Really—she doesn't take the existence of this new chapel personally at all. She hadn't cared much about the tabernacle to begin with, but there was something about the squall that had swirled around it that

had reached out and pulled her in until she loved it, until she loved the building with her whole heart. She remembers that stake conference—fifty years ago almost—looking up at President Hoyt Pike when he announced that they would tear it down; she felt a little singe of sadness on her skin like touching a hot bread pan, but it faded quickly. She wasn't going to get all up in arms like the others—the people who hadn't come to church in years, but showed up just for that conference because there was a rumor going around. About the announcement.

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Alvin had been held up that day for a few hours after the conference was adjourned. He was one of the counselors, a buffer for the president in this case. He returned home late, to a fully cooled plate of roast, mashed potatoes, green beans. The smell of Sunday dinner, built up over hours of afternoon labor, was not quickly vanished from the air. "Thanks, Helen," he said, kissing her on the forearm as she set his plate before him on the table. Helen and the boys had already eaten.

"I'm sorry it's cold," she'd said.

"No—it's fine." He let a lump of congealed gravy slide out of its boat and onto his potato mound. "Quite a response we got to President Pike's announcement."

"I assumed that's what held you up," she said, sinking into the chair at the opposite end of the table. "What is he going to do?"

"What do you mean? Well, he'll speak with them of course, but he's not going back on his—the tabernacle has to go."

"He can't just decide that, though. It's not his building. It's our building—it's Frandsenville's."

"It's the Lord's," Alvin said, raising his eyebrows. She knew his tone well: he was quoting Pike directly. Once upon a time he had to preface his comments with, "President Pike said today . . ." but eventually that

became unnecessary; his voice changed when he was quoting, and they both recognized it now.

"That's true," Helen said. For several minutes, she watched her husband eat. Then she stood up to take off her apron and put it back in its drawer. "More roast?"

"Yes, please. Anyway, it wasn't President Pike's choice. The word came from Salt Lake. And we got to vote. We voted just this morning in high council meeting. No one voted to keep the tabernacle."

"Really—no one? It was fifteen to none, huh? Well, of course—who *would* vote against him."

"*Helen*," Alvin scolded. "Well, not fifteen. About eleven to none. Some abstained."

She served him more roast, and then went about tidying the kitchen for a moment while he chewed in silence, and then she said, "It is sad, though. It's such an old building. A pioneer building."

"It's the way the Church is going," said Alvin. "It's what they've done in Salt Lake City, too, and Lehi, and somewhere in Arizona, I don't remember. And they've just had to sell the one in Heber. They're simply expensive to maintain, and don't fit the needs of the people the way a stake center would."

"That's true," Helen said again. "It is sad, though." Alvin raised his empty water glass and only ice fell against his lips. Helen brought the pitcher and refilled it. "Inez won't be happy," she said. Alvin allowed himself a half smile, thinking of the old woman. Helen laughed but stopped herself.

Inez had seemed so old then. Impossibly, laughably old—older than Helen would ever be. Helen had loved her in the obligatory way, but hadn't liked her much. Now, she feels, if she could go back, she would be different with Inez.

The morning after the announcement, Helen's phone rang. "Helen, it's Inez." The phone cord wrapped around Helen's hips as she turned to face the kitchen window, where she was met with Inez's gaze burning

through two layers of glass. Inez had pulled back the curtains over her own kitchen-sink window, from which she peered across the lawn and into the rooms of Helen's house, as was her custom. "I need some help with something. Please." She hung up and smiled at Helen through the windows.

In less than ten minutes Helen was at the front door. "Hello, dear," Inez said.

"It's not your toilet again? We can get a real plumber over here this time, Alvin really didn't know what he was doing—"

"No. It's much worse." She hobbled into her own living room and slid onto the loveseat, leaving room for Helen beside her. "Listen—I was at the conference yesterday, you know. I decided to go after all. The Jensons gave me a ride because I was talking to Betty just the day before and she told me he might do it. So I went to see if it was really true. I was thinking we've got to put together a committee. The Save the Tabernacle committee—that's what we'll call it; that's the most obvious thing."

Helen's facial reactions lagged behind the conversation. "Oh, you went to stake conference? Good." Helen and Alvin offered Inez a ride to church every Sunday, and she always accepted, but called them Saturday night to say that her back was acting up or that her nose was plugged very badly and she didn't think she'd make it.

"Well, except it wasn't good, because what I heard there nearly broke my heart in *half*, Helen. They can't tear down our tabernacle! You know Christian Frandsen built that? He was the *chief* architect." Christian Frandsen was Helen and Inez's common ancestor. Inez knew exactly how they were related, and often took the opportunity to recite the genealogy that linked them, though Helen could never quite remember. "This tabernacle is almost younger than I am! I saw it dedicated. It's not ready to die yet. Not to mention that's where I've always gone to church."

"Well, me too, Inez."

"So—I don't know—I've started drawing up some banners we can hang. You'll have to tell me exactly how to . . . mobilize the forces. You're good at that; you're in the PTA."

"Wait a minute, Inez. You know my husband is a counselor to President Pike. I can't very well organize a rebellion against the man."

"Says who," Inez said. Helen thought Inez's own husband had been gone too long; she didn't really remember what it was like to have one. "Anyway—it's not President Pike's building. It belongs to the Lord." Helen swallowed hard at hearing those words come out of her own mouth, but continued, "President Pike says it was a revelation."

"Well I've had a *personal* revelation," Inez said. "There's simply no way God wants us to tear down that tabernacle. It's a piece of history. And what would this city be without it."

"I don't know, Inez." Helen said. She fiddled with the fringe that edged the cushions of Inez's low pink couch. "I can help you with your drawings, though."

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Church is over now, and Tommy's family has taken Helen home with them. His wife, Donna, is making the birthday dinner. It is fettucine alfredo, Helen's favorite. Helen offers to help her, because that is what she is used to doing, but she knows Donna will refuse, because it is Helen's birthday, and because it is her eighty-fourth birthday. She does not feel like getting up to help anyway. Tommy is at his computer. He is working on something that bishops have to do.

"You know what I was thinking about today, Tommy," Helen says. "The old tabernacle. You remember it?"

"I remember the day it came down, yeah," he says. "I remember me and Hyrum and Ron went out to see it come down. It was *early* in the morning. Dad woke us up to watch though—we ran out to the corner so we could see better." Now he looks up from the computer.

"Mmm," Helen says.

"And I remember that Save the Tabernacle sign we had in our yard that year," he says.

"Yes. I was on the committee."

"Were you?" Donna says from the kitchen. "My mother was, too."

"Most of us ladies were. We all wanted to have something to do with it."

"But *my* mother was the chairwoman," Tommy says, affecting bravado.

"Were you?" Donna says again. "Why don't you tell us things like this?"

Why would I tell you, Helen thinks. Who in this world likes to brag about projects that they chaired straight to failure?

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Twenty-one years after the first settlers came to Frandsenville, and two years after the Frandsenville Stake was organized by Brigham Young in 1877, ground for the new tabernacle was broken on the adjoining corner of Main and Center Streets. Christian Frandsen, seventy-four years old, who had joined the Latter-day Saints in Denmark and come to settle Cedar City before being sent to settle the new colony twenty miles south, drew up the plans like he'd been taught to in his homeland. Everything that went into that tabernacle, though, was one hundred percent Southern Utah, except the windows. Wood cut in Pine Valley, bricks burned east of town, two foot thick sandstone walls from the canyon.

The railroad had come through Utah a decade earlier, and that's how they got the windows there. With the railroad came tools and techniques that expedited the building process but still the Frandsenville Saints were outmoded; their tabernacle was of the Victorian Gothic style that was on its way out then, but even if they had been aware of this certainly they wouldn't have cared. Through the 1880s the Relief Society ladies

made two hundred quilts and the young women sold beets to earn fifteen hundred dollars to send for stained glass windows from Belgium. A young Swede who had arrived in Frandsenville just a month earlier and didn't speak a word of English laid on his back on the scaffolding for two weeks, painting each tree of the Sacred Grove on the tabernacle's ceiling. When you looked up it was like the roof opened to the sky, and you could see the sun shining through the trees, just like young Joseph Smith might have seen it. When everything was in its place they scrubbed the floor with homemade soap and rolled their homemade carpets out in the aisles and awaited their building's dedication.

Somehow, though they may never have sat in a class and learned it, everyone in Frandsenville had this story woven inside like a strand of his or her own DNA. Somewhere at the back of their consciousnesses, all of them knew about the Swede, even. His descendants, some of them, brought him up at every opportunity. And the building, still the tallest in town by 1967 when they brought it down, cast its shadow over every bank transaction, drugstore interchange, childhood playdate. Anyone could give directions to anywhere if they started with "Okay, so if you're heading east from the tabernacle . . . " and anyone could find you from there.

Helen Bennett had in her heart mourned the announcement of the tabernacle's destruction, but she had not planned to head the effort to save it. Even when she was elected chair of the Save the Tabernacle committee, she still did not plan to head the effort, not really. And sometimes she liked to feel victimized, or at least make a show of that in front of Alvin—she liked to feel she was Inez Mayfield's puppet; she was leading the committee because she knew that Inez really wanted to but didn't have the means or the appeal to gather support. At first she would tell Inez things like, "I don't even argue with my husband in front of the children, how can I do it in front of the whole town?" And later, when Inez would propose making a speech at the next committee meeting about the night she was visited in a dream by Christian Frandsen and

Joseph Smith together, Helen would tell her perhaps that wasn't the right rhetorical strategy—and Helen's heavy editing quickly turned into her writing an entirely new speech. She neglected the housework. She forgot to pick up her children from school at three o'clock. She remembered that she had been a good writer in high school, always gotten good grades, and she had liked it, too. The next day, standing on the stage of the high school auditorium, she found that she liked the act of giving the speech less, but not as much less as she would have thought. There might have been as many as five hundred bodies in that room, or a thousand—she was no good at estimating the size of a crowd. But certainly it was the biggest crowd she had ever talked to. The nervousness wore off in the first two minutes of speaking. She didn't need to look at her paper as much as she had expected to. And there was something about watching people watch her talk. Sometimes they smiled, sometimes nodded. Alvin was there, too, standing in the back of the room where it was too dark to see his face. And when she glanced down at her handwritten sheets again she was hit with the realization that she had kept none of Inez's words; these were her own, and she was not doing a favor right now. She had done her share of favors in the past; this was not one of them. It felt entirely different.

After the speech people stood up to clap, and it took her an hour to get out of the high school because so many people came up to congratulate her. Some of them were crying. Some of them just wanted to give her a speech of their own, a list of things they would have said in her place. Inez, clinging to her arm, said, "Looks like you are quite the public speaker!" Alvin had left early with the boys so he could put them to bed. Finally, the high school halls emptied and Helen took Inez home. Outside, it was snowing—it was January. Four months since the new stake center was announced. Six weeks to go to demolition day.

"You'd think he'd take this as a sign, wouldn't you?" Inez said, holding her breath as she lowered herself into the passenger seat of Helen's car. She brushed the flakes of snow from the shoulder of her wool coat.

Helen knew who she was talking about. "It doesn't snow for thirty years, and now, this winter, it snows. You'd think he'd take it as a sign from God, wouldn't you?"

"It snowed five years ago, Inez," Helen said.

"No it didn't."

"Yes, the year Tommy was born. I remember—it was snowing while Alvin drove me to the hospital."

Inez huffed and adjusted her coat. "Well I think it was thirty years before that."

The thought of President Pike's omnipotence haunted Inez most of the time, Helen observed. It seemed possible to her to blame most of what went wrong on him. There was something he could have and ought to have done about everything—the un-shoveled sidewalks, the new policy at the pharmacy where she had to show her ID to pick up her prescriptions every single time, even though she'd known that pharmacist since he was born. When it became clear that President Pike wouldn't stand down, letters landed on the desk of the president of the church himself, which for weeks received no reply, until finally word came: the church would not continue to shoulder the cost of maintaining the building, but the tabernacle could be saved if someone else would buy it. The price was set: sixty-six thousand dollars. The committee took to the streets in fundraising efforts; Helen and Inez and the others made speeches before the city council, proposing plans to turn the tabernacle into a museum, or to move the city offices inside its doors. The efforts at least stalled the demolition. With the city still in lukewarm debate about the idea, and a month left to the scheduled demolition, the committee started a frantic campaign to get the tabernacle placed on the national register of historic places. When that failed, with mere weeks to go, Inez filed a restraining order against the demolition company. A judge overturned it in court a week later. And so, finally, every girl in Frandsenville who had planned to marry within the next six months rescheduled her wedding to take place within a month or a week so

that she could have her reception in the tabernacle—so she could get her pictures taken in a white dress in front of the Belgian stained glass windows, like her mother had, and her grandmother.

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The dinner is ready. The room smells like alfredo. Donna has asked Tommy twice to please go get the extra dining room chair from the garage. Helen wants to pester him too, but she decides not to. Her turn to ask Tommy to do things ended forty years ago. Donna asks a third time—this time setting a dishcloth down on the counter and pausing emphatically while she asks. Finally, he sets down his computer and hurries to the garage. Donna scoffs and looks at Helen, as if to say, "Can you believe this?" but they both can believe it.

This is the kind of anger wives are inclined to admit later they are silly for feeling, because their husbands do not recognize it. Helen recognizes it. She is surprised that after all these years her memories of Alvin have not smoothed into one long string of blisses. She thought that was what would happen. She remembers the good, and she misses him in the way that seems to drop the back out from behind her heart when she lies alone in bed at night. But she remembers anger, too. This was her mother's wedding-day advice: You can either be right or you can be happy. And Helen does believe that. But there was a time when, for six months, she thought certainly there were some things worth being right about—*only* right. She couldn't quite figure out what those things were. There was one day years ago when she had handed Alvin the lunch she had packed and kissed him goodbye before work and he noticed her iciness. He said, "Is everything all right?" and she said "Oh—yes!" and pretended that frigidity was the biggest accident in the world, because how could she explain, "I can't kiss you because you want the tabernacle torn down"? No, she would laugh at it herself before he could, and that didn't feel like the right reason anyway.

Generally, when she felt inclined to iciness, it didn't carry over to the morning. It might have been inspired by an after-dinner offense, but a good night's sleep would often dissolve it. This, though, resurfaced every morning when they both woke up, the husband and wife, and he got right into the shower, saying only good morning dear, and nothing to comfort her. Alvin was more desperate than she knew for something else to say. At night he lay on his back looking up at the dark, and all he could think to say to her was something that ended with "Miss Teen Frandsenville." It was an old joke, the only jest that came to his mind now, as he lay beside her in bed and didn't touch her.

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One hundred years to the day that Brigham Young and company rolled through Emigration Canyon and proclaimed "this is the place," as they say, two hundred and thirty-two miles southwest of Salt Lake City, the citizens of Frandsenville were sending off the floats they'd labored on for weeks. Alma Green, one of the bishops of one of the wards, was dressed up as Brigham, standing on a mountaintop of plywood and cardboard covered in paper grass and rolling down 100 South. Behind him, sixteen-year-old Helen stood waving to onlookers with a graceful flutter of the hand she had practiced for weeks, atop a platform labeled in sequined letters, "Miss Teen Frandsenville." Her crown was the same gold as the waves of her hair.

Alvin Bennett knew who she was when the float passed him by and he caught a little of her smile. He knew her name, though she wouldn't know his until the Pioneer Day dance later that night, when he would meet her in the dimly-lit dance hall filled with the sound of a little jazz orchestra and would ask her to dance. She was sunburned from standing on the float in the July sun all day. She had the prettiest teeth he'd ever seen, when she smiled.

Sometimes, now that they were married, he called her that, to tease her or to compliment her: "How did I get so lucky as to end up with Miss Teen Frandsenville?" he would say sometimes, instead of "thank you." Or, when she finally flew down the staircase after having taken too long to get ready for church and made them all late, he'd put on his announcer voice—"Here she is, boys: the beautiful Miss Teen Frandsenville!"

So, this was the only thing that came to his mind now most nights—something light, to make her smile her perfect smile, though he wouldn't even be able to see it. The words ran around his brain, rubbed it raw, like a belt on a conveyor—"*Hey . . . Miss Teen Frandsenville*." He said nothing. He would kiss her on the shoulder and roll over and sleep.

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Helen eats too much alfredo, though her appetite is gone and has been for ten years. She hadn't let herself eat it much when she was young. Now she does not care about how much butter is in the sauce. She is eighty-four.

They remind her of that by bringing out the cake—mercifully, it does not have eighty-four candles, but only two: one in the shape of an eight and one in the shape of a four. They sing to her and she blows out the candles. She does not get them both in one breath. Donna slices the cake—it is white under its chocolate frosting. Helen had hoped for chocolate all the way through.

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Inez Mayfield died at eighty-four. Helen does not remember much about the day she died, but she remembers the day she almost died. At 6:53 in the morning the phone rang in the Bennett household. It was someone at the hospital, calling to say that Inez was dead. Helen, who had stumbled in a haze down the stairs to answer the phone in the

kitchen, rested her back against the counter and looked across room to where her window met Inez's. She threw her hands on top of her head and pressed down; she didn't know what else to do. Alvin, at the foot of the stairs now, said "What's the matter?" The phone rang again and the woman at the hospital said no, she wasn't dead, it was a heart attack.

Helen told Alvin he'd have to call in and say he'd be late to work and get the boys to school. She went into the bathroom and fluffed up her hair, put on a little blush, a dress, shoes, coat, and kissed him goodbye.

Inez was not awake when Helen arrived, but a machine beside her bed beeped its congratulations every time her heart beat. That was reassuring. Helen sat in the chair at the foot of the bed and determined to wait there until Inez woke up. A nurse appeared in the door frame—someone Helen recognized from the committee meetings—Sandra, she thought her name was.

"Are you Helen?" Sandra said. Helen nodded.

"Oh, she'll be glad to see you."

"How long has she been here?"

"She called the ambulance herself at about 5:30. Said she was feeling short of breath, pain in her arm. At about quarter after, her heart"—the nurse dropped her voice as if she didn't want Inez to hear what had happened—"her heart stopped. Flat lined. It had already started again by the time we called you, but word travels too slow around here I guess."

Helen wanted to smile, but she still didn't quite believe this was happening. The nurse seemed to sense this. "She's stable now. You're welcome to stay. We'll be in and out to check on her." The nurse stood next to Inez, made note on a clipboard of something, and then slid toward the door again.

"Excuse me—can I ask a question?" Helen said, catching the nurse lightly by the arm. "Am *I* her emergency contact?"

The nurse nodded slowly, as if that were not a question she had been asked before. It made sense, actually, Helen realized. Inez had no one else.

The sun was coming up now, stretching its faint fingers of February light through the blinds and over the bedsheet, drawing stripes across the little lump of Inez's body. Now, without warning, Helen was getting ready to cry, as if the grief of hearing Inez pronounced dead was catching up with her only after she knew that the woman was still alive. She wiped at tears. A crash from outside startled her and made her jab herself in the eye.

Right—it was demolition day. And the tabernacle, which could not now be shielded from the blows of its own caretakers, had let its first sandstone block fall to the earth. Inez had talked of chaining herself to the red rock pillars that bordered the tabernacle's front door. Helen had advised her against it but at the same time contemplated it herself. Now they were both in a hospital room instead, and Helen considered getting up to open the blinds and watch the demolition take place. At the very least, she deserved this—she deserved the satisfaction of seeing her efforts decisively destroyed, rather than quietly debated and dismissed as they had been for months. But she worried the noise might wake Inez and then kill her again. She couldn't let Inez see.

But after another crash she couldn't sit in her chair any longer. She parted the blinds and peered down Main Street, where she saw a cloud of orange dust rising from inside the chain-link fence that surrounded the demolition site. The claw of a machine rose and grabbed another handful of the tabernacle, throwing it to the ground. A crowd gathered across the street with cameras.

Helen stood there and watched the building come down like she might have watched a movie in a theater. She realized an hour had passed. When the sound of the crashing sandstone stopped, she could again hear the faint beeping of Inez's heart monitor.

She hurried to the front desk and asked to use their phone. "I'm not sure when I'll be home," she told Alvin. "I want to be here when she wakes up. I don't know how long it will be."

"Of course," he said.

"Did you hear the tabernacle come down? Did you watch?"

"I—heard it. The boys ran out to the corner; they could see a little better." He paused. "Tommy was very concerned about you. He said, 'But I thought Mommy didn't want that to happen!'" Alvin tried, cautiously, to chuckle.

And Helen had to decide whether to agree that this was funny or take it as a personal attack. So she let out a little laugh, the kind that only comes like a smile and a hard breath through the nose.

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When Hoyt Pike arrived at the hospital carrying an enormous wooden bench, he received some uncertain looks. But all the staff knew who he was. They shrugged their shoulders and let him pass. The bench was too long for the elevator. He and his counselor Dave Dunford each took an end and hefted it up three flights of stairs to their destination, Dave huffing all the while and joking that it was not a job for two old men. After every turn of the staircase they set the bench down to catch their breath. Finally, they arrived at the third floor and inched the bench along the floor until they reached room 306.

Hoyt pushed open the door to find Helen Bennett asleep in a chair, and Sister Mayfield unconscious in her own bed. They began to push the bench inside, turning it at an angle so that it would clear the door frame, but still it banged against the walls and woke Helen.

"President Pike?" she said, standing up and brushing the hair off of her face. "What—"

"It's a gift for Sister Mayfield," Hoyt whispered. "They didn't tear down *every* piece of that tabernacle."

"A pew?" Helen said. "You . . . saved her a pew?"

"She'll like it, won't she." Hoyt stretched his fingers to iron out the grooves in his hands from the old pine pew.

Helen kept her eyes on the bench. "I don't know," she said.

"Thank you for coming to be with her," Hoyt said. "I know she appreciates that."

Helen nodded her acceptance.

"You don't need to get up for us," said Brother Dunford. "We're just dropping by. Hoped we'd catch her awake. But we won't bother you. Give her our well wishes."

They pushed the pew against the wall, where it was out of the middle of the room but stood in the way of the door opening fully. Dave started to back out the door, but Hoyt lingered. He laid a hand on her shoulder and said, "Sister Bennett, I know you worked hard to keep the tabernacle standing. I'm sorry that it didn't happen for you."

She looked up at him and offered a tight smile. "No—of course. Thank you." Hoyt got the impression that she wasn't being transparent with him, but he knew he couldn't concern himself with that; she would come around.

"Know that this was the Lord's plan for Frandsenville."

She nodded, shifting her eyes to Inez now.

"So no hard feelings, I hope."

Inez rolled onto her side and snored one soft long snore, but didn't wake up. Helen looked directly at the president then and sat down on the pew, planting her hands on its surface as if trying to soak something up through them. "It's just that I'm afraid for her to wake up. I don't know what I'm going to tell her. Of course, she knows what she's waking up to, but—I can just hear what she's going to say. I'm going to fuss over her heart and ask how she's doing and she's going to say something like, 'My heart? They ripped my heart out when they tore down that tabernacle!' And I'm going to have to tell her, No, Inez, that isn't your heart, it's a building—" She cut herself off.

Hoyt Pike's palms had started to sweat. It didn't happen often, but when it came upon him—the feeling that he had no idea what to say—his palms started to sweat. He wiped them once against the front of his

pants. "She will be stronger for it," he said, and though he felt that was true, he didn't really know what it meant.

"But you know what?" Helen said. "I was sitting here all morning thinking—before I fell asleep—I was thinking, we fought so hard and cared so much about this building because our pioneers built it—that's what we said anyway—but they never would have fought for a thing like this. Because they moved on. They always moved on. They knew when it was time to go, and when it was time to let your hard work get thrown all over the floor like a—toddler's block tower."

Hoyt tried a smile and said, "It *is* the Lord's work," and though he knew it was the wrong thing, he was relieved because she didn't seem to need him to say anything.

"I suppose."

Inez's monitor beeped, as if to remind them that she was still there. "Thank you for the pew," Helen said. "I think it would be better if you weren't here when she wakes up."

Hoyt left the hospital with Dave. When he reached the parking lot he saw the dust swirling over the tabernacle lot and remembered that he hadn't pointed out the get well soon card he'd left in the little box in Inez's pew where the hymnals used to go.

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Tommy and Donna live in Inez's house now. This is the house in which Helen is eating the eighty-fourth birthday cake of her life. Inez had gotten out of the hospital but died a few weeks later. She left her house to Helen and Alvin, who were shocked until they remembered that she had no one else. For a few weeks, they tried to sell it, but it didn't sell, and they stopped trying. When Tommy got married they sold it to him, very cheap. The two houses' backyards face each other; they are close, but Helen almost felt closer when Inez lived there. Back then, the house needed her all the time. Now no one calls from the house and leaves the

blinds open so they can look at her while they're talking to her, making sure she's really there. They call her cell phone, and she doesn't even have to be standing by the kitchen window to answer it. She could be anywhere. She calls to ask for things for them.

And Helen remembers the pew now—how Alvin and someone else from the ward had driven it back home for Inez, and she kept it in her living room for those few weeks back at home, and sat on it whenever she felt well enough to get out of her bed. She celebrated her eighty-fourth birthday there. Helen sat on it with her sometimes. Helen didn't think so at the time, but President Pike was right—Inez loved the pew, though she said several times, "I wish he would have saved me a stained-glass window instead."

Setting her fork down after polishing off her cake, Helen casually asks, "Do you still have the pew from the old tabernacle in here?" but after the words are out of her mouth her chest seizes up with panic that their answer will be no.

"That pew—it's from the tabernacle?" Donna said. "Yes, I think it must be in the attic." She looked to Tommy, who said, "Yes, it's in the attic. I didn't know that's where it came from either. Maybe we should put it up for sale online? Someone around here would probably pay a good amount of money for an old relic like that."

Helen knew he was joking, halfway joking at least, but she said sharply, "Don't. No one who would want it is still alive." Helen thought about asking for them to bring it to her and put it in her living room, but decided against it. What would she do with it? Donna started clearing the plates. Then they gave her a present in a bag—a sweater—and Tommy drove her home.