CITY OF SAINTS

David G. Pace

When Dennis Cormier arrived on the fifteenth floor of the Church Office Building in downtown Salt Lake City, his first appointment was already waiting. The visitor was fleshy, jowls and hips, about Dennis' age, and carried a large manila envelope, opened and stuffed with papers. He wore a light London Fog, despite the warming weather, and a thoughtlessly tied tie. His worn shoes seemed to be collapsing from the inside out. Dennis invited the man in and shut the door to his office.

"JoAnn said your name was Brother Fournier?" Dennis pronounced the name with a long "e" and no "r."

"Yes," said the man, who sat without taking off his coat. "Do you know French?"

"Enough to know that folks around here probably mangle your name all the time, just like they do mine." Dennis smiled. He had a ways to go to acclimate fully to his new home; words like "folks" and the single-syllable pronunciation of words like "believe" ("blieve"), and the relentless shaking of hands that was almost competitive compared to handshakes in Louisiana, where the church had hardly any presence. Brother Fournier's hand in Dennis's had withered when they shook. And now, sitting across from his desk, the man seemed categorically out of place.

In the hall, outside the office was Lloyd, his deep voice, resonant and fresh with the office staff as his mentor performed his morning routine. He waved at Dennis through the glass. Lloyd was a huge man with shoulders that filled elevator doors. He liked to pull you off balance when he shook hands. Dennis liked him. Lloyd was rural, from Sanpete County, one year ahead of Dennis in their callings as Seven-

ties. He could see Lloyd lumbering toward his office, looking through the Levelors and sizing up the occupants of the room, giving Dennis a querying look, then waving again.

Dennis turned toward his visitor, leaned back in his chair and asked what he could do for him. Brother Fournier turned the manila envelope over and removed its contents to his lap. The sheaf looked like the old family group sheets which Latter-day Saints filled out with the names and dates of ancestors for their Books of Remembrance. Corners were folded, pages yellowed and punched holes ripped as though hastily taken from a binding.

"I am appealing to you," said the man as he turned over the top sheet. Dennis could see tiny square photos of blurred ancestors staring out, the look of a previous age suddenly haunting the room. "This is a picture of my grandmother, Eunice Hickman." The man held up a photocopy of an elderly woman with a narrow face, severe eyes and lips that thinned to nonexistent corners. The man's fingers shook. "She went by her maiden name, Fournier."

"She is a handsome woman," said Dennis in a tepid attempt to put the man at ease. Fournier put the picture back in his lap face down and smoothed the sheets. Dennis thought of his own genealogy, the boxes full of photos, birth and marriage certificates. Vivian had just started to sort through them after Dennis had been set apart and they were readying to move to Salt Lake. And then the accident happened. The day before that he had joked with her that if the Brethren knew how much of his family records were in disarray they would never have called him to be a general authority.

"My grandmother was never allowed to take my grandfather's name," said Fournier. "At least not publicly."

"Your grandfather?"

"Jacob Hickman. You see, Elder Cormier, my grandmother was Jacob's polygamous wife. His second. A church elder known as Joseph Summerhays married them in Mexico in 1906."

Dennis looked at him puzzled. He felt there was a trap being set.

"1906?"

"That is correct. *After* the second manifesto."

In 1890 the prophet Wilford Woodruff had disavowed polygamy to save the Mormons from extinction. That was the only Manifesto Dennis knew of, and that was all he wanted to know of the Church's polygamous past, unlike some of the locals who seemed lost in church history to the point of obsession. Prior to his ordination, in his short interview with the current prophet and president, Dennis had mentioned meekly that he was more familiar with public education than the finer points of religious history. The prophet, an octogenarian who seemed to speak only in paragraphs, had reassured him. "Elder," he said, always opting for Dennis's ecclesiastical title, "each of the Brethren has his special calling in the Church. Yours, perhaps, is still unknown to you. We don't need another church historian. We need *you*."

Though his first year as a Seventy had been uneventful Dennis figured that there would be some point in his tenure when he would feel out of his depth. But then the prophet called him to be the inter-faith liaison to the region that included Salt Lake, and Dennis saw the remainder of his five-year term stretch in front of him rather enjoyably.

Dennis looked at Fournier and cleared his throat. "What is it that I can do for you, Brother?"

"Issue a formal acknowledgment."

"I don't understand . . ."

"And give my grandmother her rightful name, on the church rolls."

"With all due respect, Brother Fournier, your grandmother is dead."

"You are only as good as your ordinances," said Fournier, flinching. "What your children and grandchildren can write about you in their family histories." His jaw was set, his lips thinning like those in the picture, but through the shadow of a beard. He looked down again, spreading his fingers on the sheets of paper. Then he looked back up

at Dennis. "As a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, surely you know that," he said.

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Later that day, after the interview with Fournier, Dennis sat waiting at a table for Lloyd to get through the lunch line. Lloyd joked with the hair-netted ladies behind the counter–all of whom he knew by name–before smiling his way over to the table, his perpetually red face open with ease. He was in shirt sleeves, his suit jacket left behind, the hair on his forearms blanched from the sun, like a construction worker's. The only time Lloyd wore his jacket was when they gave press conferences in the lobby in front of the mural of the resurrected Christ, the skyline of ancient Jerusalem baked and sanitized in the background.

Dennis explained Fournier's request. Lloyd shook his head. "What's his real beef?"

"He told me that the church has never admitted to secret marriages after the Manifesto. So he has no assurance that these marriages are recognized by the Lord."

"If the family doesn't believe it was a legitimate marriage, why don't they just have her sealed to her husband by proxy? It's done all the time."

"They say the original marriage was authorized by the prophet at the time. They just want it acknowledged by the church leadership now."

Lloyd stopped chewing his sandwich. Swallowed hard. "Now? Sounds like you've got a live one."

"They lived their lives in shame," continued Dennis, inexplicably pressing for his new charge. "No one, including Sister Fournier's bishop, recognized she was a married woman. Just a single woman who kept having children."

"And this was when?" Lloyd wiped his fingers on a napkin.

"The '20s and '30s."

"And he wants some kind of public acknowledgment?"

"That this was going on, yes."

"He's going to have to take this one on faith," said Lloyd.

Dennis had hoped his colleague wouldn't say that. Dennis was young—forty-seven—and he wasn't from The Corridor, that religio-cultural stretch from Colonial Juarez, Mexico through Utah and Idaho and into southern Alberta. He had made his mark as a school district superintendent in New Orleans, as far as you could get from the legal world or the world of the Big Eight (or was it now the Big Four?) accounting firms from which most of the other general authorities seemed to have been plucked. Of course, as a youth, Dennis had visited the Church's headquarters regularly. He spent two months in Utah for training before he'd left on his mission to Montreal. There he was the only missionary who spoke French with a Cajun accent. Even so, he had always claimed the Gulf Coast as home, especially after the Hurricane. Katrina was the Lord's preamble, he believed, to what would have otherwise seemed to be the pointless and thus unbearable death of his wife in a car accident. Now, he thought, he would be leaven to a church hierarchy made up of men primarily from the Great Basin and California. What Lloyd had just said about "taking things on faith" was the recurring phrase repeated endlessly in the Church Office Building when someone just didn't want to deal with something directly. Dennis had arrived in "Zion," a man tried by flood and fire, and in his new post he would be an agent himself of transformation.

"How's your son John?" said Lloyd, diving back into his Reuben. Like everything else, eating seemed to be an athletic event for him. "How long has he been in Ireland?"

"He just got transferred to a town in the West. Lisdoonvarna. Viv and I stayed there once, actually. On our honeymoon." Dennis paused, dropping his gaze in an attempt to collect himself. "He seems to be doing okay. Says his companion is depressed." Dennis was remembering his wife's funeral, the open casket, Viv, the mother of his two children, dressed in the pleated robe over the right shoulder, the shock of green in

the ritual silk apron. The almost fetid smell of flowers. He remembered how he had bent over to lower the veil across his beloved's face before the funeral director closed the lid.

"Those Irish Catholics can be tough," Lloyd said.

Dennis knew that there was something else his missionary son wasn't telling him, something more relevant to his state of mind than the fact that locals were not responding to the gospel. After all, that's what it meant to be a Mormon missionary, right? Get doors slammed in your face.

"I thought I was going to be doing ecumenical work here." Dennis brought the conversation back around. "Not meeting with disgruntled church members. Anyway, I told Brother Fournier that I would call him next week."

Lloyd looked at Dennis and sighed. "Dennis, you're going to have to take this Fournier fellow on faith as well. Don't try to reconcile the church's history with its mission today. It never, ever turns out okay. A lot of people just end up getting hurt." He stabbed at his macaroni salad. "Eat your lunch," he said, his fork aloft. "You're losing too much weight."

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That afternoon Dennis visited the church archives downstairs. He asked for the lists of temple marriages of the early 1900s.

"Those particular records are still being digitized," explained the librarian. "I can get you the microfilm, if you'd like."

Dennis sat in front of the metal bulk of the reader. He suddenly felt as if he were about to transgress something. He felt small. Point of fact, he *was* losing weight, the effect of running every morning in Liberty Park near his new home. At first, just getting around the park once was an adjustment because of the elevation. But now, perhaps because he had dropped ten pounds, he was winging four and five times around

the wood-chipped track every day. That morning, he'd gotten a cramp in his calf. Maybe it was time to back off a little.

The librarian threaded the machine for Dennis, then turned away without a word. Dennis found the date Fournier had given him in the grid, but in the lists there was no evidence of the man's grandmother being sealed in celestial matrimony to a Brother Hickman. Not in 1906.

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The next morning Dennis added another lap, despite the soreness in his calf. When he had run in New Orleans and the weather had warmed in the spring, the sap beginning to flow up, he would begin to notice other people, their bodies, and feel the high-tension wires under his own skin vibrate to a distant planet. It was no different here in Salt Lake, and the phenomenon, now that he was single again, both pleased and worried him. "Surely, the Lord will protect me," he said aloud to himself in a tone that sounded scriptural. Didn't he deserve special protection from common, everyday sin? Just "hold fast to that which is good," he reminded himself using the stock phrase. Though poised to make a unique contribution to the Kingdom as the prophet had directed, Dennis Cormier had the road map of the gospel. Now, he just had to follow it. Wasn't that the value of being a member of the restored church of Christ? To know absolutely what it was one had to do—or not do?

The cottonwood trees billowed their refuse through the summer air. The first July he had been here he had thought the airy bits a menace, even dirty. But now he found them comforting, how they pillowed on the ground and piled against the curb. The vegetation reminded him how many things in this dry valley were utterly improbable, the cottonwoods for one, but even more so the tall, planted poplars as an accent to the land, an impulse to make the area something other than what it was—a flat, dry desert. Funny how he had thought of New Orleans the same way at first after the hurricane and after Viv died. That other city of

saints, with parishes rather than Mormon "wards." Perhaps ecologically the high desert of the Rocky Mountains wasn't any more habitable than the lowlands of the Mississippi Delta, so prone to flooding.

He moved off the running path to pass a slower-moving runner, a younger but much heavier man who looked like he was just starting a regimen—new shoes, a large, un-tucked T-shirt that still had the folds in it. An iPod.

During his scripture study earlier that morning, Dennis had made a survey through the topical index on faith, then turned to an old commentary by the brilliant apostle B.H. Roberts, long-deceased. But Dennis had found no hook upon which to hang his angst. There was an air of desperation in Fournier that reminded Dennis of his days as a bishop in New Orleans and later as a mission president back in Montreal with his young family, the way some of his fellow saints saw him not so much as a pastor but as a rigid judge, one who either rules in their favor or becomes an instant enemy. Even his missionary charges who had the courage to express their doubts—or act them out—seemed to intone, "*Tell me what it is I want to hear, or I will hate you.*"

Dennis slowed to a jog at the entrance to the aviary, lessening the pull on his lungs. In this post-Viv world, continually telling himself the unvarnished truth remained the most important thing. More important than belief. Than faith, maybe. It's not my job to make the past okay for Fournier, he thought. The past that the Church couldn't permit for fear, perhaps, that it would be irreparable to its reputation. At worst, start some kind of avalanche. I'll just tell him to take it to the Lord. To ask in prayer and in faith for peace. But Dennis knew that was a cop out. It was what Lloyd would have told him. It was what Lloyd *had* told him. Surely Fournier had already done that before showing up in a General Authority's office with his worn-down genealogy, pleading for justice. Few church members would have gone that far. That's what made the man sort of admirable, thought Dennis. What was it called, someone with *chutzpah*?

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On his way home, Dennis stood waiting for the traffic light. He could hear the train whistle to the west of the city, a plaintive cry that moved away in its Doppler slipstream. The frequent whistles in the dry air had come to signify to Dennis a lingering, aural presence of Viv, as if she had followed him back to Salt Lake after the burial. And yet he realized that he now longed for something that was not Viv. He couldn't put his finger on it, but it was something taking form slowly—primeval and filled with buzz. The rising sun ablaze before him, he saw the two white lines of the crosswalk before him as if they extended into infinity. He pressed the large, industrial-strength button for the light again and waited, then pulled at the waist of his now too-big sweat pants. Was it because he'd lost his appetite or that he couldn't stop running since he'd come to Utah? Now, even against this thoroughfare, threading the day's workers into the city, the sound of the distant train presented itself as little more than background, what they used to call in movies "incidental music." And yet, the whistle penetrated him, impelling him to move on to the black top, between the lines, to cross the street against the light. Sweat beaded on his back under his shirt. He punched the button again. The light turned. The lines merged into a single, shining rod, blinding him. But he just stood there.

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The following week Dennis picked up the phone, as he had promised, and called Fournier, but there was no answer and no voice mail to leave a message on. He was relieved.

There had been no file on Fournier from the Strengthening Church Members Committee. No signs of apostasy. No publications, nothing in the press. Fournier probably ran a small business, Dennis surmised, somewhere in the greater Salt Lake area. A dry cleaners or a print shop.

His wife was more than likely conventional. A stay-at-home mom with several children. At church Brother Fournier probably functioned as the ward clerk, collecting tithing and keeping statistics on its members. Or he was an usher. Not exactly leadership material. Obviously, he did do his genealogy, maybe even taught the module on it once a month in the high priests quorum. Yet despite his humble, faithful service, Fournier would not be pacified by the only answer Dennis was authorized to provide.

"Only half of your problem is your job description," exclaimed Lloyd later that day. "The other half is your expectations." They were standing on the observation deck of the Church Office Building. Twenty-six stories below them, the burnished, east doors of the Temple, narrow and antique, receded into granite block. South and west of them, the valley lay, alternately stitched together and ruptured by the world.

"What expectations? To be honest with this man? Help him resolve his issue?"

Lloyd turned to him. In the fierce sun he seemed exposed, the signature undergarment luminous as it pressed against his thin, white dress shirt. "It's a classic top-down arrangement here, Dennis, maybe one of the last hierarchies with all this talk of flat management."

Dennis could feel himself leaning away from this imposing man. "But we're a ch-church . . ." stammered Dennis.

". . .with a prophet at its head," said Lloyd without missing a beat. "A CEO." They stood silent for a while, the wind flogging the Soviet-styled skyscraper, pin-striped with cast, quartzite columns, a blinking light on top. Up here a veritable blast furnace of dry, sterile heat blew steadily. Dennis suddenly missed the messy humidity of the South.

"There's a reason why they call us 'the body of saints,'" continued Lloyd. He stretched out a burly arm and wiggled his fingers. "You get too far out there on the tips and you're likely to lose perspective. That's where Brother Fournier seems to have gone. When the Brethren tell you to back down, you do it because you have the perspective. The eternal one."

But what about one's calling, Dennis wondered. The persisting, straight-to-the-bone confirmation of the Spirit the saints referred to non-stop as their "testimony"? Maybe it wasn't the world at large that needed rebooting anymore. Maybe it was *this* world. This valley that needed change. He recalled the prophet's words during his interview with him: *We don't need another historian, Elder Cormier.*

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That night, Dennis woke to the enduring whistle of the cross-valley train. The mayor, a lapsed Mormon and cranky Democrat in, now, a thoroughly Republican state, had complained to Union Pacific that the tracks needed to be moved farther west, away from the downtown area. The shrill whistles in the dead of night annoyed his constituents. In response, the irascible engineers blew through the city limits, laying on the horn. When agitated himself, Dennis perhaps alone welcomed the intrusion, as though it were Viv now coming forcefully into this world with her unfinished business, and perhaps his, putting a sharp point on all of it.

The neighborhood where Dennis lived just east of the park seemed as far from Mormon Gothic as he could get without living in the resort town of Park City thirty minutes into the Wasatch Mountains which truly would have raised eyebrows among the Brethren. He thought of Becky, his daughter. "Zion is the perfect place for you." She had told him this the day of the funeral before his return to Salt Lake, newly ordained but now, suddenly a widower. She was already rounding at the belly, he remembered, Josh smiling nearby. Good kid, that Josh, he thought, even if he does strike me as a little lost, still puttering around at Tulane. Was he even a junior yet?

"You've always talked about wanting to gather with the saints," Becky had told him. "And who knows? Maybe there's a sweet spirit out there working at Temple Square who you'll fall in love with." She had

winked at him when she said this, and he saw the freckled, still grieving girl before him, his little girl. She was too young to be a mother, he'd thought at the time. "The Brethren don't want a general authority who's not married," she reminded him. The love he had for this young woman now made Dennis ache.

A "sweet spirit"? he said under his breath. He thought of his secretary, JoAnn. Single. Always blushing when he smiled at her. She was beautiful, he thought, in that Anglo-Scandinavian-Utah way. But still. . . .

Dennis pulled his bathrobe across his chest, narrowing by the day it seemed, and looked at the clock. After two. In Ireland, John would be in the middle of companionship study. He called. When his son picked up the phone, Dennis almost hung up. Even for general authorities, it was against the rules to call a missionary except on Christmas and Mother's Day. Well, he reasoned to himself, there was no Viv and no Mother's Day call, so he was justified.

"Son?"

"Oh. Hello, Dad. It's you. What time is it there?"

"Early. I couldn't sleep."

They talked about John's work. The hours of walking long County Clare roads. The meeting they had with an investigator in a pub, even though it was against the rules because of the presence of alcohol. They talked about the weather. In the background, Dennis could hear his son's companion at the sink, the clinking of dishes, the sound of shoes on hard wood. Then there was a pause in the conversation.

"John, to tell you the truth, I'm not sure why I called. Is everything okay?" Another pause.

"We've got a pretty good teaching pool here: eight."

"Better than we ever had in Quebec. That's great! How are they responding, John? Are they progressing through the discussions?"

"Oh, you know how it is, Dad. For every bit of progress we get a disappointment. A massive disappointment."

"How do you manage that?" Dennis leaned back in his chair, settling in with ease at the sound of his boy, his beloved son. He put his feet up.

"I just remind myself that, you know, Mormonism isn't for everyone, and then I move on. I've been seeing a counselor," he said abruptly.

Dennis knew that. The mission president had called him to let him know, but he had decided to let his son tell him.

"A counselor?" he said.

"A church counselor. For anxiety. Don't worry. It's all okay. Mission president set it up." His son had just referred to the gospel as "Mormonism." Dennis dropped his feet to the floor and leaned in. They talked about faith. How the Prophet Joseph despaired in Liberty Jail before his martyrdom. How the Lord spoke to him in that dark hour. About hope.

Dennis told his son that he loved him. They said goodbye, then hung up. Dennis sat there in the dark, the traffic on 7th East a half block away almost still this time of the morning. Things were clearly getting out of hand. Dennis had been here just over a year, and not only had he not married, he hadn't even dated—a red flag, he was sure, in a church that enshrined marriage as its highest ordinance. And now this. John seeing a counselor on his mission. This couldn't be good.

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"I can't help you with this, Brother Fournier," said Dennis, firmly. It was the following Monday, and he had invited Fournier back for a second interview. Dennis was in his shirtsleeves, arms crossed over his chest, and sitting on the edge of his desk, his knee nearly touching the chair Fournier sat in. "You'll need to be satisfied with a proxy sealing in the temple to your grandfather. I'm not denying that there were men who illegally married women—your grandmother. That was a very difficult time in the church's history, as I'm sure you know."

"The prophet, Joseph F. Smith. He authorized it," responded Fournier, "secretly." Dennis was ready.

"So they say. The evidence is sketchy. Mostly hear-say." He walked to the window and stood, looking down at Temple Square. "And to make a public statement that the church was wrong in not acknowledging the marriage . . . well, that can't really happen."

Fournier stood. "She was sixteen!" he said, heatedly, and walked to the window as well. Dennis waited for him to speak. But he didn't. They just stared at each other, Fournier's breath shallow and uneven.

"I understand that she was young," Dennis heard himself say. Sounded as if he were writing another letter to his missionary son, senatorial, conciliatory, utterly self-assured. Still, while it was okay for him to question the gospel, to criticize, it somehow wasn't okay for others to do that. He felt the hot mantle of purpose descend on him, the first time since he was set apart as a Seventy, and it felt lofty—heady even.

"You have to understand what's at stake," he continued, turning full-on to Fournier. "And, frankly, the covenants you made in the temple to protect the kingdom of our Heavenly Father. You need to have faith that all will be made right in the hereafter." He reached out and put his arm around the man's shoulders as Lloyd would have, to comfort him. But suddenly to Dennis it felt false. As if he were compensating for something. His own private questions? His own disobedience by not re-marrying?

Brother Fournier was eye-to-eye with Dennis, but he did not speak. He had moved from the picture of deep grief to fury, then just as suddenly to an eerie quiet. Surprisingly, Dennis realized that here, now, he preferred Fournier's temporary spike of rage to this sense of calm. At least he knew what to do with anger: be paternal.

"My faith in the restored gospel," said Fournier finally, shaking off Dennis' arm, "requires that there be healing. And there can be no healing without justice." Dennis recoiled. He placed his hands in his pockets. His slacks seemed impossibly baggy, now that he was down to 155 pounds.

Fournier turned to pick up his envelope. Despite his look of resolve, the air was thick with emotion. Dennis was thankful for the sound of the buzzing, overhead light. And he was sorry. "You will get justice,"

Dennis said to the man's back and in his best pastoral voice, softly and with as much feeling as he could muster.

"But justice requires courage," said Fournier, without turning. Then he walked to the door, opened it and left. Only then was it that Dennis remembered the man had children, and that he would be going back empty-handed to them and to his siblings, his cousins—back to his father, now ailing and who had grown up believing that he was a bastard child, a second-class saint.

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Six months later and things were clearly not going as expected. Dennis had not even been dating, even though he had had hesitating talks with JoAnn at times when the office was quiet, and work was slow. There were whisperings going on, but no announcement from Dennis. Then there was the fact that at 5-foot-10 he was slipping below 145 pounds. Still, he kept running, even in the December slush, around the wood chip track at Liberty Park.

And then he received a phone call unexpectedly from John's mission president. John would return to Utah the next day from Shannon International. He was returning home early from his mission. Dennis was in his office working late, the cosmic blur of the Christmas lights of Temple Square like nebulae far below him. Families gathered, bundled up, strollers laden with the provisions for a night out in the cold.

"What about when Mom died?" said Dennis, closing the door to his office a little too fast. After hearing from the mission president, he had called John. "What about everything you said, John, before you left for Ireland. How you had a testimony and that this was something you wanted to do. To serve the Lord?"

"I lied, Dad. I wanted to protect you. I knew you were going to Salt Lake. But . . . yes, I guess I lied." What was that he then heard? Through the receiver? His boy. He was weeping.

Dennis sat in numbness, the phone pressed forcefully into his ear. He could hear his son sobbing now on the other end through a light static buzz.

"It will be okay, son. Just come home. He waited for John to collect himself. Finally, the boy was reduced to sniffles.

"The counselor said something very interesting," John said, finally. "But I don't think he meant it the way I took it. He said, 'Elder Cormier, the decision is yours. You can be yourself and what you believe in or you can go on and live an empty life, devoid of all meaning.'"

"You know, John, you can hold whatever opinions you wish in this church," said Dennis in return. He sounded now as if he were reading from the script. "You keep them in your heart, in a private room. But you can still have them. Your faith will grow. You just have to give it time."

There was a pause on the other end, and then a deep sigh. "I feel like for the first time I *have* found my faith, Dad. Mormonism may be a beautiful thing, you know. It just . . . it just can't be what it has always claimed to be. And no one here wants to listen to that."

Dennis sat for a long time. Swallowed hard. He swiveled in his chair, pulled his suit jacket over his shoulders. So this is what it was going to be like. The inevitable challenge, he had to expect that, but this, this he had never imagined: that it would be his family who would betray him. Family was supposed to be a refuge from that, a support to his work. Like Viv had been. Like Becky was—married and starting a family. Dennis had come to Church headquarters to make a difference as an outsider, even if it was just with disgruntled fellow saints like Fournier. But now his son . . . maybe at the funeral he should have insisted that John delay his mission. Yes, his mother's death. It was too much for John. And now his son had lost his faith, his testimony that the Church was true.

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Shortly after Christmas Dennis received a phone call from the Assistant to the President of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, asking him to come in for an interview. Elder D. Howard Glenn, a career general authority who was old enough to be Dennis's father, had a kind but inevitable way about him. The day of the interview, Elder Glenn was in good form, but due to his age, he also tired easily, sometimes lapsing into listlessness. Dennis waited for him to end a phone conversation about a golf game the next day in the relatively warm climate of St. George near the Nevada border. After he hung up the phone, he looked longingly at it for a few seconds before turning his attention to Dennis.

"Damn grandson. He's got a swing that will be the end of my game. Suffers a bit from too much self-confidence, if you ask me." Dennis smiled kindly at the old man. The mild profanity, he knew, was designed to put him at ease, to send the signal that this man was no ordinary servant of the Lord, that he was secure enough in his seventy-ninth year that he could present *all* of himself. Elder Glenn stood slowly, a halt in his straightening back, then crept around the desk to what the missionaries Dennis once served as President jokingly referred to as the "visiting-from-on-high chair." Dennis stood to assist him, and the man did not resist, falling back into the duplicate captain's chair with a heavy sigh.

"Since that whole prostate thing," said Elder Glenn, "I never did get my full strength back. Still . . ." he looked at Dennis carefully, and Dennis leaned in solicitously, "I'm grateful to still be here in the second estate, as much as I'd love to slip through The Veil. To move on. How are you, Elder? How's that new interfaith program going?"

Dennis began to explain the rounds he made. The deference of other faith leaders to him that made him feel uncomfortable. Their concerns about social issues, the war in Iraq. When he looked up, Elder Glenn was drifting off. He seemed to be waiting for his turn to speak, or maybe he was having a mini-revelation of the kind that the general authorities were said to have. Ones that, thus far, had seemed to elude Dennis, especially concerning his troubled son. This time, however,

instead of just continuing on, Dennis stopped. He even touched the man's sleeve. Elder Glenn looked at him and smiled. "I'm supposed to ask you why you're not married," he said. "So tell me. Why haven't you gotten re-married? Let's get this over with." Suddenly, Dennis was grateful to this man, grateful for the question, because until it had been asked in a familiar setting, he didn't know why he felt so uncomfortable about the issue. Now he did. But Elder Glenn wasn't finished. "I know you loved your wife, Vivian was her name, right? I know you are a good man, Dennis, but we need you to set the example. We don't want you to end up like Elder Petersen, propped up everywhere by an outspoken divorced daughter at all his meetings. You may not remember that. Back in the 80s. Very embarrassing for the brethren."

"Elder Glenn," Dennis responded. "Do you remember the scripture about the body of Christ? Would you mind?" he said, pointing to the scriptures in large print on the desk.

"Please," said Elder Glenn. Dennis turned the tissue-thin pages to *Romans* and read:

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

"Paul," said the old man, nodding. Dennis then turned to the Doctrine and Covenants and read.

The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth. . . .

"The stone cut without hands. Yes," Elder Glenn said, turning away almost as an afterthought. "The gospel will fill the whole earth. Temples will dot the land."

"That is our understanding," said Dennis, and closed the book. "But we aren't all of the same office. Our calling is to do something unique and specific to our talents."

"Which is why you were called to do ecumenical work here in Utah. We've got to start reaching out to our brothers and sisters of all faiths

and lifestyles. Let them know that they need ordinances performed by the true priesthood."

"I agree with you." said Dennis, but it came out sharper than he intended. As mollifying, paternal. He stood to return the book of scriptures to the desk. "But as I understand it, what that mission or calling *is* . . ."

"Dennis, sit down" interrupted Elder Glenn. "Now I'm not sure that I'm following you." Dennis sat. He waited for Elder Glenn to speak again.

"Dennis, your calling has already been given to you by the Quorum. And you can't have the Lord's inspiration in that office unless you are first keeping the commandments." He paused. "Your son, God bless him, needed to see his father set the example of obedience to authority. But now he's confused. Lost his testimony." For just a split second, Dennis couldn't believe what he was hearing, but then in the next moment it all snapped into place, the certainty of not only the gospel but of the terrible price of his belief in that certainty.

"You need to re-marry," said Elder Glenn. "You need to re-marry or we will have to release you."

When Dennis returned to his office, Lloyd stood in the doorway, waiting for him. "I want you to know, Dennis," he said, "that when I first came here, I had some big ideas about how I was going to re-vamp the young men's program, to make it something more relevant. I admit it was disappointing when nothing I seemed to say went anywhere. But the best advice I got is what I'm going to give you. Our job is to be a soldier, not another Joseph Smith or Brigham Young. The age of prophecy of that kind is over. Our job is to obey."

Dennis looked at his friend. "I don't want to be a prophet. I just can't find a place in me where the real truth can live. Where I can learn to accept all of this so that I can act on it." Lloyd cleared his throat, dropping his head, and in that one, single gesture, Dennis felt the kinship between them drain away, and he knew that he would have to change something about himself or the rift between them would be permanent.

Lloyd looked up and performed a smile and a warm, persisting hand to Dennis's diminished back.

"What do you say we go over to the Beehive House and fatten you up on some of that bread pudding?" he said. "Better still, JoAnn, she hasn't gone to lunch. Why don't you take her?"

Just then, from outside came a muted concussion of sound and a loud crack. Through the glass from the hall, JoAnn was looking at them, startled. Lloyd walked to the open door, told her to stay put, and he and Dennis moved to the elevator, but when the car finally arrived, it was nearly full, employees with worried faces. Dennis held the door while Lloyd collected JoAnn. "I will take the stairs," Dennis said to both of them as the door closed. Entering the stairwell, Dennis knew he was not going down with the rest of them. Instead, he ascended.

The observation deck was empty. The entire floor evacuated. He pushed through the glass doors on the west side and out into the cold winter air. Below, he could hear a commotion. He could see smoke. He felt alone high above the crowd that was gathering, moving with caution towards the imposing, six-spired temple. At first, he couldn't see that anything was different. But he kept following the smoke. Then he saw it. One set of the temple's heavy east doors lay slightly tilted from their frames, violating the building's perfectly ordered lines. Dennis leaned against the Plexiglas, strained to look through the smoke. He stood with his hands on the glass, fingers spread as if he were visiting an inmate at the pen, and peered from this distance into the cracked frame, straining to see into the darkness behind the door. More smoke.

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The morning after the bombing, Dennis didn't get to the park for his run. So, later, when he returned from work, he took a long nap before waking, suiting up and then walking down to the intersection, stopping at the light to stretch. It was cold. He wore John's sweats, which were

smaller and fit him better now that he was so thin. The rush hour traffic was over and in the park only a few runners were trailing around the path in the dark. That morning, during his executive meeting with the other seventies from his quorum, no one had said anything about the temple doors which only the city's secular newspaper had reported to have been vandalized. When he asked Lloyd about the incident as they returned to their offices, it was clear how the bombing was officially to be viewed, if it were even to be acknowledged. "Yes, we'll have to get those fixed, Dennis."

"But what does it mean? Do they know who did it?"

"We will have to get them fixed," repeated Lloyd, forcefully. And then, "Dennis, the Brethren do not take counsel from our fears."

Still breathless from his run, Dennis entered the house. John was sitting at the dining room table in the dark. He sat down opposite his son. John rarely left the house these days. The boy, now a man really, still carried his mother's face, though these days it was drawn and pale, like a black-and-white version of her in a tiny oval photo from a family history. He had Dennis's slight build but his musculature still had the taut look of feverish growth. Dennis often found himself looking at this young man with unabashed ardor that at first he thought was suspect, even carnal. But it had turned out to be something else. John was silent for a few minutes, then he spoke.

"You know how it is when new missionaries come into the field? They rely entirely on their senior companion. They would strap a bomb to their bodies if you told them to. But I knew it right away. My companion, Elder Carmichael, the one I was supposed to train? He was just like Dave."

"Your mother's brother?"

"Someone who doesn't believe. And for good reasons, not just because he was intellectually proud or, what was it someone said of him, sexually impure?"

"Your companion was struggling with doubts about the Church's claims, about polygamy and other things. That was explained to me when I talked to your mission president. Sounds as though he sowed the seeds of doubt for you?" John turned toward his father. In the boy's eyes lived something he recognized but could not look at directly, and Dennis finally felt the cowardice of the script he had been following like an echo—what he had been saying about his brother-in-law ever since Dave had left the church, what he had been saying about so many things. And Dennis now knew he was at risk of becoming something other than what he was destined to be.

"Elder Carmichael asked me what I thought about all the truth claims we were repeating to the Irish," continued John. "So I told him what I thought. I let him know he wasn't the only one out there with doubts about how he had been raised. What he'd been told."

"And then what happened?" asked Dennis.

"Elder Carmichael asked that, as the senior companion, if I would still give him a blessing. And so I did. Even though I knew I was going to be going home early myself." Dennis was silent, a sudden aperture in the traffic of his soul. "I laid my hands upon his head and by the power of the priesthood I gave him a blessing. The Catholics believe despair is the unforgivable sin. But I think the only unforgivable sin is to dismiss someone's pain." John turned his hands palms up on the table. "To make an idol of an ideology." John looked away, out the front window, and he breathed out something old and tired, and his father marveled at his son for doing what he could not.

That night Dennis lay on the couch thinking of what he might have to do in the morning. The television was on in the other room, a program from the History Channel. He lay there somnolent, feeling alternately calm and then utterly defeated. He was dozing off when, suddenly, he opened his eyes with a start. There was a train whistle repeating itself over and over from the next room, the rising embellishments of other sounds surrounding it, the clack of metal wheels on a track. The sounds

were being used as part of a score, and it occurred to him that the whistle had a meaning to it based on the music it was a part of. A meaning he could not ascertain as he was only a bystander in the other room. But he also knew that from then on, when he heard the Union Pacific whistling its way through the City of Saints that it would be only that. A runaway train in the distance, forcing itself onwards, unable to stop.

It was then that he said his final goodbyes to Vivian, and it was like what he imagined a revelation to be. A wonder.

When Dennis arrived at work the next morning, he walked past the front of the temple. Plywood had replaced the doors while the historic, pioneer-crafted hinges, he assumed, were being re-cast. How strange, he thought. Even doors as heavy as the temple's could be unhinged, literally, with just the right placement of a relatively small explosive. In his office, he took off his coat and looked out the window at the Square that had become his life and the thing he defended with all his might. Except the night before. After hearing John out, in a brief moment of weakness, he had put his hand on the strong forearm of his boy and said to him, "You are a good and faithful servant, son. Welcome home." Today, he knew he would keep defending "the Faith," but from now on it would always pain him, in an exquisite, ever-accelerating way.

It did not escape Dennis that morning that Lloyd had not tapped on the glass, had not stepped in to give him his usual good morning. He knew that what he had said to Lloyd the day of his interview with Elder Glenn had changed everything. Amazing, he thought, how simple it was to step over a line. Just one right hook to the one right place, and what had seemed implacable, huge could be dropped to its knees. "We do not take counsel from our fears," he had been told.

Seated at his desk, Dennis opened his email. There was a message from Becky about his granddaughter—one year old—and about their trip out to Utah the following week. There was a meeting schedule for the next month from JoAnn. An ad for Viagra that had gotten by the seemingly vigilant spam filters downstairs. A newsletter advertising the

latest church titles from Deseret Book. Dennis methodically clicked through all of them, deleting most, saving the one from his daughter. Then at the bottom there was one with the subject line "Justice." He hesitated before opening it. The message came from an address he did not recognize. "There can be no healing without justice," it read. "And justice takes courage."

For a split second he wished he could be his son. But when he deleted the message, he knew he would be getting married again.