

Relentless

Nathan Kitchen

Wind.

Wyoming howls relentlessly under July sun and we drive on
Past antelope sentinels and endless sage
Trailing dust into unsettling emptiness—
Sacredness minus snowbanks and a rocky ridge ahead.
I know the stories. They shape me still.

The gravel road ends where monument waits
To offer complicated commemoration
Of my family
Who walked this trail of blood

Starving.
Freezing.
Dying.

I lean into eternal winds,
And touch the bronze that ties me
To them, my ancestors,
In this place that echoes footsteps on old, harsh land
Now classified sensitive trail,
Destroyer of modern cars.

And so, I walk
And walk
Up wheel ruts carved in stone a hundred seventy years ago—
Pulling me up,
Calling me up
To an ending I know, but they did not.

Their faith in this place confronts me
As I turn towards the valley
Where my distant Lexus sits

As silent as the monument,
Shouting my privilege
In the face of my widowed
Great
Great
Great
Grandmother

And her seven young children

Caught in October winds
Where life was in the steady pull
Up horizontal sheets of rock,
Where time was slowed by ice and cold,
Each step a defiant scream into a wind that would not end—
A wind that connects us now
In this age of shorts and sunscreen and a luxury car parked under
 long shadow of handcarts I somehow see through tears.

I call out,
Cries swallowed by gales,
Grandmother, forgive me.
I am not as brave,
A new kind of pioneer in a church we both loved.

I pause.
I listen.
I breathe in the wind as it courses from her lungs to mine.

Relentless.

NATHAN KITCHEN {nrkitchen@live.com} is president emeritus of Affirmation: LGBTQ Mormons, Families & Friends. He currently chairs the board of Flourish Therapy, a nonprofit providing care to LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families, and he sits on the advisory board of the Eugene England Summer Institute. He is an author with BCC Press and a dentist in private practice, and he has five children and five grandchildren. He lives with his husband, Matthew, in Arizona.