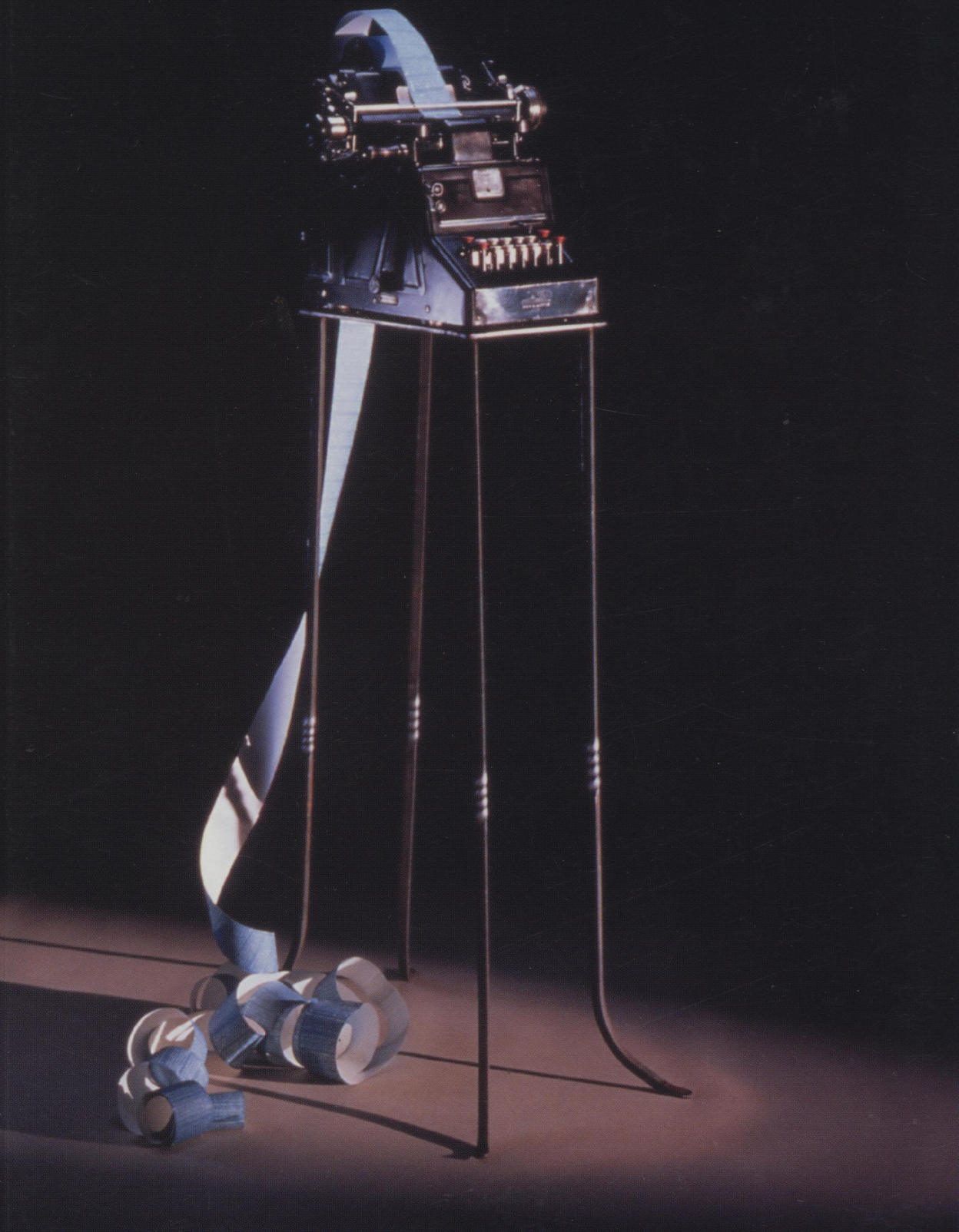
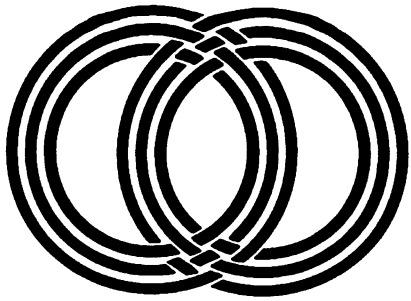
DIALOGUE

A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT





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A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

is an independent quarterly established to express Mormon culture and to examine the relevance of religion to secular life. It is edited by Latter-day Saints who wish to bring their faith into dialogue with the larger stream of world religious thought and with human experience as a whole and to foster artistic and scholarly achievement based on their cultural heritage. The journal encourages a variety of viewpoints; although every effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and responsible judgment, the views expressed are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or of the editors.

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Coming Out

I am certainly enjoying the current issue of *Dialogue*, especially Dynette Reynold's piece, "Coming out of the Evolution Closet" (Vol. 35, No. 4). As a retired biology teacher—I taught in the high school whose attendance area includes Ms. Reynolds' Ogden 40th Ward—I have endured some of the same frustrations which she has. When I taught the unit on evolution in my biology classes, I always told my students that I believed in theistic evolution, i.e. that God somehow guided the evolution of species and especially that of man by zapping the genes and causing the right mutations that brought it about. This wasn't good enough for the brethren across the street who taught seminary to my students. Even when I was second counselor in my ward bishopric, my students were told that I was in danger of losing my testimony.

More recently I had to endure a lesson from the Priesthood/Relief Society manual which had a paragraph against evolution. I sat silently as the teacher, a brother whom I home teach, expressed his disbelief in evolution, and he was followed by several others who added similar thoughts. "It is only a theory," one of them said.

Ms. Reynolds' coming out of the evolution closet has outed me. No longer will I sit silently and bite my tongue. I hope that I don't have an outburst as she did, but I have a speech prepared. If she is really interested in starting a support group, I would like to be one of the charter members.

Dean Thompson
Roy, Utah

Spreading Zion Southward?

I saved the Winter 2002 issue (Vol 35, Nr. 4) to read during my vacation. By some strange twist of fate, and from my perspective maybe the ultimate irony, I was sitting and reading on the balcony of a hotel in Ouro Preto, Brazil, overlooking the city early one morning while the family slept. It was here that I read the article by Bradley Walker, "Spreading Zion Southward, Part I: Improving Efficiency and Equity in the Allocation of Church Welfare Resources." We had traveled to Brazil to collect our daughter, who had been serving her mission in Belo Horzonte. We had been traveling throughout our daughter's mission, delivering food and clothing, which we brought in two large duffel bags from Virginia. We took these things to the poorest of the poor Saints in the areas where she worked. It was for us a small thing but for them a miracle. As we drove away from one family, a single sister with five small children living in a "house" with no electricity, running water, sanitation, or even windows (etc.), my wife initiated a discussion on what the church does in such cases to help the welfare of these people. I gave the standard answer: not much, given the

difficulty of administration, "welfare baptisms," and unlimited demands on resources. Both of us concluded that we should do more.

It was with great interest and this new perspective that I read Dr. Walker's article. Unfortunately, I could not share even the smallest part of the optimism he tries to project. His estimation of $33 million for basic interventions is probably five times to little. Anytime services are subsidized, demand increases significantly. Administration of the program he describes, while simple on paper, would be a practical nightmare. Volunteer organizations are notoriously inefficient, poorly managed, and have difficulty sustaining programs even when beneficial (cf., LDS church, Boy Scouts of America, the free clinic where I work, Deseret Industries, etc.). Based on our visits with local leaders in Brazil, I do not believe they have the training or capacity to administer a medical or food program other than the distribution of packages. I did truly enjoy Walker's discussion of the historical impact of our rejection of public welfare and of its possibly detrimental effects on church welfare services.

Finally, I felt left out, in as much as there were references to missionaries who had served in an area and come back to aid the destitute families there. Specifically, I am referring to a "charitable foundation consisting of ex-missionaries" referred to as the "missionaries who worked here." I believe *all of us would extend a helping hand* to these poorest of poor members if we knew how effectively to do so. I freely admit, however, that I do not have the energy, the time, or commitment to initiate such a program outside of the existing organizations. I do not believe the institutional church does either. So the question looms, does anyone out there have this desire. I'd be happy to help. Are there enough interested Saints with training in administration, nutrition, medicine, local politics, and languages to start an independent charitable organization to directly benefit the Saints in these areas? How do we meet and explore the possibilities?

Michael R. Warner
Manassas, Virginia

Errors of Men

If one believes that Latter-day Saints approach Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon as inerrant, as Richard Packham (*Translated Correctly*, "Letters," Vol. 36, No. 1) seems to, I wonder if that person has actually read the Book of Mormon. It is full of references to "the errors of men", and Joseph Smith's introductory material also makes such references. As it happens, there is a very good modern example of the kind of translation of cardinal directions Packham thinks is in error, "good" in the sense that if you were to force those who use it to use a (Phoenix, Salt Lake City, or Calgary) North-South/East-West grid, they would be confused: and that is the roughly 15 million people who live in the St. Lawrence Lowlands. From Hamilton, ON, to Quebec City, QC, and also up the Ottawa River valley, most roads and directions are oriented to the St. Lawrence River as if the river flowed from west to east, when in fact it flows from the southwest to the northeast. Thus, to get to the temple in Brampton from downtown Toronto, you will be told to go northwest, on a map it is more west than northwest. Likewise most English-speaking suburbs of Montreal are on "West Island",

which is southwest of the City of Montreal, not west at all.

There are many other examples of this. Seattle is one: the downtown core is oriented at a 45° angle to the meridians and latitudes, whereas other parts of the city are orthogonal. We have to ask: is a "good" translation one which fits arbitrary modern Aristotelian notions of what is right, notions of a few people of rigid understanding, or is it meant to fit the linguistic box of the writers and/or translators? We would look in vain for unicorns and leviathans in ancient Palestine, but will find them in Jacobean era literature. But that's the Bible. Fine. However, Mr. Packham's other example —deer versus horse—also has a precedent, in several ways. First of all, our English word for "deer" is a narrowing of the original word, "Thier" (cf. modern German "Tier"), which means animal in general. As Low Germans, primarily Northern Germanic peoples, used the deer, especially the reindeer, as their primary animal of burden and food, the meaning likewise became constricted. This is a very common phenomenon that one sees in historical linguistics.

Perhaps the Nephite redactors did not know what the Jaredite "curelom" was, and that could be why we see non-translateable terms alone in Ether. In the new world, liquor made from a type of cactus, which we would call tequila today, was called by the early Spanish, "wine" (to use the English word), and the bison are still called by us with the old-world term "buffalo." The next time Mr. Packham visits a national park where there are North American plains or woodlands bison present, he might want to correct the warden and insist that they not be called buffalo. Bring a marking pen and correct the signs. And if he should visit Canadian Arctic regions (as opposed to Alaska), one hopes he knows better than to call the Inuit "Eskimos" or he might be fed to the seals. Or sea lions, I can never remember which.

Marc A. Schindler
Spruce Grove,
Alberta, Canada

Other Standards

Regarding the qualifications for the new editors of *Dialogue* (*Minimum Requirement*, "Letters," Vol. 36, no. 1): during the six years I served as managing editor (under Martha Sonntag Bradley and Allen Dale Roberts), I found that what helped most was an on-going commitment to the highest quality scholarship and writing, to thoughtful and thought-provoking discussion, to meeting deadlines, and especially to an abundance of civility, good-will, and patience. Active participation in the church never compensated for an inability or unwillingness to meet the above objectives. I don't doubt that an abiding affinity for Mormonism—its culture, history, people, religion, and society—has its place. But I don't agree that participation (or even membership) in the church is a necessary requirement to produce *Dialogue*.

Gary James Bergera
Salt Lake City, Utah

Poetry Matters in Mormon Culture

Robert Hughes

> *C. FRANK STEELE, editor of the Lethbridge Herald, has rounded up some of his verses which have appeared in his column, "Lights and Shadows," and has issued them in the form of a small, paper-bound brochure, a copy of which he has sent in to the office of* The Improvement Era. . . .*We commend Mr. Steele's activity in the field of verse. Many people might well follow his example.*

WHEN THE ABOVE NOTICE APPEARED in the *Improvement Era* in September 1933, it did not seem out of place in a publication intended for the general church membership. In the same issue of the *Improvement Era,* Theodore E. Curtis posted a notice for another collection of poetry. Its announcement included endorsements from notable leaders of the church:

> I have recognized in your work much talent for expressing great thoughts in a beautiful and expressive manner.—*Dr. John A. Widtsoe.* Your book is very popular.—*David O. McKay.* Your poems are very beautiful. You are a true poet.—*Orson F. Whitney.* Every reader of your inspired lines is better for having read.—*Dr. James E. Talmage.* The book is a gem. The sentiments expressed in your verses are beautiful and the arrangement very artistic.—*President Anthony W. Ivins.* You write many splendid poems.—*President Heber J. Grant.*[1]

The next year the *Improvement Era* published over 180 poems submitted from its readership, including brief epigrams submitted by young homemakers, sonnets written by experienced matriarchs, even an acrostic. During the same year the *Relief Society Magazine* published over one

1. *The Improvement Era* 36, no.11 (September 1933): 680.

hundred poems, the *Children's Friend* published nearly a hundred, and the *Instructor, Liahona,* and *Church News* each published several dozen poems. Poetry was composed and read by most literate people; even church leaders took the reading and writing of poetry seriously. Poetry was at its peak in Mormon culture, both among the highly educated and among the common membership.

Outside of Mormon culture, poetry also thrived. Robert Frost's new book of poetry, *A Further Range,* sold over 50,000 copies and appeared as the Book-of-the-Month Club selection. W. H. Auden was composing some of his best works, as were Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and others. Most homes had a poetry anthology gracing their bookshelves. In my own case, a dog-eared copy of the classic anthology, *One Hundred and One Favorite Poems,* with a publication date of 1929 was passed to me from an aunt and became my personal introduction to the joys of poetry. My grandparents, raising their children in the 1930s, memorized and would later recite poetry by heart to their grandchildren.

On a recent visit to the main Deseret Bookstore in Salt Lake City, a survey of the poetry section revealed a few shelves of books, numbering about a dozen titles. Most were anthologies of poems written decades earlier. Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson garnered multiple titles and were positioned next to a recent collection by Paul McCartney. Only one book was by an LDS poet—a collection of poems by Carol Lynn Pearson. Further investigation of LDS publications revealed that the *Ensign* had long since discontinued its practice of carrying poetry in each issue; none of the other official church publications carried new poetry. Unofficial publications intended for an LDS readership, such as the now dormant *This People,* have eschewed verse altogether. Contemporary poetry appears regularly only in editions of the scholarly or intellectual journals, including *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, BYU Studies,* and *Sunstone.* A poetry journal, *Zarahemla Quarterly,* ceased publication after a few issues; other literary journals carrying poetry came and went. A journal with limited distribution, *Irreantum,* the official publication of the Association of Mormon Letters (AML), carries about a half-dozen poems in each quarterly edition. However, the editor of *Irreantum,* in an e-mail discussion group sponsored by AML, stated, "Humor is definitely one of the areas *Irreantum* is interested in, and I personally enjoy it more than poetry."[2]

From its zenith in the 1930s to its nadir entering the new millennium, poetry as a cultural force in Mormon society has nearly disappeared. The

2. Chris Bigelow, AML-List, 25 January 2002; http://www.aml-online.org/.

fortunes of poetry have fallen from the height of church leadership endorsements to a state in which the editor of a literary association which "promotes the production and study of Mormon literature and its enjoyment by all" announces that for him poetry ranks below humor in the world of Mormon letters. The near disappearance of verse in Mormon literature has been bewildering to those who love and observe the art. How could such an important and enjoyable part of our literary tradition become irrelevant in the current cultural landscape? Why is poetry nearly non-existent in the main LDS bookstore in Salt Lake City?

This is a conundrum because poetry in general is thriving. Most major metropolitan areas have a freely distributed art and events newspaper available, and listed therein are scheduled poetry slams, occasional poetry readings, and meetings. At the same time, the internet has spawned new forums for the sharing of poetry, including e-mail discussion groups and web-rings which bounce the internet surfer from web-site to web-site to sample various individuals' works of poetry. In traditional print forms, more poetry is being published today than at any time in history. Les Dulton of Dustbooks, which publishes the biannual *Directory of Poetry Publishers*, receives books from 300 new small presses and 300 new magazines each month.[3] Most do not last long, but more than 1,400 magazines and 800 small presses survive long enough to make it into his directory. Each annual edition of the *Poet's Market*, another directory of publications which feature poetry, can be several hundred pages thick.[4] The field of Cowboy Poetry boasts annual gatherings around the country with regular participation of poets, singers, and an enthusiastic audience.

Yet, upon closer examination, it seems that poetry is thriving in a vacuum. Each poetry group develops independently of others; at any of the poetry events or activities occurring on a regular basis that I have attended, no mention was ever made of competing or complementary events and activities. Readings at universities or arts centers announce only poetry events under their direct departmental jurisdiction; at poetry readings held at city libraries, announcements or acknowledgements of university events seldom occur. Poetry slams are more about performance than poetry, more about angst than art. Cowboy poetry seldom, if ever, garners any mention from other poetry groups. With rare exceptions, the participants at one type of poetry event do not attend other events.

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3. Les Dulton, *Directory of Poetry Publishers* (Paradise, Calif.: Dustbooks, 2002).

4. Nancy Breen and Vanessa Lyman, eds., *2003 Poets Market* (New York: Writer's Digest Books, 2003).

What seems to be missing is poetry for the masses and poetry for the intellectual segments of society. Well-read individuals, who in a prior generation would have been familiar with the works of contemporary poets, no longer care. While they may make efforts to be familiar with critically acclaimed novelists of our time, whether Pulitzer Prize or Booker Prize winners, they no longer feel the same about leading poets of our day. Joseph Epstein lamented, "The crowds in London once stood on their toes to see Tennyson pass; today a figure like Tennyson probably would not write poetry and might not even read it."[5] Even regular patrons of the arts—those who frequent the symphony, opera, or jazz performances—will tolerate but not embrace the art of language. Readers of *Dialogue, Sunstone,* or similar publications which highlight literature in a Mormon context have apparently lost interest to the point that major publishers of LDS books seldom carry poetry titles any more. They simply do not sell.

The demise of poetry in Mormon culture has mirrored trends in a broader American culture. Much discussion about the reasons for this trend has taken place in various forums. Delmore Schwartz has blamed the obscurity of modern poetry on its difficulty. Randall Jarrell, in a lecture at Harvard called "The Obscurity of the Poet," blames the national culture.[6] Yvor Winters points to the ultimate results of Romantism[7] while Christopher Clausen highlights the increasing focus on scientific and technical advancements in society.[8] Philip Larkin blames the modern subsidizing of poets, which, he says, cuts them off from their audience; [9] Wendell Berry has identified the disintegration of language in general.[10] Alternative forms of entertainment are an obvious factor. Although no definitive conclusions have been reached, and the discussion continues, some factors consistently receive more attention and resonate with the non-specialist reader of poetry.[11]

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5. Joseph Epstein, "Who Killed Poetry?" *Commentary* 86, no. 2 (August 1988): 15.

6. Randall Jarrell, "The Obscurity of the Poet," in *Poetry and the Age* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 3-25.

7. Yvor Winters, *Primitivism and Decadence: A Study of American Experimental Poetry,* in *In Defense of Reason* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1960), 1-152.

8. Christopher Clausen, "Rhyme or Reason," in *The Place of Poetry* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981), 1-27.

9. Philip Larkin, "Subsidizing Poetry," in *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces, 1955-1982* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, c1983), 87-92.

10. Wendell Berry, "Standing by Words," in *Standing by Words* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 24-63.

11. Epstein, "Who Killed Poetry?" 16.

Traditional Poetry vs. Free Verse

When people are asked why they do not enjoy contemporary poetry, the response is typically "I don't understand it," followed quickly by, "It doesn't sound like poetry." All standard definitions of poetry include some reference to intense or condensed meaning coupled with poetic sound. Understanding the messages and meaning in poetry is a lifelong endeavor, but what does it mean to say that something sounds "poetic"?

Poetry comes from a strong oral and aural tradition throughout all languages and cultures. Traditionally, listeners could easily distinguish between song and poetry, and between poetry and prose. Song was distinct from poetry in that lyrics were accompanied by music, the art of tone.[12] Instrumentation was not required; the human voice could produce music. Poetry was distinct from prose in that poetry utilized the sound of words and sentences to distinguish it from prose. In *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics,* reference is made to a number of research findings in which listeners were asked to distinguish between "speech mode" and "non-speech mode." The brain processes the two differently. In poetry, both sides of the brain listen and process the sounds and meaning simultaneously, but of course, differently.[13] These distinctions were clear enough over time that a blind man could tell the difference between song and poetry, between poetry and prose. When prose was well written, it might receive the compliment that it sounded poetic.

In English, the sounds of poetry were typically identified by meter and rhyme, which were not usually present in prose. More recently (meaning the past century), syntactical and lexical experimentations on the part of poets have been used to signal that the words and sentences are non-speech mode, but meter has been the most important distinguishing sound in traditional poetry. As the modern English language evolved, the concept of stress or accent became a distinguishing characteristic of the language. With individual words, accent is a fundamental part of the word: We say MORmon, or SUNstone, emphasizing the first syllable, not morMON, or sunSTONE, emphasizing the second. The combining of stressed and unstressed syllables formed so-called "verse feet" with the verse feet set in various fixed patterns; the patterns became a staple ingredient of the poetic line. An oft-quoted comment from Robert Frost is that he would as soon write free verse as play tennis with

12. Susan Stewart, "Letter on Sound," in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word,* ed. Charles Bernstein (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 29.

13. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, eds., *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1174.

the net down. The reasons Frost gave for not writing free verse had to do with meter:

> I do not write free verse; I write blank verse. I must have the pulse beat of rhythm; I like to hear it beating under the things I write. That doesn't mean I do not like to read a bit of free verse occasionally. I do. It sometimes succeeds in painting a picture that is very clear and startling. It's good as something created momentarily for its sudden startling effect. It hasn't the qualities, however, of something lastingly beautiful.[14]

There may be something more to meter than Robert Frost simply hearing it beneath the things he wrote. Maybe he unconsciously felt it, too. William Packard, founder of *The New York Quarterly*, commented that language continues "to maintain its mysterious relationship with the pure intuitive rhythms of the earth. Sexual rhythms, the woman's monthly fertility cycle, a man's hormonal cycle, and the complex metabolism of all human and animal phases of growth from infancy through puberty and menopause—night and day, sun and moon, winter and spring and summer and autumn—all these mysterious rhythms [find] expression in language and poetry."[15]

The world of opera also gives us a further clue to rhythm and poetry. One of the reasons for the existence of vibrato is because it resonates with natural human rhythms: "We have natural tremors in our body," said Ingo Titze, director of the National Center for Voice and Speech. "We are gigantic oscillating machines. Everything is going back and forth—chemical, mechanical, physiological. It's very difficult for us to remain still."[16]

The standard line of traditional English poetry has been the heroic line of five beats—iambic pentameter. It is probably not coincidental that the heart beats on average five times for each breath we take; thus, the heroic line of Shakespeare's and Milton's poetry resonates deep within us. One poet and highly regarded scholar, Timothy Steele, has argued that the fight against meter by some poets is not a recent phenomenon, but rather dates to ancient Greece. The ascendancy of non-metrical poetry over the past century is merely the latest attempt to fight meter, and it will not last. Unfortunately, none of us will live long enough to see if Steele is correct.[17]

Obviously, this discussion of meter focuses on the English language, which developed stress and accent out of its Germanic roots, but not all

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14. Rose C. Feld, "Robert Frost Relieves His Mind," *New York Times Book Review*, 21 October 1923, 2, 23; cited in *On Frost: The Best From American Literature*, eds. Edwin H. Cady and Louis J. Budd (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 6.

15. William Packard, *The Art of Poetry Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), xiii.

16. Alan Edward, "Viva Vibrato!" *Deseret News*, 27 October 2002, E1.

17. Timothy Steele, *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter* (Fayetteville and London: The University of Arkansas Press, 1990).

languages have stress in syllables as a distinguishing characteristic. Many languages utilize rhyme in poetry, the repetition of sound being a form of echo that creates a rhythm and helps the listener or reader distinguish speech mode from non-speech mode. While rhyme may be dismissed as simple or childish by some, a more rigorous study of rhyme in poetry shows how rich it can be. We often consider strict rhyme (vowel and final) at the end of a line as the only type of rhyme used by traditionalists. Yet to masters of the craft—Shakespeare and Pope in an earlier age, Frost and Auden more recently—the language tools of alliteration, assonance, and other types of rhyme were not to be overlooked.[18]

With meter and rhyme firmly established as the specific means to identify poetic sounds in language, a formal poet could then use a stanza form as the logical next step in structuring a poem. Lewis Turco, in *The Book of Forms*, identifies hundreds of poetic forms in use in the English language.[19] Such forms have evolved through hundreds of years of experimentation and cross-fertilization with other language traditions. Not all forms are effective; time has shown which are useful for structuring certain poetic messages. For example, the Shakespearean sonnet form follows a logical sequence: The first quatrain establishes an argument, the second quatrain extends the argument, the third quatrain turns toward a resolution, and the final couplet closes the argument. Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 reads as follows,

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest,
Nor shall death brag thou wandrest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest,
    So long as men can breathe or eyes can see
    So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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18. There are seven basic types of rhyme, each of which repeats an initial sound of a syllable, a vowel sound, a final sound, or various combinations. If I=initial, V=vowel, F=final, the rhymes are IVF (alliteration, as in Bob, base); IVF (assonance, as in Bob, Mom); IVF (consonance, as in Bob, tab); IVF (strict rhyme, as in Bob, slob); IVF (reverse rhyme, as in Bob, bog); IVF (pararhyme. as in Bob, bib); IVF (rich rhyme, as in Bob, bob). See Preminger and Brogan, *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry*, 1054.

19. Lewis Turco, *The New Book of Forms* (Hanover and London: New England University Press, 1986).

Edmund Spenser tried to improve upon the form by adding a rhyme between the first and second quatrain, and then again between the second and third quatrain. Following is a sequence from *Amoretti* (Sonnet 75) with a similar sentiment to the Shakespeare poem, i.e., the poet's lover will live forever in the poem:

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washèd it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his pray.
Vain man, said she, that dost in vain assay
A mortal thing so to immortalize!
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eek my name be wipèd out likewise.
Not so (quod I) let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your virtues rare shall enternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name;
Where, when as death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

The Spenserian sonnet would seem to be a superior form since it includes additional rhymes. But not so—we hardly even notice the additional rhymes because our mind is processing the message in the optimal mix of rhyme and reason. The sonnet from *Amoretti* achieves its objective, but not more so than Shakespeare's sonnet. As Paul Fussell more eloquently explains:

> We see from the opposition between form and matter in this sonnet of Spenser's the more general critical principal which underlies all stanzaic form: the principal of expressive form, or accommodation. That is, the sense and the form should adapt to each other: if a couplet follows a series of quatrains, the matter of the couplet should differ from the matter of the quatrains for the rhyme scheme to justify itself aesthetically and take its place as a fully expressive, organic element in the poem. Given the universal psychological appeal of the sonnet structure of complication followed by resolution—an archetype of the common act of problem-solving, or deciding, or even rationalizing—numerous variations are inevitable, although few have won the sanction of custom.[20]

Some Mormon poets in the past generation have used form effectively, but the use of tried and true forms is now the exception rather

20. Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 124.

than the rule. Clinton Larson composed in a wide variety of forms; Arthur Henry King used everything from a *Venus and Adonis* stanza to the Japanese tanka; Sally Taylor used multiple forms in writing a series of Mormon Pioneer poems; Marden Clark experimented with sonnet forms. A younger poet, Karen Marguerite Moloney, has used form on occasion to enhance her poetry. Here is a representative example, a modified villanelle titled "Snowfall at Glenflesk":

The hush that sheathes the road is sure and slow.
My lights suspend a galaxy of flakes:
The silence is as haunted as the snow.

I conjure kindred names I would not know
Had no one told me how your welcome wakes
The hush around your turf-fire, sure and slow;

Had Conor and his liegemen long ago
Been late to flock the glen beyond the lakes,
Their sanctum still as haunted as the snow;

Or had you never dusted off to show
The pedigrees you walked these hills to make.
The hush that sheaths the farm is sure and slow,

And still you jigsaw all the leads I know,
Till, dancing down the fields of my mistakes,
The sentence comes as swiftly as the snow:

"Curreal! Your Julia's from Curreal. And so
It seems you're kin to half the valley's folks."
The hush that sheathes the glen is sure and slow,
Our sanctum still as haunted as the snow.[21]

This poem works not only because it carries a message of interest to Mormons and the emotional content seems sincere, but also because the poet has used her craft to raise the poem to the level of art. While there is a steady metrical beat throughout, it provides a lilt rather than a singsong rhythm. In several lines the poet's choice of words could have been different, but she chose to employ assonance, consonance, and alliteration with an ideal balance, and the exact rhymes do not sound trite;

21. Karen Marguerite Moloney, "Snowfall at Glenflesk," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 86.

the chosen form builds on the concept of repetition, yet the slight modifications add rather than detract from the form. The listener or reader knows this is good poetry.[22]

But what of free verse? Does unabashed enthusiasm for traditional poetic form mean that free verse cannot be appreciated? As Robert Frost indicated, some free verse poems are effective. Consider Carl Sandburg's free verse poem, titled "Grass":

> Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo,
> Shovel them under and let me work—
> I am the grass; I cover all.
>
> And pile them high at Gettysburg,
> And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
> Shovel them under and let me work.
> Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
> What place is this?
> Where are we now?
>
> I am the grass.
> Let me work.

Sandburg's poem creates a moving and memorable picture with deep meaning. He also made countless choices based on sound which the reader likely does not consciously notice. A brief portion of Frances Stillman's analysis highlights some of the technical expertise hidden in Sandburg's poem:

> In the first stanza, which has three lines, the first line begins with an assonantal group of words (words with parallel or similar vowel sounds), "Pile the bodies high," and so does the second, "Shovel them under.". . .The third line of the first stanza introduces another piece of assonance, "I am the grass," with the "I" sound echoing the assonance of the first line; it then goes

22. Philip Dacey and David Jauss (eds., *Strong Measures: Contemporary American Poetry in Traditional Forms* [New York: HarperCollins, 1986] 7-14) have pointed out nine common ways in which poets try to hide form to avoid criticism of writing in archaic methods, including: disguising forms, grafting free verse into traditional forms, alternating between formal and free verse, shifting stanzaic patterns, creating hybrid forms, inverting forms, truncating forms, extending forms, and inventing nonce forms. All these methods are evident in Mormon poetry of the past generation. However, Moloney does not necessarily hide form in her poem; rather, her departures and returns to the form capitalize on its inherent strengths.

> on to return to the assonance of the previous line in "cover," which is actually a half-rhyme with "Shovel.". . .In addition, "Austerlitz" (with the first syllable pronounced in the anglicized fashion in which we say "Austria") and "Waterloo" have great parallelism of sound. "Au" is the same sound as in "Wa(ter)," "ter" occurs in both words, and the final syllable in both cases begins with the letter "l.". . .Even in the seventh line, when the poet writes "Two years, ten years," his logic is musical, rather than substantive; "One year, ten years," or "Three years, ten years," would not have had the inevitability of sound (furnished by alliteration) that makes the phrase memorable. It is not the exact number of years, but the sound of the number, which is important here.[23]

To the blind man, there can be no question that "Grass" is poetry. It would not matter how it looked on the page, it would still be poetic in both sound and meaning. Contrast Sandburg's poem with one by Sharon Olds, who is a highly regarded and award-winning poet. Michael Ondaatje wrote of her book, *The Unswept Room*: "Sharon Olds's poems are pure fire in the hands—risky, on the verge of falling, and in the end leaping up. I love the roughness and humor and brag and tenderness and completion in her work as she carries the reader through rooms of passion and loss."[24] The book was a 2002 National Book Award Finalist for Poetry. Olds provides some background for one of her poems in the book, titled "Virginal Orgy":

> In our sophomore year, Solomon Wheat, a senior, captain of the high school team, carried us to the Tournament of Champions, and we won. I left the game with my friend the hourglass beauty, and her friend the President of the Sophomore class. He put an arm around each of us, as if there were two of him, one for her one for me, and I felt, through him, linked to her long, tilted eyes and Scythian-bow lips and cinched waist and the large globes of her breasts. It was almost as if I could look into a mirror held by Mike and see myself as Liz, the way we had seen ourselves as Solomon Wheat. I felt that Mike was hugging me partly so he could hug Liz, as if I were a moderate price he was paying for embracing her glory. . . ."[25]

But of course that *was* the poem. Sharon Olds found the return key on her keyboard, and the final result looks like this:

> In our sophomore year, Solomon Wheat,
> a senior, captain of the high school team,

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23. Frances Stillman, *The Poet's Manual and Rhyming Dictionary* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 86-87.

24. Cover blurb for Sharon Olds, *The Unswept Room* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 2002).

25. Ibid., 27.

carried us to the Tournament of Champions,
and we won. I left the game with my friend
the hourglass beauty, and her friend the President
of the Sophomore class. He put an arm
around each of us, as if there were two of him,
one for her one for me, and I felt,
through him, linked to her long, tilted
eyes and Scythian-bow lips
and cinched waist and the large globes of her
breasts. It was almost as if I could look
into a mirror held by Mike
and see myself as Liz, the way we had
seen ourselves as Solomon Wheat . . .[26]

This is the type of highly praised free verse poem which confuses the general, non-specialist reader. Without the line breaks, nothing would distinguish it as poetry. When the distinction between poetry and prose becomes unclear, the typical reader will simply opt for well written prose instead, and poetry loses its audience. Just as formal verse can be poorly written, with trite rhymes and tortured meter, so, too can free verse be poorly written. Fussell comments:

> A lot of people take the term free verse literally, with the result that there is more bad free verse written today than one can easily shake a stick at. Most of it hopes to recommend itself by deploying vaguely surrealistic images in unmetered colloquial idiom to urge acceptable opinions: that sex is a fine thing, that accurate perception is better than dull, that youth is probably a nicer condition than age, that there is more to things than their appearances; as well as that Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were war criminals, that the CIA is a menace, that corporations are corrupt, that contemporary history seems "entropic," and that women get a dirty deal. All very true and welcome. Yet what is lamentably missing is the art that makes poems rereadable once we have fathomed what they "say."[27]

Many defenders of free verse point to a poem such as Sandburg's "Grass" to highlight how a poem can find its own "organic form." I do not dispute this notion, but it should be pointed out that the challenge is rarely met with success. A generation ago, A. R. Ammons described a coastline in his now-classic poetic manifesto, "Corson's Inlet," and praised the beauty of jagged natural shapes; so he, too, would let his own verse take a random course. He did not see straight lines or boxes in the natural world, and therefore he would not confine his poetry to the

26. Ibid.
27. Fussell, *Poetic Meter*, 88.

artificial forms traditionally used in poetry[28]. However, we have learned a lot in the last generation about nature and its randomness. Chaos theory, fractal geometry, the Fibonacci sequence, and other advances have taught us that nature is not so random after all. Nature has form and structure, and in an ironic postscript to Ammons's comment about the coastline, moviemakers now model coastlines on their computers using fractal geometry to save the cost of filming actual coastlines. Just as nature has form and structure, so have hundreds of years of experimentation shown that various traditional poetic forms, such as the sonnet, are the optimal organic forms which are often the best vessels for creating certain works of poetry.[29]

Free verse was discredited by some a century ago when experimentations with the new style were still underway. Today, however, free verse has long since become the accepted norm and formal verse has been discredited. Meanwhile formal poets and readers of formal poetry simply desire more balance in the publishing and teaching of traditional styles. Traditional poetry is often ignored by poets, poetry editors, and reviewers alike, despite the fact that readers enjoy it.[30] And in the schools, formal poetry is not taught with the same attention as free forms. Bruce Bawer commented on the teaching of traditional forms:

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28. A. R. Ammons, *Corson's Inlet: A Book of Poems* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965).

29. Denise Levertov defined organic form as "a method of apperception, i.e., of recognizing what we perceive, and is based on an intuition of an order, a form beyond forms, in which forms partake, and of which man's creative works are analogies, resemblances, natural allegories. Such a poetry is exploratory." See Levertov, "Some Notes on Organic Form" found in *Poetry* 106, no. 6 (Sept 1965): 420; reprinted in Levertov, *Poet in the World* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1973), 7. Richard Wilbur, a traditionalist, explains organic form from his perspective: ". . .my practice is absolutely the reverse of saying, well let's write a sestina now, let's see if I can write a roundeau. I've never, never found myself doing that kind of thing. It's always a matter of sensing that something wants to be said, something of which, as yet, I have a very imperfect knowledge, and letting it start to talk, and finding what rhythm it wants to come out in, what phrasing seems natural to it. When I've discovered those things for a couple of lines, I begin to have the stanza of my poem, if I'm going to have a stanzaic poem. In any case, the line lengths declare themselves organically as they do, I suppose, for a free verse poet. The difference between me and a free verse poet is simply that I commit myself to the metrical precedents which my first lines set." For more in-depth discussions of organic form, recent developments in understanding natural order, and Ammons and Wilbur, see Paul Lake, "Orders: Free Verse, Chaos, and the Tradition," *Southern Review* 34, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 780-803.

30. In a 1995 poll of its listeners, the BBC compiled Britain's one hundred favorite poems. With the exception of a half-dozen free verse poems, nearly all were written with traditional meters, rhymes, and stanzas, see *The Nation's Favorite Poems* (London: BBC Books, 1996). In Mormon arts, one letter to the editor of *Sunstone* lamented that none of the poems in the publication ever made use of rhyme; "Reader's Forum," *Sunstone* 15, no. 4 (October 1991): 6.

> Formal poetry? Forget it. If traditional form and meter are covered at all. . . they tend to be treated at best as exotic options, at worst as quaint historical curiosities—things that a contemporary poet should know about in the same way that scientists should know about alchemy or Lamarck's theory of acquired characteristics. Even teachers who harbor an affection for form and meter are likely to place little emphasis on these matters in class, partly because they know that formal poetry (despite somewhat greater acceptance in recent years) is still not smiled upon by most American poetry editors.[31]

However, this type of discussion is truly academic, in the third meaning of the word. "Pushkin could count on railway workers to know his poems," John Berryman told Eileen Simpson, his first wife. If the only way to know whether a poem sounds beautiful and moving is to ask someone trained in the academy, then the audience has already been lost and will remain a fraction of what it could be.[32]

Academia and Poetry

The eight-volume *Critical Survey of Poetry* chronicles the lives and works of over 300 poets who have written poetry in English. Those born prior to 1900 came from diverse backgrounds and engaged in varied occupations. The earliest poets were often monks or courtiers, but the list also includes dramatists, diplomats, artists, librarians, etc. Robert Burns was a tax collector, William Cullen Bryant was a lawyer then a journalist, Stevie Smith was a secretary, and Carl Rakoski was a family therapist. Anne Bradstreet was the wife of a governor. The diversity continued into the early part of the twentieth century: T. S. Eliot was a banker, who later turned to publishing; Wallace Stevens was a corporate insurance lawyer; William Carlos Williams was a pediatrician. Others, such as Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, and Marianne Moore, were artists living a bohemian

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31. Bruce Bawer, *Poets & Professors: Essays on the Lives and Works of Modern Poets* (Brownsville: Story Line Press, 1995), 341. Mary Oliver, a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, commented, "Students and other readers of Milton, of Shakespeare, of Wordsworth, of Wilfred Owen, even of Frost, come to the poems, frankly, with tin ears. They cannot scan. They don't know an iamb from an anapest. They read for comprehension and hear little if anything of the interwoven pleasures of the sound and the pattern of the poem, which are also deeply instructive concerning the statement of the poem, along with the meanings of the words themselves. Not knowing how to listen, they do not hear it sing, or slide, or slow down, or crush with the heel of sound, or leap off the line, or hurry, or sob, or refuse to move from the self-pride of the calm pentameter no matter what fire is rustling through it . . . Five hundred years and more of such labor, such choice thought within choice expression, lies within the realm of metrical poetry. Without it, one is uneducated, and one is mentally poor." See Mary Oliver, *Rules for the Dance: A Handbook for Writing and Reading Metrical Verse* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), viii-ix.

32. Epstein, "Who Killed Poetry?" 16.

existence. Several, such as Archibald MacLeish and Randall Jarrell, worked for national magazines as writers and editors.[33]

Of the poets born after 1940 who are listed in the *Critical Survey of Poetry*, nearly all work in academia as professors. Some commentators have argued that this phenomenon has played a role in the decline of poetry in the intellectual community and in the broader American culture. They point out that fifty years ago there was only one creative writing program in the country—an experimental one at the University of Iowa. As of 1998 there were at least 290 graduate-level creative writing programs in universities spread around the country, and more than one thousand undergraduate programs. Due to public and private funding increases over the past generation, a career track in creative writing has evolved. The inevitable demands of a career, coupled with university organizational dynamics, have resulted in what some call behaviors indicative of an elitist poetry subculture.

This criticism has received renewed attention with the appointment of Dana Gioia as the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Gioia is best known as the author of a controversial essay first published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, titled "Can Poetry Matter?" The essay is still available on the *Atlantic Monthly* web-site more than a decade after its initial publication.[34] Yet Gioia was not the first to raise the issue. The first detailed discussion of the phenomenon was by Joseph Epstein, whose critique in *Commentary*, titled "Who Killed Poetry?" received much attention.[35] Other articles in publications with a broader readership have echoed the points raised by Gioia and Epstein. A leader for an article in *The Economist* stated, "To be a versifier was once a great thing. Now it is faintly ridiculous."[36]

The key points in these articles and essays are as follows: First, the countless publications listed in directories such as *The Poet's Market* are completely unknown by society at large, read only by a small minority of the academic community. The intended audience for these directories is the subculture of poets who are found on university campuses: poets looking for publishers. Critic Bruce Bawer explains:

> A poem is, after all, a fragile thing, and its intrinsic worth, or lack thereof, is a frighteningly subjective consideration; but fellowships, grants, degrees,

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33. Frank N. Magill, ed., *Critical Survey of Poetry* (Pasadena and Englewood Cliffs: Salem Press, 1992).

34. Dana Gioia, "Can Poetry Matter?" *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1991, reprinted in Dana Gioia, *Can Poetry Matter?: Essays on Poetry and American Culture* (Saint Paul: Gray Wolf Press, 1992), http://www.theatlantic.com/.

35. Epstein, "Who Killed Poetry?" 13-20.

36. "Poetic Injustice," *The Economist*, 20 December 1997, 133.

> appointments, and publication credits are objective facts. They are quantifiable, they can be listed on a résumé.[37]

The so-called "publish or perish" dictum has resulted in countless poems published for the poets themselves. Gioia comments:

> Like subsidized farming that grows food no one wants, a poetry industry has been created to serve the interests of the producer and not the consumers. And in the process the integrity of the art has been betrayed.[38]

A second point raised in these essays is that editors of poetry anthologies are increasingly affiliated with academic programs. In the past a poetry anthology was an important means to introduce poetry to a broader audience, an audience which could not purchase the works of each poet. Some argue that, unlike anthologies earlier in this century, more recent anthologies appear to be assembled with marginal attention to the quality of the material. Publishers recognize that the best way to get an anthology assigned in a university program is to include the potential instructor's works in the anthology. The resultant anthologies are not so much a collection of the finest poetry being written as, rather, a kind of professional directory. *The Morrow Anthology of Younger American Poets*[39] includes 104 poets, virtually all of whom teach in creative writing programs. It even includes photos of the poets. As Gioia points out, "one suspects that perhaps the book was never truly meant to be read, only assigned."[40] Hence, the broader community is not purchasing anthologies as often as in the past, and poetry is exiting from their lives.

Underlying this shift in our cultural relationship to poetry is the notion that advanced academic training is necessary to write decent poetry and, conversely, that poetry cannot be worthwhile unless the poet has an academic credential. Unfortunately, good poems and good poets get caught in the crossfire. When California's first Poet Laureate, Quincy Troupe, was forced to resign in 2002, the reason was a fabricated academic credential. The fabrication, he said, "went on my résumé about seven years into my academic career. . .Somebody told me I would never get on the tenure line unless I changed my resumé. Since then," he said, he has made his living by writing and publishing books and teaching.[41] In later interviews, he expressed great disappointment in the entire inci-

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37. Bawer, Poets and Professors, 284.

38. Gioia, *Can Poetry Matter?* 10.

39. Dave Smith and David Bottoms, eds., *The Morrow Anthology of Younger American Poets* (New York: Quill, 1985).

40. Gioia, *Can Poetry Matter?* 9.

dent: "This country has to learn to evaluate people on what they can do well instead of whether they are credentialed. . .Whether you have a degree has nothing to do with whether you can be a poet."[42] What was lost in the entire incident was the focus on his poetry, which was well liked across the board. He should not have needed the academic credential to write poetry.

The academic community rejects most such criticisms. Several poets responded to Epstein's article. Donald Hall wrote two responses, pointing out that Epstein's attacks used every possible cliché against poets and contemporary poetry.[43] Many of Hall's protestations had merit, but few poets have acknowledged any of the complaints against them. David Fenza, the director of Associated Writing Programs, speaks of "smarmy little putzes that are blinded by their own presumptions. . .The spread of writing programs represents the democratization of the arts. Creative writing is so attractive to students because it is one way of exercising the efficacy of the human will."[44]

Yet critics such as Gioia and Bawer are unrepentant about their comments. Gioia receives countless letters from people in all walks of life: housewives, ranchers, even a Hollywood producer, and a U.N. Ambassador, who all say he didn't go far enough in his criticism. "These people felt deprived of something important."[45]

These critics all agree that teaching is an honorable profession, and teaching in the humanities is doubly difficult in a society that highly values superior investment returns and advances in technology. Gioia's criticisms were not targeted toward individuals and the contributions they make to our educational system; Gioia himself received advanced training under the tutelage of poets Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Fitzgerald and occasionally teaches at the university level, in addition to having a successful career in business. Gioia's comments would have had the same validity if poets' occupations all gravitated toward pediatrics or tax collecting. The main criticism is the lack of diversity and its attendant problems, among those who control much of what the public reads of or about poetry. In an interview several years after his article appeared,

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41. Tim Rutten, "Poetry May Outlast these Laureates Woes," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 October 2002, E1.

42. Fahizah Alim, "Poet: On to Life's Next Verse," *Sacramento Bee*, 15 January 2003.

43. Donald Hall, *Death to the Death of Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 18-26.

44. Quoted in "Poetic Injustice," 130.

45. Dana Gioia, "Hearing from Poetry's Audience," *Poetry Review*, Spring 1992. See also Gioia's updated introduction to the Gray Wolf Press's Tenth Anniversary Edition of *Can Poetry Matter?*

Gioia stated:

> I am mostly a *persona non grata* on campus. The university is an institution, and one thing institutions hate—be they academic, military, or industrial—is criticism from the outside. I have been amused by how wildly rancorous and passionately loony some of the professorial attacks on me have been. . . .I have, of course, also found many eloquent defenders on campus. The university is not a monolith. There are still many independent-minded teachers and writers who keenly understand how troubled both Creative Writing and the academic study of literature has become. They appreciated that "Can Poetry Matter?" is not an anti-university tirade. It is a book that critiques some specific problems in current academic literary study, especially in Creative Writing programs, anthologies, and poetry reviewing, and then suggests—rather tentatively, in fact—some basic reforms.[46]

In the Mormon intellectual community, poet affiliation with academia mirrors that of the broader culture. With a few exceptions, most Mormon poets are quick to claim academic affiliation. In Eugene England and Dennis Clark's anthology, titled *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*, [47] the brief biographies of each poet summarize the situation. More than half indicated they taught at the university level. More than a third indicated a literary prize they had received. Over half claimed an advanced university degree. Only five of the nearly sixty biographies did not mention academic affiliation or credentials. Poets' biographies published in *Dialogue* and *BYU Studies* follow the same pattern. *Sunstone* does not give background on its poets, but the poets are seldom different from those found in *Dialogue* and *BYU Studies*. In the 1930s it was unusual to find an academic poet (e.g. Alfred Osmond) writing for Mormon publications; today it is the norm.

When Richard Cracroft reviewed *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poetry*, he lamented the fact that many of the younger poets represented in the volume, those born after 1939, wrote poems which "are testimonials to how the educated modern Mormon poet has assimilated the secular culture and modes of poetry, repressing and replacing soaring spirituality with earth-bound humanism."[48] The tone, style, structure, and vocabulary of the later poems in the anthology are similar to those found in the various academic journals devoted to contemporary poetry. Given that

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46. Gloria Brame, "Paradigms Lost," *ELF: Eclectic Literary Forum*, Spring 1995. Although Gioia is best known for his poetic roles, some Utahans may find his business career more interesting—as a vice-president at General Foods, he was responsible for the Jell-O brand of products.

47. Eugene England and Dennis Clark, eds., *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).

48. Richard H. Cracroft, *BYU Studies* 30, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 119-123.

the creative output of the younger poets will likely be scrutinized by peers outside of Mormon culture—i.e., other academic professionals who may have an impact on their careers—Cracroft's comments should not be too surprising.

Tension between academic and popular poetry surfaced a few years ago in a community bordering BYU. A proposal was made to name a popular poet as Orem's Poet Laureate. The proposed poet, a Mormon bishop, had written a great deal of traditional metrical and light verse and had the endorsement of some well-known citizens. However, those in the academic community were appalled at the proposal simply because BYU's Distinguished Poet-in-Residence, Leslie Norris, was also a citizen within the community's boundaries. The Utah State Poet Laureate, a recently retired professor at Southern Utah University, stated, "I'm stunned. Nothing against [the popular choice], but that's like overlooking the Kentucky Derby winner and choosing a plow horse as Horse of the Year. . . .I applaud Orem's initiative, but I wonder about their choice." Agreed Guy Lebeda, literature coordinator for the Utah Arts Council: "It's always good to recognize poets, but this would certainly raise eyebrows in the literature community. . . .They have a living treasure in their midst. That should pretty much end the discussion." Ironically, BYU's Norris rose above the fray and supported the popular choice. "Whatever encourages poetry, I'm in favor of. . . .[I]t sounds like they have the ideal man."[49]

The current situation in Mormon arts has not gone unnoticed. Elbert Peck pointed this out in a *Sunstone* editorial about Cowboy Poetry several years ago. He asked, "Is it possible to make poetry—folk poetry—a popular art again? Or is poetry destined to be the purview of a small elite of LDS literati?"[50] To answer Peck, I would paraphrase Dana Gioia's subtitle from his classic essay: If Mormon poets venture outside their confined world, they can work to make poetry essential once more.

The Search for Honest Critics

When the literary critic William Logan was asked what he thought of the present state of poetry, of its current health as an art, he replied, "I distrust the motives of the question." [51] No doubt his opinion was sought because he is one of the most respected poetry critics writing today, and it would bolster arguments on one side or the other if he weighed in with

49. Phil Miller, "Orem Laureate?" *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 5 May 1998, A1.

50. Elbert Peck, "Cowboy Poetry and Boots," *Sunstone* 15 no. 6, (December 1991), 12.

51. Garrick Davis, "William Logan and the Role of the Poet-Critic: An Interview," *Contemporary Poetry Review*, internet version, http://www.cprw.com/.

his opinion. But he refused to take sides in the debate and felt the discussion had been too divisive. Instead, his focus has been on analyzing and reviewing individual works of art, trying to determine which are good and which are not. Furthermore, as a poetry critic, his analyses and recommendations are always enlightening, whether the review is positive or negative.

Surprisingly, not all critics and poetry reviewers share Logan's critical approach. Consequently, some commentators point the finger at poetry reviewers—the poet/critic—as one more factor in the decline of poetry as a serious art form in American culture. As an anthologist can gather the best poetry together for a general audience, so too can a reviewer point the general reader toward works of distinction and away from mediocrity. Yet in the last half-century most poetry works which have been reviewed have received only praise, not critical analysis. When Fred Chappell, the North Carolina Poet Laureate, gathered several reviews of poetry that he had written for the *Georgia Review* into book form, his collection was subsequently reviewed by Adam Kirsch, a critic for *The New Republic*, who made these comments:

> Chappell is a good representative of the poetry boosterism common today, so happy that any poetry is being written and publicized that its quality is a matter of indifference. Indeed, criticizing its quality is seen as offering aid and comfort to the Philistine enemy. The very proliferation of poetry books and writers, at a time when readers seem to be vanishing, is a good thing, according to Chappell: [Chappell writes] "Literate citizens should be expressing their thoughts and feelings on paper; their emotional lives are so furiously busy that they really don't have time for the secondhand emotions of others." Notice the insidious use of the word citizens, as though writing awful poetry were somehow conducive to civic merit; notice, too, the automatic equation of poetry with "emotional lives," the reduction of art to therapy and gossip. When this is an accepted view of poetry, it is no use worrying about the Philistines: they are already within the gates.[52]

In an earlier age, poetry critics pulled no punches. Randall Jarrell's review of one of Archibald MacLeish's poems included the comment that "it might have been devised by a YMCA secretary at a home for the mentally deficient."[53] Likewise, his comment about a book by Oscar Williams: "[It] gave the impression of being written on a typewriter by a

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52. Adam Kirsch, "Booster Shots," *The Boston Phoenix*, 20 April 1998, internet version, http://www.weeklywire.com/.

53. Quoted by Gioia, "Can Poetry Matter?" h, When People Paid Attention from Randall Jarrell, "Poetry in a Dry Season," *The Partisan Review*, 1940.

typewriter."[54] Jarrell was excluded from Williams's anthologies for his comments, but his critical integrity was maintained. Jarrell thought his reviews had cost him a Pulitzer Prize, and maybe they did, but as Logan comments: "Reviewing is not a dangerous trade if the worst that can happen, even to a poet as good as Jarrell, is to be deprived of a few honors."[55] Yet most reviewers are also poets who prefer to practice professional courtesy. As Logan explains,

> Editors often complain that poets hate to review their contemporaries because they're afraid of making enemies. Perhaps this is cowardice at its most genial. When poets lather their reviews with nothing but diplomatic flattery (or criticism so mild it wouldn't kill a fly), criticism has failed its readers.[56]

Praise of mediocre poetry confuses readers, who end up doubting their own critical perceptions.

Poetry reviews in Mormon arts follow a similar pattern. One example is indicative: A poet named Dave Smith taught at the University of Utah. Some of his published poetry, both a book titled *Goshawk Antelope* and one titled *Dream Flights,* were reviewed in an issue of *Sunstone Review* by Bruce Jorgenson and Dennis Clark. Jorgenson writes:

> Dave Smith may be the fastest moving poet on the ground these days, a man whose totemic beast should not be goshawk nor antelope, but roadrunner. He was teaching at the University of Utah in 1979 when Illinois published *Goshawk, Antelope.* Now at Florida, he has published two more books of poems, *Dream Flights* and *Homage to Edgar Allan Poe,* and a novel, *Omliness.* Who could hope to keep up with that output?. . .No less a critic than Helen Vendler has nearly canonized Smith as a writer of "Faulknerian power," a "poet of plenty" whose "brilliant sense of reality lights up even his densest work" and whose "steady advance in art promises more powerful work to come". . . .Faced with the sheer plenitude of the poems and the verbal energy, one could hardly demur. . . .No cautious minimalist at all, but like the major romantics and their modern scions, in whose line he seems to belong, Smith interprets the world as a blankly enticing suggestive other, and wonders about that act itself, the mind in its knowing. . . .[57]

Glowing terms abound throughout Jorgenson's review. He concedes that some of Dave Smith's poetry might raise concerns, but glosses over the problem: "The occasional obscurity arises, I think, because Smith's

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54. Ibid., as quoted by Gioia from Randall Jarrell, "Verse Chronicle," *The Nation,* 25 May 1946.

55. Davis, "William Logan," 3.

56. Ibid.

57. Bruce Jorgenson, "Poetry as Narrative," *Sunstone Review* 2, no. 8 (August 1982): 28.

poems, whether narrative or statically perceptual, almost always work from bewilderment toward some tolerable comprehension by 're-enact[ing] the irrational logic of flesh.'"[58]

Dennis Clark has been the most thorough and critical of poetry reviewers in Mormon arts. Consequently, his review of Dave Smith is more analytical about what message is being conveyed, and he does highlight some concerns. The review points out what Clark feels are some of the strengths of the book: "The poems are so carefully structured, possessed of so clear a narrative line, and gathered into a sequence so clearly moving toward a thematic climax, that I can't believe them autobiographical or confessional." Clark invokes other poet-critics, in this case Robert Penn Warren, to support his view that Dave Smith's poetry is worth reading. Yet one cannot escape the fact that the poetry of Dave Smith is lacking something, and Clark is aware of the problem. Of one poem Clark comments, "[T]hat point is unclear to me, as many of these poems are in places, usually in the seams." In fact, Clark drops several hints that might lead one to seriously question this collection of poetry, but rather than following through, he closes with this comment: "Read the poems with patience, going back where you find them opaque or oblique, and you will find them becoming public property, becoming your own experience, your own hope. What better gift can a poet offer?"[59]

Contrast these reviews with one by Bruce Bawer, a literary critic who was a director of the National Book Critics Circle. His poetry reviews have appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, *The Washington Post Book Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The American Scholar*, *The Nation*, *The Hudson Review*, and other publications. Bawer does point out and praise well-written poetry when he finds it, but of Dave Smith's *oeuvre*, Bawer writes:

> Dave Smith might be described, indeed, as a model academic poet. He is prolific: in sixteen years he has published two books of fiction and twelve volumes of poetry. . .a body of work that is perhaps second to none in its ability to reflect the perverseness of the artistic criteria and professional priorities which constitutes the "creative writing" sensibility. Smith's poetry, written invariably in free verse. . .typically consists of a gloomy, nebulous. . . description, heavy with abstruse allegorical intent and often permeated by violence. . . .Sometimes the natural description is accompanied by a spotty memory from the poet's childhood or an anecdote about his own children; more often than not it yields some sort of murky epiphany or vague metaphysical speculation about passion, fear, reality and illusion, the passage of

58. Dennis Clark, "Poetry as Fiction," *Sunstone Review* 2, no. 8 (August 1982), 29.
59. Ibid.

> time, the triumph of death, the endurance of life. Whereas in another poet this nexus between the natural, the personal, and the cosmic might give the impression of being emotionally valid, in a typical Smith poem the connections between these elements appear to be arbitrary. The average Smith poem, indeed, seems held together not by the force of his love or distress or wonderment but by an act of will.[60]

Bawer provides some clear examples of the form and content of Smith's poetry. The examples support his arguments, and his analysis of the flaws in the poetry is straightforward:

> Imagery, in his hands, is often an academic exercise, his personification tending toward such cliches as "the sullen sun," "the shocking gray face of the sea," "the wind softly licking the wave." His most characteristic metaphors and similes are equally mechanical; parodic of sincere emotion, they run the gamut from the confusing to the ridiculous, their main purpose clearly being not to conjure up a vivid, emotionally authentic image but to weave exotic verbal tapestries. . . .Even more exasperating are those similes in which he pointlessly compares physical objects to abstractions, the effect of which is to turn potentially sharp images into cryptic ones: an old tool shed is "eternal as guilt," a plunging hawk "as lethal as love," an arroyo "empty as memory." One feels as if one could play mix-and-match without doing any real harm—why not, for instance, a hawk "as lethal as memory," a tool shed "as empty as love"?[61]

Bawer's review, though largely negative in tone, is one that the general reader will take seriously. Not only is it clear what the poet is trying to achieve, but why the poet fails in that endeavor. The reviewer is straightforward in his analysis and recommendations. Although Clark's review comes closer to this kind of critical analysis needed by general readers, Jorgenson's review is simply enthusiastic.

Over the past forty years *Dialogue*, *BYU Studies*, and *Sunstone* have reviewed a couple dozen poetry books. Of those reviews, most were very positive and none could be considered negative. Some, like Clark's review mentioned above, highlight valid concerns, and as indicated above, Richard Cracroft's review of *Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poetry* actually expressed disappointment that the Mormon poems in the collection do not seem very Mormon. Yet no poetry reviews in Mormon periodicals have criticized a poetry work in a manner similar to Bawer. During the same time period, however, reviews of other types of books on Mormon topics have been more balanced, in that the reader of the reviews has the

60. Bawer, *Poets and Professors*, 285-86.
61. Ibid.

confidence to make decisions regarding purchase and reading based on the recommendations in the periodicals. As with reviews of other genres, a review essay looking at all the books of poetry in a given time period should give a reviewer ample opportunity to compare, contrast, and recommend superior works of poetry. Reviews of a single work of poetry by multiple reviewers with differing perspectives would likewise give the general reader a better indication of quality poetry books, as has been done with books on history, doctrine, or social analysis.[62]

The Romantic Era poet Percy Bysshe Shelley composed the poem *Adonais* as an elegy to John Keats. Although Keats actually died of tuberculosis, Shelley attributed Keats's death to the cruel and biting reviews of his work, reviews which were more an attack on Keats's social status than on his poetry. Time has been kinder to Keats than were his initial reviewers. Commentators on the current state of poetry criticism do not advocate a return to personal attacks on poets, but they do advocate integrity in poetry reviews. Honest critical reviews of Mormon poetry, preferably by general readers, instead of other poets who may have a vested interest, could help bring discouraged readers back to the art.

Conclusion

In 1653 Isaak Walton published *The Compleat Angler*, an eclectic combination of personal essay, fishing advice, and the occasional poem. The subtitle of the work captures the imagination: "The Contemplative Man's Recreation." The fact that poetry played such a prominent role in the book indicates the high regard held for the art of language. This regard ran through civil society for hundreds of years; three centuries later President Spencer W. Kimball was recording his thoughts and feelings in poetry.[63] In the spring of 2003, the 23rd Annual Conference of the National Association for Poetry Therapy was held in Miami, Florida. Sessions at the conference covered varied topics, including strategies for ensuring the continued government funding of creative arts therapies positions.[64] From mainstream art and enjoyment, to a debatable, publicly funded position on the fringe of society, poetry has traversed a tortured path.

It would be naive to think that a return to poetry which rhymes and

62. See David J. Whittaker, "Review Essay," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1981): 100, for the rationale behind a review essay; also David J. Whittaker, "The Hoffmann Maze," *BYU Studies* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 67-124 as an example of an effective review essay based on this rationale.

63. Edward L. Kimball, "Spencer W. Kimball and Poetry," *BYU Studies* 25, no. 4 (Fall 1985), 161.

64. http://www.poetrytherapy.org/main.htm.

carries a rhythm would restore it to the place it once held in society. A superior poem must also create an "immortal wound" as Frost says; it must touch the heart and capture the essence of the human condition. Technique is only one aspect of a superior poem. Although student-poets leaving academia refer to their varied destinations as "the real world," none would wish them to cease from composing after passing from the ivory towers. Nor would anyone desire their instructors to stop writing their own poetry (all of the Mormon poets praised in this essay come from the ranks of professional teaching). Rather, one hopes they view their art as an important part of society to which they contribute, not as an academic exercise or as career strategy. Mormon poets from all walks of life can compose and read what Cracroft calls literature "woven out of the stuff of Mormonism and spun across a Mormon world view interlaced with Mormon essences, those often ethereal but real, ineffable but inevitable spiritual analogues and correspondences that convey Mormon realities."[65]

Poets in earlier ages wrote works which appealed to both scholars and the general public. For example, Blake's poetry is suitable for children, yet also challenges scholars to this day; his "Tyger, Tyger" is a perennial favorite of English schoolboys and theologians alike. In the past century, Robert Frost could compose a poem like "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," which appeals to the general reader with its clear, concise images, yet still garners scholarly discussion of its countless aspects. Tennyson could write "Ulysses" with its allusions to Homer's *Odyssey* and specific references to Dante's *Inferno*; yet he could also stir the soul of the man in the street:

> . . .Come, my friends.
> 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
> To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
> Of all the western stars, until I die.
> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
> Though much is taken, much abides; and though
> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are:

65. Richard Cracroft, "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature," *Sunstone* 16, no. 5 (July 1993): 51.

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

While we cannot return to the poetic environment of the past, we can try to return poetry to an honorable place in Mormon culture.

Alive in Mormon Poetry

Danielle Beazer Dubrasky

THE SUMMER 2002 EDITION of *Irreanteum: Exploring Mormon Literature* is devoted to the theme of environmental writing in LDS theology and culture. It features poems solicited by guest editor Todd Petersen by several contemporary LDS poets, including Susan Elizabeth Howe, Bruce Jorgensen, Patricia Gunter Karamesines, Leon Chidester, and me. At the risk of seeming narcissistic, I call attention to this issue as an appropriate place from which to respond to Robert Hughes's essay, "Poetry Matters in Mormon Culture," as this essay lacks an in-depth discussion of those who would be considered contemporary Mormon poets. In addition to that of the poets mentioned above, the poetry of Lance Larson, Kimberly Jones, and Emma Lou Thayne has found appreciative audiences both within and without LDS circles. I was curious that Hughes limited his discussion of contemporary Mormon poetry to only one poet—David Smith. Furthermore, the inclusion of Smith seemed to serve as part of a critique on the integrity of poetry reviews rather than a discussion of Smith's poetry in the LDS culture. The lack of reference to other LDS poets seems an odd omission considering the essay's title.

To counteract that omission, I will refer to some of the poets published in *Irreanteum* to expand Hughes's definition of poetry. He limits poetry to formalist poetry, in which the form of the poem is shaped by a pattern of rhythm and rhyme. By insisting on such a narrow definition, he ignores a larger and equally important aspect of poetry—its metaphorical nature. Poetry is a shape shifter. The most effective poems, whether written in free verse or in traditional forms, are those in which language transforms and is transformed, like a figure in one of Ovid's myths. Part of the pleasure of reading poetry comes from the shifts in imagery and metaphors, which can be as startling as the water nymph Daphne hardening into a laurel tree to escape Apollo's pursuit. A pattern is created as the image or metaphor turns.

This poetry of shifting metaphors can be found in Bruce Jorgensen's poem "Getting Home from Ithaca, 1968." The poem begins with the

intensity of youthful desire, emphasized by the pattern created in the repetition of the word "owned." "I was twenty-four then/and could love a place enough to die in it./Mine: not one I owned/but the one that owned me;/and it took two years in a place I'd never own,/would never own me,/ to give me to it" (23). An internal rhyme in a later stanza—"swam, when the falls/flowed again, *naked*/to stream-smooth rock and *shaken* shadow (23 my emphasis)"—underscores the eroticism of the experience. This memory of fluidity and potency is made more poignant by the turn in the last three stanzas toward an arid and petrified image of "pocked basalt, dry/mottled with pinyon" (23), anticipating a loss of that youthful sexual intensity.

In her poem "Utah: Five Sacred Lessons," Susan Elizabeth Howe uses a long narrative form to create a lyric sequence which develops a relationship between the land and the poet. Her poem forms a pattern by personifying the land as a teacher. She also uses a technique of contrasting philosophical statements with sharp imagery, as in the following lines: "The mountains are great ships/ floating above us, setting their course/by the stars./ But to know the mountains/there are other ways./ Watch the hummingbird,/whose nest is the size/of your two folded fingers/your pinkies./She is both quick/and still" (36). This contrast creates a pattern by alternating the focus of the poem between broad and detailed observations. Leon Chidester's poems are terse narratives, whittled down to essential syntax and imagery to reflect desolation and the hardship of living off the land. In all of the above poems, there is an inherent relationship between the poem's form and its content. The form is not random but creates a pattern that develops out of that relationship.

Another of Hughes's concerns is that poetry has become less prominent in LDS publications and bookstores. He states that "[t]he demise of poetry in Mormon culture has mirrored trends in a broader American culture." Poetry has lost a larger national audience because "[e]ach poetry group develops independently of others. . . .With rare exceptions, the participants at one type of poetry event do not attend other poetry events." Hughes points out, validly, that despite the increasing publications available for LDS poets, these poets are not known by a mainstream LDS audience. However, keeping in mind the metaphorical nature of poetry, I suggest that there may be another reason for poetry's demise in the LDS culture. The LDS religion presents a challenging paradox—its theology is mysterious, supernatural, and metaphysical. It is based on an amazing metaphor—that mortals are capable of being transformed into deities. Yet, the programs developed by the church encourage primarily a pragmatic existence and a literal interpretation of sacred texts. Does the pragmatic emphasis sometimes undermine the religion's metaphorical nature? In other words, is contemporary poetry ignored because it does not fit into the goal-oriented outlook of today's church programs?

Ironically, the LDS religion is very poetic. The dichotomy of having a divine nature within a mortal shell has been expressed over the centuries by a variety of poets. The LDS religion expands on that idea through very eloquent and poignant beliefs, in particular the concept that we have passed through a veil of forgetfulness away from a place we sense only through the most intangible sensations. Perhaps if more individuals within the LDS religion would explore this less certain but very rich side of Mormon theology and depend less on didactic stories or slick, idealized "Mormon Ads," there would be not only a broader audience for poetry but more poets.

In Memoriam
KARL CHRISTIAN SANDBERG

ON APRIL 26, 2000, Karl Sandberg passed away, at the age of 69, in St. George, Utah. He is mourned by his family, students, colleagues, and countess friends. Karl was a part of many communities—Mormon and academic—and he navigated these communities with congenial grace. He spent his childhood in Southern Utah. A French-speaking mission for the church sparked his life-long interest in French language, culture, and history. He received a PhD in French and Humanities from the University of Wisconsin in 1960. He was a respected teacher at several universities, including Duke, the University of Arizona, the University of Minnesota, and—for twenty-four years—Macalster College in St. Paul, Minnesota. His many published writings range widely—from popular French language textbooks and scholarly articles to a children's book and many, many poems.

Karl's learning had enormous breadth—he knew intellectual history and the history of religions. Parallel insights from American and European religious history often enriched his penetrating analyses of modern Mormonism. "Karl loved the Sunstone/Dialogue quest for religious truth," writes Todd Compton, "he loved the alternative voice community, and the articles he published were gracefully written, often witty, always thoughtful, expressing both deep faith and critical thought."

He was respected for his integrity, thoughtfulness, humor, and depth of character as well as for his intelligence and scholarly contributions. His bishop in St. Paul, Stephen Pusey, says, "His contributions were great but not always public. He had a good Christian heart, a noble soul." Along with his many academic achievements and his active participation in the Mormon "alternative voice" community, he was a devoted husband and father. His son David writes "We had a remarkable childhood. Dad was very much involved with the family." Karl is sorely missed by all who knew him. We are honored to publish in this issue two of his final poems.

Shadow

Karl Sandberg

No more constant lover in the spring was there.
I see thee when the blossoms break
the bounds of loveliness,
when streamlets sing.
Bound to thee am I in sleep and wake.
I see thee beyond the joy which hours inspire.
In the rose's sky I feel thy breath.
And ever in the restless moment of desire
I sense thy face behind me,
Mr. Death.

Take My Hand

Karl Sandberg

The shadows on the hills of afternoon
Overflow the canyons and the cliffs.
The sun is low, now gone.
The labor now is done
And gone the care.

Take my hand.
Our paths have led us here
And we are one.
Ours is the privilege now to breathe the evening air.
Through the darkness stars appear
And keep us in their light.

Take my hand.
You are in my life
Like orange blossoms in the desert night.

What is the Challenge for LDS Scholars and Artists?

John M. Rector
Kirsten N. Rector

"We will yet have Miltons and Shakespeares of our own."
—Orson F. Whitney

SINCE THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH, Mormon spiritual leaders have emphasized the importance of attaining knowledge, both spiritual and secular.[1] Not only have we been admonished to seek and value learning, but church leaders have predicted that church members would surpass the rest of the world in their scholarly and artistic accomplishments. President John Taylor exclaimed,

> You will see the day that Zion will be far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind as we are today in regard to religious matters.[2] God expects Zion to become the praise and glory of the whole earth, so that kings, hearing of her fame, will come and gaze upon her glory.[3]

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1. A few examples include the following:

Joseph Smith: "One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith*, reprint edition (Salt Lake City, Deseret Books, 1989]m, 313); "We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true Mormons" (*Ibid., pg. 316*). Brigham Young: "Let [the members] be educated in every useful branch of learning. . .(*Journal of Discourses 12:22*); "Every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all sciences and art belong to the Saints (*Ibid., 10:24*); "How gladly we would understand every principle pertaining to science and art, and become thoroughly acquainted with every intricate operation of nature and with all the chemical changes that are constantly going on around us!" (*Ibid., 9:167*); "Mormonism embraces all truth, including scientific" (*Ibid., 9:149*); "Our religion will not clash with or contradict the facts of science in any particular" (*Ibid., 14:116*).

2. John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:100

3. Ibid., 20:47

Many years later, in the first of three related addresses at BYU, President Kimball stated,

> BYU certainly must continue to be the greatest university, unique and different. In these fields [drama, music, literature, sculpture, painting, science, and all the graces] and in many others, there should be an ever widening gap between this school and the other schools. The reason is obvious. Our professors and instructors should be peers or superiors to those at any other school in natural ability, extended training, plus the Holy Spirit, which should bring them light and truth.[4]

Implicit in these statements is the belief that processes which underlie the attainment of spiritual knowledge also underlie the attainment of secular knowledge and that because church members are privy to the gift of the Holy Ghost, this, coupled with a love of learning, will result in unparalleled scholarly and artistic attainment. President Joseph Fielding Smith explicitly underscored these ideas when he said,

> Knowledge comes by both reason and revelation. We expect the natural unfolding of knowledge to occur as a result of scholarship, but there will always be that added dimension which the Lord can provide when we are qualified to receive and he chooses to speak.[5]

Dr. Allen Bergin, an emeritus BYU professor of Clinical Psychology, published an article in *BYU Studies* in 1979 further rounding out these teachings. He stated,

> I believe in bringing the Restoration to the academic world by infusing scholarly work with values, revelations, and inspired methods of inquiry that derive from the gospel. If this can be done rigorously and successfully, the results could be revolutionary. . .but first, *it must be understood that the principle of revelation is as fundamental to the University as it is to the gospel itself*. . . .In keeping with Church teachings, I believe that the extraordinary insights of scientists, scholars, and artists come by revelation in the context of disciplined and educated searching. This means that the process that pertains to sacred knowledge also applies to secular knowledge, for the origins of both lie ultimately in the same divine source of truth.[6] (Emphasis in the original)

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4. Spencer W. Kimball, "Climbing the Hills Just Ahead" in *Educating Zion*, ed. John W. Welsh and Don E. Norton (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 56-57.

5. Jospeh Fielding Smith, as quoted in Spencer W. Kimball's "Climbing the Hills Just ahead" in *Educating Zion*, 71.

6. Allen E. Bergin, "Bringing the Restoration to the Academic World: Clinical Psychology as a Test Case," *BYU Studies* (April, 1979): 449.

And yet, while LDS scholars and artists do make contributions (and at times significant ones) to their respective fields,[7] one could easily argue that we have not lived up to our potential as encouraged and foreseen by our spiritual leaders. In spite of inspired teachings which assert that the discovery of all truth comes from the same divine source and that "all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole,"[8] non-LDS scholars and artists are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the world's significant advances in the fields of knowledge. Although the Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes are not the only standards by which to judge world-class achievement in the arts and sciences, a quick look at the religious affiliation of winners illustrates a world-wide trend:

TABLE 1
Religious Background of Nobel Laureates (1901-2002) and Pulitzer Prize winners (1917-1998)[9]

		Jewish	Protest.	Catholic	Other	Indeterm	Non-rel.	Total
Nobel	# won	127	221	66	36	184	105	739
Prize	% won	(17%)	(30%)	(9%)	(5%)	(25%)	(14%)	
	% of μ	(.2%)	(7%)	(17%)	(39%)		(14%)	
Pulitzer	# won	33	46	20	6	339	N/A	444
Prize	% won	(7%)	(10%)	(4.5%)	(1.3%)	(76%)		
	% of μ	(.2%)	(7%)	(17%)	(39%)			

Clearly, Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners do not come from a representative cross section of the population. Winners for whom religious back-

7. For a listing of names and contributions of LDS scientists, see *Latter-day-Saints and Science: Some Contributions of LDS Scientists*, by Mark W. Cannon. This can be found online at www.meridianmagazine.com.

8. Howard W. Hunter, "President's Formal Charge of Responsibility," *LDS Church News*, 26 Nov. 1994.

9. I am grateful to Dr. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi of the University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel, for providing us with the bulk of the Nobel data in this table. Dr. Beit-Hallahmi and his associates used available biographical information on each Nobel laureate from 1901 to 1996 to compile their data. Using this method, I proceeded to compile the remainder of the data, from 1996 to 2002. The "biographical method" of ascertaining religious affiliation is admittedly imprecise. Note that the "indeterminate" category contains cases where information is lacking or ambiguous, and really reflects, according to Dr. Beit-Hallahmi, a low level of religiosity, or none at all.

The Pulitzer data in this table came from Brennan, E. A., & Clarage, E. C. (1999). *Who's who of Pulitzer Prize winners*. Orynx Press. Only winners from fiction, non-fiction, drama, biography/autobiography, history, music, novel, and poetry had their religious affiliation information included in the table. Data relative to the differing religious groups and their proportions in the population at-large came from www.adherents.com.

ground information was available are disproportionately represented by main line Protestant backgrounds, although Jews are highly over-represented relative to their numbers in the general population.[10] Conversely, the percentage of Catholic winners is smaller than their percentage of the population as a whole. Furthermore, it is meaningful to note that in the overwhelming majority of cases, prize winners are *not* religious individuals.[11] The labels used in this table designate family-of-origin religious affiliation rather than winners' devotion to a particular set of religious beliefs per se.

Why do individuals from Jewish and Protestant backgrounds win so many prizes? Some have posited conspiracy theories. Others have advanced more plausible explanations. For example, Dr. John Hulley, former senior economist with the World Bank in Washington, D.C. and author of *Comets, Jews, and Christians*, asserted in a recent interview[12] that a symbiotic relationship exists between Protestants and Jews. In short, Hulley believes Protestant countries, such as the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, provide a fertile soil in which Jews thrive: these countries offer a social environment of *freedom, tolerance,* and *incentive* which allows would-be scholars and artists the room and safety they need to flower.

Given that most Latter-day Saints reside in Protestant countries, why haven't we experienced a world-class flowering of LDS art and scholarship, such as has occurred among the Jews? Are there factors inherent within LDS culture (our "soil") which might impact academic and artistic accomplishment? On a personal level, we, the authors, freely acknowledge that as LDS academics, we have not contributed any significant scholarly advances to our respective fields. Apart from the many potential idiosyncratic reasons for our lack of achievement (e.g., insufficient IQ, lack of creativity, laziness), answers to these questions are likely to be complex and multifaceted. We speculate about a few that may apply to us, as well as to the general body of LDS scholars and artists.

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10. Remarkably, Jews constitute only 0.2% of the world population, yet they win over 17% of Nobel Prizes.

11. The author of the table asserted that, for this data, the labels *Jewish, Protestant, Catholic,* or *Other* are in the overwhelming majority of cases not a reflection of religiosity, but of its absence ("Benjamin Beit-Halllahmi, Religious Affiliation, Religiosity, and Scientific Eminence: A Survey of Nobel Prize Winners 1901-2001," unpublished manuscript).

12. John Hulley interview, *The Jerusalem Post*, Internet Edition, Sunday, May 11, 1997 (www.jpost.com).

Cultural Challenges:

1. *Our priorities and lifestyle may conflict with achieving scholarly and artistic eminence.*

It is our general view that all other things being equal (such as IQ and native talent), scholarly and artistic accomplishments boil down to *time commitment*. As members of the LDS faith, we are admonished to adopt a hierarchy of priorities which places secular attainment after spouse, family, and church.[13] Not only are we encouraged to value the institution of marriage, but we are encouraged to marry early; not only are we encouraged to value and respect the family unit, but we are encouraged to start a family early and to have many children; not only are we encouraged to develop testimonies of the gospel, but we are encouraged to attend church regularly and to accept church callings, some of which can be quite labor-intensive and time-consuming. The result is a lifestyle oriented towards familial relationships and ecclesiastical duties, which may not be conducive to achieving a high level of artistic or scholarly prominence.

Take, for example, the cases of a close friend of ours and his younger brother, both of whom were blessed with considerable IQ, motivation, and means to succeed. Our friend, early in his youth, became disaffected from the church, while his younger brother remained devout. Both excelled academically at the undergraduate level, yet only the younger brother married at this time. The older brother went on to complete advanced degrees at the London School of Economics, Cambridge, and ultimately Oxford, joined the faculty at the University of Chicago, and then published a book. He finally married in his mid-thirties, but remains childless by choice. The younger brother took a much more conventional, albeit rigorous path, completing medical school at the Albert Einstein School of Medicine while serving as a bishop and fathering four children. For the sake of his family, he altered his initial plans to become a researcher and entered a more practical and lucrative field of medicine. Both brothers have certainly been successful; however, the younger brother has sacrificed the possibility of scholarly prominence for gospel priorities, while the older brother continues to devote his life to scholarship and is achieving increasing recognition in his field.

Pursuing eminence in the arts can pose similar challenges to active

13. See Dallin H. Oaks, "Focus and priorities," *Ensign* (May 2001): 82; Russell M. Nelson, "Identity, Priority, and Blessings," *Ensign* (August, 2001); Richard G. Scott, "First Things First," *Ensign* (May 2001): 6.

members of the church. Consider the experience of some local friends, both educated in music, who happened to attend two back-to-back organ concerts several years ago and noted a stark contrast in the performers. The first concert featured an acclaimed, world-class organist, who gave a virtuoso performance. The second performer was an organist for the Tabernacle Choir, who also offered a fine performance, but who clearly lacked the skill of the first organist. To our friends' minds, the most obvious variable in these diverging performances was the fact that the first performer was married solely to her craft while the second performer was an active church member and father of eight with obligations tugging him in many directions. We as believers carry the conviction that the second organist will ultimately enjoy a richer life experience because of his priorities, but we can't deny that he will most likely have made artistic sacrifices in the process.

In our opinion, artistically or academically gifted LDS women are even more likely to experience these priority conflicts than are their similarly gifted male counterparts. Men have church sanction to pursue career paths which might coincide with their unique abilities. LDS women, on the other hand, while receiving encouragement to become educated, are generally not encouraged to pursue careers or time-consuming endeavors outside the home unless marriage ultimately is not an option. As a result, the likelihood of LDS women becoming artists or scholars of renown is even lower than it is for men.

Given the demanding three-fold mission of the church, even those of us who dedicate the hours between 9:00 and 5:00 to academic or artistic careers will, because of the value choices we have made, likely take up the remaining, waking hours with church and family priorities. Gospel priorities, though they may afford us many blessings, put devout Mormons at a disadvantage when it comes to producing world-class art and scholarship.

2. *We tend to value conventionality, orthodoxy, and adherence to authority.*

> *There is too much sameness in this community. . . .I am not a stereotyped Latter-day-saint and do not believe in the doctrine. . . away with stereotyped Mormons!*
>
> —Brigham Young

The prophet Joseph Smith broke sharply from 19th century conventions in restoring the gospel. Some of his teachings, such as polygamy and the United Order, were unconventional enough to contribute to his martyrdom and to force the early Saints to flee west to avoid persecution. We as members may still consider ourselves "a peculiar people," yet as the church has grown into a global organization now entering the 21st century, our image has evolved: today, we are perceived as conventional

and conservative in our values, behavior, and political orientation.[14] Indeed, Latter-day Saints seem to fit well within certain professions such as politics, law, and business, where maintaining the status quo is often valued and emphasized. An LDS faculty member at Harvard University recently observed that while members of the church were well-represented at her institution's prestigious Business and Law Schools, very few LDS students could be found in Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. She suggested that perhaps our culture encourages "action-oriented talents" more than "contemplative talents."[15] Latter-day Saint celebrities such as Stephen R. Covey, J. Willard Marriott, Orrin Hatch, the Osmonds, and Steve Young, while their accomplishments may be noteworthy, could all be described as having succeeded in "action-oriented" fields rather than contemplative ones. And yet, contemplation is an essential ingredient in the production of significant art and scholarship.

Coupled with our conventional social tendencies, we as members of the church receive considerable encouragement to heed church authorities and to be orthodox in our thinking as it relates to our faith.[16] A united governing body advocating a set of uniform beliefs helps the church function smoothly and provides us with the consistency and structure we need to place and keep our feet firmly on the gospel path. In addition, we are assured that our leaders "will never lead [us] astray,"[17] and are encouraged to accept that "when the prophet speaks, the debate is over."[18] Church authorities often re-emphasize these teachings, which likely have significant benefits for us as church members, bringing peace of mind as we struggle with life's complexities.

Yet, what impact might these tendencies—conventionality, orthodoxy, and adherence to authority—have on the creativity, ingenuity, and innovative thinking necessary for scholarly and artistic advances? Psychological research has shown that those with orthodox religious beliefs appear to think less complexly about religious issues.[19] But what is the

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14. David Van Biema, "Kingdom Come," *Time Magazine*, Aug. 1997.

15. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, personal communication, 21 January 2003.

16. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Prayer for the Children," *Ensign* (May 2003): 85-87; N. Eldon Tanner, "The Debate is Over," *Ensign* (August, 1979): 2; Dallin H. Oaks, "Alternate Voices," *Ensign* (May, 1989): 27; Ezra Taft Benson, "Fourteen Fundamentals of Following the Prophet,"address given at BYU, Feb. 26, 1980; Robert D. Hales, "Hear the Prophet's Voice and Obey," *Ensign* (May 1995): 15; H. Ross Workman, "Beware of Murmuring," *Ensign* (November 2001): 85 ; Alan P. Burton, "Follow the Brethren," *Ensign* (October 1972): 5.

17. Wilford Woodruff, *The Discources of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), 212-213.

18. Tanner, "The Debate is Over," 2.

19. C. D. Batson and L. Raynor-Prince, "Religious Orientation and Complexity of

relationship between religious orthodoxy and flexibility of thought about non-religious subjects? Is it possible to be "in the box" religiously, but "out of the box" secularly? Psychological research attempting to answer this question has been mixed.[20] Judaism, however, may provide a meaningful model for speculation. In Table 1, we saw that fully 17% of all Nobel Prizes have been awarded to individuals of Jewish background. Yet, not one of those prizes has been awarded to an Orthodox Jew.[21] Orthodoxy in and of itself is unlikely to be the sole cause of this difference in achievement, but the disparity is striking. Best-selling Jewish author Chaim Potok has written extensively about the inherent tension between living an orthodox religious life and pursuing scholarly or artistic achievement. Of his own writing, he says:

> All of my books are an attempt to explore the dimensions of this kind of confrontation. . . .Do [we] throw out [secular] truths in order to maintain our uniqueness, our allegiance to our particular religious "core"? Is that the price that is being exacted from us? That's the tension my characters are caught up with. . .A tension felt by many people with whom I grew up. . .[22]

People of all faiths have resonated to the themes of Potok's books. This kind of conflict is clearly not unique to Jews, but one felt by orthodox believers from many religious traditions.

When we think of our most admired pioneers in the arts and sciences, how many would we consider to have been conventional in terms of their thinking or their approach to their life's work? From Shakespeare to Hemingway, Newton to Einstein, Galileo to Hawking, Mozart to Gershwin, and Rembrandt to Picasso, history's great innovators have had a significant impact upon the world in large part because they have pushed the envelope of convention. As devout members of the church

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Thought about Existential Concerns," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22 (1983): 38-50; and M. W. Pratt, B. Hunsberger, S. M. Pancer, and D. Roth, "Reflections on Religion: Aging, Belief Orthodoxy, and Interpersonal Conflict in Adult Thinking about Religious Issues," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 31 (1992): 514-522.

20. See R. A. Altermayer, *Enemies of Freedom*. (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 1988); M.B. Lupfer, P. A. Hopkinson, and P. Kelley, "An Exploration of the Attributional Styles of Fundamentalists and Authoritarians," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 27 (1988): 389-398; M. Meadow, and R. Kahoe, *Psychology of Religion: Religion in Individual Lives* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); and S. M. Pancer, L. M. Jackson, B. Hunsberger, M.W. Pratt, J. Lea, "Religious Orthodoxy and the Complexity of Thought about Religious and Non-religious Issues. *Journal of Personality* 63 (June 1995): 2.

21. Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, personal communication to authors on 13 January 2003.

22. Chaim Potok, "On Being Proud of Uniqueness," lecture at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, March 20, 1986.
See http://www.lasierra.edu/%7Eballen/potok/Potok.unique.html.

striving for excellence in scholarly and artistic endeavors, we may have to tolerate a certain amount of tension between our faith's emphasis upon orthodoxy and conventionality and our attempt to look at our lives and our work in fresh, innovative, new ways.

3. Dogmatism.

> *There has been great difficulty getting anything into the heads of this generation. . . . I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them. . . fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes which is contrary to their traditions. . . .*
>
> —Joseph Smith[23]

Dogmatism is defined as "positiveness in assertion of opinion, especially when unwarranted or arrogant; a viewpoint or system of ideas based on insufficiently examined premises."[24] A good synonym for dogmatism is closed-mindedness. One memorable example of a dogmatic individual is Archie Bunker, the main character from the 1970's sit-com *All In The Family*. Archie, a church-going man with minimal education, is a self-proclaimed expert on any number of subjects from politics to race to relationships to religion. In reality, he knows very little and has rarely scrutinized that which he *thinks* he knows. Audiences either loved or hated Archie, but we all had to admit that we recognized him—within our communities, our families, or at times within ourselves.

There is a stark contrast between the closed and open mind, the one-dimensional and multi-dimensional thinker. In Victor Hugo's masterpiece *Les Miserables*, the character Javert is so obsessed with the letter of the law that he spends his life in a self-defeating quest to punish ex-convict Jean Valjean, a man who has long since reformed. By contrast, the character Monseigneur Bienvenu transforms Valjean's life by extending him mercy after Jean has betrayed the cleric's hospitality by stealing from him. There are demigods in the world who with their followers piously scapegoat those who are different or "deviant." But there are also Mother Theresas, who gather in outcasts and untouchables across all racial and religious differences. The Pharisees in the New Testament fail to recognize the Messiah in their midst because of their dogmatic focus on strict adherence to purity laws. Meanwhile, Jesus turns this same religious establishment on its head by proclaiming those who count themselves righteous as sinners. Those who count themselves sinners, he says, stand at the threshold of the Kingdom of God.

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23. *History of the Church*, VI: 184-185.
24. *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Edition.

Dogmatic individuals do not question their assumptions and, as a result, are highly unlikely to push back the frontiers of knowledge. One might ask, what is wrong with a person's dogmatically holding on to a true belief? We, however, are convinced that truth, whether spiritual or secular, is typically multi-faceted and multi-leveled. If we assume there is nothing more or surprising or contradictory to learn, we are not likely to discover truths hidden beneath or within the truth to which we cling. Our knowledge of the truth will remain partial and static.

To be sure, we as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *do not* have the market cornered on dogmatism or close-mindedness. Just as there can be dogmatic Mormons, there can be dogmatic philosophers, scientists, atheists, liberals, conservatives, and so forth. But because there is so much in the storehouse of insights the restored gospel provides, we as members of the church can easily be lulled into believing that we have all the significant answers. We may not feel any need to question or re-examine our viewpoints, nor approach the world around us in an open, self-questioning, inquisitive way. To the extent that we are dogmatic, we limit ourselves as artists and scholars.

4. *We may not use the Spirit as well as we could.*

Non-Mormon scholars are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the world's advances in knowledge. If it is true, as President Smith and Dr. Bergin assert, that revelation is the guiding factor in the growth of all human knowledge, two conclusions suggest themselves: (1) the Spirit's influence is much broader and less partisan than church members typically assume, and/or (2) we as LDS scholars and artists are not making very broad or efficient use of the influence of the Spirit.

With respect to the first conclusion. N. Elden Tanner wrote:

> We learn from the scriptures that all truth is revealed through the light of Christ. . . .Thus, the truths discovered by such men as Sir Isaac Newton, Thomas Edison, and Albert Einstein were actually revealed to them through the light of Christ.[25]

As evidenced by the innumerable academic and artistic accomplishments of "gentile" society, the Spirit works in a wide variety of contexts, with a wide variety of individuals, who have a wide variety of life-experiences. Yet we Latter-day Saints don't often acknowledge that the Spirit is actively involved with people who are *not* members of our church, many of whom have lifestyles incompatible with our religious ideals.

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25. N. Eldon Tanner, "Ye Shall Know the Truth," *Ensign* 8 (May 1978):15.

With respect to the second conclusion, one could ask if LDS academics and artists are perhaps too prideful to seek the Spirit as earnestly as we might. Perhaps we're unaccustomed to or uncomfortable with seeking divine guidance in our academic and artistic pursuits. Using the terminology of Abraham Maslow,[26] perhaps too few of us are "peakers": individuals genuinely aware of and connected to the spiritual aspects of life, and so we struggle to identify and be guided by the Spirit.

Ironically, participation in orthodox religion can sometimes lead to a dulling of sensitibities and a de-sacralizing of much of the rest of life for very normal and understandable reasons. First, "familiarization and repetition generally produce a lowering of the intensity and richness of consciousness, even though they produce preference, security, comfort, etc. Familiarization, in a word, makes it unnecessary to attend, to think, to feel, to live fully, to experience richly."[27] For example, none of us likely had any difficulty staying alert during our first temple session. Yet how many of us have struggled to attend closely or even stay awake in later sessions? Secondly, "participation in orthodox religion can lead to the tendency to dichotomize life into the transcendent (church-oriented) and the secular-profane (everything else) and can, therefore, compartmentalize and separate life temporally, spatially, conceptually, and experientially."[28] Perhaps we're guilty of bifurcating our lives into the secular and the sacred, not believing as deeply as we might that "all things are spiritual" (D&C 29:34). Orthodox religion is not unhealthy in-and-of itself, but we would be well-served to be vigilant in countering such stultifying processes once we recognize them.

We've coined the term "Joseph Smith Complex" to refer to our tendency as a people to recognize only a limited, typically dramatic, set of experiences as being spiritual (for example, feeling a "burning in the bosom" after prayer, hearing a voice, having a dream, seeing a vision, or receiving a directive from a priesthood leader), and only certain places as being validly spiritual, such as the church, the temple, or the Sacred Grove. But as Abraham Maslow points out,

> The great lesson to be learned from the true mystics. . .is that *the sacred is in the ordinary*, that it is to be found in one's daily life, in one's neighbors, friends, [work], and family, in one's back yard. . . .To be looking elsewhere for miracles is to me a sure sign of ignorance that *everything* is miraculous.[29]

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26. Abraham Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 27-29.

27. Ibid., 34.

28. Ibid., 33.

29. Ibid., x-xi.

Whatever limitations we may face, the Spirit can enhance what and who we are, which in turn can have a significant impact upon our work. In this respect, desiring and explicitly seeking the Spirit to broaden, enlighten, and invigorate us is a crucial aspect of our reaching our full potential as artists and scholars.

Two Contrasting Examples of Scholarly Achievement:

In our research, we came across two unique world-renowned scholars from LDS backgrounds, each of whom illustrates a different road taken in the attempt to integrate faith and scholarly pursuits.

Dr. Paul D. Boyer, emeritus UCLA professor, won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1997. From personal communications with Dr. Boyer, we learned that he was born and reared in an LDS home in Provo, Utah, and graduated with a B.S. from BYU in 1939. However, when we inquired as to whether the LDS faith had played a prominent role in his life, he informed us, "No, except that the church helped establish good schools in Utah. . . .At the time I was there, BYU was not nearly as conservatively dominated by the Mormon church." He went on to tell us that he and his wife had their names removed from membership roles many years ago and offered the following perspectives on his evolving attitude toward religion in relation to science:

> All the truths I know about how living things function, about the wonderful world in which we live and the universe have come from science, not religion. I am amazed that some fellow scientists believe in your type of God. I note that the greater the accomplishment and the more understanding of the science of biochemistry and molecular biology, the less likely is a scientist to have a belief in any religious doctrine or a monotheistic deity.[30]

While Dr. Boyer has had, by his account, a fulfilling marriage and a rich family life in spite of the rigor of his work,[31] he at some point decided to forego religious faith in favor of scientific explanations.

Contrast Dr. Boyer with the experiences of LDS Pulitzer Prize winner Dr. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who was born and reared in an LDS home in Sugar City, Idaho. As an undergraduate, she studied at the University of Utah. Regarding her educational experiences, she told us:

> Although I didn't realize it at the time, I think I was fortunate in having been

30. Paul D. Boyer, personal communication with authors, 11 January 03.

31. Paul D. Boyer, autobiographical information included on the Nobel Prize web site (www.nobel.com).

> raised in a family, a community, and at a time when the church really emphasized learning.[32]

In the midst of her scholarly pursuits, Dr. Ulrich married and had five children. Eventually she completed her doctoral degree, wrote a book for which she won the 1991 Pulitzer Prize in History, and landed a faculty position at Harvard. Dr. Ulrich has been an active member of the church her whole life. When asked if she had "paid a price" or experienced any conflicts between being a world-class scholar and an active Mormon, she replied,

> The price [I pay] is in being mistrusted in some LDS settings and circumstances. But I think there is real strength in "not fitting in." . . .I think gender makes a huge difference. In my case it may have been an advantage because I began my career during a period when feminism was transforming the disciplines. I had the sense of doing something rare and important, and that sustained me. . . .I am fortunate that I have a very supportive husband and children and have chosen a field of work in which life experience is an advantage. My life experience as a mother, grandmother, wife, and active Mormon has been enriching *though time consuming*! I had to learn to take my own work seriously, and that wasn't easy.[33]

As these two examples illustrate, significant challenges and risks are involved in creating world-class scholarship and art as an active Latter-day-Saint. But it can be done.

Conclusions?

Will we ever see the day prophesied by John Taylor, when "Zion shall be far ahead of the outside world in everything pertaining to learning of every kind"? Perhaps, but we must acknowledge that world-class achievement in the arts and sciences is an extreme rarity and will always be the exception rather than the rule. Of course, we have had less than two-hundred years in which to establish ourselves as a culture in comparison to the three-thousand-year-old Jewish tradition, so perhaps patience is in order. Yet patience notwithstanding, we can't overlook what is likely to be the single most important variables, beyond "genuis" in academic or artistic accomplishment: time commitment and focused hard work.

As scholars and artists struggle to balance Gospel commitments with intellectual and artistic pursuits, it would seem wise to heed King Ben-

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32. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, personal communication with authors, 21 January 03.
33. Ibid.

jamin's words: ". . .see that these things are done in wisdom and in order, for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength" (Mosiah 4:27). Perhaps the Spirit can help us discern which concessions to our faith are merely conventional or dogmatic, versus which are inspired and godly. Openness to experience, willingness to ask questions and re-examine assumptions, and increased self-awareness all can and will seem threatening to familiar conventions. Can we, and this is the heart of the dilemma, humbly ask the Spirit to guide us beyond our safe and certified, conventional selves?

Jude's Use of the Pseudepigraphal Book of 1 Enoch

Cory D. Anderson

IT HAS BEEN RIGHTLY STATED that the Epistle of Jude is the most neglected book in the New Testament.[1] Such an assertion was made in 1975 by Douglas Rowston, who noticed that, "[w]ith the exception of G. B Stevens, New Testament theologians have ignored the book and, apart from Friedrich Spitta and J. B. Mayor, modern New Testament scholars have not treated the book except in a series of commentaries."[2]

Since Rowston's provoking comments twenty-six years ago, a plethora of articles and new commentaries have been produced.[3] Unfor-

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1. Douglas J. Rowston, "The Most Neglected Book In The New Testament." *New Testament Studies* 21 (July 1975): 554. This observation was made first by William Barclay in 1960 (William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude* [Edinburgh, Scotland: The Saint Andrew Press], 183).

2. Rowston, "Most Neglected Book," 554.

3. For recent articles and commentaries on the epistle of Jude see: Richard J. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983); J. Daryl Charles, "'Those' and 'These.' The use of the Old Testament in The Epistle of Jude," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (February 1990): 109-124; J. Daryl Charles, "Jude's Use of Pseudepigraphical Source Material as Part of a Literary Strategy," *New Testament Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 1991): 130-145; J. Daryl Charles, "Literary Artifice in the Epistle of Jude," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 82, no. 1-2 (1991): 106-124; Walter M. Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions," *Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 31, no. 3 (September 1988): 287-292; Jarl Fossum, "Kurios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5-7," *New Testament Studies* 33, no. 2 (1987): 226-243; Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987); Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996); Carol D. Osburn, "The Text of Jude 5," *Biblica* 62, no. 1 (1981): 107-115; Carol D.

tunately, some commentaries do little more than give a cursory treatment of the epistle, treating it as an appendix to the New Testament. This was J. Daryl Charles's criticism in 1991: "Where it is studied, Jude is normally examined side-by-side with the other 'catholic' epistles or subsumed under the study of 2 Peter."[4]

While great advances have been made in the study of the Epistle of Jude, much work remains to be done. One such area needing further study is an evaluation of Jude's hermeneutic, especially in relation to his use of the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch. Some attention has been given to this area over the years, but much of what has been written has focused on the implications of Jude's use of pseudepigraphal writings for the doctrine of inspiration.

Many commentaries, while focusing on the explicit use of 1 Enoch in Jude v.6 and vv.14-16, have neglected any serious discussion of the other echoes and allusions Jude makes to 1 Enoch. The result is that very few have asked and answered the questions concerning *how* Jude reads 1 Enoch and *how* he uses this pseudepigraphal writing in his epistle. In light of this, it is the aim of this paper to show that Jude's belief in the inspiration and authority of the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch played an influential role in the writing of the Epistle of Jude, in that it caused him to read 1 Enoch with an eschatological and christological hermeneutic.[5]

Jude's Acceptance of 1 Enoch as Scripture

One of the areas of debate in studies on the Epistle of Jude concerns Jude's use of what today are considered non-canonical writings. Does

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Osborn, "1 Enoch 80: 2-8 (67: 5-7) and Jude 12-13," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (April 1985): 296-303; Carol D. Osborn, "The Chrisotological Use of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14, 15," *New Testament Studies* 23, no. 3 (April 1977): 334-341; Thomas Wolthuis, "Jude and Jewish Traditions," *Calvin Theological Journal* 22 (April 1987): 21-45.

4. J. Daryl Charles, "Literary Artifice in the Epistle of Jude," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde de älteren Kirche* 82, no.1-2 (1991): 106.

5. Regarding the eschatological and Christological hermeneutic of the New Testament authors, Craig A. Evans made the following comment: "NT writers frequently found new meanings in OT passages. This happened, not because of careless exegesis or ignorance, but because of the conviction that Scripture speaks to every significant situation. This is especially so, if the situation is believed to have eschatological significance. The scriptures are accordingly searched for clarification. The NT writers were rarely concerned with the question of what happened or what the text originally meant. The NT writers, as also their contemporary Jewish exegetes, were chiefly interested in what the Scriptures meant and how they applied. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus became for early Christians the hermeneutical key for their interpretation and application of the Jewish Scriptures" (Craig A. Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," in *Introducing New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Scot McKnight [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000], 193). Although this quote refers to the NT authors' use of the OT, the same could be said for Jude's use of the book of 1 Enoch.

Jude's use of such pseudipigrapha suggest that he viewed these books as inspired and/or authoritative? Does he accept 1 Enoch as scripture? In commenting on this issue, Michael Green suggests that even though the early church highly esteemed 1 Enoch, "we have no means of knowing whether Jude regarded these books as canonical."[6] Of Jude's usage, Green suggests, "even if he knew it to be a myth, he might readily use it as an illustrative argument, seeing that it was so familiar to his readers. Paul does not mind using a heathen poet in this way (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor.15:32-33; Titus 1:12)."[7]

Green's comments echo those of many scholars,[8] but does Jude simply use 1 Enoch as an illustrative argument? Not according to Lawrence VanBeek, who says:

> The introduction, "and to these ones even Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied saying," shows that Jude considered the words of Jude 14, and the book of 1 Enoch from which they came, to be authoritative. This is

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6. Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 57. Green's use of "canonical" is anachronistic in that the canon was not yet formulated. Jude was probably not thinking in terms of a fixed "canon."

7. Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 58. Paul does refer to other sources without believing they are inspired, but the way in which Paul makes reference to these is different than Jude's reference to 1 Enoch 1:9. In Titus 1:12 and Acts 17:28, Paul's introductory formula ("one of themselves, *a prophet of their own*, said, . . ." and "some of *your poets* have said, . . .") reveals that the prophet and poet mentioned in these texts are not Paul's prophets and poets, but rather belong to the people of Athens and Crete. Paul does acknowledge truth spoken by these poets and prophets, but acknowledging truth is different than endorsing the prophet as inspired. Jude on the other hand acknowledges the biblical character Enoch to have actually prophesied. See also 1 Cor. 15:33 where Paul uses a source not inspired, but containing truth. This text does not have an introductory formula.

8. Some examples of this perspective come from scholars such as Donald Guthrie who said, "Nevertheless, if it cannot be demonstrated that Jude regards 1 Enoch as Scripture, he clearly holds it in high esteem and considers it legitimate to cite it in support of his argument" (Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* [Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-varsity Press, 1990], 915). Moo argues two points in attempting to prove Jude did not view 1 Enoch as inspired: 1) Jews and Christians in the first century were already operating with a "closed" Old Testament canon, and 2) unlike other New Testament authors who quote the Old Testament, Jude does not introduce his reference to 1 Enoch with the introductory formula "it is written" (Douglas J. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Peter and Jude* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996], 272-74). In response to Moo, two comments should be made. First, there is evidence that the Old Testament canon was *not* closed in the first century. Although the contents of the Law and the Prophets were generally established, the third division of scriptures known as the Writings were still unclear even in the time of Jesus (Luke 24:27, 44). For an excellent treatment of this topic see Craig A. Evans, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Canon of Scripture in the Time of Jesus," in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation*, ed. Peter W. Flint, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 67-79. Second, in response to Moo, Jude does use an introductory formula similar to Matt. 15:7 where a quotation from the inspired prophet Isaiah is introduced with the formula, "rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you."

> shown in two ways; first, Jude used an introductory formula which resembles that of several portions of the New Testament, particularly Matt. 15:7 and Mk 7:6; secondly, Jude pointed to the fulfillment of a prophet's words in Jude's own time, which is also common in the New Testament writings.[9]

In dealing with an argument such as VanBeek's, Moo says:

> To be sure, Jude claims that Enoch "prophesied." But this word need not mean "wrote an inspired prophetic book"; it could well mean simply "uttered in this instance a prophecy." The reference, in other words, could be to the immediate passage and not the entire book.[10]

Using Moo's logic regarding the book of Jude, Matt. 15:7 could also be communicating that Isaiah simply "uttered in this instance a prophecy," and that Matthew did not mean to say that "Isaiah wrote a prophetic book." Is this the kind of logic that should be applied to Matt. 15:7 and Mark 7:6? Granted, the book of Isaiah is quoted and alluded to often in the New Testament, thereby indicating its authority, but 1 Enoch is also quoted once and alluded to on numerous occasions in the book of Jude and other New Testament writings.[11]

Two additional points need mentioning in support of Jude's possible belief that 1 Enoch is inspired and authoritative. First, the evidence suggests that Jude does not distinguish between his use of the Old Testament and his use of 1 Enoch. In this short epistle, Jude masterfully weaves together a midrashic treatment of various texts,[12] never making a qualitative distinction between the pseudepigraphic and what is in-

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9. Lawrence VanBeek, "1 Enoch among Jews and Christians: A Fringe Connection?" in *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Brook W. R. Pearson (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 103.

10. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 273.

11. F. H. Chase, "Jude, The Epistle Of," in *Dictionary of the Bible: Vol.II*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1899), 801-02. In this brief article, Chase identifies fourteen verses in Jude which are possible echoes and allusions to Enochic literature. Of these allusions, Guthrie says, "If these can be maintained it would be evidence enough of the dominating influence of 1 Enoch on the author's mind. But many of the parallels are very slight and have weight only on the prior assumption that Jude definitely used the book as a basis" (Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 916). In this writer's opinion, the fact that Jude quotes from 1 Enoch in Jude 14-15 and alludes clearly to it in Jude 6, is evidence enough that Jude used the book of 1 Enoch as a basis. For a treatment on the book of 1 Enoch in the New Testament see R. H. Charles, *The Apocrapha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 180. Charles states, "1 Enoch had more influence on the New Testament than has any other apocryphal or pseudepigraphic work."

12. For an excellent examination of Jude's hermeneutic and Midrashic use of scripture see Earle E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 221-36.

spired and authoritative. If 1 Enoch were used merely for illustrative purposes, then one would expect some qualitative distinction to be made in the text of Jude.

Second, Enochic literature was accepted by some Jews and Christians during the intertestamental period and in the early church.[13] Since Jude was a contemporary of some who accepted 1 Enoch as authoritative and inspired, it is not without reason to suggest that Jude, as well as the heretics he confronted in his epistle and the recipients of his letter, all held the same belief.

Rather than viewing Jude's use of 1 Enoch as illustrative material, J. Daryl Charles suggests that Jude is "exploiting, if not the *readers'* devotion to Enochic literature, then that of his *opponents*."[14] Is Jude merely giving attention to 1 Enoch because the recipients or his opponents were devoted to Enochic literature even though he is not? Is he simply using 1 Enoch as a literary strategy? Robert C. Newman says, "One might be inclined to dismiss Jude's reference as an *ad hominem* argument against his opponents who accepted the OT pseudepigrapha since he apparently quotes 1 Enoch 1:9 in v14 and cites a no longer extant portion of the *Assumption of Moses* in v9. Yet there is no hint in the context that Jude in any way distances himself from these citations."[15]

Perhaps a better suggestion, in light of the evidence presented thus far, is that Jude, the recipients of the letter, and his opponents, were all devoted to the pseudepigraphic book of 1 Enoch. Jude's reason for using the book might be his devotion to what he considered an inspired text and the eschatological and christological message he found contained in the book of 1 Enoch.

Jude's acceptance of 1 Enoch as scripture is significant because of the

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13. VanBeek, "1 Enoch among Jews and Christians," 93-111. VanBeek presents a compelling case that 1 Enoch had wide acceptance within Jewish circles (due to its usage in the book of Jubilees), among the Qumran community, and in Jewish literature outside of Qumran. With regard to 1 Enoch's acceptance among Christians, VanBeek points to the authoritative usage of 1 Enoch by 2 Peter and Jude, as well as some of the Church Fathers. For evidence that Qumran held 1 Enoch to be scripture, see Peter W. Flint. "Noncanonical Writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Apocrypha, Other Previously Known Writings, Pseudepigrapha," in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation*, ed. Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 116-21; and James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 149-57.

14. J. Daryl Charles, "'Those' and 'These.' The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle of Jude," *Journal For The Study of The New Testament* 38 (February 1990): 119. See also J. Daryl Charles, "Jude's Use of Pseudepigraphical Source Material as Part of a Literary Strategy," *New Testament Studies* 37, no.1 (January 1991): 130-145.

15. Robert C. Newman, "The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2,4," *Grace Theological Journal* 5, no.1 (Spring 1984): 35.

effect it had upon his reading of this pseudepigraphal book. Attaching the quality of inspiration to a text affects the way in which that text is read. If Jude views 1 Enoch as scripture, then perhaps his reading of 1 Enoch is more akin to the way in which other New Testament authors read the inspired text of the Old Testament and then quoted and alluded to it.

Jude's Eschatological Reading of 1 Enoch

Jude's reading of 1 Enoch is similar to the Qumran sectarians in that he reads scripture eschatologically by applying to it a "pesher" method of interpretation.[16] Of the Qumranic method of interpretation, Longenecker has said,

> The Dead Sea sectarians considered themselves the divinely elected community of the final generation of the present age, living in the days of "Messianic travail" before the eschatological consummation. Theirs was the task of preparing for the coming of the Messianic Age and/or the age to come. And to them applied certain prophecies in the Old Testament that were considered to speak of their situation and circumstances.[17]

Jude, like other New Testament writers, was similar to the Qumran sectarians in that his "hermeneutic included the principle that inspired Scripture speaks of the last days in which the interpreter is living (a concept not unlike that found in the Qumran community in, say, the Habbakkuk commentary)."[18] For Jude and the Qumran community, scripture was more than just applicable to their situation, it was written about

16. The Qumran community would quote a passage from the Old Testament and then introduce the interpretation of the passage with the phrase "its interpretation concerns." Rather than attempt to interpret the passage in its historical context, Qumran interpreters would read the passage and apply it directly to their situation. Thus, they believed the scriptures had been written to them, for them, and about them. James C. VanderKam, an expert on the Dead Sea Scrolls, made the following comments on the exegesis of the Dead Sea Sectarians: "Very early in the study of the scrolls, it became evident that at least two fundamental assumptions underlay Qumran exegesis. The first is that the *biblical writer* referred in his prophecy to the latter days, not to his own time; the second was that the *commentator* assumed he was living during the latter days and that therefore the ancient prophecies were directed to his own days. His duty, then, was to unlock the secrets of the prophets' mysterious words and thus to find the divine message that addressed his circumstances" (VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 44).

17. Richard N Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis In The Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), 24.

18. Walter M Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter: The Use of Ancient Jewish Traditions," *Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* 31, no.3 (Sept 1988): 289.

them, to them, and for their situation.[19] They believed they experienced the fulfillment of what was written long ago.[20]

In making use of 1 Enoch, perhaps Jude's mind was drawn to the eschatological focus of this pseudepigraphal writing.[21] Such a focus is seen in Matthew Black's translation of 1 Enoch 1:2, where Enoch says that his vision is, "not for this generation, but for a generation remote."[22] In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, E. Isaac translates 1 Enoch 1:2 as, "I look not for this generation, but for the distant one that is coming."[23] It appears from the first few verses of 1 Enoch that the book was to be understood eschatologically. In other words, what was supposedly written in Enoch's time was not for their generation, but for a generation in the distant future. Could it be that Jude, in his familiarity with 1 Enoch, understood his generation to be the distant one referred to by Enoch?

In examining 1 Enoch and the epistle of Jude, we find several indications that Jude did understand 1 Enoch to be written to his generation. A comparison of Jude v.4 and the contents of the book of 1 Enoch reveal three similarities. First, the "condemnation" spoken of in Jude v.4

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19. The pesher method of interpretation was common during the intertestamental period. In 1 Cor. 10:11, Paul reads the Old Testament stories in a typological manner, applying them to the eschatological generation living in Corinth. Another example of the pesher method is found in Acts 2:16-21, where Peter preaches a message to the multitude gathered on the day of Pentecost using a passage from Joel 2:28-32. Peter says, "*this is* what was spoken of through the prophet Joel." Thus, Peter understands his generation to be the eschatological fulfillment of Joel 2:28, even though there was an historical fulfillment of this text during Joel's day.

20. This seems to be Michael Green's point when he says, "Jude is using a midrashic technique, making five citations (vv.5-7, 9, 11, 14, 18) each of which is followed by a commentary section (vv.8, 10, 12-13, 16, 19), and there are extensive parallels for this at Qumran. It is a powerful way of showing that the prophecies from of old are now being fulfilled. . .the prophecy-fulfillment theme is clear, and sheds light on Jude's background" (Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 176). See also Richard J. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 5. Bauckham says, "Jude's midrashic method bears some comparison with the pesher exegesis of Qumran. There is the same conviction that the ancient texts are eschatological prophecy which the interpreter applies to the events of his own time, understood as the time of eschatological fulfillment." Typically, this prophecy-fulfillment theme is identified only with respect to the citation of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14-16 and not applied in a comprehensive way to Jude's allusive use of 1 Enoch in several other texts. It is this writer's view that Jude is not only reading 1 Enoch 1:9 eschatologically, but he is reading 1 Enoch's overall message in an eschatological manner.

21. A connection to the distant generation predicted in 1 Enoch 1:2 is also made by Charles, "Jude's Use of Pseudepigraphical Source Material," 144.

22. Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985), 25.

23. E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 1, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James Hamilton Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 13.

appears to be the condemnation predicted in 1 Enoch. The first part of Jude v.4 says, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, *those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation*"[24] (italics mine). In reading eschatologically, Jude views the false teachers denounced in his epistle to be the individuals who were "marked out" for condemnation long ago.

To what event or passage of scripture does Jude refer? When were these false teachers "marked out" for this condemnation? Could it be that Jude makes reference to the Old Testament,[25] to the teachings of Jesus,[26] to the apostolic teaching mentioned in Jude vv.17-18,[27] to 2 Peter 2:3,[28] to the book of 1 Enoch,[29] or to some combination of one or more of these views?[30] Given Jude's extensive use of allusions and echoes from both the Old Testament and the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch, the most likely conclusion is that Jude has both these sacred writings in mind in Jude v.4. However, it should be noted that Jude's direct quotation of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude vv.14-15 is a good indication that the condemnation spoken of in these verses is the same condemnation spoken of in

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24. All scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, Reference Edition (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977).

25. In this view, the condemnation refers to the Old Testament types elaborated on in Jude 5-7, 11.

26. Perhaps Jude is drawing upon Matt. 7:15-23 where Jesus taught concerning false teachers.

27. Kelly rejects this view on the basis that the Greek word *palai* means "long ago," a description which seems unlikely since the apostles were probably contemporaries of Jude. See J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1969), 250.

28. Charles Bigg, *The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 326. Bigg's view presupposes that Jude is dependent on 2 Peter. However, J. N. D. Kelly says, "The once popular suggestion that the writer is recalling the prophecy of doom pronounced on false prophets and teachers at 2 Pet.ii. 1-3 must be rejected, if only because most are now convinced that Jude antedates 2 Peter"(Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 250).

29. Those who are in support of this view are Kenneth S. Wuest, *In These Last Days: 2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, and Jude in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 237; and Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1965), 24.

30. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 230. Moo states: "The simplest explanation, however, is that Jude introduces the evidence for the false teachers' condemnation that he will adduce in the rest of the letter. He makes his case by citing from the Old Testament (vv. 5-8, 11), from Jewish traditions (vv.9, 14-16), and from the teaching of the apostles (vv. 17-18). In all these sources, he says, the 'condemnation' of these false teachers has long been established." While certain features of Moo's view are appealing, the difficulty lies in the meaning of the word *palai*. Can this word accurately refer to the apostles? Bauckham suggests a combination of Old Testament types and 1 Enoch (Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 36).

Jude v.4. The eschatological perspective of judgment coming on a distant generation is a theme continually mentioned in 1 Enoch.[31] This theme of judgment is picked up throughout Jude's epistle as he reminds his readers of the Lord's judgments in the past and his coming judgment mentioned by Enoch.

A second indication that Jude understood 1 Enoch to be written to his generation is that the "elect and ungodly" mentioned in 1 Enoch appear to be fulfilled as the elect and ungodly in Jude vv.1,4. After describing the false teachers whose condemnation was written about long ago, Jude v.4 calls them "ungodly persons." That Jude intends his readers to catch the use of ungodly and relate it to the book of 1 Enoch seems highly probable, given Jude's quote of 1 Enoch 1:9 where the same Greek word is used four times.[32] In Jude's epistle he refers to the "ungodly" false teachers of his day by using a pesher method of interpretation. This suggests that Jude believed the ungodly and false teachers of his day to be those who were predicted in 1 Enoch. The pesher method is evident in the italicized portion of the following quote from Jude 14, "and *about these* also,[33] Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied;" and also Jude v.4 where it says, "for *certain persons* have crept in unnoticed, *those* who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, *ungodly persons*."

In the epistle of Jude, another Enochic theme appears to be adopted by Jude when he contrasts the "ungodly" of 1 Enoch 1:9 and Jude v.4, 15,

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31. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 5. In outlining the contents of 1 Enoch, Isaac says, "The first part of the book contains an introduction (chs.1-5), which portrays the eschatological era and the final judgment of the righteous and the wicked." Interestingly, Jude appears to make use of 1 Enoch 1-5 on numerous occasions (compare Jude v.1-2 with 1 Enoch 1:8; 2:10 also Jude v.4 with 1 Enoch 1:9).

32. For an investigation into Jude's use of catchwords, see Charles, "Jude's Use of Pseudepigraphical Source Material as Part of a Literary Strategy," 140-42; Rowston, "Most Neglected Book," 557-558; and Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter," 289. Each article points out that "ungodly" is used in Jude v. 4, 15, and 18.

33. There is some debate concerning the rendering of the Greek text in v.14. Of this difficulty, Moo says, "It is not clear whether Jude intends to say that 'Enoch prophesied about these men also [i.e., in addition to the wicked people of his own day]' or that 'Enoch also [i.e., in addition to these other texts] prophesied about these men.' But the NIV is probably correct to suggest the latter by simply omitting the 'also' (Greek *kai*)" (Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 269). Interacting with this issue, Kelly suggests, "Many prefer to construe too (*kai*) with these, immediately before which it stands in the Greek, and argue that the writer's point is that Enoch's prophecy was directed at the present-day errorists as well as at his own contemporaries. The underlying assumption, however, is more modern than ancient; and as a matter of fact Enoch himself is represented (1 En.i.2) as explicitly stating that his vision relates 'not to this generation, but to a remote one in the future'" (Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 276).

18, with the "called or elect" of Jude v.1 and 1 Enoch 1:1-2, 8; 5:7-8.[34] Jude appears once again to be reading 1 Enoch eschatologically, in that he believes the elect and righteous of 1 Enoch are the called and righteous of Jude. The similarities between Jude v.1 and 1 Enoch 1:8 were identified years ago by F. H. Chase who placed the Greek text of Jude alongside of the Greek text of 1 Enoch 1:8.[35]

An example of the similarities can also be seen when the English texts of Jude and 1 Enoch are placed together. In Jude v.1 it says, "to those who are *the called* (κλητοις), beloved in God the Father, and *kept* (τετηρημενοις) for Jesus Christ: May *mercy* (ελεος) and *peace* (ειρηνη) and love be *multiplied*[36] to you." In 1 Enoch 1:8 it says, "And to all the righteous he will grant *peace* (ειρηνην). He will *preserve* (συντηρησει) the *elect* (εκλεκτους), and *kindness* (ελεος) shall be upon them." (Italics and use of Greek text are mine).[37] With such strong similarities it seems probable that Jude was not only dependent on 1 Enoch, but also understood the elect and righteous whom he addresses to be a fulfillment of 1 Enoch.

Thus, it appears that Jude viewed 1 Enoch's eschatological message as pointing to fulfillment in his day. Jude's message is simply that God has declared in 1 Enoch that he will come to judge the wicked and ungodly false teachers in our midst, but the elect will be protected from his judgment and his peace and mercy will be multiplied to them.

A third indication from Jude v.4 that 1 Enoch was written to Jude's generation is his reference to those who "deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ." Given Jude's previous record of identifying themes and characters in 1 Enoch and applying them to his generation, it should not be surprising to discover that 1 Enoch also speaks prophetically of those who have "denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah"[38] in 1 Enoch 48:10.[39] This similarity caused J. N. D. Kelly to note, "There is a remark-

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34. Black, *The Book of Enoch*, 104. According to Black, the designation "the elect" "occurs most frequently in the Book of the Parables (40.5; 41.2; 48.1; 51.5; 56.6; 58.3; 62.7,8,11 etc.), but it is also found in the older Book of Enoch at 1.1 ('the righteous elect'), 8; 5.7; 25: 5; 93.2 ('the elect of the world')."

35. Chase, "Jude, The Epistle Of," 801. In his brief article, Chase provides a list of possible echoes, but does not comment on the significance of such similarities other than to suggest that Jude was influenced by 1 Enoch. See also Mayor, who likewise hears an echo to 1 Enoch 1:8 in Jude v.1-2 (Mayor, *The Epistles of Jude and 2 Peter*, 76).

36. In Jude v.2 there may be an echo of 1 Enoch 5:10, which says, "And *peace* shall increase their lives and the years of their happiness shall be *multiplied* forever in gladness and peace all the days of their life" (Isaac, "1 [Ethiopic Apocalypse of] Enoch," 15).

37. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 13.

38. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 36.

39. For a possible Enochic echo in Jude and Matthew, see 1 Enoch 38:2 which says, "where will the dwelling place of sinners be, and where the resting place of those who *denied the name of the Lord of the Spirits? It would have been better for them not to have been born.*"

able parallel, in wording and sense, in 1 En. xlviii. 10. . .which, in view of his acquaintance with that work, may well have prompted his choice of one here."[40]

However, there are others such as Carroll D. Osburn[41] who believe Jude v.4 is more likely an adaptation of 1 Enoch 67:10 which says, "So the judgment shall come upon them, because they believe in *the debauchery of their bodies and deny the spirit of the Lord"* (italics mine).[42] There is an interesting similarity between the italicized portions of 1 Enoch 67:10 and that of Jude v.4 which says, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons *who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ."*[43]

Does Jude believe that the false teachers and their denial of the Master and Lord Jesus Christ was a fulfillment of 1 Enoch 48:10 or 67:10? Given his belief in the eschatological focus of 1 Enoch 1:2, Jude's clearly eschatological reading of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14-15, and the tremendous similarities between 1 Enoch and Jude 4, such a conclusion seems very likely. In further support of this perspective is the messianic and eschatological tone of the various texts in the Parables (or Similitudes) of

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Notice the similarities between this text and Matt. 26:24, where it was said of Judas "woe to that man by whom *the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."* Other possible echoes of Jude v.4 are found in 1 Enoch 41:2; 46:7; 45:1-2; 67:8-10; and 48:10 which says, "For they have denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah" (translation of 1 Enoch passages is by Isaac, "1 [Ethiopic Apocalypse of] Enoch").

40. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude,* 252. Not everyone today would agree that Jude's acquaintance with 1 Enoch is what prompted his choice of words in v.4. For example, Richard J. Bauckham commented on 1 Enoch 48:10: "Jude has sometimes been thought to have modeled his words on this, but it occurs in the Parables of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37-71), a section of *1 Enoch* which has not been found among the Qumran fragments and which is now commonly dated in the late first century A.D. It seems unlikely that Jude knew the Parables; there is very little other indication in the letter that he did (but v 14, cf. *1 Enoch* 60:8)" (Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary,* 39-40). For a similar, yet more extensive discussion on the dating of the Parables of 1 Enoch, see Black, *The Book of Enoch,* 181-89. Two years after Bauckham's commentary was published, Carroll D. Osburn suggested that Jude v.12-13 was an echo of 1 Enoch 67:5-7 and 80:2-8. If Osburn is correct, then Bauckham's suggestion that Jude did not know the Parable's section of 1 Enoch is questionable. See Carroll D. Osburn, "1 Enoch 80:2-8 (67:5-7) and Jude 12-13," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47, no.2 (April 1985): 296-303.

41. Osburn, "1 Enoch 80:2-8," 300.

42. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 46.

43. The similarities between these two texts is what caused Osburn to suggest that, "The reference to 67:10 in Jude 4 is neither an explicit quotation nor a mere allusion, but an adaptation in which the ancient message is retained while the wording is adjusted in view of Jude's historical concern and theological understanding" (Osburn, "1 Enoch 80:2-8," 300).

1 Enoch, which speak of those who have "denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah." Of the messianic and eschatological outlook of 1 Enoch, E. Isaac has said,

> One of the extensively discussed concepts in 1 Enoch, particularly by students of New Testament theology, is that of the heavenly Messiah (45-57). The Messiah in 1 Enoch, called the Righteous One, and the Son of Man, is depicted as a pre-existent heavenly being who is resplendent and majestic, possesses all dominion, and sits on his throne of glory passing judgment upon all mortal and spiritual beings. This description of the Messiah is placed in the Similitudes in the context of reflections upon the last judgment, the coming destruction of the wicked, and the triumph of the righteous ones. This eschatological concept is the most prominent and recurring theme throughout the whole book. The very introduction (1-5) opens with an announcement of the final, coming punishment, the destruction of the wicked ones and the resurrection of the righteous ones to an endless and sinless eternal life. Likewise, in the dream visions (83-90) the same theme is recalled. In this case, the righteous dead, including converted gentiles, will be resurrected, the Messiah will appear, his kingdom will be founded, and the new Jerusalem established; on the other hand, the sinners, the fallen angels, including the apostate Jews, will be judged. The last major section of 1 Enoch (91-105) is an admonition to righteousness, for he predicts that the wicked shall be condemned to eternal punishment in Sheol, whereas the righteous shall have a blessed resurrection to enjoy the bliss of heaven.[44]

The Messianic tone of 1 Enoch 48:10 is significant in that Jude's reading of 1 Enoch is from the perspective of one who had already seen the Messiah and understood him to be Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jude's reading of 1 Enoch 48:10 is not from the vantage point of one who is looking forward to the Messiah, but rather one who is looking back from an informed perspective and able to see Jesus as the fulfillment of the Messianic texts of 1 Enoch.[45] In reading 1 Enoch in this manner, Jude, like other New Testament writers, was not only reading with an eschatological perspective, but also one that is clearly christological.[46]

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44. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 9.

45. Dunnett, "The Hermeneutics of Jude and 2 Peter," 292. Regarding Jude's Christological reading of 1 Enoch, Dunnett states, "Two observations must suffice. First, whereas in 1 Enoch God is frequently described as 'the Lord of the Spirits,' whom the sinners of the earth deny (38:2; 41:2; 45:2; 46:7; 48:10; 67:8; cf. Titus 1:16), in Jude the ungodly persons 'deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ' (v 4). Does Jude mean to apply both titles of Jesus or to apply 'Master' to God and 'Lord' to Jesus? Two factors appear to favor the former option: (1) The construction of the Greek phrase is a single article (*ton*) with two nouns joined by 'and' (*kai*); (2) the use of 'Master' (*despoten*) in a closely related text (2 Peter 2:1) appears to refer to Jesus—namely, 'the Master who bought them' (cf. Rev 5:9; 1 Pet 1:18)."

46. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 191-92. Concerning the New

JUDE'S CHRISTOLOGICAL READING OF 1 ENOCH

When we turn to Jude's christological reading of the book of 1 Enoch, we find that Jude v.6 and 14-15 require further explanation. First, Jude vv.5-7 presents a christological reading of both 1 Enoch and the Old Testament.[47] Such a reading is based primarily on an interpretation of the italicized portion of v.5 and 6, which reads,

> (5) Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that *the Lord*, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. (6) And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, *He* has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. (7) Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

Of verse 5 and the difficulties involved in interpreting it, Michael Green asks,

> But who did the saving and the destroying? Was it God, the Lord, Jesus (possibly Joshua; the names are the same), or some combination of them? All these variants occur. Commentators generally are attracted to the reading "Jesus" (i.e. Joshua), following Justin, Origen and Jerome. For the typological idea behind this reading, see 1 Corinthians 10:4. But this cannot be right; the one who destroyed the Israelites in verse 5 also banished the angels in verse 6, and this rules out Joshua. Probably *the Lord* was what Jude wrote, and the other readings are scribal glosses to add precision. It is God who acts as judge in each of the three incidents Jude mentions. It is God who will judge the false teachers.[48]

Green's view of the difficult textual variant in verse 5 is that *the Lord* refers to God, and apparently not to Jesus. This perspective is also adopted by Douglas J. Moo, who commenting on the textual variants of verse 5 has noted:

Testament authors' use of the Old Testament, Longenecker states, "Having had their eyes opened by Jesus so that they could understand the Old Testament christologically, they continued both to repeat his expositions and to explicate more fully previously ignored significances in the nation's history and the prophet's message. Their major task, as they saw it, was to demonstrate that 'this' that was manifest in the person and work of Jesus 'is that' which was recorded in the Old Testament." Jude's use of both the Old Testament and the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch can be explained in this same manner.

47. For an excellent treatment of these verses see Jarl Fossum, "Kurios Jesus as The Angel of The Lord in Jude 5-7," *New Testament Studies* 33, no.2 (1987): 226-43; and Caroll D. Osburn, "The Text of Jude 5," *Biblica* 62, no.1 (1981): 107-15.

48. Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 177.

> Others think that "the Lord" is the best reading, but identify this Lord as Christ. But the flow of the passage shows that whoever delivered and destroyed the people (v.5) also kept the disobedient angels in darkness (see "he" in v.6). *It is unlikely that Jude identifies Jesus as the one who did all these things.* Probably, then, we should read "the Lord" and identify him as "Jehovah" God. (italics mine)[49]

Both Green and Moo dismiss the christological reading of Jude 5-7, but do so for reasons lacking serious support.[50] What is puzzling is why Moo thinks Jesus couldn't be the "Lord" mentioned in verse 5, when Κυριος, the Greek word for Lord in verse 5, is the same word used in Jude 4, 14, 17, 21, 25 in reference to Jesus?[51] The only other use of Κυριος in Jude is found in verse 9 where Jude may or may not have intended the Lord in this text to be identified as Jesus.[52] If Jesus is identified as the Lord in the rest of Jude, then there is good reason to understand his reference to the Lord in v.5 as pointing to Jesus.

According to Jude v.6, it was the Lord (Jesus) who punished the sinning angels. Who are these sinning angels, and to what Old Testament text does Jude refer? According to most scholars, the Old Testament is silent on this particular event, other than a possible reference to it in Gen. 6:1-4.[53] While Gen. 6 is certainly a significant text in identifying the angels of Jude 6, Jude's reference concerning the sin and fall of the angels more likely comes from the book of 1 Enoch,[54] especially chapters 6-10,

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49. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 239-40.

50. Those who are in support of a christological reading of Jude 5-7 are Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 49; and Bigg, *The International Critical Commentary*, 328.

51. Perhaps the reason commentators such as Green and Moo do not accept "the Lord" of Jude 5 to be a reference to Jesus is best explained by Kelly, who adhering to the same view as Moo and Green, has said, "As regards Christ, He who punished the murmurers in the desert is declared in the next verse to have imprisoned the fallen angels, and there is no evidence of Christ having been credited with this; 2 Pet.ii. 4 explicitly ascribes the action to God"(Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, 255). In response to this, does there need to be Old Testament evidence of Christ judging the Israelites and the angels in order for Jude's christological reading to be true? If this is the case, then Paul's christological reading of Israel's wilderness experience in 1 Cor. 10:4,9 would somehow be invalidated. In the first verse, Paul clearly sees Christ in the Old Testament narrative since there is no textual variant to suggest anything else. This is not true in 1 Cor. 10:9 where the text reads either "nor let us try the Lord," or "nor let us try Christ."

52. Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 49.

53. Thomas Wolthuis, "Jude and Jewish Traditions," *Calvin Theological Journal* 22 (April 1987): 24-27.

54. For an excellent treatment of Jude 6 and its relation to the book of 1 Enoch and other Jewish literature, see Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 50-53; and Wolthuis, "Jude and Jewish Traditions," 24-27.

although numerous other parallels can be found throughout 1 Enoch.[55] Several parallels between Jude and 1 Enoch are listed below in the italicized portions of passages from 1 Enoch:

> And secondly the Lord said to Raphael, "*Bind* Azaz'el hand and foot (and) throw him into *the darkness*!" And he made a hold in the desert which was in Duda'el and cast him there; he threw on top of him rugged and sharp rocks. And he covered his face in order that he may not see light; and in order that he may be sent into the fire on *the great day of judgment* (1 Enoch 10:4-6).[56]

> And when they and all their children have battled with each other, and when they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, *bind* them for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground until *the day of their judgment* and of their consummation, until the eternal judgment is concluded. On those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire—and in torment—in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever. And at that time when they will burn and die, those who collaborated with them will be *bound* together with them from henceforth unto the end of (all) generations (1 Enoch 10:12-14).[57]

> At that moment the Watchers were calling me. And they said to me, "Enoch, scribe of righteousness, go and make known to the Watchers of heaven who have *abandoned the high heaven*, the holy eternal place, and have defiled themselves with women" (1 Enoch 12:4).[58]

In comparison to these texts in 1 Enoch, Jude 6 reads, "And angels who *did not keep their own domain*, but *abandoned their proper abode*, He has kept in eternal *bonds* under *darkness* for *the judgment of the great day*." The similarities between Jude and 1 Enoch are too great to be mere coincidence. Jude is clearly dependent upon 1 Enoch and is reading the story of the Watchers christologically.

Jude's second christological reading of 1 Enoch is found in Jude vv.14-15.[59] What makes Jude's reading of 1 Enoch christological is that

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55. Of the parallels or similarities, Charles says, "The similarities between Jude 6 and 1 Enoch are not merely superficial. Jude depicts the angels' sin as one of deserting their αρκῶη, i.e., their 'rule', 'domain' or 'position'. His language, significantly, is reminiscent of 1 Enoch 12.4: '. . . the Watchers of heaven . . . have abandoned the high heaven. . . .' Consider further verbal parallels to Jude 6: (1) 'the great day of judgment' (1 Enoch 10.6; 84.4; 94.9; 98.10; 99.15; 104.5), (2) 'binding' and 'darkness' (10.4), (3) 'abandoning heaven' (12.4; 15.3), (4) 'bind them. . .until the day' (10.12), and (5) 'chains' and 'imprisonment' (54.4)" (Charles, "Jude's Use of Pseudepigraphical Source Material," 136-37).

56. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 17.

57. Ibid., 18.

58. Ibid., 19.

59. For an excellent article focusing on Jude's christological reading of 1 Enoch 1:9 see Caroll D. Osburn, "The Christological Use of 1 Enoch 1:9 in Jude 14, 15," *New Testament Studies* 23, no.3 (April 1977): 334-41.

1 Enoch 1:9 ascribes the coming judgment to God,[60] but Jude ascribes it to the Lord, or Jesus.[61] This is evident when the two texts are read side by side:

> Behold, he will arrive with ten million of the holy ones in order to execute judgment upon all. He will destroy the wicked ones and censure all flesh on account of everything that they have done, that which the sinners and the wicked ones committed against him (1 Enoch 1:9).[62]

> Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him (Jude v.6).

There are significant variations between the Enochic text quoted by Jude and the translation given by Isaac in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.[63] Moo has noted that Isaac's translation "is based on the Ethiopic language version of 1 Enoch. The book is also extant in Greek, and fragments of it have been discovered in Aramaic and Latin. Scholars debate about which of the versions Jude might be quoting from; most think that, whatever version he knew, he was doing his own paraphrase in Greek."[64]

Regardless of the variations between the texts of 1 Enoch, Jude appears to have read 1 Enoch with a christological hermeneutic. Thus, he was simply employing the same christological reading used by the other New Testament authors; the only difference is that Jude not only applies a christological reading to the Old Testament, but also to 1 Enoch.

While most traditions today recognize that 1 Enoch is not inspired,[65] the Epistle of Jude provides strong reasons for believing that Jude, the re-

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60. Although 1 Enoch 1:9 does not specifically say that God will come in judgment, the context of chapter one is clearly speaking of God.

61. Of this, Bauckham says, "In 1 Enoch the subject of the sentence is God, named in 1:4. Jude's *kurioj*, which has not support from the other versions, has no doubt been supplied by him, probably as a christological interpretation, in order to apply the verse to the Parousia of Jesus Christ. . .but perhaps also by analogy with other theophany texts (Isa 40:10; 66:15; Zech 14:5; cf. *1 Enoch* 91:7) which were also applied to the Parousia in primitive Christianity" (Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 94).

62. E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 13-14.

63. For a detailed treatment of the differences between Jude and the Greek text of 1 Enoch, see Bauckham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 94-96; and James Hamilton Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and The New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 72-74.

64. Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 269-70 n4.

65. Although most traditions today do not recognize 1 Enoch as "inspired," Isaac says that "1 Enoch played a significant role in the early Church; it was used by the authors of the epistle of Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and a number of apologetic works. Many

cipients of his letter, and the false teachers being denounced through his writing, had all embraced 1 Enoch as an inspired text. Jude's belief in the inspiration and authority of 1 Enoch influenced the way in which he read 1 Enoch, much like our reading of scripture today is influenced by the particular beliefs about inspiration and canon that are adopted in our various traditions. In reading the eschatological text of 1 Enoch, Jude interpreted it to be speaking to his generation and was able to see Christ within its pages.

Implications for the Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation

The focus of this paper has been to provide an examination of Jude's use of the book of 1 Enoch, a book known today as a pseudepigraphal writing. Although the scope of this paper limits an exhaustive treatment of the Enochic material contained in the Book of Moses 6-7 and the Joseph Smith Translation (Gen. 5:22-7:76), a few comments should be made in comparing how both Jude and Joseph Smith have used the material.

Jude's use of 1 Enoch	Joseph Smith's use of 1 Enoch
1. Jude *acknowledges* the use of 1 Enoch. This is evident from the introductory formula used in introducing the direct quotation of Enoch in Jude v.14.	1. Joseph Smith's Book of Moses *does not acknowledge* a dependence upon Enochic literature, but the claim is made that it parallels portions of 1 Enoch.[66]
2. Jude wrote his epistle in approximately 70 C.E.[67]	2. Joseph Smith's Book of Moses was written in 1830 C.E, with some claiming that it was written prior to the availability of 1 Enoch.[68]
3. Jude's view of 1 Enoch as inspired was an error.[69]	3. Joseph Smith did not view 1 Enoch as inspired since he did not have access to 1 Enoch.[70]

Church Fathers, including Justin Martyr, Ireneus, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, either knew 1 Enoch or were inspired by it. Among those who were familiar with 1 Enoch, Tertullian had an exceptionally high regard for it. But, beginning in the fourth century, the book came to be regarded with disfavor and received negative reviews from Augustine, Hilary, and Jerome. Thereafter, with the exception of a few extracts made by Georgius Syncellus, a learned monk of the eighth century, and the Greek fragments found in a Christian grave in Egypt (c. A.D. 800), 1 Enoch ceased to be appreciated except in Ethiopia" (Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," 8). While most traditions do not accept 1 Enoch as inspired, it appears from this quote that the Ethiopic Church still views 1 Enoch to be authoritative and perhaps even inspired.

66. See Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1986), 112-13.

67. Scholarly opinion on the dating of Jude varies, but the point here is that, unlike

From this chart, several questions arise regarding the use of Enochic literature in the Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation. First, did Joseph Smith really have no access to 1 Enoch, or is it easier to believe that like Jude, he accessed and used Enochic literature in the formation of the Book of Moses? Second, are the parallels between 1 Enoch and the Enochic material found in the Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation strong enough to prove that Joseph Smith was inspired in writing the Book of Moses? Or, did Joseph Smith know 1 Enoch and simply used it in the formation of the Book of Moses? While answers to such questions are outside the scope of this particular paper, it is this author's hope that the reader will continue to seek answers to such important questions.

Joseph Smith, Jude acknowledges that he used the Book of 1 Enoch long after 1 Enoch was in circulation.

68. The title page to the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price refers to it as, "An extract from the translation of the Bible as revealed to Joseph Smith the Prophet, June 1830-February 1831." Hugh Nibley has argued that Joseph Smith, writing in 1830, could not have known the book of 1 Enoch because it was not available until 1873 (Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 3-5). According to Nibley, this provides compelling evidence that Joseph Smith was inspired by God in writing the Book of Moses; for how else can we explain all the parallels between the Book of Moses and 1 Enoch? (Ibid., 94)

69. The thesis of this paper is that Jude's belief in the inspiration and authority of the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch was influential in causing him to read 1 Enoch with an eschatological and Christological hermeneutic. The question this paper does not directly address is whether Jude's belief that 1 Enoch was inspired was accurate. Could an author of a New Testament book be wrong in how he viewed the literature available to him in his day? Could it be that God divinely inspired Jude to write what he did, in full dependence on 1 Enoch, knowing that what he was writing was not in conflict with what he had already revealed in the Old Testament?

70. If Hugh Nibley is correct that Joseph Smith could not have known the book of 1 Enoch, it would be difficult to argue that Joseph Smith viewed 1 Enoch as inspired because he did not know of its existence. If Joseph Smith did use 1 Enoch in the formation of the Book of Moses, the question of Joseph Smith's view of 1 Enoch becomes a central issue, just as it is with the book of Jude.

Body Blue: Excerpts from a Novoir

Phyllis Barber

TO WRITE IS TO SIPHON THE CLOUDS, the stars, the wind and rain through the pen. It's like holding a root into the earth of the soul. It's like a channel from the sun to the paper. Hold the pen with love and all these things.

PROLOGUE

When the blues come knockin', you better open up your door.
—Little Milton

My father's father's father, a good Mormon man, hanged himself in the garage.

My father's mother, a good Mormon woman, spent a year in the Nevada State Mental Hospital after giving birth to six children and being bounced around the West by a husband who couldn't keep a job. They sampled many homes and gardens: Brigham City, Logan, Salt Lake City, and Price in Utah; San Diego in California; Ely, Ruth, Boulder City in Nevada; Malad and who knows where else in Idaho. The fact that she was a gypsy by situation rather than nature and the fact that her husband had an on-again, off-again obsession with alcohol must have gotten to her after a while. The family story goes that after one year in the hospital in Sparks, Nevada, the powers-that-be telephoned her sister, Helen. "Please," they said, "Come and take Hortense home. Nothing's wrong with her, except she's dying of a broken heart." One could say that Hortense's life failed her or that she failed her life. One could say she suffered from melancholia, if one is inclined to put life into neatly labeled boxes.

My father decided to finish his life on a different planet without moving there. At age sixty-five, he had a nervous breakdown, had to be subdued and was taken to the hospital for a week. "But he wasn't talking

about Martians or anything like that," a cousin said. "He was just telling everybody things he hadn't been able to say for years." For twenty years after that, my father listened to his own tune, strictly his own. If anyone scolded or told him to mind his manners, he began singing loudly, "Blow the Man Down," or some such dismissive tune. He was free at last, some of us thought. Free from the rules, the shoulds, the oughts. One could say he suffered from senile dementia, if one is inclined to have comforting, compartmental answers.

So where do these blues come from? This depression? This melancholy? From the Scandinavian ancestors who didn't get enough light in winter because of the Midnight Sun and overcast skies? From the Welsh forefathers who were known to have a few loose branches in their family tree? From the downtrodden? From generic human angst?

To talk about depression, melancholia, the blues, any of those things, it seems that the people who need to categorize don't think in terms of the ocean, of the witnessing of the waves that pull away from the shore, then rush towards it and curl and roll and crash and then pull together again. Endless motion. Endless breaking. Endless knitting back together. The ocean. The waves. Endless cycling. The turn of a wheel.

CHAPTER ONE

Woke up this mornin'.
Had a story on my mind.
Woke up this morning',
A sad story on my mind.
Trouble is. . .
Trouble is. . .

Sometimes in a life, it's like you fall down an invisible shaft, one you didn't see coming. You sail to the bottom. Land on your back. When you come to, the day is blacker than night, the sun has a new name, your hands and face are strangers. Bilge water rises around you. You can't last. The idea of stillness sounds good, even while your body is picking you up, walking you into the kitchen, to daylight, to change. Your padded slippers scuff the tile floor. Birds sing outside. But who cares on a blue Monday when the blues knocks at your door, pushes past the lock and says, What's up? as it sits on a big overstuffed sofa on its ample backside.

Trouble is, can a girl like you sing the blues? A girl who's supposed to be sunny, cheerful and greet the day with a song? A girl who's expected to be dignified and classy? A girl with promise, talent, looks, brains, and blessings on her head? Yet a girl whose feelings speak out all over her face and who cries in public. A girl with dark moods that feel

like tunnels. A girl who's much more ragged than refined. Believe me, I know blues. Honey, I get the blues, yes I do.

THE LIFE.

I speak of my life in the present tense. It is always with me. Always reminding me that it's still with me. Encased in the labyrinth of memory.

I'm five years old. My father tells me he has a bicycle for me. It's a beat-up bicycle, but one that works. He's painted it a dull black to give it a newness; its fenders are dented; it has large balloon tires; it's a girl's bike and when I get ready to ride, I stand between the pedals, not quite able to reach the seat.

My father holds me as I stand on the pedals. I tell him to let go. I can do this. I know I can do it. Freeze frame: the bulky black bicycle, my father holding the handlebars, me ready to go, that moment like a commemorative stamp in the story of my life. He steadies me on the first few rounds of pedaling, and then, I take off, just like that. Thin, shy me, pumping away down Fifth Street in Boulder City, Nevada, off into the sunshine, into the possibility of turning those wheels forever until I reach infinity. Always fascinated with infinity, even doodling infinity symbols on my papers at school.

When my feet turn those wheels on my new/old black and dented bicycle, I sense I can ride down the street into something much more exciting than ordinary life. The pedals spin around and around until they become something more than pedals with a chain. My bike is Pegasus headed for the summit of Olympus, headed for divinity, and I'm not human anymore.

But why does my life seem so small to me, even at the age of five? What makes me want so much more? Who is this greedy self that dreams of wheels turning and rolling into larger territory, wheels that make promises as they turn? Who is this person who wants to be bigger than everything around her, who wants to be everywhere she isn't?

Forty-eight years later, on the twenty-ninth day of April, my friend C. J. and I close up her apartment in Fort Collins and head out of town on Highway 14. Me on top of a black cherry Cannondale road bike with Blackburn racks, a Northface two-person tent tucked away in Jandd panniers, Pearl Izumi bike pants, Shimano clip-in shoes, a Giro bike helmet, Patagonia vest and a long-sleeved shirt. She on top of a spring green bicycle custom-designed by Albert Eisentrout, an eccentric fellow in Colorado Springs. It is a love bike with heart-shaped tubing, a gift from her soon to be ex-husband who's a bike enthusiast and knows about state-of-the-art equipment. We are gear queens ready to burn up the road. It's a long, straight road into the farmlands of eastern Colorado. Pretty blank, pretty uneventful with acres and acres of newly-planted crops barely

showing tips of green. But we're on our way across America, the United States of America. I need clarity in all the smoke and indecision of my life. I need to find a way back to my aliveness. So does C. J.

In this particular year, I'm less enchanted with infinity, not having been able to make the finite work very well. The perimeters of my world have turned inhospitable. Marriage has failed; separation isn't better. Thirty-two years of a Mormon temple marriage and a wannabe Happy Family/Smiley Face marriage up in smoke. Divorce is imminent. My husband David and I hadn't made it to "united we stand."[1] We weren't moving in the same direction. Our promises of faithfulness for time and all eternity were a bust. I was also a bust at motherhood because my sons were independent-minded, irreverent, raucous, and uncontrollable, and my first son, Geoffrey, had disappeared on me when I wasn't watching. Evaporated. Died much too young before we had a chance to get fully acquainted.

I'm bone-tired of the fiction of myself, of the mask of the kind, elegant, noteworthy, nice woman I've tried so hard to be. Everything feels out of kilter, strange, topsy turvy. I feel like a long, extended row of zeroes. Unrecognizable. Uncomputable.

My friend C. J., all around outdoors woman and also my student in the Vermont College MFA in Writing Program, needs to run from the Rockies as much as I do. We're both getting divorces. We're both at loose ends. We both need to do something to jolt us out of our sense of being abandoned by love and its promises. We're the perfect match to do something indescribably insane, like me agreeing to C. J.'s cockamamie plan to take a 2,300 mile trans-continental bike ride from the Front Range of the Continental Divide to Montpelier, Vermont, for the summer residency. We'll ride fifty five miles a day with no time scheduled for days off. We'll carry forty pounds of gear and have no support vehicles. We'll camp out every night. And all of this during tornado season in the Midwest.

It doesn't matter that I haven't ridden my bike seriously for years, if ever, that I've only trained for two months on flat terrain, that I hate hills. It doesn't matter that C.J. is sixteen years younger, much more fit, a much more likely candidate to complete such a trip. It only matters that both of us want to get out of Dodge and fast. Escape our lives. Escape everything.

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1. David and Phyllis Barber, married for 33 years and divorced for six, are devoted friends. This is not a "kiss and tell" or "here comes the judge" account, but rather a recognition that there are many whose idealism gets caught beneath the intersecting wheels of Mormonism and of contemporary life. It is also a willingness to share this struggle to pull free again with others who may have been in a similar place.

So, two days before May Day, the time of flowers blooming after April showers, we straddle our bicycles, both feet on the ground and grin at each other.

"America, here we come," C. J. shouts, a strand of hair already loose from underneath her helmet and blowing across her face. "Yes, yes and yes."

FROM INSIDE MY HEAD.

It's like this: when a big event comes along, the U.S. Postal Service commemorates the moment, the notable place, the triumph, the kiss, the breakthrough. These memories are set by engravers making incisions in metal, but that's beside the point.

There's a commemorative stamp lying on your desk right now, and you love commemorative stamps. This one is the Centennial Olympic stamp—1896 to 1996—the almost naked man preparing to hurl the discus. His arm is pulled back. He's poised for action. He's the essence of the Olympic Games. The embodiment of Hero. But he's a concept, not a man.

You don't have a story here, do you? Only a hero in his perfection. What would you find out if you saw other pictures of this man, such as him stepping out of the bath? Is he as well hung as the rest of his body promises? Is he really a winner? Is he a good man when he's not hurling the discus? Or is he boorish and cruel to women and children? What face does he wear when he's not in front of a crowd?

Too bad there's not a series of stamps, like moving picture stamps, where you could watch him preparing for the big event, making his way to the stadium through rude crowds, swinging his arm from back to front and releasing the round disc to spin through the air. It could show the perspiration on his neck before the discus sailed across the stadium, flecked with pieces of sunlight as it spun, tilting slightly, wobbling, landing where it could be measured. And then you could see the crowd cheering and the wreath of laurels being placed on his head. Or not.

But postage stamps wouldn't be postage stamps if they were like that. They're one picture that implies history. Period.

You're attached to stamps and monuments. More than that, you insist on commemorating the harsh moments, the unforgivable things said or done—those things hovering in the shadows where low-burning lanterns give off greasy light and blacken the walls with smoke. You have embraced, carried, and nursed those bruised memories until they have almost destroyed the rest of you. But why is it necessary to commemorate the ugliest parts of yourself and tuck them deep inside where they fossilize like trilobites on a dry lake bed? Why should you, a living person, become a statue of stone, an unchanging, granite-carved monu-

ment of memory that may have nothing to do with truth? What about the blanks, the continuum, the margins, the rest of the story? Isn't there forgiveness? Or only the harsh remembrance of things you didn't mean to do? Freeze frames. Cold. Icy. Unforgiving.

THE LIFE.

Death is as big as life, maybe bigger, but nobody wants it coming down their street. As if talking could keep it out of town. . . .Most people shift their eyes when the subject slips out. It's unsocial. It's gauche. Uncomfortable.

Geoffrey died. My first child. Our young son. Sometimes I want to talk about the Geoffrey I loved with all my heart and feared with all my fear and about what happened to him, but it makes people uncomfortable. Their alarms go off when The Nice Talk Rules are broken. They squirm and say they have someone they must talk to, so excuse them, they're oh, so sorry to have to leave. It's best to stay with innocent, uncomplicated sorrow. Let people cry for the dead. Let nothing ruffle pure grief.

It's May of 1970, and David and I are standing in a hushed room of a chapel with sage green carpet. Friends and relatives are loosely assorted around an open casket, while we shake hands with a flow of blurred people.

"I know just how you feel," a woman with a tightly curved nose says to me. "I lost a son, too." She pats my hand and curls her bony hands around my cold fingers. "God needs your child now," she says. "It's his time to go." Mrs. Hansen seems sure of her theology, but I want her to go away. The wax of my friendly-face smile feels tight. "Nice of you to drop by," I say.

The line winds like the wall of China as people dressed in silk and suits wait to express regret in the dim light fanning from the wall sconces. Curious people who've taken time from their daily routine to pause and honor the dead, so many who haven't known, who say they had no idea.

We hadn't advertised Geoffrey's hemophilia when we moved to Salt Lake City. Everyone seemed to back away at the mention of the word. The royal disease. The rare blood disease. We'd learned to be selective about whom we told. We knew that superstitious fear bred unconscious cruelty.

Even I was afraid of what had come through me—something so out of the ordinary that no one in the family had ever had before. And on this day in that seafoam colored room, I am a *publick* example, standing before the mourners in moss green, a woman needing comfort, but also a woman who's played a part in passing on a thing called hemophilia. I am a link in something I didn't know I was linked to. Me—the carrier.

Someone dropped a drop of madjack potion into the amniotic fluid. Or maybe I did something wrong along the way—something major I hadn't owned up to.

"God will watch over your child now." Mrs. Hansen is speaking to David, whose gray crescent smudges beneath his eyes seem darker because of his navy blue suit and tie. "It's better this way. God's plan is bigger than we can know."

Am I really standing in a reception line at my son's funeral—my black hair limp and disinterested in holding a curl, my face unlit by enthusiasm? The day seems diffuse, not of one piece, separated into particles that form clouds to hide the sun and the way out of this confusion.

"Thank you, Mrs. Hansen. Thank you for coming today." David seems simpler in his acceptance of her sympathy. He weeps openly as she squeezes his hand. I'm only feeling cold and hostile hearing her platitudes and feeling her fingers curl around mine. He's a simpler man than I'm a simple woman. He's still holding her hand.

In the blur of the next hand grasping mine, the next mouth offering condolences, I overhear a gathering of relatives talking to each other—the in-laws to the out-laws, depending where one fits into the hybrid family tree David and I had joined together by marriage—a group of people bunched tightly and unaware of anyone else around them.

"This didn't come from our side of the family," someone says from the cluster of all-my-relations. Battle lines are being drawn. "We've never had anything like this ever. Hemophilia is not in our bloodline."

"Well, it didn't come from our family either," another definitive voice says as the soft light of the hushed room fails to soften the words. "Never heard of it before now, except in books."

David and Phyllis, X and Y, my husband and I. Two young parents standing in a room full of people shaking their heads and the responsibility from themselves. Looking uncomfortably at the casket. We have failed genetic engineering. Mis-manufactured the blood. Marred the family myth of perfection. But why should blood misbehave for any family? Why has the blood turned on us? Against the child lying in a nest of blue satin pleats with powdered, rouged cheeks and a faint touch of lipstick on his lips?

Everything is turning, it seems. Turning strange. My autonomic body has secrets it's kept from me, things like physical changes in chromosome relations, biochemical changes in the codons that make up the genes. Mutations. Changes in the lineal order of the ordered. Accidents. Surprises. And, my emotional body is more complex then I'd imagined—pride and wounded pride, shame, anger, motherly love for the flesh issuing forth from my body and frustration at being asked to carry this burden. All this behind my friendly face.

FROM INSIDE MY HEAD.

Is this what two people get when they made love, when they had sex, when they obeyed nature's imperative: let's get together, yeah, yeah, yeah? Hot to trot and what have you got? A little boy whose blood won't clot. Now we stand like two Jobs in the middle of the desert. Why me, God? Why us?

"Be grateful you have other children," Mrs. Hansen is saying. "Life does go on, so be grateful for everything it gives you, even the difficult things. Only you can lay your suffering at the feet of God."

Mrs. Hansen's words make me more tired than I am. Is she a book on the subject or something? Does she understand subtlety and complexity, the condition that every case in court has different facts? I want my own grief. And why should she be so sure of herself? Why is David still holding her hand like she's his mother and why don't his tears stop rolling down his face?

I want to capture my life in words and pin it all down somehow. I want to capture the essence of who I've been, who I've wanted to be, who I seem to be after all the trying to be other than who I am. I have a story to tell. I confess.

The truth is, no one can capture an entire life. For everything selected from a life, a thousand other things are left out. For everything told, there's the question of interpretation. Maybe there's no such thing as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. When we shape the past in the present, the past becomes something new. When we pin a butterfly to the corkboard, we no longer have the flittiness, airiness, the magnificence of what a butterfly is.

I'm a musician who believes music speaks more clearly than all other mediums. Sometimes, my speaking needs to be singing. Sometimes I need to hear the beauty of a melody line or the wail of an honestly-felt song.

CHAPTER TWO

I thought of that while riding my bike.
— Albert Einstein on the Theory of Relativity

TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE JOURNEY.

"Is this some kind of mid-life or post-divorce crisis?" my mother asked in her ancient, wavering voice over the telephone. She had a hiatal hernia somewhere in her voice box. I could picture her sitting in her Lazy-Boy chair, her old-age shoulders sloping too much and her head too high off her neck, but I could still envision her signature elegance. "That's pretty ambitious, I'd say."

I could imagine her expression, the one that mothers reserve for their hopeless offspring who are about to set off on a wildhair adventure. "You're strong, but not that strong," she said. "You're fifty-three years old. And aren't you supposed to train on a bicycle for months and months to be in shape for this kind of thing?" She sipped something, probably water or juice between words. "Why do you have to do this?"

"Mom, skip the drugstore psychology."

"You don't have to be snippy. Remember what your dad said about pride."

"Of course: the story about Prince Bellerophon riding to Mt. Olympus on Pegasus. He thought he'd become Zeus. *Hubris a te nemesis.* I've heard it all before, Mother, and you're barking up the wrong tree. Understand? This isn't about my pride."

"But everybody can see you're hurting. What's so bad about that? Just accept the fact of hurting for a while and then come back and live with the rest of the human race. That's how it works."

"I need to do something I've never done before, okay? It's crazy. It doesn't make sense, but I'm going to do it. Period."

"You always were impulsive."

"That information is useless, Mother. Doesn't do anyone any good."

"Are you taking a cell phone?"

"No."

"What about anything for self-defense?"

"I took one self-defense class; that should be sufficient."

"I heard about a man on a long bicycle trip who got kidney stones from being on his bike so much."

"Mother!"

"You always were the strongheaded one, weren't you?"

"Nothing matters. Can you understand that nothing matters to me right now. I hate this gray place where nothing matters."

"But there are better options than riding a puny little bicycle across the country. What about your joints? You're not a spring chicken, you know. You could seriously damage your body. Did you ever think to compute just how many spins of the pedals it will take to get you from here to Vermont? Think about it. And what about your boys?"

"They don't need me anymore. You know that."

"So they might say. Why don't you make an appointment with a therapist?"

"I just need to do something wild and reckless. I want to take care of things myself. Can you understand?"

My mother took a huge sigh from the eons of her experience. "Where's your sense of humor? You've gone dry as a bone. Can't you laugh at yourself anymore?"

"You're right, always right, Mother, but I don't feel like laughing, period, that's the way it is."

"Just laugh, Phyllis. Start now."

"Yeah, yeah, like Daddy used to say: 'A merry heart doeth good like unto medicine.' I've had it with the scriptures, Norman Vincent Peales, and drugstore analysts." I started shuffling papers on my desk. I didn't want to talk any more. "Anything else before I'm off? Any other words of encouragement?"

"No, Miss Temperamental. Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Trust me, Mom. I'll call you from somewhere in the Midwest."

"You and Dorothy and her red sequined shoes. The people who care about you are more real than those shoes, believe me."

"Me and Dorothy. Blown away from home. Gotta get to Kansas, Mother."

"You don't need to run away, Phyllis, but if that's what you want to do, then good luck. God will help if you'll humble yourself, but I know you don't like me to talk about God or the church."

"Mother."

FROM INSIDE MY HEAD.

Singin' the blues is all about letting it all hang out. Not pretending. You could pretend you're not singing about what happened to you, just talkin' about somebody out there somewhere, but you know and I know, you gotta know it to sing it.

You used to be happy and you used to love to dance, sing, and whirl around. But somewhere along the way, you got all sad and choked up, maybe about the time you concluded the final straw had been laid across your back. Your pores oozed the blues. Your mind clogged up like wet spaghetti. You felt like singin' the blues more than anything else. And you knew you had to do something, even if it was get on your bicycle, girl. Roll those wheels. Flush the sad out of your cells and bring them back to life.

THE LIFE.

Maybe it's a dream and maybe it isn't.

My husband licks the small of my back while I sleep, caressing my hips while I try to escape the waking world. His tongue wet and sloppy on my skin, I suddenly pull myself to the edge of the bed. This is my husband, and I'm crawling away from him, inching away, a bit at a time.

Love. What is love? And sex, what is that? It means too many things, I think. It's a place for abandon and recklessness and giving up your mind, and yet all I can think about when he touches me is that I don't want to give in to that touch. I don't want him arousing me anymore. I've given over one too many times. I roll out of the covers and run to the

bathroom to gasp for air. I feel six years old. The tightness in my chest won't open up.

He follows me. He stands behind me and cups his hand around my breast. "You want me. Don't try to run away." My autonomic responses are waking, my genetic impulse to procreate is in action, and I find myself trembling at the touch of his fingers on my nipple.

"It's a lie between you and me," I force myself to say, resting the palms of my hands on the sink tile. "Things dried up a long time ago. You want other women, so go take them. Go have what you want, but don't drag me along just so you can have everything you started with. I don't want you. I don't want your body. Leave me alone."

He presses his maleness against my back side, and I feel goose flesh on my arms. "Just because I'm attracted to other women doesn't mean I don't love you."

Why can't I be calm? Why can't I be cool? Why can't I tell him to go away and leave me alone? I feel excitement rising in my body, that sap, that juice, whatever it is that is the source of all fluids.

"Go find someone else. Things are too messy between us. Too many botched attempts. We don't have a big enough heavy-duty pink eraser, you know. "

He bites into my neck and plants three tiny kisses on the lobe of my ear. "I want you," he says. "I've always wanted you."

"That's not enough anymore," I say, reaching for my bathrobe on the hook of the bathroom door. "Like I said, things are too messy. We've blown it too many times. I just want a clean slate."

I break free of his hold and direct my arms through the purple sleeves of my robe. Tie the sash in front. Hoist myself up to the bathroom counter. Let my legs hang over the edge. Swing my legs and hum a faintly familiar tune.

"There's not a clean slate anywhere in this world, except for a brand new baby. Fact is, people make mistakes. But smart ones forgive themselves and move on."

"All I can feel right now is that the mistakes are always there. White correcting fluid still lumpy. Erase marks."

"But isn't there such a thing as forgiveness?" He examines the shadow of his beard in the morning light. "For a woman who talks about faith, you don't have much."

He looks small in his nakedness. His family jewels are at rest, unengorged, hanging quietly. He is a man. No more. No less. A simple man with a penis, pelvis, a hairy chest, arms, legs, and a head and whatever else.

"Actually, the way I figure it," I say from my perch on the counter, "if you hang onto the bad things that happen, you'll have something to talk about. Something dramatic. People love a shocking story. A whispered,

closely-told shocker. They try to hide their fascination with your bad luck or judgment while secretly congratulating themselves on their lot in life being better than yours. Or they feel hip and privileged being around someone who's been there, done that, and knows all about bad luck. Don't you think?"

"You'll never be happy. You don't want to be happy. You're too attached to the sad, cynical story of it all." He pulls a T-shirt out of a bathroom drawer and climbs into it. Then he pulls out his running shorts. "I couldn't make you happy if I tried, and believe me, I've tried. When are you going to lighten up?"

"Iron Maiden. Adagio Alice. *Pavanes* for dead princesses. That's my style." I smile against my will and force a laugh. And then the forced laugh turns into a real one. He rolls his eyes back, slips his sweatband onto his forehead, and kisses my cheek quickly. The bathroom brightens.

Too much stuff gone down, baby,
Too much stuff.
Too much acid in my heart,
Too much.
Too many lovers, too many lies,
No more desire, between my thighs.
Too much stuff gone down, baby,
Too much stuff.
Too much broken glass,
Too much.
Don't touch my body, don't touch my breath,
My face is empty. No kisses left.

Cars are all right on occasion, but they are not moments of grace as bicycles are.

—Colman McCarthy

THE JOURNEY.

C. J. and I started our bicycle journey on the morning of April 29, 1996. We left Ft. Collins, Colorado, heading east to Montpelier, Vermont, where we planned to arrive in seven weeks to attend the summer residency at Vermont College. We'd outfitted ourselves for wind, rain, cold, heat, emergencies, and the night. All of this, weighing about eighty pounds, was stuffed and rolled into a gazillion plastic bags and fitted into front and back panniers on both of our bikes. The weather looked promising enough on the day we began, pedaling out of town on Vine Street to Highway 14 into farm and ranch country and America here we come.

As we passed over the interstate, jazzed to be on our trip at last, we knew we were the lucky ones. People passing in their hurried, worried cars couldn't feel Spring. They couldn't smell it. They couldn't feel the sun and the way it touched our shoulders. They were locked inside metal and glass, fenced off, corralled like cattle and speeding down a chute into the feed lots of the big cities: Ft. Collins. Boulder. Denver.

C. J., an optimistic, brimming-with-energy, elf-like blonde with a turned up nose and an irreverent mouth, was set to pedal into herself or out of herself, whichever came first. She came across as confident, self-assured, and even cocky, but was a combination of bold, brassy, and exceptionally fragile. When people asked how tall she was, she'd tell them, "Five foot two. And people didn't think they piled crap that high." She was more like a young girl than a woman, as if something had arrested her in her youth and held her hostage. Her voice hadn't matured with the rest of her, and sometimes she sounded like a promoter for the "Hey Kids, There's a Magic Ring in Your Cereal" Show. She often got carded in bars.

She didn't like to talk about her feelings, except for short blasts out of the blue. "I'm a friggin' train wreck," she said one day when we'd been buying our tent, then let the words sail away with no further comment. I knew she was reeling from her own separation, from the hurt of her husband losing interest and moving across space away from her into new territory and maybe even another woman. I didn't know much more, except that the "train wreck" analogy resonated with me.

I'd been separated from David for two and a half years, waiting for tax implications to settle before making the final step to divorce. After being Ms. Lonely Heart Supreme, I'd gotten involved with someone I thought was a primal, real man: someone who seemed straight arrow and uncomplicated; someone who was like the hunter stepping into the light from the leaves of the woods; someone who was basically uneducated—the perfect antidote to my cerebral husband of 32 years and his complicated psychological explanations for his behavior. Problem was, I found out too late that this very appealing, big-grinning, primal man was addicted to crack cocaine and pot and tobacco and alcohol, you name it. His main goal in life was to make enough money to support his daughter, who lived with his ex-wife, and to drive a Pontiac Trans Am. Red.

Maybe because I needed someone to fill the void or maybe because I'd been well-schooled in the Christian way, that all people are equal in God's eyes, I'd taken him in the summer before. He'd needed help with his eight-year daughter who was visiting him for a summer. After a night of smoking crack in the living room of his apartment while his daughter cowered in a corner of his bedroom, he couldn't bear hurting her any longer. He came to my house the next night, broke down, cried, and

asked for help. Not clear about my motives, I invited him and his daughter to move in. After all, he was a lost soul, and at his best, a decent human being.

Who knows why for sure, but I became obsessed with helping the man I'll call Spinner, even though he repeatedly disappeared into thin air with my VCR and acoustic guitar which he pawned for crack money. This became like a game of "I'm sorry. I couldn't help myself. I'll pay you back." On again, off again, kicking him out, taking him back, I thought I could be the one to help him find his way, to accept responsibility and his own individual strength. There's a slight chance I had an Atlantic-sized heart, but more likely I was a marginalized, lonely woman who needed someone to look after and be intimate with. After all, I'd been with three sons and a husband for a long, long time.

As C. J. and I headed toward Briggsdale, the destination for the day, with nothing else to do but turn the pedals and occasionally shout some smart remark to each other, I kept wondering about the Phyllis I'd once been. The one who was alive, spiritual, curious, and enthusiastic about life. The one who'd once been able to accomplish the moving of mountains, who'd raised three sons, who'd chaired endless committees, who'd been a dedicated Mormon, who'd raised thousands of dollars for good causes, who'd helped launch the Writers at Work conference, who'd edited the Junior League Heritage Cookbook, who'd played piano concerts and accompanied hundreds of musicians, who'd written and published books. She'd disappeared. She'd given up somewhere along the way.

I touched the back of my hand to verify I was still in my body, but how was it possible for C. J. and me to transcend ourselves? To find answers? To move out of our perceptions about how life had to be to be a good?

Our wheels turned round and around, passing discarded cigarette packs, two golf balls, a car light reflector cover, even two strawberries on the shoulder of the road—bits and pieces of passing lives. There were farms and there were sheep who bolted when we rode by. A Peregrine hawk, cows and more cows, and a dead owl whose wings I stopped to spread and whose feathers I decided not to pluck.

After stopping for French dip sandwiches and a pee break in Ault, we hit a hill that required me to try the front derailleur for the first time (I'd never needed to use it on the gentle slopes in Denver). To my dismay, I found I couldn't shift into the highest gear. Against the recommendation of the bicycle shop in Denver, but in an attempt to have state-of-the-art everything on my bike, I'd upgraded the derailleurs at the last minute. At this point in time, it seemed terribly stupid to have been seduced by the phrase "state-of-the-art."

Being more familiar with bicycles, C. J. volunteered to fix the prob-

lem at the side of the road while I read instructions out loud from the bike repair manual. After I read from page 26 and after C. J. adjusted the designated screws, I tried out the bike. It did shift more easily but sounded like a sewing machine.

"We'll see if we can find someone in the next town to refine my repairs," C.J. said.

After a first day of 47.3 miles, we finally limped into the tiny burg of Briggsdale. Sam and Charity, two kids on swings at the playground, told us how to find Lou, the town mechanic.

"The problem's in the gear shifter," he said, stroking his cheek. "But this thing's too complicated for me. All these gears. You'd better take it to the bike shop in Sterling in the morning. Where you planning to spend the night?"

"We thought we'd camp out in one of the fields," C.J. said. "Pitch our tent."

"Not a good idea tonight. The fields were sprayed today. Why don't you try the local motel? My wife's mother owns it. She'll give you a deal."

We didn't want to look a gift horse in the mouth, but the room in the Briggsdale Motel was dingy—two beds with limp red poppy bedspreads, an ancient black and white TV with a small screen, a leaky faucet and bulb-burned lampshades. We couldn't complain for $20 and didn't. Because the grocery store was closed, Lou's mother-in-law and her miniature poodle named Bear brought us dinner on a tray. I recorded all the day's details, including the Wonder bread, tomato slices, carrot sticks, hamburger patties, baked potatoes, and applesauce served on blue Melmac, in my newly-purchased journal. The adventure had begun.

Back on the highway the next morning, we hitched into Sterling in a Mack truck driven by Pat, a combination Navajo-Sioux-Mexican with a sharp-shooter moustache and a great laugh. After regaling us with tales of the truck driver, he dropped us at Jimmy G's Bike Shop in a square, white-washed, no account building. Jimmy G himself put my bike back in business with a flourish and at no charge. . . .

From Inside my Head.

Over the years, I haven't known whether to label myself as creative with a vivid imagination, bright but flawed, normal with a certain spin, gifted with a string attached, bi-polar or uni-polar, an aesthetically sensitive woman, someone who's unafraid to talk about life from the down side or maybe someone who's touched by madness. Maybe what I am is mad, plain and simple, though there's no such thing as simple about madness. But it could be that madness is Divine Madness—a kiss from God, a chance to know the full spectrum of humanity, a chance to feel the

condition of being tied to the moon and the tides and the pull of the ocean waves, back and forth, in and out.

It takes strength to love so deeply and to sorrow so sadly. There are days when I think I can't take it any longer—being caught in a riptide, caught between rocks and seaweed and the chaotic tumbling of water. Except for sometimes, there's a lull and I float out to sea. Or I get washed up on shore to be warmed by the sun until the waves grab me again.

Maybe my tribe and I have been asked by The Someone who assigns tasks for this earthly experience if we would be those to take on the depths and heights of human feeling: the musicians, the painters, the sculptors, the writers. Everyone is assigned some challenge it seems: the delirious, the clogged, the malignant, the bent who can't straighten, the straight who can't bend. . . .

My mind feels mad as I try to put this into words or concepts, as I try to capture what it is to be highly sensitive to every movement in a room, to the colors that swim past my eyes, to every nuance of feeling in a friend's or lover's face. What it's like to be so full of feeling with no place for it to go. How it feels to be a body of water, not solid flesh, as though I'm a wetlands with the sadness always spongy beneath the surface. Step wrongly and the water squishes up out of the earth and soaks your and my shoes.

I want to arrange my thoughts about this. I want to come to some definitive conclusion about whether I am well or sick or whether I am a gift or a hex or a bad seed. It seems a curse to have a mind which can behold so much, hold so much, feel so much, and to have it turn against itself and devour itself, tortured with the task of figuring everything out.

Be still, mind. Be still and feel the rhythm of the waves, the lap of water at a lake's shore, the birds in the trees, the rustle of leaves. Be still and sit in a chair with your legs and hands uncrossed and behold the beauty. Behold another's face. Hold a sleeping baby. Hold yourself. Be still. Listen when the blues come knocking, and be still.

Confessions of a Modern Day Mobber

Robert Kirby

I HAVE PERSECUTED MORMONS for ten years. I began riding with the mob in the early 90's while working for the *Utah County Journal*. Asked one day to write a quick editorial for the paper, I penned "5 Kinds of Mormons." It offered the theory that of all the millions of Mormons in the world, there were only five basic types: liberal, genuine, conservative, orthodox, and Nazi.

As I recall it took less than an hour to write the editorial. Not surprising when you consider that there were so many things about cultural Mormonism inside me itching to get out, mostly those things we have transformed into doctrine out of nothing more than sheer repetition.

"Five Kinds of Mormons" was well received by nearly everyone but the newspaper's publisher. Hundreds of readers, most of them active LDS, praised the humor in the editorial and asked for more. Encouraged by the response, I continued lampooning us and never looked back even when I got into trouble for it.

I needled Mormon dress, hymns, kitsch, wedding receptions, food, seating arrangements, and speech. When I wouldn't stop doing it, I was fired by the *Journal* and picked up by the *Salt Lake Tribune*. My reputation for skewering Mormons grew and followed me when we moved to Salt Lake County last month. Our first Sunday in the new ward began with a noticeable no-man's land around us on the pews. I understood, however, that this behavior was prompted out of fear of turning up in a column rather than distaste. The worry soon abated, and we have since made good friends.

Writing what I do about Mormons initially had far more to do with personal therapy than it did with changing anyone's mind. It was my way of easing the internal tension that occurred during boring and frequently pointless church meetings, a tension that left unchecked might have developed into a scenario involving a rifle and a rooftop. Church for me has always been grueling. Writing about it made it easier.

But several years ago I really began to struggle. At first I thought it was simple writer's block. Gradually I came to understand that it was much worse. The thrill was gone. Perhaps writing no longer offered me the sanctuary it once had. If so, maybe it was time for me to leave. After all, I do not believe everything I am told simply because someone in a position of authority says it is so, and I refuse to let congregated opinion sway my personal convictions. Isn't that the definition of apostasy?

I briefly considered becoming a committed apostate. I talked it over with friends, family, and sometimes even tolerant strangers. I explored the usual Internet web sites and read the testimonies of abuse by the church. One day while lurking around an anti-Mormon website, I read something every bit as ridiculous as anything I'd ever heard in church. A former Mormon claimed that those who walked the edge of Mormonism did so because they simply lacked the courage to jump all the way out of the church. The writer specifically mentioned members who attended Sunstone Symposia and even me by name. I confess to being surprised. All those years of swimming against the flow and not once had I considered the possibility that I suffered the barbs and harangues of the orthodox because I lacked courage to run away from them.

Right then I knew I had to stay. Right then I noticed the similarity between those I regularly lampooned and those who mistakenly believed I was somehow on their side for doing so. Seriously, where is the difference between the charge that fringe Mormons lack the courage to leave and the equally spurious and illogical claim that those who do leave lack the moral fiber to remain?

There are Five Kinds of Ex-Mormons as well, most of them in dire need of a bit of lampooning to help them get over themselves. They suffer from the same malady they see so clearly in others: an inability to distinguish between being filled with the truth and being full of yourself.

Life is a test of individuals. Unfortunately, we forget this. Human beings love company so much that right or wrong isn't nearly as important to us as having our opinions validated by fellow travelers. Some people remain congregated in the church because it suits their personality. Others congregate when they leave—and end up committing the same crimes they once abhorred. I have listened to people I knew long before they left the church, and I recognized that what they had "found" outside of it had not changed them. They were like divorced people stalking ex-spouses. And just like those they believe trapped inside the church, they fail to understand that other people are not their problem. Our greatest hurdles in life will always be ourselves.

I am no exception. My lampooning other people says far more about me than it does about them. It says that I am still Robert Kirby, my own hostage in a guerilla war against convention, a prisoner of my own biology, sociology, and psychology. I will ever be suspicious of any attempt to correlate spiritual matters into a controllable bureaucracy. I have little

trust in organized religion, particularly one that so handily elevates some people above others. For these reasons my hackles go up when I see human beings congregated in groups larger than two. Strand two people in a life raft, and you have maximum cooperation. Put three people into the same raft, and two of them will invent a religion (or even an anti-religion) that enables them to marginalize the third.

I confess that much of church leaves me scratching my head at best and nursing a migraine at worst. I have far more questions than answers to the things I see and hear there. But there are moments when I understand what God wants from the fumbling dichotomy that is me. These epiphanies typically occur early in the morning before the day has become polluted by human noise. There are also those moments, usually in Sunday School, when the only thing I can be is an atheist.

I think God wants me to be me, or at least the best version of me. When the shouting and fretting is done, I am a Mormon. My personality has its roots set deep in a movement chock full of irony. Mercifully, it is this irony that drives me. I hear God best through it. Irony is that difference between the peevish way we want things to be and our frequently miserable and failed understanding of the way they really are. This is not a Mormon problem or even a religious problem. It is oh so human.

Perhaps because I have chosen to remain in the church, I seem to receive far more negative responses from non- or former Mormons than I do from aggrieved active members. One particular reader could have learned volumes about himself had he taken the time to think through the frying pan/fire logic he used in a letter:

> It is hard to believe that you are Mormon. Why in the world would you choose to be associated with such a religion? It's run by men and doesn't let women do anything. It claims that God only talks to one person, and that it's the only truth. Mormonism is a very controlling religion. It is a huge corporation that invades people's lives. You should get out.

A lot of what the writer says is true. The church is directed by men, it is rather controlling, and it does claim to have the truth. But here comes the irony. The letter was signed: "Ex-Mormon now Catholic."

So where does a lampoonist belong? Am I sheep or wolf—or possibly a little of both? Or am I something altogether different? The only conclusion I can reach is that my faith should be the product of me rather than of any group's claim to hold the copyright on truth. And because I am me, I have particles rather than articles of faith.

My 13 Particles of Faith

1. I believe in God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and in mankind's innate inability to tell the difference between them and, oh, a giant ball of fire or even an extremely intolerant political party.

2. I believe that men will be punished for their own transgressions, including stuff we did completely by accident or because of testosterone. Women will probably just get probation.
3. I believe that through the atonement of Christ, everyone will one day be able to tell annoying church authorities where to get off.
4. I believe that the first principles and ordinances of the church are: boring speakers, meetings that last forever, music that sounds like someone giving a whale a sonogram, food storage gone bad, and idiotic bickering over caffeine and movie ratings.
5. I believe that a man must be called by God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority, and that only regular long distance rates will apply. Meanwhile, women answer only to a biological clock.
6. I believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, viz.: deacons, teachers, centurions, lepers, thieves, virgins, lunatics, mustard seeds, and demonically possessed swine.
7. I believe in the gift of tongues and would die a happy man if, just once, some smart-ass would have the guts to try it when I was around.
8. I believe the Bible and the Book of Mormon to be the word of God as far as I personally can translate them correctly, which I try not to do much because it scares me.
9. I believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and I believe he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the colossal foolishness of the entire human race.
10. I believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes, most of whom will work for Microsoft; that Zion will be built on this (the United States) continent by undocumented migrant labor, and that Christ will eventually rain personality on the church.
11. I claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to it being none of your damn business, and allow all men the same privilege, except for Pat Robertson, Louis Farrakhan, and most cannibals.
12. I believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magis. . . . wait, no I don't.
13. I believe in being honest to a point, true to myself, chased by the police, benevolent to deserving people, virtuous on the Internet, and in doing whatever my wife tells me to do; indeed, I may say that I follow the admonition of Paul in believing, hoping and enduring—and that all of this damn well better be worth it in the end.

Declaring oneself in this way has its drawbacks. After my particles of faith ran as a column in the Salt Lake Tribune, I was invited to discuss

them with the stake president. A good man, he offered the possibility that perhaps this was too far over the line. I countered with the point that no one complained the year before when I rewrote the Ten Commandments. I asked him if his problem with the column wasn't really more about his own hypersensitivity than about my flirtation with blasphemy?

So where should someone like me go? Don't answer. It's a rhetorical question.

Two weeks ago, I taught the High Priest Group lesson in my new ward. Since it was the first of the month, the High Priest Group leader said I should choose the subject. I chose as the topic of my lesson a quote from Edward Gibbon: "THE VICES OF THE CLERGY ARE FAR LESS DANGEROUS THAN THEIR VIRTUES." Then I gave a lesson on the importance of helping people get past harmful Mormon stereotypes.

As lessons go, it was better than some and not as good as others. When I finished, the High Priest Group leader raised his hand and—apropos of nothing that I could see—asked, "Do you know [Salt Lake City Mayor] Rocky Anderson? Well, he's a homosexual. Just as gay as he can be."

Following a moment of confused blinking, I said that I knew Rocky Anderson well enough to know that he was not gay. We debated the point for a minute or two. Gradually, a feeling of belonging came over me.

Seriously, why would I leave? My work here is not done.

Delineation

Maureen Clark

1971
October snow brings the hunters
down from the mountains
without their kill. Sometimes
it happens this way.
Sumac and oak
still heavy with russet leaves,
heavier with snow, trunks
splitting-open, damp wood.
Power lines down
across the valley. A perfect stage
for departure.

Things that were left:
four pair of brown polyester pants/suspenders/
garden gloves caked with earth/1946 Pontiac/
rocking chair/old radiators/
house/photographs
in sepia-tones:

He is third from the left, back row
between Otto and Harry;

boys from the neighborhood.
Someone has written 1916—Swede Town

on the back in blue ink. Maybe it's spring;
hard to tell if the snow is almost melted

or almost enough. The angle of the camera
has captured his shadow just above his right shoulder.

This rocking chair
is the one
he was sitting in
when the Feds
raided the house
looking for whisky
that was hidden
under the floorboards
under the braid rug
under that chair,
where he sat rocking
my infant mother.

Utah Territory, 1893

Maureen Clark

A washed cup,
folded socks,
three unworn shirts
with no scent of him.
Smooth bedsheets,
dry towels.

She begins to know
something of scapegoats;
those who are left
to wander in the desert
unburned.

This desert
is not a rose.
Petals fall
uncounted
from the catalpa.
All the grasses
are in Nebraska
blowing westward
in silver waves.

Unmended fence,
empty barn
two children in the yard
quick as sparrows
between sun and shade.

Smoke ascends
from the lamps,
gathers at the ceiling,
soot ghosting
the walls.

Breach Birth: Aug. 20, 1891

Maureen Clark

> *"We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, not permitting any person to enter into its practice."*
> Wilford Woodruff, President
> Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
> October 6, 1890

He is born breach, meaning gap.
From the beginning
he was negative space
a blue cast shadow,
blurred into background
by a squint of his father's eye
and a prophet's Manifesto
proclaiming an end to polygamy
in the Utah Territory,
Swede Town,
in this very house,
where his mother labors.

He is the unstitched seam
between blood and water,
a dangling thread not quite cast off;
draggling in dirt between his father's
God and his pocketbook;
two unreachable shores.

Luck will be his religion,
he can live with arbitrary grace.
He'll be a shadow on the porch
a blank face under the brim
a thread of light
along the jaw.

Driven

Nathan Keonaona Chai

For my father-in-law, who knew the conflict

ALVIN HAWKING AWOKE two hours after dusk. He slipped out of his cot and dressed in the dim yellow light that washed through the screen door at the end of the barracks. Several of the soldiers around him were snoring. He could hear music and the thrum of loud voices from the next barracks over and he knew that the mechanics were getting high again. Across the aisle Clemens was sitting on his cot, propped up against his pillow, scratching out a letter under the glow of a flashlight balanced on his shoulder.

"You're up tonight, huh, Al?" Clemens said.

Alvin nodded. He pulled his boots on and tied the laces.

"You want to borrow a pack of Luckies?" Clemens asked. He put his flashlight down, leaned over the side of his cot and rummaged through his duffel bag. "Gets pretty lonely out there all night."

"No, thanks," Alvin said.

Clemens looked up and grinned. "Oh, yeah. That Mormon thing. I keep forgetting."

"See you in the morning," Alvin said.

The night air was warm and slow, sharp with the gray smell of salt blown in from the Gulf of Tonkin. As Alvin walked, he could hear the electric buzz of the power poles and the hundreds of wires that hung over the base and divided the night sky into a crooked grid. He looked down and watched the dark sand passing beneath his boots. Soon he had forgotten his route and destination and was merely walking, moving without purpose, his mind having turned its focus inward. He thought on how dark and surreal his life had become, how different from the life he had intended. It was almost as though he were not human anymore, but more like some animal driven before a wildfire.

He had been happy, he remembered. The summer had been good. He returned to Salt Lake City from his mission in May. In June he'd begun again to date Lara Sanchez, his high school girlfriend. Then, in August,

he was drafted. He remembered the numbness that had taken him that day. He remembered driving his father's Plymouth slowly through Salt Lake City, staring out at all the people. People who, seeing his face behind the sun-glinted windshield, would never know what had just happened to his life. When he finally pulled into the carport at his parent's house and turned off the engine, it was well past two o'clock in the morning. The needle on the fuel gauge pointed to empty.

Alvin came to a chain-link fence and looked around. Then he remembered. Guard duty. He turned and started back toward the ammo dump. He thought about Lara then, though at first he tried not to. He thought about the night he told her. They were sitting on the hood of his Plymouth, parked on the slope of a foothill as near Ensign Peak as Alvin dared travel on the gullied dirt road. The city lay spread below them, electric grids and networks shimmering beneath the dark peaks. Although the night was still warm, Lara shivered. She buttoned her jacket and turned up the collar.

When he told her that his number had come up, she turned away and stared across the night-gray fields at nothing.

After a few minutes of silence, she spoke: Are you going?

The question startled Alvin. He thought for a moment, then told Lara that he had to go, that Mormons had never backed down when their country needed them. The answer sounded empty, an excuse more than a reason.

Could you kill someone? Lara asked. Is that what the Church is about?

A cool canyon breeze spun past them, full of the dry smell of sagebrush. Alvin could think of nothing to say.

So they sat on the hood of the Plymouth in silence. Alvin turned away, looked down at the Salt Lake Temple, at its sharp granite angles and spires visible just above their shoes and the square hood ornament. Lara followed his gaze.

I'll pray for you, she said.

Alvin said nothing.

God takes care of his own, she said.

"What's your name?" asked the soldier, standing at the door of the building.

Alvin stared at him dumbly.

"Your name?" the soldier said, louder.

"Hawking."

The soldier looked at his list, then back at Alvin.

"Go ahead," he said.

Alvin went into the building. He was issued an M-16, helmet, flak jacket, and radio. Another soldier named Gary led Alvin out the back door to a waiting Jeep.

"Looks like you get the north side tonight," Gary said.

He started the engine and shifted into gear.

"North side's pretty quiet," Gary said. "Far enough out that you don't get noise from the base. I've taken the shift a couple times myself."

Alvin nodded and looked down at his M-16. The last time he'd held one had been at Camp Wilson, Alabama. That was when he met Heber, the only other Mormon on base. Camp Wilson was Heber's final stop on the way home, Alvin's first stop on the way out. They often spent their off-duty hours together, chatting, walking around or relaxing on the benches near the surrounding woods. Heber usually did the talking, his stone-gray eyes wide behind his thick glasses, his hands tracing strange forms in the air.

Alvin relaxed back into his seat and listened to the rumble of the Jeep's engine. He wondered what Heber was doing. Maybe he was at the movies with a girl. Maybe he was reading another one of those history books. Alvin's thoughts turned to his final conversation with Heber. They had been sitting on their usual bench, talking about fly-fishing, when Heber had suddenly grown serious.

You know, Hawk, it's not the flesh that makes a man hard to kill.

What's that mean, the flesh? Alvin asked. Sounds biblical.

It means that it's not the face or the body or anything else. It's the story. You can't think about the story.

The story?

Heber raised both hands, taking hold of an invisible rifle, steadying it against his shoulder. He squinted and angled his head to the right.

You should see nothing more than a statistic, Heber said, and his arms and right shoulder recoiled suddenly. Your bullet will surprise him, cut through him like he was never there. Like he never had a story.

Heber let his weapon fall back into memory. He slouched against the bench. Sweat trailed down his face and his thick standard-issue glasses slipped down his nose. He wiped his forehead with his sleeve. Alvin turned away, watched as a red bird glided in over the treetops and landed on a dead branch straight out. He was never quite sure he understood Heber when he talked about war.

You believe in visions? Heber asked.

You mean like in the scriptures?

I saw one out in the field, Heber said.

Alvin looked at Heber. The sunlight flashed across lenses, hiding his ice-gray eyes.

What did you see? Alvin asked.

The face of God, Heber said. The void where God should've been. Hard to say which.

Alvin looked down at his hands.

It was all a mistake, Heber began. I was sharing Jared's hole because

Ronnie was dead in mine. Jared was radioing for air support, but our radio friend kept saying they that another squad was on its way and they couldn't send in the birds until it reached us.

Wow, Alvin said.

Heber nodded and looked down. He gripped his thighs.

The attachment never made it, he said. They were ambushed crossing a field on the other side of the river. Every one of those boys got zapped before they made it to cover. You have any idea how I know that?

No, Alvin said.

Because our radio friend suddenly told us we had air support. By that time the VC had figured time was up. All of the sudden it was absolute quiet. Smoke still rising into the air. But our planes sure torched those empty hillsides. You should've seen it, man. Like the Fourth of July.

Alvin could only shake his head.

After that Lieutenant Birches called in the dust-offs. He had everyone that still had two legs set up a perimeter. Except me. I had to help load bodies. Funny thing is, when I picked up Ronnie, all I could think of was he felt like a bag of potatoes. Hard and broken, just like potatoes. After a while I couldn't think of anything. Just buzzing in my head.

When we finished they flew us across the river so we could load the other squad. We touched down and the first thing I saw—the very first thing, Hawk—was this dead soldier lying on his pack, staring up at me. Black boy, eyes wide-open, one ear missing, smiling like he was going to ask for a hand to get up. And he talked to me, Hawk. He told me something.

I thought you said he was dead.

That's what I said. Dead. As in, *dead*. I picked him up and he whispered in my ear. It was a vision, I guess. I don't really know what to call it.

If this is one of those stories to scare cherries. . .

Heber turned and looked at Alvin.

What did he say? Alvin asked.

Heber ignored the question.

I loaded him and loaded the others on top of him. Then I got in and sat on the pile and rode back over the river.

My God, Alvin said.

You think so? I've found it's not so easy to believe as it used to be. He never did show up for me, you know. Or maybe I'm just going crazy.

Alvin said nothing.

You believe God decides who lives and dies? Heber asked.

Alvin looked toward the trees. The red bird was gone.

Heber pressed the matter: Did he decide I would live and Ronnie would die?

I guess we all die in the end, Alvin said. I don't know. Maybe we just have to do some things alone and accept the consequences.

Yeah. Alone. Just do what you have to do and the other guy does the same. God can sit on his throne and watch.

Heber took off his glasses, rubbed his eyes. He stood and stretched his skinny arms toward the cloudless sky.

Gotta run, Hawk. Suppertime. I'll stop by and see you before you ship out tomorrow. You can tell me some more of your mission stories. Where was it again? South America?

Mexico. See you later, Heber.

Heber stood there a moment longer. In the slant light of evening, his shadow stretched over the grass toward the trees, his hands on his hips enclosing two bright triangles of grass.

Don't worry, Hawk. It goes by real fast. Soon enough you'll be back here going through this stupid decompression stuff yourself.

Enjoy your supper, Alvin said.

Heber's shadow fell over the bench, across Alvin's face, and then it was gone. He had not come to visit Alvin that night, and they had not written any letters since.

Gary slapped Alvin's shoulder. "Watch this," he said.

Alvin looked at Gary. He was smiling. He turned off the headlights and slowed the engine to a crawl. Alvin stared out and tried to make sense of the shapeless dark. After a minute or so, Gary stopped the Jeep. He leaned toward Alvin and whispered, "One, two. . ." On "three" he switched on the Jeep's brights and leaned on the horn.

In the sudden light Alvin saw a wall of sandbags and beyond it, in the fringes of the light, the bulldozed perimeter and a razor-wire fence. To the near side of the sandbags, a soldier shot up into sitting position and jerked around, throwing his helmet from his head. His squinting, blinking face looked dazed and pale and he raised a hand to shadow his eyes.

Gary hollered out a laugh. The soldier, swearing violently, climbed to his feet and turned his face away.

"You weren't sleeping, were you?" Gary called, still laughing.

"Real funny," the soldier said. He stooped down, picked up his gear, and walked to the Jeep.

"All yours," he said, looking at Alvin.

Alvin got out and the other soldier took his place.

"Someone will come get you at four hundred," Gary said.

"Thanks," Alvin said.

Alvin watched as Gary turned the jeep around and started back toward base. The taillights soon disappeared behind a wide hill and the growl of the engine faded. It was very quiet and dark then, and Alvin walked over and sat down against the sandbags. To the east, from behind the low mountains, came a gray light. He sat there, unmoving, watching as a three-quarter moon rose slowly into the sky. He felt very tired.

He began to wonder what guard duty was like for the soldiers out in the field, the real soldiers who didn't work nine-to-fivers in rear-support areas. He imagined that he was sitting in a foxhole somewhere to the North, looking up at the same three-quarter moon. He imagined that he could hear the slow breathing of the other men dug in around him. Suddenly there was a low whistle and the flash-thud of a mortar. The men were awake and yelling. The quick popping of AK-47 fire. Someone cried out in pain or fear. Alvin pulled his helmet over his head and slumped deeper into his foxhole. Another mortar hit, closer this time. The concussion jarred his senses. Dirt rained over him. He screamed.

Alvin startled awake and blinked a few times. It was quiet. A warm breeze was blowing off the Gulf, pushing in gauzy clouds that gave the moon the illusion of speed. He stood and paced behind the sandbags, trying to clear the echoes of battle from his head. After a while he sat down again and took off his helmet. He thought then about his first day in Vietnam, when he was called away from the other new grunts fated for battle and taken to a small building where a man named Porter gave him a typing test. Alvin typed fifty-five words a minute. Porter took the test results and left the room. Twenty minutes passed, during which time Alvin offered more than a few silent prayers. Porter finally returned and handed Alvin a folder. Written at the top, beneath Alvin's name, was his new MOS:

Headquarter Company File Clerk
Ordnance 184 Battalion
Camp Haskins

Alvin sat down again and slouched back against the sandbags. Two months had passed since then. Two months of clerical work in the heart of a war-plagued country. He'd been sitting at his desk in the Quonset hut that was the clerk's office when he'd found out about guard duty.

As was his habit, he'd come in early that morning. The predawn hours in the office were his only time alone. Outside, rain fell in steaming sheets, beating against the corrugated tin roof. Alvin leaned back and pulled open the wood flap that covered the open-air window, letting in the smell and sound of rain.

Clemens slammed through the door. He took off his poncho and shook the water off with a strong snap.

Looks like I won't be sailing today, he said.

Clemens had rebuilt a junked sailboat and rigged a rusty pontoon as an outrigger. He'd painted *USS Pakalolo* on the stern. For his girlfriend back home, he'd said, and explained that she was part Hawaiian. He had the boat tied down at the beach, and when the weather was clear, he'd take it out and roll joints and drift in the wind. Alvin had been out with him only once; the smoke had made him sick.

Clemens threw his poncho over an empty chair and walked to his desk.

Reminds me of Seattle, he said, except here the rain makes you hotter.

Never been to Seattle, Alvin said. He let the window flap slam back into place.

Nice city, Clemens said. Real green.

Clemens sat down and began to sort through his stack of I-15 forms. He rocked his chair back on two legs and put his muddy boots up on the file cabinet.

Find anything noteworthy, Al? he asked.

Haven't looked yet.

Alvin picked up his papers and stared at the first.

Here's one, Clemens said, flicking a paper with his middle finger. Some crazy lieutenant out in—I don't know how to say these names—Ganam Sing? Angam Sing? Anyway, he's going to get juiced over this one.

What happened?

Get this. Some guys move in on this village and an old man stabs the lieutenant in the leg with a pitchfork.

They have pitchforks?

Hold on, it gets better. So this lieutenant pulls out his pistol and starts yelling that he's going to put the old man down. Not enough sleep the night before or something. Anyway, one of his boys tells him not to, they get into a fight, the lieutenant lands a good one and this kid's blinded in one eye. Can you believe that?

Alvin considered the matter. How do you do that? he asked.

Do what?

Just try to kill an old man like that.

Practice.

I don't know if I could kill someone.

Clemens snorted. What choice do you have?

I just wonder, that's all.

If you don't do it, the other guy will.

Maybe. I don't know.

Maybe? There's no *maybe* about it. Who's going to protect you if you don't? Jesus?

No. I don't know.

Clemens shook his head. What do they teach you guys in that stupid church of yours?

Alvin listened to the rain against the roof. He forced a quick laugh and asked, I wonder if that blind guy will get a Purple Heart?

Clemens chuckled. If I were him, I wouldn't want one. Imagine trying to explain to everyone back home how you got it.

You could chalk it up to hand-to-hand. Does it say what they did to the old man?

Doesn't say, doesn't matter.

Why not?

He's crazy, just like everyone else out here. Us, them, all crazy. You've read enough of these reports. Haven't you figured that out yet?

The office door opened and Jameson entered, arms hidden beneath an oversized poncho.

Change of plans, he said. We're signed up for guard duty. We have to go get our assignments.

Who signed us up? Clemens demanded.

I don't know. Dill, maybe.

We have to do guard duty? Alvin asked.

Look, guys, Jameson said. It was coming either way. Might as well get it over with.

Jameson waited while Alvin and Clemens put on their ponchos, then they stepped out into the rain together. Their boots sucked into the shiny mud, and the buildings faded in and out of sight, indistinct and colorless in the—

A gravelly voice came from the ground beside Alvin. "Hey, Charles, you there, man?"

Alvin picked up his radio and looked at it. After a moment a softer voice fuzzed with static responded. "I'm with you."

Alvin put the radio down. He lay back and let his M-16 rest across his chest. He put his hands behind his head and stared up at the night sky, at the moon drifting behind the thin clouds.

"Where you at?"

"Southwest. You?"

"Quarter mile over your left shoulder."

"At the point again?"

"Where else."

Silence for a moment.

"You up again tomorrow night?"

"No. I go back to laundry."

"So you're cool to trip out to Danang with me on Friday?"

"You know it. I been saving my five bucks."

"Right on. Girls around here ain't Philly class, but I still like to—"

Alvin switched off the radio. He closed his eyes and worked himself into a more comfortable position.

Some time later he awoke. He couldn't remember falling asleep. He had been lying there, waiting and drifted slowly away. Away from Vietnam. Far away to where Lara was waiting, her sweet hair against his face like desert rain. The delicate line of her perfumed neck so close.

But he must have fallen asleep, because there were no clouds in the sky, the wind had died, his M-16 was lying on the ground beside him. And Lara was gone. The final letter had come a few weeks earlier. Two short paragraphs. She was gone.

At first Alvin wanted to fall back into the dream. But soon that desire

left him, replaced by blunt anger. He felt foolish for thinking about her. He hated her. No, he realized, he hated the war. He hated everything his life had become. He hated that nothing was his anymore, that he no longer had any choice.

He sat up and grabbed his M-16. He slid his fingers over the smooth steel of the barrel. Then he slowly brought the rifle up and aimed it at his boot. His forefinger hooked over the trigger. Maybe he did have a choice.

A few long seconds passed. He relaxed and withdrew his finger from the trigger guard. He put the rifle down and was about to stand and stretch when he saw the man. He dropped down to his knees and peered over the sandbags.

The man was small, standing fifty feet away at the far edge of the bulldozed perimeter. Silent and still. He had somehow passed the fence and the coils of barb wire. No shirt. A cloth bag limp at his side, held by a cord over his shoulder.

Nothing about him suggested a threat. Yet he should not have been there.

Alvin remained crouched. The man's shoulders quivered and Alvin could hear a sort of stuttered sniffling, rasping. Alvin closed his eyes and when he opened them the man was still there. It was then that he understood the noise. Crying.

Alvin reached for his M-16. Lying there in the dirt, the dull black steel was darker even than the night. When he looked up again, the man had stopped crying. Or at least the noise had stopped and his shoulders no longer quivered. And he had begun to walk mechanically toward base. Toward Alvin.

Alvin inched over to a space between the top sandbags so that he could see better.

The man continued his maddeningly slow advance, his knees stiff, his back straight, his eyes fixed on the denuded earth before him, on the black shadows pooled within each hardened bulldozer imprint. He was halfway across the perimeter, about twenty feet away now.

"One more," Alvin mouthed.

The man took the step. Alvin stood. He held the M-16 with his left hand under the stock, the right at the trigger, the weapon pointed over the man's head toward the stars. He waited, the upper half of his body now exposed above the sandbags.

The man did not see him. He took another slow step. Then he pulled his foot back, as though the ground had revealed itself to be unstable. His eyes rose to meet Alvin's.

The man's face was ashen in the moonlight, a pale circle in the darkness. And he was young, no older than Alvin. Something in the way he carried himself had made him seem old. His slender arms moved to the cloth bag. He gripped it with both hands.

Alvin acted without thought. The M-16 whipped through the air and centered the man. The product of instinct or cinema, Alvin couldn't be sure which.

"Stop!"

The man didn't acknowledge. Instead he pulled the bag to his chest, gripping it as tightly as though it were his life's last hope.

This time Alvin had to think about it: he forced the words out, his voice violent against the quiet.

"Take your hands away from the bag!"

The man screamed something in Vietnamese and crouched down, as though preparing to leap forward. He stabbed his finger at Alvin and screamed again. Alvin shouted back and their voices clashed together.

"Come on, man! I don't want to shoot you!"

Alvin's left hand cramped and he tried to relax it. Then silence, as harsh as the shouting. Breathing and the slosh of blood through Alvin's ears.

"You!" the man yelled. "You! You!"

Sweat stung Alvin's eyes and he tried to dry his forehead with his shoulder.

"What do you want!"

"You! May-ree-ca! Go! Go!"

"Put the bag down!"

"Wife dead! You may-ree-ca! Dead!"

Alvin's stomach sickened as the man shouted his story into the night.

"Go back!" he shouted. "I won't shoot if you go back!"

"Shoo me!"

"Just turn around and I won't!"

The man thumped his chest with a fist. "Shoo me! Shoo me!"

"No!" Alvin screamed. "Go back!"

The man's hand jerked out of the bag. Alvin hadn't seen him reach in. The man screamed again in Vietnamese and raised his hand above his head. Something dark, solid, round in his clenched fingers.

Grenade.

"No," Alvin murmured, groping at his rifle, trying to find the safety. Fumbling. Panic. His fingers tripping over the steel. At last he found it. He aimed his weapon at the man's shirtless chest. His hands trembled and the barrel would not hold its target.

The man did nothing. He said nothing. He still held the grenade above his head.

This time Alvin didn't scream. His voice was calm, as though someone else were talking for him.

"Put the grenade down."

The man lowered the grenade to his side. No emotion on his face. He stepped toward Alvin.

"Stop. I'll shoot."

The man took another step.

Alvin was screaming again: "Stop!"

The man jumped forward and shouted, beat his chest again with the grenade.

"Dead!"

Alvin could taste vomit in his mouth.

"Dead!"

Alvin heard himself yell. He heard the M-16 crack.

The bullet snapped through the man's shin and he fell thrashing to the ground, the cloth bag tangled around his neck, the dust rising around him. In those few seconds several thoughts, as bright and fleeting as streaks of moonlight on water, flashed across Alvin's mind. He wondered if he'd made some fundamental error, if Lara would ever take him back now, if God would judge him harshly, if Heber also would have fired.

Then Alvin saw the grenade lying in the dirt. He saw the man, his face bent with pain, reach out and grab it. Alvin suddenly knew what would follow. He dropped his rifle, leapt over the sandbags, and sprinted toward him.

"Don't!"

His ankle turned on a rock, and with a grunt he tripped face-first onto the hard earth and slid into the man's body. He rose to his hands and knees, his face only inches from the man's, close enough to see the thin pallid scar that sliced across the man's forehead, through his eyelid and into his cheek. The eye itself was blank, fogged white with disease.

"Ai Han," the man whispered.

Alvin felt him move, heard a faint metallic click. He grabbed at the man's wrists, but too late: the pin had already been pulled. Alvin flung himself back and clawed at the ground, trying frantically to crawl away, his mind blurred by two simultaneous and conflicting realizations, "I tried to kill him, I tried to save him."

A dull thump, a flash, then absolute darkness.

Some time later, Alvin surfaced into a dim half-consciousness. Pain like a shriek inside his head. Inescapable, throbbing with each heartbeat. He moaned and tried to roll to his side. Rustling, unidentifiable noises sounded from the space around him. Someone held a blinding circle of light over him.

"Look at that!" a voice said. "What did that?"

Someone yelling: "Shut up, Perry! Leave the body alone and help us."

"Well just look at it. I've never seen—"

"Shut up! Either help or get out of the way!"

Alvin moaned again and struggled to pull free of whatever held him

down. A soldier was suddenly staring at him, his face very close, the stink of his breath in Alvin's nose.

"Quit moving. You're only making this harder."

The face disappeared. Alvin screamed as his foot caught fire.

"I can't get this boot off!"

"Where's that morphine?"

"I don't know. It's not in here."

"Where is it?"

"How should I know?"

"Find it!"

Alvin thrashed and a gargled sound came from his throat.

"Easy! Easy!"

Something forced him back, held him pinned to the ground.

"I got it!"

The light moved away from Alvin's eyes. Shuffling for a moment, then a sting at his arm.

"Get that stretcher, Perry. Quick."

The face was over Alvin again, staring into his eyes. "Don't worry," he said, "You're going to be fine. On a plane back home in no time. Just hang in there, buddy."

Then he was gone. A strange warmth began to glide slowly from the sting at Alvin's arm up into his chest. His head felt as though it were expanding, and the pain began to float further and further away. Soon Alvin could no longer remember where he was. He wondered if perhaps he was already home, if perhaps he had never left. He felt a vague sense of happiness.

A distant tinny voice: "Lift on three. One, two. . ."

His breathing slowed and as the medics lifted him onto the stretcher he sagged into a heavy sleep.

Listening to the Lord

Max Freeman

24 September 1999; American Memorial Cemetery
Manila, Philippines

A rare treat in Manila—real grass,
short and green, probing tentatively
out of rich soil. The sky
waits to rain—black clouds
bloated, moving slowly and tenderly,
as if they might spill open any moment.
Urban tragedy lies below us—
an uneven sprawl of light
dimmed by smog, spread
about us like a tired dog,
clumsy sky-scrapers filled with rot,
paint peeling in strips and windows stained black,
uncomfortably upright, angular,
like legs kicking aimlessly
at the humidity. And all those helpless
people trapped inside! And below, where jeepneys
honk their endless, unmoving parade
and squatters hold noses tightly shut
against the hot stench of rivers
they've gradually made hell.
                But here, the grass
Is painstakingly trimmed, and trees shrug
upward, branches raised in indifference,
hanging leaves and pink flowers one acacia sonata
sewn with reflected light, our mingled voices.
The white crosses are rank
and file, like good soldiers, over rolling
green hills—heavy marble
oblivious to delicate landscape.
We're talking, of course, about God—
200 of us, missionaries flown over
on the wings of testimony,

our parents' tears. Lucky us, I think,
these other boys sent in legions
just to die, never knowing the language,
the enemy. It's no sacrifice at all.
Fittingly, he speaks of Jesus'
heavy cross—heavy as a world—
wood beam pure weight
on harried shoulders, back broad
as the sky. The Jews all spit and talk back—even the Apostles
stand back, don't know what
to say.
Watch how the night plays
tricks on us. One moment
those thick white crosses point
a weighty finger at earth, stakes
pinning grass to ground, the hill
rising from below like a sigh, belated,
undulating; we look again
and it appears the land is sinking,
depressed, into the earth,
and the buoyant stone is lifting
off like marble balloons.
The mineral blooms all lined
in a row, stately stems
hammered into the garden.
The sermon *is* the mount—
a terrible new law, the wine
poured out of old bottles like dregs
into bitter new cups.
Each eloquent word carried
by wind, garnished
with grief—somber décor, really.
We want to say the word
so good that even God
will listen and answer our poem
with a blessing. Even Jesus
rested in the grass,
an ugly cross
singing in his ears.

Saturday Evening, Sunday Afternoon

Helen Walker Jones

AT THIRTY-EIGHT I'M STILL SINGLE. Actually, let me be perfectly frank: Possibly Steve Young and I are the only people in the Western Hemisphere who have remained celibate until such an advanced age, and he finally got married at long last. Both my brothers are bishops, my Aunt Louisa (not her real name) was once on the General Board with Belle Spafford, and all my great-great-grandparents were converted to the church when Wilford Woodruff swept the British Isles with his mesmerizing mode of preaching. A lot of good it did me. Tonight, I'm all dolled-up, ruby-lipped, legs waxed, sitting in a bar on the Orem hill, quietly sipping my Diet Coke with a man I fully expect to at least hug and kiss and become a bit more intimate with, before this Saturday night is over. Long-term celibacy was once my strong suit. Recently, I've begun to wonder if I can hold out any longer, or if I want to.

"Let me guess: You're Mormon?" the man says, leaning back against the padded seat of the booth we're sitting in. When he takes a swig of Moosehead beer, I notice his moustache is the size of a walrus's, his sandy hair is getting a bit thin on top, and he has the weathered, lined face of a sheepherder. Still, he's definitely the best looking man in the place. He has the rock-hard biceps of a man who works with his hands. I met him twenty minutes ago, when he challenged me to a game of snooker. Not knowing the rules, and lacking any experience or talent, I lost big-time.

"Yeah," I say. "But just semi-active. I go to sacrament meeting only. How about you?"

"Fifth-generation handcart builder." He smiles slyly, touching the wet rings on the table until they blend with each other. His moustache glistens with foam. In between swigs of beer, he drinks water. In an hour, he's had only half a bottle of beer. He begins to sing, in a soft lilting tenor frail as tissue paper, "Then wake up, and do something more than dream of your mansions above. . ."

I laugh, surprised. "Doing good is a pleasure. . ." I say tunelessly, not wanting to let on that I'm a voice teacher.

"A joy beyond measure. . ." he chimes in.

I finish it off: "A blessing of virtue and love."

"*Duty* and love," he corrects me. "Fetch me a hymnbook and I'll prove it." His cigarette burns itself out in a gilded ashtray. The air in this dark room is a nicotine cloud. Men with yellowed fingers and unfriendly grins slouch past in low-slung jeans and tee shirts with slogans. I've known men like them—men who finish with a woman and leave her on a faded motel bedspread with her legs bare and her heart pounding and Jerry Springer haranguing his guests on the TV. One of my old BYU roommates got caught up in internet chat rooms last year and ended up sleeping around like that. It broke my heart, as well as hers. A woman of my age who has dated at all becomes well-acquainted with false hopes and humiliation. If she's sensible, she learns to approach every opportunity for romance with caution.

"Still with me?" my companion asks. (Notice I say "companion"—like missionaries, inseparable, kneeling morning and night in humble supplication. Or eternal companions, bound in holy wedlock throughout all time.)

"I suppose you realize I'm approaching thirty-nine," I say tentatively.

"So? I was forty-one last birthday." He touches my cheek. I'm beside him in the booth, my thighs stuck to orange padded naugahyde beneath my black wool mini-skirt. "You ain't over the hill yet, darlin'," he says fondly.

"Actually, I feel like I'm on the downhill slope." There's an uncomfortable silence.

"Well, I figure I've still got a good forty years before I need to make my death-bed repentance," he says.

For many disenfranchised Mormons, the topic of death is a prelude to a gospel discussion, so I take a stab at it. "Ever been to a Mormon funeral?"

"Get real, hon," he says. "My dad's, my grandparents', aunts', and uncles'. I've been a pall bearer probably ten times, including last month."

"A relative?"

"Nah. Next-door neighbor. At the stake house. Five dozen floral tributes. Had to open the sliding shutters into the rec hall. I think it was one of the apostles gave the valediction."

"The benediction, you mean?"

"No. The farewell address. This dude had contracted that Agent Orange, or whatever it was, in Saudi during Desert Storm. He lived with it for years, but ended up sticking a pistol in his mouth."

"How awful. Were you in the army?"

He shakes his head. "Naw. I thought of enlisting in the Reserves, but I was married already, and a daddy, before I was twenty-two."

"Oh."

"I only seen her once in the last year," he remarks. "We never got sealed in the temple or nothin'. My boy, Jack, was the only good thing to come out of that union. The two of us used to hunt together in the Uintas, fish the Weber Canyon, ride our dirt bikes in Goblin Valley."

"That's great," I murmur. "I hope you stay close to your boy." Then I add, "The valediction. Did you make up that word?"

"I don't hardly think so. Might be just a Utah-ism."

"Enough about funerals," I say, abruptly changing the subject to BYU football. He's a fan.

"I favor Jim McMahon over Ty Detmer, Steve Young, or Robbie Bosco, as the greatest BYU quarterback ever," he announces. "To me, college football's the purest sport there is. I'd like to die watching a touchdown pass and be buried in a royal blue casket. None of that purplish navy blue for me. I don't care how many times they change the uniforms." He scratches his left ear and smoothes the collar of his golf shirt, which is a drab tan, but looks good on him, with those muscular arms. He is a ruggedly handsome man, not cute in the movie star sense, but definitely what my students would call a "hottie."

"I went to a funeral last week," I tell him. "Returned missionary. His goal was to paint murals for a temple."

"What'd he die of?"

"AIDS."

"Times change," he says, attempting to slide along the booth in my direction, subtly nudging me with his hips, paying no attention to the sucking sound as my bare legs peel away from the orange naugahyde. "Thinking about eternal life don't give me much consolation, neither," he says. "The only thing that does is knowing I own my house outright, my business is in the black, I got more work than I can handle, plus both my vehicles are paid off, and I don't owe nobody a cent."

I wonder why he's presenting his financial statement to me. When we're standing, he kisses me, his cool fingers touching my neck and hair, his nose pressed against my cheek, his moustache tickling my nostrils. "Well," he says, "how 'bout it? Wanna see my place?"

"Yes," I say, not knowing exactly what I'm agreeing to, but realizing I'm in deeper than I should be.

He lives on a tree-lined street in a two-story house. I was expecting a dingy, unkempt apartment, but his living room is large and furnished with wine-colored leather couches, a walnut coffee table, and stained-glass lamps which fill the place with dim, shadowy light. It's definitely a man's room, with an enormous television flanked by towering speakers and four remote controls lying on a neat pile of sports magazines.

"My place is nowhere near as immaculate as this," I admit. "I'm not the world's best housekeeper."

He confesses to having a cleaning lady. "I bet I know one difference between your place and mine," he says. "You keep your scriptures on your nightstand, no?"

"No," I say.

"Don't try to fool me." His hands are on my shoulders, his walrus facial hair brushing my cheek. "I know you," he says. "You unmarried Mormon women, saving your physical favors for the long run, for all eternity. Don't wait till it's too late, hon."

My great-grandmothers both left Utah at the turn of the century to help settle outposts for the church—one in Star Valley, Wyoming; the other in Cardston, Alberta. You can't stand in a room full of Mormons and stretch your arms in a circle without touching somebody whose roots are in one of those settlements. How provincial we all are, how tied to the soil, how small-town oriented, how predictable, how easy to become acquainted with.

"I've tried forsaking sex," I say, "but I lack resolve."

"Mansions above," he whispers as he draws me gently down to sit on the couch beside him. In this dimly lighted living room nothing surprises me: not the faint buttermilk smell of stale laundry, not the ember of his cigarette in the darkness, not the tingling I feel as he strokes my knee and then cups my breast with his big workman's hand, not the pictures of his ex-wife and grown son on the mantel or the hand-written script in the lower right corner, "Our deepest love, Carolee and Jack Always," as though "always" were their last name.

I twist my body a bit, freeing myself from his fingers. Not that I want him to stop, but I feel compelled to do so. Gentle as he is, he scares me. I have too many regrets. After we kiss for a while, he gets up and lights another cigarette. Finally he says, "I don't wanna spoil this by moving too fast, you know? I think there's something worthwhile going on between the two of us. And I don't mean just that I think you're the sexiest woman this side of the Rockies." He's not pressuring me, but still I feel like a naughty teenager, expecting my parents to switch on the family room light at any moment. I wonder if he always dates prim Mormon spinsters who pretend to be hip by wearing their skirts too short.

He hands me a mug of foamy hot chocolate with miniature marshmallows melting into its depths. I can't recall what his name was, even though he told me in the noisy bar. I didn't catch it over the noise of the jukebox and clinking glasses. So, for now, I'll just think of him as Mr. Always, the ex-husband of Carolee Always. He sips pale brown coffee, taps cigarette ashes into the heavy-duty glass tray with "Courtesy of Geneva Steel" etched on the side. The ashtray looks perpetually unwashed, carrying with it the rank odor of Monday morning in airless nightclubs. Apparently, the housekeeper forgot to wash it.

At my age, Mom was the mother of seven. Leading the Singing

Mothers in their annual spring concert was the highlight of her existence. She pressed her best white blouse and navy blue skirt every Easter, and pinned a sprig of dusty silk violets to her bodice. Pin-curled hair made a tight frame around her beautiful, angelic face. Music transported her to the higher realms, she said. Hearing Mendelssohn, she always pictured the actual pearly gates opening inward upon the celestial kingdom. If, with all your hearts, ye truly seek me. . . .

He strokes my shoulder with his callused thumb tip. "How old is your son now?" I ask.

"My son," he says flatly. "My son woulda been nineteen in November."

"He died?"

"Yup. Killed in a car wreck a year ago. Coming back from a debate meet in Vegas. Him and his partner had just won the Western States Championship. A drunk hit'em, doing better'n a hundred miles an hour."

"Oh, I'm so sorry." I'm trying not to become tearful. Everything that pops into my head seems like a cliché but I want to comfort him somehow. So I put my arms around his neck.

"He was a good kid. A lot better'n I deserved. We were buddies." His breath is hot on my face. He hugs me back, and we just sit like that for a long time, not saying anything. I feel his breath on my hair and his broad hands below my shoulder blades.

"I can't think of anything worse than losing a child. You must miss him terribly." Listening to myself talk, I sound like a cheap greeting card, but there's no other way to voice these sentiments.

"I don't tell people about him," he says, his moustache twitching against my cheek as he speaks. "I hardly ever mention him. Even now, a year later, I can't do it without getting choked up." He looks at me for a long time, then kisses me in a sweet and non-threatening way. "I don't know why I told you. Except I had to do something. I want you to trust me, but I can tell you're not ready to have sex with me yet," he says with an ironic little laugh. "That's fine. I don't mind going slow. Hell, I haven't dated a woman in over a year. Haven't even given a woman the eye in all that time." I wonder why his wife left. Was it because their son died? Or before that? He seems like a tender man, and considerate. My blouse tugs snuggly under my armpits. I still have my arms draped loosely around his neck. Tonight, I was only looking to have a little fun, to find some physical affection while still retaining the upper hand. This is much more than I bargained for, emotionally.

"So you're telling me you've been celibate a whole year?" I ask him.

"Yeah," he says.

"Does it feel like a lifetime?"

"You better believe it."

"Well then," I say, "maybe we *are* made for each other."

"What is it you do, honey?" he wants to know. There's not a trace of impatience or frustration in his voice. He's seems genuinely interested in me, or maybe he's just deflecting his attention from the topic of his son's death.

"I teach school," I admit. "Choral music."

"I never finished my degree. Never made it past my freshman year in college, truth be told. That botany class got me where I lived, and anthropology—I couldn't hack that Samoan stuff. Margaret Mead, you ever heard of her?" I nod. He continues, "I may not talk like much, but I'm no dummy. I built up my own business from scratch—P.A.C. Welders—and now I got eight full-time employees. I used to work for Mountain Fuel, you see, but there's no future if you're not your own boss."

"What's P.A.C.?" I ask.

"My initials," he explains. I'm still wracking my brain, trying to remember what name he told me in the bar. So he's a welder. I picture an acetylene torch beneath his bed. Maybe we'll both ignite before the evening's over, our flesh melded in sexual congress, our skeletons coupling in the ashes of his smoky bedroom. I have to think of sex in these terms, to keep my distance, so I can remain in control with anyone who wants to sleep with me.

He massages the furrows in his forehead, working up his courage to ask me something. "I don't meet many women like you," he says quietly. "Hell, who am I kidding? I never meet women like you—a teacher, a church-goer, a teetotaler. You're a good-hearted person, I can tell. I respect your morals. You're somebody I could introduce to my mother."

"Yes," I answer, "mothers have always liked me more than their sons do."

He laughs. "I think maybe you worry the sons," he says. "You're a contradiction in terms. You can't make up your mind if you're Sexy Sadie or Sister Relief Society President. And you just might be the perfect woman, aside from your terrible lack of snooker skills." There's a pause. "So how about Sunday dinner at Mama's?" he suggests.

"Today?" Saturday night is over. It's two a.m.

"Why the hell not?" he asks. "Mashed potatoes, gravy, roast beef, green peas, jello, and whipped cream, devil's-food cake. I got a standing invitation. She always invites a few of her widow friends over, and me. I'm her baby, the only one of her six boys that's gone astray. The only one without a good, solid wife to roast beef for me, and whip my cream. Mama's seventy-seven, fit as a fiddle, plays table tennis on Tuesdays, does her own housework, hasn't missed a visiting teaching month in fifty-two years. Used to swim laps at Deseret Gym every weekday, before they tore it down. Even got herself a boyfriend the last year or so. He wants to build a garage for her, so she doesn't have to scrape her wind-

shield in the winter. Wants to marry her, if truth be known, but she says she's sealed to the best man ever put on earth, so why fool with a good thing?"

"Your mother sounds intimidating."

He laughs. "Hell, no," he says. "She loves everybody. Totally without guile. She'd love you the minute she laid eyes on you."

"A woman you met in a bar?"

"We could say it was at the church."

"Doesn't she know better?"

"Wishful thinking covers a hell of a lot of sins."

"All right," I agree.

We talk all night long, discussing the Philadelphia Eagles, the science of welding, the congressional race, Brahms (his mother's favorite composer), clarinet lessons (he studied for five years and loves Benny Goodman), the merits of wader boots for fishing the Weber river, the fact that his son Jack grew to be six-foot-two, ran cross-country for his high school, plus being a champion debater, and loved to bicycle on the Alpine Loop.

He fixes us toast and eggs at dawn, and we fall asleep, sitting side-by-side on the big leather couch. Then, shortly after noon, he calls his mother, who has just returned from church, and breaks the news to her that we're coming. He drops me at my apartment for a quick shower while he sits in the car with the engine idling. I dress hurriedly, and when I get back in the car, we're oddly shy, as though we'd never sat on a couch in a darkened room and thought about making love to each other, or spoken of the death of his grown son. He left his pickup truck at home; we're driving in his big, new, four-door sedan, a family man's vehicle just made for carpools. The freeway shimmers in the late autumn rain.

Passing American Fork, I wonder what kind of crazy notion this is, going to visit somebody's mother in a short skirt and clingy cashmere sweater. I just grabbed the first clean things I saw in the closet. I should be wearing a floral print dress with a tatted collar, and Mary Jane patent leather shoes with white anklets. How many years has it been since anyone took me home to meet his mother? Twelve? Fifteen?

He has freshly-combed, wet hair, slicked back on the sides like Elvis Presley's, only shorter. It's dark brown when wet. Lovely, the way it curls over his lined forehead. At the Point of the Mountain he pulls onto the shoulder by the gravel pit to kiss me, touches my knee beneath my skirt as though it were Bavarian crystal. "Damn, your legs turn me on," he says. "Think we could do it up in those gravel pits without the Smokeys catching on?"

"We'll be late," I say, amused at his teasing. "Your mother."

"Oh, yeah. I hate cold gravy."

We pass the prison, Riverton, Sandy, Murray, the Denver turn-off. He takes the Thirteenth South exit, heads east to Foothill. We cruise through the Monument Park area, home of the general authorities. His mother's house is massive, brick, landscaped to a tee. There's a potted bougainvillea on the porch, a white-slatted swing suspended on heavy chains, a pitcher of iced lemonade on a lace-covered table. It seems rather cool and autumnal for lemonade, but so be it.

His mother stands and offers her hand to me. Her smile is genuine, her white hair flawlessly coifed. "Hi," I say. "I'm Charlotte Ridgeway." She holds my hand between hers, assesses my face, ignoring the reek of stale cigarettes rising from my clothing after having ridden in the car with her son. She hugs me, pressing me against her estimable bosom as though I were the prodigal daughter come home after years as a wastrel.

"Call me Martha," she says, her eyes bright and wet. She motions to the swing. "You two kids sit here," she says. "I'll be right back with the appetizers."

"No widows today?" I ask her son quietly after she goes back inside.

"She cancelled them. Wants to concentrate on just you."

His mother offers a tray of bacon-wrapped water chestnuts alongside Cheez-Whizzed celery sticks with chopped walnuts lined up on top. Actually, very tasty. We munch away, even though walnuts give me canker sores. She sits near me in a wicker chair, the hem of her chiffon dress wispy in the breeze. "I hope you like lamb," she says. "I bought a nice leg of lamb yesterday. Phillip actually prefers beef, don't you, dear?"

It's the first I've heard his name clearly, though I saw some smudged white lettering on his mailbox and a partial name on the peel-off label of his *Sports Illustrated*—P. A. Carpenter. Secretly, I was afraid his name would be "Parley."

"You teach music?" she asks, ecstatic. "Come in and play my Steinway, please. Something by Brahms, if you don't mind."

"I'm really a singer and vocal teacher," I admit. "I did study piano, but it's been years and basically I'm barely good enough to plunk out the melody for my students."

"I'll accompany you, then. Are you an alto or soprano? We'll perform for Phillip. Of course, I'm sure he's heard you dozens of times, but for me it will be your debut." Obviously, Phillip is not in the habit of bringing women home. She assumes we're on the cusp of commitment.

The house is filled with the delicious smell of browning meat, yeasty rolls, steamed green beans—Sunday dinner. In the living room, Martha hands me a stack of music books—arias, art songs, anthems for low and high voices. I choose "The King of Love My Shepherd Is," because it will please her. Phillip—"Phil" suits him better—watches from the tapestry-covered couch, his arms stretched out along the top ridge. He's tapping his foot nervously, anxious at not being able to smoke. I can't look him in the

eye when I sing, "Perverse and foolish, oft I've strayed." Again, I feel silly, embarrassed, like an adolescent caught passing notes in class. His mother's playing is sensitive, heart-felt, technically fine. She's a natural accompanist.

"Thank you, Sister Carpenter," I say as she closes the book.

Phil claps politely. His mother's eyes fill with tears again. "You have the voice of an angel," she says, while he nods, a wisp of a smile turning up the corners of his mouth.

She clutches my hand to hers and I feel the smooth linen of her hanky against my palm. "Phillip, dear," she says over my shoulder, "would you mind going down to the storage room and bringing up a devil's-food cake mix? I'm running a little late today."

As he disappears down the stairway, she clasps me to her again and says, "Between us, I know we can get him on the right track again. He's a good man. Things just didn't work out last time. She wasn't. . .well, there are always two sides to a story. But you, dear, are perfect for him. Perfect. He's had such a hard time since Jackie died. I didn't think he'd ever recover. I honestly haven't seen him with a woman once since it happened, and before that—well—Phillip has always been a lady's man. I'm so glad he found you. And I won't ask where, because I know you're the right one, regardless."

Phil is back with the cake mix. She takes it from him and goes off, humming, into the kitchen. So she guesses that I met him in a bar. He puts his hands on the small of my back, inching them down onto my butt, and presses me full-length against him. I squirm uncomfortably, afraid his mother will interrupt us. I listen for the whirring of the mix-master. "She likes you," he says, "almost as much as I do. What say we leave right after dinner? I can't wait to get you alone again."

His mother's humming grows louder, nearer, then stops. She must be standing in the doorway, watching us kiss, smiling approval because now his hands rest demurely at my waist. The kiss is soft and quick. She clears her throat. "Just let me pop this cake in the oven, and we're ready for the main course," she says.

He nuzzles my ear with his lips and whispers, "Ten years from now, you won't even remember how we met in a beer joint."

"She knows," I say.

"She's a smart old cookie."

"Charlotte, dear," his mother says, "you take this chair, and Phillip and I will sit on either side of you."

"What a lovely table," I say. English bone china, crystal goblets, real silverware. Coming from this background, how did Phillip end up in a cheap Orem bar, dragging on cigarettes? But look who's talking.

"I hope you don't mind kneeling for the blessing," she says, puffing as she settles her bulk at the side of her chair. "It's the way we always did it in Star Valley."

I beam, breathless at the coincidence, smiling open-mouthed at Phillip, forgetting until I see his blank expression that he doesn't *know* yet where my grandparents were from. We have no shared history, except the history of his son, plus the heavy breathing and hurried caresses we shared last night.

The food is mouth-watering, old-fashioned Mormon cooking. I can tell that, in her mind, Martha Carpenter is already planning the ceremony, wondering if the bishop will perform it here in her lovely home, Wagner's march from "Lohengrin" played on her Steinway, the civil ceremony a stop-gap measure on our journey to the temple.

Phillip is smiling at me over his hot roll. He nods his head as though we share a secret, as though he has just eased a glass slipper onto my foot and found it a perfect fit.

After dessert, I wash the dishes by hand in steaming water. Martha dries so she can put things where they belong. "I have a perfectly good dishwasher," she says, running her fingertips over the word, "Kitchenaid," "but there's nothing compares to a couple of women, standing side-by-side, washing and wiping. It's one of the purest forms of fellowship, don't you agree?" Phil has made himself scarce.

The dishes done, we adjourn to the porch again. His mother admires my appearance. "I had hair like that once," she says, "gold as honey, down past my shoulders. And those knees, my goodness, how can anybody have knees worthy of showing off? They're lovely, Charlotte, dear. I don't blame you for wearing your skirt short. I'm sure Phillip likes it. He's always been a 'leg man.'"

"He told you that?" I say, amazed.

"Oh no, but a mother overhears these things now and again, you know, when a group of young men are eating pizza in her kitchen at midnight."

Phil comes back and, as the afternoon sun slants sideways through the picture window, the three of us lapse into a silence as uncomfortable as the gaps in testimony meeting when the microphone hums vacantly. By five o'clock, Phil has still made no move to get up. Finally, I stand and say, "Well, we should be going. Thank you so much, Sister Carpenter. It was lovely meeting you, and the dinner was delicious."

"Mormon girls always help with the dishes," she says. "Have you ever noticed?" She pats my back. We're exactly the same height. Her eyes are dry now. She stage whispers, "Don't you dare let this one get away," as Phil leans to kiss her.

In the car, he waves to her across the street with one hand while with the other he's cupping my knee and trying to move his fingers higher onto my thigh. Sister Carpenter blows a kiss and stands with her hand extended as we drive back down the hill, descending into the valley from the east like true pioneers.

On the way back to Orem, we're both very quiet. Everything I can imagine talking about seems trivial. I keep thinking about his son, dead on the highway at age eighteen, his career in debate and cross-country and whatever else he cherished, gone. His dad's pride in him, their shared love of fishing and bicycling, vanished. I picture an ambulance, flashing lights on a desolate stretch of I-15, the car overturned in the ditch, the boy's body on a stretcher, covered with a ghostly sheet, oozing blood. The boy's poor mother, who had already lost her husband, would have received the news via telephone that her only child was dead on the interstate.

"Would you ever want to have more children?" I blurt out, turning to look at Phil's profile as we speed along the freeway. I'm conscious that every car we pass may be driven by a drunk.

He takes my hand and urges me to sit close, then tucks his arm around my shoulder, cradles my head against his chest and says, "I've thought about it a lot. Jack hated being an only child." He's quiet a moment, then adds, " My mom's right about us. She's always right. I want you to live with me."

He waits for me to say something, but I don't. I'm not sure exactly what I think.

"If it feels too sudden, just don't worry about it. I won't push you into anything," he tells me.

At the back of my mind, I'm harboring fond wishes about telling my children that I met their father on a summer evening in autumn, at a fireside where iced lemonade was served, Cheez Whiz and walnuts on celery sticks turned the inside of my mouth white with canker sores, and we all knelt to say the prayer. But truly, nobody ends up happy, do they?

My Toyota is still parked on the slab of pavement east of the beer bar on the Orem hill. Phil drives me there. It's night again. We've spent twenty hours together. He gives me a thick-tongued kiss in farewell, then pats his shirt pocket. I can see the tattered edges of the paper on which he wrote my phone number and address. "I'm in the book, anyway," I tell him.

"Look, I sat in front of your place for twenty minutes. Don't you think I could find it again? Say, tomorrow's Monday, right?" he asks. "How about getting together for Family Home Evening?" He grins, but now I can see melancholy behind his smile.

"Should I prepare a gospel lesson, or are you taking me bowling?"

"Either," he says, "long as it's followed by a little lovin'."

I wonder if his attraction for me will die down in a week or two if I'm not willing to sleep with him. Maybe he'll be taking some nice exotic dancer up to Salt Lake for a leg of lamb next Fast Sunday. "Fine," I say half-heartedly. My brother, the bishop of a ward in Sacramento, just disfellowshipped a woman for having an abortion. I was surprised; I would have expected excommunication.

"So you live alone?" he asks me.

"Yes. My apartment's tiny."

"When's the lease expire?"

"I don't have a lease."

"I'll be there tomorrow with my pickup," he says. "Get your furniture ready to move to my place."

I gaze at him steadily and smile. "I couldn't do that," I say. "I'd get fired for shacking-up with a man."

"Quit your job, then," he suggests. "I'll support you. Always did want a stay-at-home woman."

"Your mother wouldn't approve, and neither would mine. But call me," I say, "if you're serious about Monday night." I open the passenger door.

"I am nothing if not serious," he says.

"We're just so different," I protest meekly. "Now your mother and I, we're peas in a pod."

"So what's the problem? You can spend your Sunday afternoons in social intercourse with my mom, singing your anthems, doing your dishes, plunkin' at the Steinway. The rest of the week you can engage in the other kind of intercourse with me. We'll keep each other happy, in and out of bed. I can tell you're a damn fine woman, and passionate, too, if you'd give yourself half a chance. I could be real happy with you, Charlotte. Listen," he grabs both my hands and holds them in his, "if you're hung up on getting married, let's run off right now to Vegas. We can have the ceremony at dawn in one of them little chapels." For the first time, I notice the urgency in his voice. He's not kidding. The road to Vegas. How can he think of it without grieving?

"We don't even know each other, Phillip."

"The hell we don't. When you come from a background like ours, you know each other in less than a day. We spent all night talking. Most married people don't talk that much to each other in a whole year. I'll bet your mother and my mother are interchangeable. Am I right?" I nod reluctantly. "It's better'n one of them arranged marriages in Thailand or China, or wherever. So let's do it. Whaddaya say?"

I step out of his car and close the door behind me. Leaning through the open window, I say, "I really can't do that, but ask me again, will you? In a month or two?"

"You're not gonna ask me to quit smoking?"

"No."

"I been trying for twenty years to give it up. Can't do it."

"My great-grandfather smoked," I say, warming to the subject, not wanting to leave him, "but he always went to church, anyway. One day he drove his team from Star Valley down to the Logan Temple with a load of deacons in back, going to do baptisms for the dead." I rest my

arms on the chrome of his car and flip the black rubber window lining with a fingernail. "Grandpa stood outside the temple grounds, waiting for the boys, smoking one cigarette after another."

"Was this grandpa married in the temple?"

"Yes."

"Did he smoke all his life?"

"As far as I know."

"Maybe him and me'll be buddies in the eternities. But Charlotte, darlin, we're in the here-and-now. I'll ask you again in a month, and I want the answer to be yes. And by the way, I plan to call you 'Lottie.'"

As I walk to my car, I feel his eyes on me. This is all part of our story, our folklore, the tale that every long-married couple is capable of relating sixty years down the line when asked the question, "How did you and your sweetheart meet?"

The chances of our staying together may be extremely slim. It would be an unlikely marriage, to be sure, but not necessarily a bad one. I've just about decided I'm not the type to hold out until the next life, panting after an eternal husband—some good man who already has a wife or two. I might as well take Phil, if he's still around in a month. I could do worse.

He waits for me to start the ignition of my own car, then blinks his headlights, a corny but charming gesture. I like him. I don't want to get married in Las Vegas, but I do want to get married. They'd have to get a new nameplate for my door at school—"Ms. Charlotte Carpenter." It's not politically correct to say "Mrs." in our district.

I'm not too old—Phil and I might still have a couple of babies. Would he truly want that? Or is he secretly worried that he's too old to start a new family? He's old enough to be a grandfather, and I a grandmother, if we'd started young. He'd be sixty before the first one graduated from high school.

Who knows what will happen in the next month? I might be standing in white satin beside a Steinway with stephanotis twined in my hair, or sitting once again in a no-name beer bar on the Orem hill, staring at the bottom of a Coke glass, listening to the thrum of a guitar, feeling my own pulse race whenever a grim-faced, unshaven steelworker walks by. Regardless of which it is, I'll never turn out the way my parents expected me to. I'll never be holy enough to suit my brothers. I'll never rise in the first resurrection, upright and unashamed, my garments washed pure in the blood of the lamb, my conscience unscathed, the film of my life one continuous round of faith-promoting episodes.

I slam on my emergency brake, fling my car door open, rush back to the big Pontiac, and stick my head inside Phil's window, catching his breath in my mouth, feeling the softness of his lips, the brush of his whiskers, relishing the physical pleasure this man gives me. I have never

been beautiful, except for my hair and legs; I've never been righteous, except for my silent prayers and acts for the helpless; I've never been loved, except by my own parents. But now, in this deserted parking lot with two motors running, two sets of headlights intersecting in the buzz of air beside this multi-laned highway, just for a moment I'm awash with the frantic needs of the flesh and I can testify, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I will not let this good and sexy man get away from me, anywhere on this side of the veil.

Brothers

Levi S. Peterson

ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF after Mitch fell, he decided on a comeback climb. Understandably, his wife was less than enthusiastic about it.

Everyone agreed the fall should have killed Mitch or, worse, made a quadriplegic of him. It happened on an easy cliff in the Sandia Mountains. He had three pieces of protection placed, but they zippered out. He had broken his neck, a shoulder blade, an ankle, and a dozen ribs. He wore a halo brace with screws anchored in his skull for months. At night he couldn't sleep more than two hours before the brace woke him up.

His wife, Jan, had to bathe him and wipe his bottom when he used the toilet. Actually, Jan wasn't his wife. He'd needed a reason for being excommunicated from his church, which was Mormon, and living with Jan without the benefit of matrimony sufficed. However, they both counted on getting married sooner or later. So she gave him his baths and wiped his bottom.

He tried to assure Jan that the comeback climb wouldn't be technical. Someone had told him that you could get to the top of the highest peak in Wyoming by a scramble if you knew the route. That was what he had in mind. He wanted to get on with his ambition to climb the highest summit in each of the fifty states. The problem was that none of his Albuquerque friends were interested in driving so far for a scramble. He told Jan he would be okay going solo. In fact, he needed a solo outing of some sort. He needed to see where his life was headed, what with technical climbing being out of the question. But Jan said someone had to go with him. If nobody else went with him, she would have to, an impossible eventuality because her idea of a vigorous workout was a half hour in a gym.

Against his better judgment he let her phone his stepbrother Bernie in Salt Lake City, whom he hadn't seen in twenty years. Bernie, who was a total Mormon, was properly skeptical of getting involved in this little adventure. He said he was afraid of heights. Jan said the point of a scramble was that you didn't expose yourself to dangerous falls. Bernie then said he didn't have the stamina for it. However, his wife Carol got on the other phone while this conversation was going on and said he did too

have the stamina; he was a scoutmaster and just last summer had taken thirteen boys to King's Peak, the highest point in Utah. Bernie briefly considered raising yet another objection, which was that he was afraid of being alone, and as far as he could see, a five-day trek in the Wind River Mountains with a stepbrother from whom he had been estranged for decades wouldn't be much different from being there alone. However, he was ashamed of this phobia, which seemed not just juvenile but downright infantile, and he couldn't mention it to Carol. So her assertion that he had been to King's Peak with thirteen scouts just last summer clenched the matter, and he reluctantly agreed to go along with Mitch.

Mitch and Jan drove to Salt Lake on a Sunday. He told her she didn't need to go to the trouble. She said she didn't trust him enough to let him go alone; once on the road, he could very well change his mind and head for the Wind River Mountains without Bernie. Mitch protested her suspicion, but not with much vigor because the thought had occurred to him more than once during the preceding week.

Bernie and Carol took them in, Carol with more enthusiasm than Bernie. Obviously, Jan and Carol had already struck up a warm friendship over the phone. Jan left Mitch to unpack in the guestroom while she went to the kitchen to help Carol get dinner. During their after-dinner talk, Jan reminded Bernie over and over that he had to keep a close eye on Mitch and not let him do something foolish, given the fact that he was still so stove up from the accident that he couldn't raise his hands much higher than his head. Bernie promised to do as requested, falling into a sullen resignation because, being a total Mormon, he knew he'd have to honor his promise. As for Carol, she had been on a spiritual high for days, marveling over the prospect of Bernie being the instrumentality by which his lapsed brother might be induced to rejoin the church and marry his gentile girlfriend and of course convert her and then take her to the temple and be sealed to her for time and eternity. Glowing with good will, she had let Bernie have sex every night during the past week, a frequency unheard of since the early years of their marriage. She was worried that it might sap his strength for the climb, but he said, no, it would actually make him stronger. According to an article he had read in a chiropractor's office, a man who was emptied of his regenerative fluids had an improved ability of arms, legs, and lungs.

In bed that night in the guestroom, Mitch grumbled about how complicated a simple climb had become. Having been raised a Mormon, he could see clear as day which direction Bernie and Carol were headed. He warned Jan to be on her guard during the coming week. Carol would tow her to Temple Square and also undoubtedly to that building that used to be Hotel Utah where he had heard that a film on the history of Mormonism was pumped without cost and at high pressure to unsuspecting gentile tourists.

"You need to check yourself over pretty carefully every night," he said, "to see if you are becoming infected with her testimony. It's contagious as small pox."

"What's a testimony?" she asked.

"It's a witness that you have had a message from the other world. Mark my word. Carol has had a big one."

"They both seem like awfully decent people," Jan said. "I can't figure out why you've been hiding them from me all this time."

Well before dawn Mitch and Bernie loaded their gear into Mitch's car and headed for Wyoming. Neither of them found it comfortable to be locked in a car with the other. The last thing either wanted to talk about was their years spent together in rural Idaho. Eventually, the silence got to Bernie, and he began giving minor details about his eleven grandchildren, whose photographs Mitch was already familiar with because they covered a lot of wall and table space in Bernie's house. Mitch didn't reciprocate, though he did have a couple of kids by his first marriage, a son and a daughter, both respectful and affectionate toward Mitch, married with growing families, both doing the Mormon thing full time, thanks mostly to their mother and also to their stepfather, who had turned out to be a pretty decent fellow.

When they had got onto the high plains of Wyoming, still heading east into the early sun, they could see the Uinta Mountains off to the south just across the border in Utah. Bernie said he had been taking boy scouts to the Uintas every summer for twelve years. He admitted it was a scary business to be a scoutmaster. Boys of that age didn't think; they operated on impulse, the more unintelligent the better as far as they were concerned. You never knew when one of them might try scaling a cliff or swimming across an ice-cold lake. Some scoutmasters weren't so smart either. He knew one who had carried a dozen hymn books in his pack on a ten-mile trek so his scouts could sing at the campfire. Another allowed himself to be tied to a tree by his scouts in what was supposed to be a game; the boys then hiked into a nearby town to hang out all evening with girls at a drive-in.

East of Fort Bridger they left the freeway and took a state highway headed north. In time their road began to follow the Green River. The river was slow moving and of a brown, muddy color that made people ask why it was called the Green River. Cottonwood trees lined its banks, and grazing cattle dotted its wide grassy bottom. To the east rose the wild, rugged wall of the Wind River range. An hour later, they stopped in Pinedale and bought some freeze-dried dinners at a small sporting goods store. While they were paying, Bernie told the cashier, a young woman who looked like a granola cruncher from Yosemite or the Cascades, that they were brothers.

"That depends on what you mean by brothers," Mitch said to her.

"His dad and my mom got married. So we spent some time on the same farm. That was a long time ago."

On the way out they passed a display of rock climbing gear. Mitch pointed out a spring-loaded cam, a device with tiny cogs and looped cable. "That's the kind that pulled out and let me fall," he said.

The cashier was still watching. "My fall is the reason this fellow is with me," Mitch explained to her, jerking a thumb toward Bernie. "My wife figures somebody ought to be along to keep an eye on me even if he can't climb."

"I don't apologize for being afraid of heights," Bernie said.

They got into Mitch's car and continued driving north along the river, which paralleled the mountain range closely. Mitch pointed out that somewhere on its barren, jagged crest was an indistinguishable prominence called Gannett Peak, their ultimate destination.

They were both thinking about what Mitch had said to the cashier. Mitch was thinking he had been unnecessarily blunt. He granted it showed insecurity on his part. It had something to do with Jan and Carol warming up to each other. As for Bernie, he was feeling snubbed and angry. A backpack trip with the scouts was an ordeal. He looked forward only to its end. This trek promised to be worse—five days of brutal labor, entirely unrewarding in and of itself, to escort a man who didn't want escorting to an elevation so nondescript that you had to take the word of the geologists that it was sixty or eighty or a hundred feet higher than the elevations around it.

After a while Bernie said, "My dad adopted you. Your mom adopted me. We have two sisters in common. It seems like to me that makes us brothers."

"I never regarded your dad as my dad," Mitch said.

"Yes, I know," Bernie said. "You called him Jim."

"I went to a lawyer six or seven years ago and said, I want to repudiate an adoption. I don't want it down on the records that I am the legal son of Jim Lindmuller. The lawyer said, We can change your name easy enough. What do you want to change it to? I said, To Taylor, which is my real dad's name."

"I knew about that," Bernie said.

"So now my name is Mitch Taylor again," Mitch went on. "No disrespect meant to you."

"No, of course not."

About an hour later they got to a trailhead at the end of the road. They strapped on their packs and headed into the mountains along the wide, deep canyon of the Green River. They crossed meadows and went through stands of lodge pole pines and aspens. There were moose and elk droppings in the trail—also a good deal of horse dung. Sometimes the trail came close to the wide, rushing river, which did seem green

here, a milky greenish color probably derived from the grinding of boulder fields and glaciers. Bernie complained about his aching back. He said he knew his shoulders wouldn't stop hurting till he took off the pack. He said he had never started a backpack trip without wondering why he was doing it. Mitch for his part was trying hard to recapture the old euphoria of a climb. It ought to be turning on almost any moment, he kept telling himself. In the meantime, his shoulders were hurting so much he considered turning back. No pain, no gain, he began to tell himself, repeating the mantra of weight lifters. It stood to reason his back would hurt less on his next trip. This trip would condition him. Furthermore, you shouldn't expect to make a summit without some cost. That was what climbing was about.

Early evening they made camp on a bench above the river. They heated a couple of the freeze-dried dinners over Mitch's tiny camp stove. Mitch scowled while he ate. Camp food was all pretty much tasteless. However, you had to eat to keep up your strength. He watched while Bernie opened the pop-top lid on a small can of diced fruit. Bernie offered him half. Mitch shook his head. "You hauled it; you eat it," he said. There was an issue here. He had disapproved when he saw Bernie putting the cans in his pack on Sunday night. "Too much weight," he had said. "It isn't worth the expenditure of energy required to carry it."

They both had a miserable night, lying in a narrow tent with a half-inch of cellulite foam between their sleeping bags and the ground. Mitch groaned sometimes when he turned over. "Let me just ask you," Bernie said on one of these occasions. "What's so important about getting to the top of a mountain?"

"That's a good question," Mitch said. He admitted climbing was a strange business. If you couldn't make the top, you might just as well stay home. He talked about the first ascent of Denali, attributed to an Episcopal minister named Hudson Stuck. In 1913 Stuck and three partners arrived on the south summit of Denali, from which they could clearly see a fir pole planted on the lower north summit three years earlier by the most improbable climbers in the history of mountaineering, the so-called Mt. McKinley sourdoughs. Four miners, spurred on by a bet made in a Fairbanks saloon, had toiled across the Muldrow glacier and established a camp around 11,000 feet. From that camp, in a single epic day, three of the miners climbed more than 9,000 feet to the north summit, unfurled a flag on a fir pole they had carried, and returned. But it didn't count. They hadn't made the true summit.

The next morning, Mitch and Bernie shouldered their packs and, without the benefit of a trail, turned up a lateral canyon named Tourist Creek, which proved to be seriously misnamed. Its steep slopes consisted of gigantic boulders fallen from sheer granite cliffs. Angular and multifaceted, the boulders overlay one another in utter confusion, leaving no

shred of soil anywhere visible. Many were as large as a car. Some were as big as a dump truck. Weighted by their full packs, Mitch and Bernie levered themselves upward over the boulders with aching muscles and gasping breath. Footing was at best precarious, on sharp edges or tiny projections that accommodated only the toe of a boot. Mitch, mumbling "No pain, no gain," moaned every time he stretched for a hold above his head. Bernie was panting hoarsely. This was, he saw, no hike but an exhausting climb only a little short of technical. Certainly it gave a new meaning to the word *scramble*. He found it helpful to watch Mitch's foot and hand moves. Every few minutes he was faced by a wide gap between boulders, requiring either that he consume five or ten laborious minutes climbing off one boulder and onto another or that he accept the exposure—the empty space between himself and the rocks fifteen or twenty or thirty feet below—and leap heedlessly across the gap. It gave him no pleasure to realize that more and more he was resorting to this last measure. It seemed a gesture of desperation, a serious compromise of good sense.

Noon found them perhaps two-thirds the way up the canyon. They sat with their feet dangling over a small boulder and ate a lunch consisting of cheese, crackers, and lemonade made from powder.

"Going back to this thing about us not being brothers," Bernie said, "Jan seems to think we are."

"Yes, and she thinks scoutmasters are mountaineers, which they aren't. So she just might be mistaken on this other matter too. No disrespect meant."

"No, of course not."

"On this thing about your dad," Mitch said. "I was nine when Mom married Jim. I already had a dad, and he had walked out on me. I had very complicated feelings. On the one hand, I needed a dad; on the other hand, I felt like Mom had given up on my dad too soon. I kept hoping he would come back. He'd been a nice guy. I can remember a lot of nice things he did for me. He took me places, did things with me. So when Mom said Jim was going to adopt me, I protested. Then Mom took out her twelve-gauge shotgun, so to speak, and fired both barrels. She said my dad had signed off on Jim adopting me in return for being free of child support. I was young, but I wasn't stupid. I knew I had been sold. I'm not claiming I have been a good daddy myself. But at least I paid child support, and my kids saw me at vacation time."

They got up, shouldered their packs, and began clambering over the boulders again.

"I think my dad actually did love you," Bernie said.

Mitch turned to face Bernie. "Get real!" he said. "Do you remember that year you and I were supposed to stay on the homestead all summer and not come into town except on Sunday? I was fourteen and you were ten or eleven."

"I remember."

"Jim said, 'Mitch is in charge. Bernie, you mind him.' About the third or fourth day we were out there, we went into the pasture to catch the work horses so I could hitch them up and mow alfalfa. I asked you to carry one of the bridles. Just on principle. You refused. I thrust one of the bridles into your hands. You dropped it. I picked it up and hung it over your shoulder. You pushed it off. I tied the reins to your wrists. You collapsed and lay on the ground. I dragged you a few yards. You were howling and cursing. So I gave up and took the bridles and somehow cornered the horses without your help and went to work, mowing hay. When I got back to the shack at noon, you were gone. You had walked into town even though Jim had said we weren't to do that. Nobody showed up to tell me anything about it till Sunday morning when Jim drove out to take me into town for church. I said, 'Is Bernie coming back out with me tonight?' Jim said, 'No, and by the way, it isn't your privilege to discipline Bernie. That's my job.' And I was out there the whole summer by myself."

"I was in the wrong," Bernie said.

"I don't blame you," Mitch said. "Jim is the one who was in the wrong for putting us out there in the first place. And my mother, for letting him do it."

"No," Bernie insisted, "from start to finish, my behavior was inexcusable."

Inexcusable yet inevitable, Bernie admitted to himself. He remembered all too clearly the aloneness of the homestead. During his waking hours he'd had a strange impulse to run. There was something terrifying, something imminently lethal, about isolation. He hadn't walked back into town the day he'd abandoned Mitch. He had run. But it wasn't something he could tell Mitch about, or anyone else for that matter. It seemed too shameful, too infantile.

Late in the afternoon they turned southeastward out of Tourist Creek, taking a side gorge that was a little less steep and offered stretches where grass alternated with boulders. Toward evening they arrived at a crescent-shaped lake perhaps an eighth of a mile wide and a half mile long, which stood, according to Mitch's altimeter, at 11,000 feet. They made camp with difficulty, there being only sparse spots of grass in a terrain composed mostly of rock. As they heated water for supper, the clouds that had covered the sky most of the day parted and a late sun came out. To the southeast stood high final peaks on the Continental Divide with snowfields and glaciers, Gannett itself being still out of sight. For supper they shared an unpalatable freeze-dried meal of potatoes, beef, and gravy. Bernie opened another can of diced fruit and offered half of it to Mitch.

"No way," said Mitch. "What are you trying to do? Break down

my morals? You don't bring canned goods on a climb. It's a matter of principle."

"You have a strange sense of principle," Bernie said. "Considering that you got yourself excommunicated from the church."

"That was a matter of principle too," Mitch said. "As you know, I was sealed to Jim and my mother for time and eternity when they got married in the temple. So after I changed my name back to Taylor, I began inquiring how you go about getting unsealed from someone. It turned out the easiest way was to get excommunicated from the church. That undoes all your ordinances and sealings. So I did it. I began shacking up with Jan, and my bishop obliged by holding a church court which I didn't show up at."

"I would think you'd at least want to be sealed to your kids," said Bernie.

"I never was sealed to them. I don't belong to anybody. That's the way I feel. I'm out there all alone."

By the time they had finished supper, Mitch was starting to feel good. He was pleased with the hard scramble up Tourist Creek. If your body hurt as much as his did, it had to be good for you. This wasn't a trek for couch potatoes. He could see he wasn't finished, not by a long shot. He wasn't sixty yet, way too young to give up real climbing. He was starting to feel that Bernie's presence was irrelevant. If he couldn't add anything to the climb, at least he couldn't detract much from it either.

Mitch looked out on the lake, a purple mirror beneath a darkening sky. A single planet burned in the cloudless west. Talus slopes of jumbled boulders, fallen from looming cliffs, edged the lake on either side. Sparse patches of grass showed here and there. The only sign of animal life was a few flies—no birds, no mosquitoes, no fish circles spreading on the breathless lake. You couldn't be depressed in a place like this. Things were uncomplicated here. Simple gestures, clear and unambiguous, kept you alive.

Unlike Mitch, Bernie hadn't cheered up. The stark, unadorned landscape depressed him. He longed for Carol. About now he should have been helping clear the dinner table, carrying the dishes to her while she loaded the dishwasher. He was feeling little twinges of the old hysteria over being alone. It didn't help much to be in the presence of a morose, uncommunicative fugitive from righteous living like Mitch. It struck Bernie that this must be a foretaste of the Telestial Kingdom, that unhappy place where the unvaliant among the Mormons and the wicked among the gentiles will dwell throughout all eternity. He saw clearly now how it would be there: barren, unfurnished, sterile, populated by souls who took no comfort in one another's presence, who lived, that is, in effectual isolation forever and ever.

"I don't understand why you would deliberately get yourself unsealed from your family," Bernie said while they were preparing to get into their sleeping bags. "Especially from your mother and our sisters. You share their blood."

"If I didn't feel like part of the family on earth, why should I feel like part of it in eternity?" Mitch said.

"Well, what about Jan?" Bernie insisted. "Don't you want to be with her in eternity?"

"You bet. I plan on it. I lucked out when I ran into Jan. I'm whopped on her. She's whopped on me. We've agreed after we die we'll look each other up."

"You can't just look each other up."

"What do you mean we can't?" Mitch said. "What's to stop us?"

"Because you're not married in the temple. You're not sealed for time and eternity."

Mitch rustled about in his bag, turning this way and that, groaning a little as he sought a comfortable position. "I hope you don't know what you're talking about," he muttered. "Because if you do, the Big Fellow upstairs is a whole lot meaner than I had any idea."

Somewhere late in the night they both got out of the tent to urinate. There had been spatters of rain on the tent earlier. Now the sky was broken, with vast patches of luminous, star-studded sky showing.

While they were settling into their bags again, Mitch said, "I looked up my dad—my real dad—a couple of times before he died, which was about fifteen years ago. I knew his name of course, but I didn't have an address. I didn't even know what state he lived in. So any time I traveled, I'd check the local phone book, in airports, gas stations, motels. One night in a Motel 6 in Rapid City, South Dakota, I looked in the phone book and there he was. I phoned him right then. It was eleven o'clock. 'It's you!' he said. 'Well, come on over.' So I went. Didn't get to bed till two or three in the morning. He wasn't living with anybody. He'd run through four or five wives. Last time I saw him, he was dying of kidney failure from diabetes. A nurse phoned me from the hospital, and I flew in from Albuquerque. He held my hand and cried, and when I said, 'I'll look you up on the other side,' he said, 'I'd like that.' 'Yeah,' I said, 'we'll get to know each other.' 'Let's do it,' he said. 'I'll count on it.'" Mitch was weighing the odds. Could God be so mean, so punctilious and worried about protocol, that he wouldn't let people associate with each other in eternity even if they wanted to unless they had knuckled under to the church and gone through all the ceremonies and made all the vows and kept all the commandments, all four or five thousand of them?

After a while he said, "I guess I don't believe you on that business of being sealed for time and eternity. It's a bunch of hocus-pocus. God wouldn't be that malicious."

Bernie squirmed about, trying unsuccessfully to fit his body around a couple of rocks located in just the wrong places. Mitch was the one who was in the wrong, of course. It wasn't a matter of God being unforgiving; it was a matter of God giving some simple rules. Obey and you get the blessings; disobey and you don't. Nonetheless, things did seem unreal to Bernie just at this moment—the dark tent, Mitch's occasional moaning, the vast rocky wilderness outside, indifferent to human plans and human desires. Sometimes Bernie believed God's emanations filled the entire universe. You couldn't go anywhere God wasn't. But this place made him wonder. Maybe God let the universe tend itself, ruled by natural law, and when it was time to save you, he'd send out a search and find you and bring you home.

About an hour later they got up and fixed breakfast in the dark. Soon after dawn they left camp with emergency gear in their packs in case they had to bivouac. They trudged past the lake and up another narrow, winding valley filled with jumbled rock and an occasional patch of grass. From the end of that valley they could at last see Gannett. They went on, laboring over a half-dozen old moraines and across tundra littered by boulders from a long departed glacier. Midmorning, they started up the final crest, traversing a snowfield, which differed from a glacier, as Mitch informed Bernie, in that it didn't migrate and therefore presumably harbored no crevasses. Beyond the snowfield, they angled across a talus slope toward a cliff towering just under the final peak. Mitch was convinced he could see an easy way up the cliff.

"Right over there to the left," he kept saying. "Not bad at all. A pretty good scramble, actually. Thirty, forty yards of touchy stuff, and then we're free for the top."

Bernie eyed it over—a kind of fractured, rocky staircase that deepened while it rose through the cliff. "That doesn't look like a scramble to me," he said. "That looks dangerous."

He sat on a big rock while Mitch looked for a better route. When he came back, Mitch said there wasn't a better one. "It's this or nothing," he said. "I admit it's tricky. However, no mountaineer would rope up for this chimney. It's just a scramble. Just do exactly what I do and you'll be okay."

He started up the staircase, placing his hands and feet carefully. There were plenty of good holds, but of course if you happened to slip, you'd tumble all the way to the bottom of the staircase.

"I can't do it," Bernie called up to him. "I told you I was afraid of heights."

Mitch backed down and sat on a rock beside Bernie. "Guess it's turnaround time," he said morosely. "It's pretty painful anyhow, reaching up for those handholds. Though I was doing it as you just saw."

They sat for maybe fifteen minutes, eating lunch. The sun was very hot and they both slathered on another layer of sunblock.

"What if I went on alone?" Mitch said. "You'd wait here. I could do it up and back in about two hours."

Bernie didn't answer. He thought about the homestead in Idaho. It had been six miles from town. He didn't know how many miles this place was from a town. He did know it wasn't a place for breaking into a mindless run, which was what he felt like doing just now.

"So what about it?" Mitch repeated. "Are you okay with me making a go for it alone?"

"That'd worry me," Bernie said.

"Nothing to it," Mitch said. "I keep telling you, it's just a scramble."

"What'll I tell Jan?"

"No need to tell her. What she doesn't know won't hurt her."

"It'd really worry me," Bernie said.

They sat another ten minutes or so. Mitch was again inclined to concede. It wasn't just a matter of pain when he had to stretch his arms for a handhold. His muscles were only about half as strong as formerly. He wasn't sure he could rely on them in a pinch. But then he began thinking about how close the summit was and how he would go on for the rest of his life wanting to kick himself in the butt for not having the grit to give it a real try. He got up and shouldered his pack. "I'm going to do it," he said. "Sorry, Bernie. You wait right here. Have yourself a nice nap."

He started up the staircase, whistling cheerfully. About a hundred feet up, he shouted, "See you in a couple of hours." Then he disappeared.

Bernie sat in the shade at the base of the cliff, wondering whether climbers climb because they want to escape their social obligations. Mitch had got what he wanted, which was to be alone. As for himself, he had wasted three days and was fated to waste two more just to find out the fellow he had always thought of as a brother was as distant and alien from him as a man who had been picked out at random from the general population.

Below him stretched a jumbled slope of boulders and beyond that a vast gleaming snowfield and beyond that a narrow, rocky valley with a couple of small lakes and barren cliffs on either side, topped by a skyline of jagged, irregular rock. No trees, no shrubs, no meadows. No butterflies, no bees, no birds. Just lichens. It was true, he now noticed for the first time. On all hands, the rock, close and distant, was covered by a grey-green scale of lichens. A strange despair came over him. How could you identify with lichens? How could you take any comfort, find any shred of fellow feeling, in such a dry, thin veneer of textured color upon otherwise bare rock? He noted, with a touch of curiosity, that the old fear was accelerating inside him, like a vehicle getting up to speed. Solitude exerted a pressure like an atmosphere. He could feel it on his skin. He wanted to run. Just where was unclear.

It occurred to Bernie that, if he hurried, he still had time to catch up with Mitch. He got to his feet and shouldered his pack. He studied the staircase a moment. He decided he could manage it. The trick would be to place his hands and feet on those convenient ledges without looking down, because if he looked down, he would be finished. He'd do something like go rigid or have spasms.

Once he was at it, the climbing seemed easy. He went up and up. Euphoria came over him. But pretty soon he realized that holds for his hands and feet were becoming harder to find because the stairway was fusing with a band of vertical rock. He had apparently got past the point where Mitch had left the staircase. He decided to retreat. Looking down, he was dizzied by the empty air. He kept climbing, reasoning that he would top the cliff at any moment and there would be Mitch heading toward Gannett.

After four or five advances, he saw that the granite was bulging into an overhang. He could see he was done for. He clung in a stupor of terror, the toes of his boots resting on a four-inch lip, his left hand cupping a doughnut-shaped knob, the fingers of his right hand bending into an inch wide crack. Warmth spread around his crotch and he realized he had lost bladder control.

About an hour later Mitch made the summit. The summit itself wasn't much to look at, something of a round table of rock rising above the jagged, serrated ridge that stretched away in either direction. The full circle view was spectacular: rugged mountain ranges and vast shimmering plains rimmed by a horizon mysteriously vague in its indication of where earth ended and sky began. On the summit was a gallon can covered by a flat rock, inside of which were a pencil and a register of persons who had recently been here. Mitch added his name to the list. He wasn't ecstatic. He was too tired, too full of aches and pains, for that. But he was satisfied. The old man wasn't down and out yet. He just might make it back to technical climbing. He'd try for it; that was for sure.

He sat on an edge, dangling his feet over empty space and mulling possibilities while he ate an energy bar and took a drink of water. There was a saying: if you keep climbing long enough, you die on the mountain. If only it were guaranteed, he wouldn't give the matter a second thought. You couldn't ask for a better way to die. But what if it put you in a wheelchair? What if it sentenced you to ten years in a quadriplegic's bed?

All of which got him to thinking how Jan had so patiently given him baths and wiped his butt for three months, and that brought him around to thinking about the next life and the possibility that God would say the following to him on Judgment Day: *You had plenty of warning; you knew you had to get sealed to Jan in the temple in order to have her here; as it is, you have to go off with that bunch of strangers over there and spend eternity milling*

around among them, and don't try anything funny like trying to form some new friendships and love relationships, because if I get word you're up to that, I'll send in the immigration officers and transfer you to a new location.

The climb down proved slower and more risky than the ascent. Mitch dropped off the main ridge through the rubble of a declivity. At the bottom of that, he got onto a precarious, foot-wide ledge, along which he sidestepped, gratefully seizing handholds if they were available. There was about a hundred-foot drop here. The trickiest part was the transition off the ledge into the staircase. He had to admit it was a technical situation. No question of it, he'd have welcomed a belay here. It was lucky Bernie hadn't come along. But, sure enough, he made it safe and sound into the staircase, which left him feeling much more euphoric than he had on top. It was true; the old fellow still had some grit in him.

About then he happened to look upward and was stunned by what he saw. In fact, he had to ask himself whether he was hallucinating. It was Bernie, maybe forty feet above, hung on sheer rock.

"What are you doing up there?" he shouted.

Bernie tried to answer. The sound wasn't much more than a whimper. He longed to let go and get it over with. His hands seemed to be of another mind. They gripped ferociously. They seemed frozen into position. They had long since turned numb. He heard Mitch say, "I'm coming up. Hang on." What seemed a complete thought broke the blank paralysis of his mind. It was that he had to tell Mitch about the file marked *Important* in his desk at work. It would inform Carol about the insurance and retirement. Mitch was saying something more but Bernie couldn't focus on what it signified. He was being enticed, seduced, by that longing to let go and get it over with. It seemed a sensible, peaceful solution to his dilemma. He marveled that his hands couldn't grasp that fact. It was as if someone else controlled them.

He could hear Mitch again, clearly now, saying, "I can see a good hold for your left foot. Get your weight onto your right leg and let your left foot down easy. I'll tell you when to plant it. Then I'll tell you where to place your hands."

"It's no good," Bernie said. "I'm finished. There's a file in my desk at work. Bottom drawer, way to the back. Tell Carol about it. It'll tell her about the insurance and retirement."

"Don't be stupid," Mitch said. "Get your weight on your right leg, then lower that left foot. Just take it easy. Keep your toe in contact with the rock."

Bernie didn't move, and Mitch repeated the directions. He still didn't move. "Can't you get into motion?" Mitch said. "It's only a couple of hours till dark."

"I keep wanting to," Bernie said. "But my body won't cooperate."

Mitch began to rethink this attempt at a rescue. He wasn't sure how

long he himself could cling to his present hold, which wasn't as secure as Bernie's position. His upper back was a throbbing mass of pain. They were on epic rock, the kind only zealots and suicidal heroes attempt without protection—and climbers of that sort, having made it up, would rappel down or find a safer route elsewhere, there being few things more certain to produce disaster in the entire sport of mountaineering than downclimbing sheer rock.

He considered the ethics of the situation. No one could fault him now for climbing down. He had made an honest—and highly risky—effort to save Bernie. The longer he waited the more likely Bernie was to fall and take Mitch down with him. It didn't make sense for both of them to die.

Strangely, Mitch himself now seemed in a kind of paralysis. Instead of starting down, he studied the granite about four inches from his eyes. If you looked close, you saw that granite was composed of crystal-like particles tending toward a hue of bluish grey. Some climbers spoke of intimacy with the rock, as if rock loved to be climbed. They talked that way at parties and in bars. Thinking about that kind of vain, pretentious, and unknowing talk emptied Mitch of emotion. He wondered what some of those armchair mountaineers would recommend in the present crisis. How would they feel about abandoning a brother who had gone catatonic on a cliff? How would they feel about waiting in the dark near the base of the staircase for the inevitable rattle of rock announcing that Bernie had at last lost his hold, followed by the sickening thump of his body at the bottom?

It seemed that, as a bare minimum, he should say some kind of formal goodbye to Bernie before he started down—tell him, for example, that, yes, he would convey his message to Carol and also that—and this was a surprising sentiment on Mitch's part, something he had had no premonition of before this instant—he did appreciate those years they had lived together in the same house and actually did regard him as a brother despite his hostile talk in that sporting goods store in Pinedale.

"Where I went wrong," Mitch said, abstractly and to no purpose, since he assumed Bernie had shut off his hearing, "was by splitting up our party when I decided to make a try for the peak. The rule is you don't split up a party in the mountains."

"Things went wrong," Bernie said, "because I didn't know we weren't brothers. I should have stayed home. I thought maybe we would get to know each other again."

"It's too late now for this to do any good," Mitch said. "But I've changed my mind, if you'll let me say so. Of course you are my brother. I'm never going to forgive myself for bringing you out here just to get you killed."

He could hear a strange sound. He realized it was Bernie sobbing.

"Do you want to try lowering that left foot?" Mitch asked. "Get your weight on your right leg. Keep your toe in contact with the rock. I'll tell you when it's reached the new hold. Then I'll tell you where to place your hands and your other foot."

It took ten minutes to talk Bernie into completing the move.

"You wouldn't be able to speed things up a little, would you?" Mitch asked after he had given directions for the next move.

"Maybe I can," Bernie said. "I'll try."

Christian Spinning

Marilyn Bushman-Carlton

My son who is blue-eyed and sensitive
thinks he's alone in his room
where his music bumps and heaves.
I stand unseen at the door which is open
holding a stack of clean folded clothes.
He faces a window overlooking the city
(it might as well be the complete universe)
which bruises him in small ways all day.
The back of his pale freckled neck
toils his head with the count;
his elbows, boneless and fluid,
unbind his hands,
set them whorling in erratic ovals.
Bare feet balance his knotted boy body
tossed like clay on a wheel;
his longish hair, blonded by sun,
flutters loose, shines now
and hurts my eyes.
I am promised to silence,
to the spectacle of his labor,
his most secret heart,
skinned, and spinning.

Now and at the Hour of Our Death

Todd Robert Petersen

LUIS STRAINED HIS EARS, watching bare jacaranda branches twitch in silhouette against the bedroom wall. The bedroom window was sliding up. It was not a dream. A human shadow was nearly indivisible from the web of tree branches fluttering on the curtain. Luis woke Nina and told her to stay silent. She rose slowly, confused at first, as he slid open the night stand drawer, removed his pistol, and drew back the slide. She breathed in sharply when the sash rose in its frame. Before Luis could speak, he heard a pistol cock behind the curtains, and then the boy's foot appeared as he slipped into the room.

"*No se muevan,*" the boy said in lazy street Spanish. The short-barreled revolver trembled slightly in his hand. In the dim light, he was barely visible.

"*¿Que quieres?*" Nina said.

The boy trained the pistol on her before answering. He told her to shut her mouth. Luis shook his pistol at the boy, and the boy swiveled, bringing his other hand to the gun. Luis loosened his thumb and then tightened it back up against the pistol grip. He told the boy to leave his house. Nina whispered that her husband's money clip was on the dresser, that she had some more money downstairs in her purse.

The boy told her to get it.

Luis said, "Stay there."

From the hallway Maria said, "Mamma, I'm thirsty."

The boy swung his pistol toward the door and fired, a flash of light blasting the boy's face white, his crooked teeth and narrow jaw carved into the darkness that followed. Nina screamed. The pistol bucked in Luis's hand, and the room flashed again. The boy fell back against the window, the odor of gunpowder pressing out against the walls and into Luis's face. The noise brought the other children running. Nina burst out into the hallway and took Maria up into her arms.

"Stay outside," she screamed to them. "Stay outside."

Luis kept his pistol leveled at the boy and rose from his bed. His ears were ringing.

"Mother of God," the boy said, gulping for air.

Luis pulled on a pair of pants to cover his temple garments. He imagined that he was only a collection of tissues without a spirit. Blood throbbed through the arteries in his forearm. Blood throttled through his ears. He re-gripped the pistol as it hung from the end of his arm, the muzzle turned in slightly toward his thigh. He pulled the top garment off, catching it on the hammer of the pistol. When it came free, he tossed the garment onto the bed and in the darkness crept toward the boy.

Stepping across him, Luis pulled the sash down and then moved back. The boy's tongue pulsed wordlessly in the open gape of his mouth, his eyes zeroed on the wall over the bed. The boy kicked his heel along the carpet and twitched his hand, which lay palm-up and curled. Luis dropped his eyes back down and watched blood bloom across the cartoon bull of the intruder's tee-shirt. He was no more than fifteen years old and wore an almost imperceptible mustache. His eyes drooped.

Luis stooped down, drove the pistol against the boy's head, twisted it flush, and breathed in, trying to steady himself. He began to pull on the trigger and felt the resistance of it against his skin. He froze. The boy was laboring under his own failing breath and gasped again for Mary. Luis loosened his hold on the trigger but left the pistol pressed against the boy's forehead. Slowly his finger curled again on the trigger.

The lights flashed on, blinding him for moment. Luis turned and saw Nina staring at him, her hand still on the light switch. The boy was motionless. Nina said nothing, but she stood in the doorway watching Luis's naked skin under the light. He threw the pistol on the bed and pushed past without speaking, without surrendering.

"You will have to be released," the stake president said. It was only three days since the shooting, and everyone in *La Boca* had heard about the break-in. Reporters came right on the heels of the police. Photographs of the boy as they wheeled him into an ambulance were everywhere in Buenos Aires by lunch the following day—so much different than the *disparasitos*: a just murder, they called it. "Of course it was self-defense," the stake president continued. Luis nodded. "He broke into your house, shot at your children. I suspect that there will not even be charges brought against you."

"I think it will all be fine," Luis said.

"Your calmness surprises me."

"The boy didn't leave me a choice."

"Still we will have to release you, for your own good. We will want

you to have time with your family, time to repair some of these injuries. The church will be fine without you."

Luis twisted his head slightly until he felt his neck muscles tighten and heard the small pop of his vertebrae. The stake president rose and walked to the window and stood there with his back to him. He waited without speaking for a long time. Luis shifted nervously in his chair, listening to the desk fan hum. Finally the stake president turned around, "Luis, how long have I known you and your family?"

He shrugged, "I do not know, Juan, ten years, maybe."

Juan nodded and slipped his hands down into his pants pockets.

"I have known Nina since she was. . ." He took his right hand out of his pocket and tapped it against the middle of his thigh. "I do not know, since she was this tall."

"What are you asking?" Luis stood.

"I am not asking anything. You know how they are always saying that the people of Buenos Aires are most scared of being forgotten?" Luis scratched his nose and then nodded again. "If you leave here, they say that the *pampas* will swallow you up. It's too big to understand."

"Your point?"

"All we've got is each other, Luis—the church, our families, forgiveness."

"He broke into my house, Juan."

"All I am saying is to stand up before the Lord. It is easy to forget yourself when you're busy being right. Let us help you when you need it."

"Tomas and Rogelio are still assigned to home teach us, are they not?"

Juan shrugged. "I suppose."

"I will call them if we need anything," Luis said.

Juan almost spoke but tossed out his hands in place of the words.

"Are we finished?" Luis asked.

Juan carried his gesture toward the door.

With a thin flashlight and a small magnifying lens, Luis knelt down in the bathroom where the police had cut out a section of the gypsum wall board. They had taken the lead slug from one of the wall studs and dropped it into a small plastic bag. The hole left behind was just above the floor. Directly behind him there was an untouched hole where the bullet had torn through the bedroom wall and entered the bathroom. Luis rose up from off his knees and went into his room, pushed the flashlight into the hole, and switched it on. He walked back into the bathroom and knelt down again and moved his head slowly until he saw the light flicker. He stayed there watching it, imagining the path of the boy's bullet, envisioning Maria's head just left of the invisible trajectory.

"Luis," his wife called.

He continued to stare at the light.

"Luis, where are you?" she asked, her voice growing louder. Soon he heard her footsteps on the carpet. He stood abruptly and put the magnifying glass underneath a towel that was lying on the counter top. When the bathroom door opened, he walked past his wife without saying anything. She turned and saw the light still stuck in the wall.

A week later, while workmen busied themselves replacing the blood-stained tile grout upstairs, Luis sat motionless in the living room slumped in a chair. His thumbs and fingertips were pressed together, the ends of his thumbs resting silently against his lips. He saw Nina watching him from the kitchen, framed by the door jamb and lit from behind. She held a spoon in her hands, and a towel hung over one shoulder. Ignoring her, Luis gripped each arm of the chair and hauled himself up.

One of the tile-setters came down the stairs and asked where they could put the bedroom furniture. Luis did not answer. "Excuse me. . . Sir?" the man said. Luis went to the window and stared out with his back to the man. Nina came out of the kitchen into the living room and told him that he could move it into the spare bedroom across the hall. "We have been staying in there, but we will be okay."

"I am sorry for the trouble," he said.

She shook her head and told him, "It is no trouble. Do not worry." He touched the bill of his cap and then climbed the stairs. She went back into the kitchen. While she was gone, Luis sat down and stared at his feet. After a time Nina returned and knelt down beside Luis without touching him. He watched her fold her hands carefully, one on top of the other.

"I do not know what to think about what you did," she said.

"I did not do anything except kill a thief," he answered, continuing to stare across his fingertips, his chest rising and falling with his breath.

"I have been praying about it," she said. "You think that there are not any commandments about what someone might have done. I understand that." She stood and crossed over into his line of sight. He took his hands away and pushed himself up again but still said nothing. "I know I cannot understand what this has done to you."

"No," he said.

"Perfect," she said, throwing up her arms and then folding them immediately. "You know nothing and I can understand nothing, and God does not speak to people, and Jesus never was, and the whole thing is a big trick against you."

He rocked slightly to one side and then settled again. "Where are the children?" he asked. Nina just stared at him. "Where are the kids?" he asked again. "Do you even know?"

Nina turned and walked over to the window. Upstairs she could hear the men struggling with the bed. "How can I help?" she asked. "What can I do?"

"I don't know."

"Have you prayed about this?" she asked.

"What am I going to say to God, Nina?" he said, throwing his head toward the empty kitchen. She could see that his breathing had become mechanical and exaggerated.

"I am going to ask you a question," she said, and she drew a deep breath, "Do you—I mean, we. . .I mean. . ."

Without turning around, Luis said, "If you are going to babble, then leave."

Tears trembled in Nina's eyes. Luis rose and walked past her, heading for the kitchen. Upstairs there was a thump and the sound of cursing. Nina was crying.

"Why have you stopped wearing your garments?" Nina called out to stop him. He looked back at her, staring as if his gaze could pull the answer out of her mouth, so he would not have to give it. "Luis," she said. "It is our covenant, not just yours." Without a word he turned and walked to the front door, stopped, and raised his hand as if he might speak. "You are sealed to all of us," she said sweeping her hair back from her face. He stood in the entry with his hand on the doorknob as if he had not heard her.

He did not take the car, but walked down the street and caught a bus that took him on the *Avenida Nueve de Julio* through the middle of downtown. It was still early evening, but all eight lanes were packed with cars. He rode, consciously trying to think about nothing, until the bus driver started glancing back at him in the mirror. He wanted to be forgotten, but he knew that it was impossible to really disappear. If Nina had come in one second later, he'd have shot that boy again. And where was the devil during that? Where was Jesus? Since then he felt as if he had walked out of an office building and found himself high on a cliff in Tierra del Fuego, staring out toward Antarctica, the sting of salt on his face, the wind singing like high tension wires in his head.

When his bus stopped, he lurched forward and banged down the steps onto the street. Some school girls in their white coats giggled past. The guitar and bandeleon of some contemporary tango throbbed out of a narrow, modern cafe. He walked for a while, numb to everything, and when another bus stopped in front of him, he got on board, paid the fare, and took a seat in the same place as before. The bus took him into *Barrio Norte* past Recolete Cemetery. He rode, changing busses, until he was no longer certain where he was. It was some industrial suburb to the south, and the bus was full of old women. Across the aisle he noticed a particular old woman with two large shopping bags on the seat next to her. Her withered hands spidered over her rosary beads, the cross spinning one way and then other. She rocked slightly with the familiar words of the Hail Mary.

The boy had been Catholic as Luis had been once, a long time ago. He had called out to Mary and had fallen into the same prayer. Next to him the woman took up another bead, and she began the cycle of her prayers again. Penance, he thought. Mormons never spoke of penance, though they were forever speaking of repentance. Luis had all but forgotten the word.

As an altar boy, he knew that the Catholic Church was a labyrinth of mysteries, a succession of candles, a matter of vestments and high holy days of obligation. His tongue still knew the words. . .Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen. Then another turn and another. He could sound the words against his teeth. What absolution did this old woman need, what could she have possibly done, Luis wondered as he watched the cross spin. And as he fell under the hypnosis of her rosary, the face and voice of Father Dejardin, a Jesuit and a teacher of his, knit together in his mind.

"Luis, what is the matter?" the priest asked, shaking Luis's shoulder lightly. Confused by prayer, Luis had fallen asleep in one of the pews. He had come back to St. Jude's to ground himself, to find sanctuary with the saint of lost causes. Religion had abandoned him, it seemed, perhaps the saints could find him again. The savor of falling was rich, but Luis could no longer bear the remoteness of his soul. And then, after the Mormon missionaries found him, the world was not as it once seemed to be.

Father Dejardin shook Luis's shoulder lightly. "Luis, morning bells are ringing," he said. Luis stirred, but said nothing. His hair was matted and pressed down on one side. He was unshaven, and his hands trembled slightly, perhaps from the cold.

The priest asked him if he was sick. Luis shook his head. He asked if Luis might want to call his mother. Luis told him there was no one to call and tried to wave him away. When the priest would not leave, Luis lifted his head and saw the black cassock first, and then white collar, then the priest's dark brown eyes and thin, familiar nose. Luis felt immediately embarrassed, and he pulled himself up by the back of the next pew and tried to slide away.

The priest told him to sit back down. His voice was calm. "You do not look well," he said. Luis backed away even further and the priest reached for his hand. He caught it firmly and let his eyes flash up to Luis's, holding his gaze until Luis broke away and relaxed his hand. "Stay," the priest said, lowering himself to sit next to Luis, "and tell me a story." He then crossed his legs, folded his hands, and set them in his lap. Luis sat as well and ran his hands across each side of his head, smoothing the hair with his fingertips. Five minutes passed, candles flickering against the walls, Luis feeling the pressure of the vaulted ceilings, the dark recesses above and behind the truss work, the history of the steeple and the slate shingles. He let his eyes drift about the church. He felt him-

self beginning to grow calm. Father Dejardin scraped his fingertips against his chin, and Luis turned toward the priest, waiting for a sermon. But the priest said nothing, he just cocked his head slightly like a dog waiting to be rewarded.

"Why did Christ never come here, Father?" Luis finally asked.

"A question, Luis?" Father Dejardin said, "I asked for a story."

Luis grimaced, but knew of no way past Dejardin's eccentricities. "What if," he began with a long breath, "What if Christ didn't stay seated at the right hand of God after he rose but went to Columbia and preached to the people up there? What if he really was Quetzalqoatl of the Maya?"

"You have been talking to the Mormons," Father Dejardin said calmly.

Luis nodded.

"Those missionaries are honest people. A bit young, but honest. They do not lack for drive."

"They answer my questions," Luis said.

"Of course they do, that is their job."

"Do you think they are lying to me?"

"Does it feel like they are lying?"

Luis shook his head.

"Does it feel like they are telling the truth?"

Luis shrugged.

"So how are you going to get yourself out of this fix?"

"It's between me and God, I imagine."

"There are no private acts, Luis," Father Dejardin said. "Nothing is self-contained." The priest then drew his hands to his lips and interlaced his fingers. He closed his eyes, and then without re-opening his eyes, he said, "Evil is what man made of paradise. God will save the righteous from themselves. That is the world we live in. Everything is a mix of mystery and grace."

Luis told the priest that he believed all men will be saved, but will not be glorified the same. "You and Peron will not end up in the same place, but that does not mean Peron will be in Hell, if he is repentant, if he accepts the gospel. . . .Paul speaks of these things. Mormons didn't invent it."

As he considered Luis's words, Dejardin fluttered his eyes and then breathed out through his nostrils. "I suppose Socrates was right," he said, "'It is noble to aim at a noble goal, whatever the outcome.'" The priest set his head down onto his fist and became absorbed in his thoughts. Luis felt the vastness of the church return, and he became suddenly aware again of all the small recesses and alcoves in the architecture, all the shadows. The priest lifted his head from his fist and sat back upright. "I imagine this changes everything for you," he said.

Luis started at the priest's words as if he had absentmindedly

touched a hot stove. His heart began to seize in his ribcage. As it began again to beat, Luis thought that the force of it would spring his bones apart. He lowered his face into his hands and tried to keep himself from weeping in frustration. Father Dejardin waited, and then asked Luis again if this knowledge changed the world as he saw it.

"No," he said and then followed it quickly with, "Yes," and then, "I do not know."

"What do you think about the Mormons and their message?" the priest asked again.

"I think it is right, Father; I think it is the way things happened," he said suddenly without thinking.

"They do not cast the Church in a favorable light."

Luis dropped his head and stared down into his lap.

"I think 'whore' is the word they use."

"You know Church history better than I do, Father," Luis said.

Father Dejardin smiled. "We might have taught you too well," he said.

"Perhaps," Luis answered. "But Father, why only Jerusalem? Why leave out all the other people? And why to people who wanted none of it in the first place?"

"You have changed, Luis. In many ways it is good to see. I am concerned at the outcome, but it is good to see that you are not past feeling. You have always had more than your share of demons." Dejardin lifted his eyes to watch Luis's response.

"He doesn't bother us anymore," Luis offered.

"Yes, but have you forgiven him? I have told you a thousand times that you can't come to peace through rage."

Luis refused to listen.

"He's your father, Luis. *Love* does extend to those we dislike. It has to. Remember *agape*. Remember to forgive yourself."

The bus came to a stop, and the old woman stood and moved slowly to the front of the bus. Luis watched her step carefully down onto the street, refusing the driver's help. As the bus pulled away and back into traffic, Luis pushed against the seat. The bus continued on for another block, and then he pulled the cord for a stop, pushed through the door and descended to the street.

The air outside was cool and struck his skin suddenly. It was choked with exhaust, and the streets were still full of cars and young people, full of families and lovers. Some instinct awoke inside of him and stretched itself. His heart began to seize. Above his head, phone and power lines crossed and re-crossed themselves like a drift net, and he became suddenly struck by the flatness of things. Through and beyond them, everything became, for an instant, infinite. He hovered in stillness, drinking in details, promising himself he would not forget. Then the world filled in

again around him, and Luis saw he had been saved from himself, just as Dejardin had said. God was invisible but everywhere. The city, the traffic, the dust hung together by a power that was not chaos.

There was a coin-operated telephone across the street. The man using it, hung up the receiver, checked his watch, and joined the flow of foot traffic. Luis felt through his pockets for a coin, and when he found one, he crossed over to the phone and dialed home, not even thinking what he would say. Nina answered.

"Luis?" she asked.

"It's me," he said.

"Where are you?"

"I don't know. Downtown."

"I'll come with the car and get you."

"I'm not lost," he said, watching people speed past.

"I know that."

A young man and his girlfriend walked past Luis while Nina spoke. The couple stopped and kissed. Young patrons in a nearby café began pointing over their menus at them, and when the man raised her hand, pointing to a ring on her finger, everyone in the café clapped. Behind them, to the north, an ambulance pulsed through the intersection while overhead a helicopter sheared the city noise in two. And severed from one another, the din and clamor rose like a song into the hazy afternoon.

Liahona

R. A. Christmas

After he was let go, Dad's job
was changing the rolls on those
little spindles in the bathrooms.

Almost every morning he'd arise
and find the spindles blank or in
fragments on the floor (the rolls

on the counters)—it was curious
unworkmanship how neither his
wife nor children ever paid any

attention to the restoration of toilet
paper, or anything that might give
them a sense of direction like he

had by faithfully attending to the
way the spindles worked—by the
opposition of the springs—which

always (even when all else failed)
indicated where he should go and
what he should do. And he did.

Havesu

Karen Rosenbaum

HE WATCHES ELAINE'S BUTTOCKS, the tan shorts browned at the seat, as she walks briskly ahead of him on the narrow trail. Her dirty orange daypack bounces on her back, the leaky canteen a long wet lump on the right, the camera a squarish bulge on the left, separated by the other things she's stuffed in—toilet paper, hand lotion, capless ballpoint pens, little sticky rectangles of sugarless gum, and a ragged paperback, so she'll never have to waste time. In honor of nature on this trip, she's left behind Isaac Bashevis Singer and has limited herself to guidebooks on plant and animal life in the Grand Canyon.

When Rob first met her, six years ago now, at Jody's flat, she was smudged and sweaty after a twenty-hour charter flight from Tel Aviv, two jolting bus rides from Kennedy, and a four-story climb from 93rd Street proper. She dumped that same dirty orange pack upside down on Jody's mohair rug. "I've simplified my life," she said. "These are all my possessions." There were, he remembered, some travelers' checks, her passport, a Swiss army knife, some cotton underwear and t-shirts, all stamped with the Hebrew letter aleph by a kibbutz laundry, a camera with sand gritting somewhere in its innards, a poetry anthology dating from her undergraduate years at the University of Nevada, and a blue paperback copy of the Book of Mormon that she said she'd stopped reading but was holding onto for sentimental reasons. She'd given away a cheap guitar and the rest of her clothes. Finally, however, she admitted to owning boxes of books and a carton of aunt-embroidered dish towels and box-top-bought stainless steel spoons and forks—no knives—all of which arrived just before they were married.

The orange pack suddenly looms larger. He slows his step, so he won't run into her; she hikes unevenly, racing for fifteen minutes, then dawdling for twenty. She holds a pronged ocotillo branch aside for him now. "Careful. I'm too poky for you."

"Poky." He pokes at her ribs and she sucks in her stomach. "Funny word, poky. Poke. I wonder what it means in cowpoke."

She shrugs. "You could still run on ahead, you know. You could probably catch the boatmen if you went now."

"I'll stick with you. Even if I won't get a Technicolor, wide-screen account of Terrill sleeping with the queen of Siam."

"He didn't sleep with the queen of Siam," she says. "Did he?"

"Elaine," he says. "Keep walking."

She speeds up both her step and her speech. "Look," she says, "you'll wish you'd gone when they get back and start talking about it. You'd get to see Moony Falls and maybe the reservation. You could take the camera. Get some pictures of the stone gods the Indians used to scare their children."

"The stones aren't the gods. The stones are the children. Bad children got turned into stone." With one hand he slaps at a bug trying to burrow through the stubble on his face; with the other he searches his pockets for the Cutter's. "I can carry the camera though."

"No. I want to carry it." She feels around her back with her left hand, pats the bump. She is talking over her right shoulder. "You'll have to work up gradually again to your daily ten miles. Hanging onto a raft and hiking a little won't do it. Especially eating like porkers. Maybe if you rowed. How many miles would you have to row to equal running ten?"

"I don't know." He spreads insect repellent on his hair for good measure, then shifts his attention to the creek. A river really, it spreads out, rolls over a flat layer of rocks, drops half a foot. They've come about a mile from where it laps into the Colorado, from where they left the rafts tied up, one to another in the surprise inlet in the sheer limestone walls. "Why don't you get a picture?" he says.

She squirms out of the backpack, reaches in. Fiddling perfunctorily with the adjustments, she aims at the foam and snaps. She drops the camera again into the pack. She lost the lens cover a week after he'd given it to her, a Christmas present to replace the series of sandy instamatics.

The canyon is green. Like spring in the canyons back home. Old home, that is, the Wasatch Range, the Uintas, where he used to go off by himself summer days—biking the old three-speed up two-lane highways with camp stove and sleeping bag weighing down the rear tire, or packing in with Eddie, who always got nosebleeds at high altitudes. One time they were flushed out of a canyon with their homemade kayak. They wrecked on the rocks and crawled up the bank just in time. Borrowed truck bed empty, they drove, squeaking with mud and sobered with fear, back down to the valley. They didn't bang the back screen, but Mom wailed, "Don't sit on anything, don't even stand there, get straight under the shower," while LaNell and LouAnne, big sisters, always virtuous and clean, squealed their disgust. Mom and Dad and Eddie the Unmarried still hold down the purple brick house with the bent tree in front. LaNell and LouAnne long ago moved to their own brick houses. Only LaNell is dead now, proving God knows what. If God knows. If God.

"Are you thinking about your long-lost youth?" Elaine shakes her hands as she walks. Her fingers swell, are constricted by her rings.

"Actually, I was thinking about certain economic indicators for the international plastic market."

"You were thinking about your past. What were you thinking about it?"

He shrugs even though she can't see him. "It's long lost." He sidesteps something whipping across the trail into the brush. Something reptilian probably. "I was thinking," he says, naming something safe, "of snipes."

"Oh," she says. "Snipes. We went on a snipe hunt once." She talks to the left side, so he can see part of her cheek. "At Lake Mead. The bigger kids gave us paper bags and parked us there, told us to wait for these great big birds." She shapes one with her arms. "We waited for hours before someone came and told us we were wasting our time."

"Hours?"

"Well," she concedes. "Maybe forty-five minutes."

"Snipes don't even live in Nevada," he says. "That's why you were wasting your time. Snipes live in Utah. And you could never catch one in a paper bag. We once gave a pack of Cub Scouts some gunny sacks, told them to wait on the hillside. We gave them a nicely detailed description of a snipe. Scales. Big nose. Stringy neck. Gold-plated molars. Everything we could think of. We told the kids to crouch down on a rock with the gunny sacks open and to whistle as high as they could. Snipes have very acute hearing, you know. If you whistle just the right notes, the snipes will run into the gunny sacks. Know what one of the kids said?"

"What?"

"'What's a gunny?'"

Elaine laughs. "Gunnies are even bigger than snipes, you should have told them. They eat goats."

"After which they burp and belch and suck blood," says Rob.

They are moving along the trail fairly fast now. Most of the group is behind, but there are several fresh tread prints when the trail is dirt, not rock. The thin-ridge soles are Terrill's. He and Andy spurted off as soon as they'd tied up their boats. The Sacramento soil engineer, Jerry P., had galloped after. Rob wanted to, Elaine is right, but Terrill—born-again blowhard, instinct epitomized—it's bad enough to watch him perform in public. Rob didn't think he could handle a private showing. Besides, Elaine keeps going distant on him. He wants to stick around. "Hmm," he says to her back, "what was easier to believe in—Joseph Smith and visiting angels or snipes and gunnies?"

A knee-high boulder blocks the trail. She sits on it, swings her legs over. "Not a fair choice," she says. "We didn't grow up singing songs about snipes every Sunday." She brushes off the back of her shorts, but

since her hands are dirty, she makes the smudge worse. "Hey," she turns back after a few steps, "I still believe in gunnies."

This is a comfortable little canyon, he thinks. The main gorge isn't intimate and overgrown like this. It's vast, indifferent in its millions of years, the perfect antidote to human pride. Yet somehow the natives believed they mattered, mattered enough for gods to seek out and punish them. On the canyon walls, the Havusupai stone babies; in the depths of the gorge, the remains of a retributive, earth-swallowing flood. Some tribes, he has read, have thought the Colorado their own road to hell. Some have believed in a god who inundated the road to Paradise—so human beings wouldn't try to sneak over the boundary.

According to the boatmen, most obstreperously Terrill, the whole Grand Canyon *is* Paradise, not the way to or the way from. Paradise. It sounds like the name of an Atlantic City amusement park. Mormons believe Paradise is a kind of check point in an endless cross-country race. He tries to remember the party line. Christ preaches there to the dead. Folks already prepared and repentant jog on towards a heaven which is itself a par-course to another trail to. . .Rob ducks under an ocotillo branch that Elaine has cleared with an inch to spare. Mormon Paradise isn't like Jewish Paradise, at least according to the Singer stories Elaine likes to read aloud. Nor like those other pastoral places, banana pudding in the sky and all.

He kicks at one of Terrill's thin-ridge sole prints. Earth of course is an exhausting place too, even for ex-Mormons, if there really is such a thing. Rob has suspected for some years now that there isn't. Alienated, repudiated, even excommunicated—which he isn't and doesn't want to be—Mom would suffer too much, maybe even he would suffer—there never is a final break. B.R. doles out cocaine and Rob not only shakes his head, the small white cups make him think of the sacrament and he shudders inside. He doesn't contribute to, can't even laugh at, the luncheon discussions of the Hindu sex positions. And before he'd met Elaine, he had a very nice, very bright, very pagan girlfriend whom he saw only once after that first night at Jody's and that once to tell her goodbye. Elaine had a chance of understanding, he figured, about the faith that no longer securely folded him.

He bumps into her now, not noticing until the back of her head hits his chest that she has stopped. She takes a quick step forward and points at the cliff ahead. "Where'd the trail go?"

He looks around. "Over there. They said we'd be fording the creek. This must be the place." He repeats that with a gravelly voice. "This *is* the place." Elaine is unamused. Grimacing, he plunges into the water. It reaches his waist.

"It's deep," she says.

"Come on. You're the swimmer. Anyway I'm waiting for you."

She takes a few steps in, is up to her chest. "It's cold!" A few more steps and he grabs her outstretched arm. The rocks feel slick and spherical; they teeter on them as they push against the water and across the current. He boosts her up to the opposite bank to the trail. The wet shorts wrinkle around her bottom. The lower half of the daypack is wet. And probably the camera. He sighs. Oblivious, she trots on ahead, squeaking water out of her running shoes.

She bought those shoes three or four years ago, has used them for everything but running. The plan was to try a mile or two in the mornings with him. She never really got into it. "It's not any fun," she'd say. "I'd rather ride the rec club exercycle. At least I can read while I'm pedaling." She took up racquetball for a while, with Jody, but that didn't work out either. She finally settled on swimming—the one sport he dreads—maybe since the kayak splintered in Logan Canyon. She's good at it, too, likes the feel of the water on her body, she says, likes the stretch. She comes home late from work three days a week, hair wet and dark, slicked back behind her ears or tied in two stubby bunches at the sides of her face. "Two kilometers," she says," or "Can do the butterfly ten minutes straight now." When she's pregnant, she tells him—they're talking about it, maybe next year—she'll be able to swim up until the last moment.

Before them a sneeze punctuates the silence—Andy grinning and wiping his nose on his bare, brown arm. "Allergies," he sniffs, "to spring things. Flowers. Pollens." He blows his nose into a blue bandanna he pulls out of a tight pocket in his cutoffs.

"You already been up to Moony Falls?" Elaine asks.

"Just patrolling the trail. You found where to cross, I guess." He grins again, wide and toothy. He has a deep scar next to his right eye, and it crosses with wrinkles when he smiles. "I'd better get back to the ford," he says. "Didn't mean to let you cross on your own." He sidles past.

"I like Andy," Elaine says when she judges he is out of earshot.

"You like everyone."

"No I don't. I don't like Lona much."

"Why not?" *He* doesn't like Lona because she's so severe, frenetic, so narrow-hipped, tight-lipped, but Elaine often talks to her at dinner. He thought of them as friends.

Elaine bends down and peers at a big-petalled orange mallow. "Maybe," she says finally, "because I'm something like her. That's a pretty common reason for disliking people. We dislike people we can compare ourselves with. Isn't that why *you* dislike," she pauses shrewdly, "certain people?" When he is silent, she straightens up, looks at him, trots on.

To himself he thinks, me, comparing myself with that big-mouthed boatman? Terrill. What do we have in common? Even his name sounds

manufactured, Hollywoodish, like the names of the women he is always, according to him anyway, humping—Tiffanies and Sheilas and Jessicas and Kims. But he is good with the oars. Rob can tell by the way the other boatmen act. And he's got the women hypnotized. Even Elaine, who's usually distrustful of muscle men and Jesus freaks.

A Jesus freak. That at least is original, Rob thinks. It is so original that Terrill couldn't have made it up. It doesn't compliment the Hemingway he-man crap. He must really believe it. Well. He slaps at another insect. Most of us did. Once.

There are shrill shouts on the trail ahead. Elaine turns around, looks at him. "What's that?" she asks.

"Snipes," he says.

The whoops take on bodies, a clump of khaki-clad kids with wet, rolled-down socks. "Hey mister," says the first one, a blond boy of about twelve whose shirt, still buttoned at the waist, hangs down about his shorts. "How far to the river?"

"Two miles," Rob says, "maybe three. Where'd you come from?"

Information acquired, the kid isn't interested in chitchat. He whistles at the Scouts bunching up behind him. "Two more miles, guys!" He shoots past. The others bump along after.

Twenty years ago, Rob thinks, Mom would iron his army drab uniform and mustard scarf, so he could march like a little Nazi in a downtown parade or pant, too warm, on a mountain hike or scrabble with similarly suited little fellows in the church parking lot. On the trail ahead a sweating man in a large uniform leans against a big rock. His hair is stuck to his forehead. He seems to be breathing too hard to talk. He raises his eyebrows in a question and motions with his head the direction of the boys. Rob and Elaine nod, respecting his silence. He sighs and raises a foot, clumps heavily down the trail.

"If he's in such bad shape going downhill," Rob steps around a hedgehog cactus, "he'll probably have a coronary on the way back up."

"You could be a scout leader," she says.

"Huh?"

"I mean if we ever became Mormons again. I don't think scout leaders have to believe anything so long as they can tie knots."

Rob stops, stunned. "What are you talking about?' he starts to say, but distracted by a redbud tree, she is fishing the camera out of the daypack.

Her forehead creases, the foretelling of tears. "It's wet." She hands the camera to him.

"I should have carried it," he says as gently as he knows how but not gently enough.

She sucks in both lips. "Don't you take the blame. You'll just resent it when you start thinking about it. It's *my* fault." She sounds almost

proud. "I'm sorry." She doesn't sound sorry. "I was careless." She pronounces "careless" as if it were two words.

"You weren't careless," he says. "You were just short." He pushes the camera back into her pack, brushes her hair aside and touches her neck. "Come on. Someone'll catch up."

"So what?" Her voice is strained.

"It's nice to have a few hours alone. You handle communal living better than I do. You had that kibbutz experience."

"Anyone who can live wedged in among ten million people for nine years ought to be able to handle twenty for two weeks." She takes long steps away from him. "Listen," she says. "Must be Beaver Falls."

The trail forks, the lower path ending at the base of a dozen short flat cascades terracing the widened river. The less traveled path climbs the cliff, where shirtless, sunning like a large lizard, Terrill perches on a rock. "Hey," he sits up on his haunches, "wanta swim up to the second floor?"

"I thought you were hiking to Moony," Rob says.

Terrill closes his eyes and smiles. "Hiked up a few miles," he says, "to show Big Jerry the way. Thought I'd come back and show you the intermediate sights."

Elaine's eyes are bright. "What's behind the falls?"

"More falls," Terrill says. "Prettier ones. Come on. I'll show you."

Elaine dumps the backpack with the ruined camera on a rock, peels off her already wet shorts and shoes, and wades into the same river she had nervously crossed below.

"Isn't it still cold?" Rob says.

"No. More sun here." She is suddenly gone, having apparently stepped off an underwater ledge. She reappears, sputtering, giggling, her hair molded to her head. "Don't you want to come?"

He doesn't, but Terrill is standing, overlooking the whole scene, so he shucks shoes and shirt and steps into the water. Elaine splashes over the rock rim that forms the low falls, her t-shirt sticking to her back. Now she is breast-stroking easily in the pool beyond.

As soon as the ground drops away, he panics. The banks are close, he tells himself, he can always swim that far, but the water is so cold he can't breathe right when he tries the crawl. Elaine is in the middle of the pool now, paddling and shouting up at Terrill. "Now what?"

"You okay, Rob?" Terrill asks. He peers down from his cliff.

With wild strokes, Rob pulls himself over the bank and climbs up. "Too cold for me," he shivers. "I'll wait here."

Terrill nods. Then he plummets into the water, sneakers first. He bobs up next to Elaine. "Come on!" he says and swims off against the narrow rush of water. She follows. They are out of sight in a second. The churning water drowns out all sounds beyond. There goes my wife, Rob thinks, in her underpants, with a boatman. He settles on a rock and lets

his feet sink into the mud. Briefly fascinated and repelled, he analyzes his own fear, envy, shame, disgust, relief. Then he thinks about practical things. He might as well try to get back to the trail end before anyone else arrives to see him stranded, abandoned.

If he sticks to the edge of the pond, hangs onto the sides, he can probably avoid the drop-off. The ragged rocks jab at his feet and pimple his hands, but he makes it to the base of the falls without getting his head wet. Sitting on a rock next to Elaine's shorts, he extracts the camera from her daypack and examines it. It doesn't rattle. Maybe a good shop can do something. Some things can be repaired. He pulls on a sock. There is a trickle of blood along the side of his left arch. He massages his foot. Most wounds heal. He laces up his shoes.

There are sounds from the trail. Others are coming up the lower fork. It's plump Marie, glistening in her nylon running suit, and a dull accountant whose name he can never remember.

"Been swimming, I see," the accountant says. "Where's Elaine?"

"She swam up to the back falls with Terrill."

"Didn't you try it?" asks Marie.

"I'm going to hike on up," Rob says. "Up towards the reservation. Maybe I'll be able to see them from the cliffs." He doesn't think of this until the instant he's said it. "Besides, I want to see Moony Falls."

Marie is shedding her shoes as he starts out on the upper fork. He pauses on the cliff side and looks down over the pool. He can't see the narrow passageway to the upper falls from here. The gravel slides under his feet. He leans into the mountain. Some of the rocks look and feel as hard as the side of a skyscraper, some crumble like rotten wood. All are dry, hot, and old, so old they obliterate the possibility of belief. And yet for centuries the men who walked this wilderness believed.

He hears a shout and looks down at the bank where he had pulled himself out of the pool. Marie is sitting there, embracing herself with her arms. "It's too cold," she yells. She has on a swimming suit top or a dark blue bra, he can't tell which. Her skin is pink, burning.

"And too deep," he shouts down. "And too wet." He turns back to the faint trail. A lizard skitters into a creosote bush. A thin-ridged print points the way, maybe, who knows, to Paradise.

From *Three Jacks*, a novel

Darrell Spencer

SUNRISE, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1963, not yet but about to be one ugly day in U.S. history, and standing over there about to climb into the family Nova was my dad, Jack, the man suffering—in words he stole from his own dad—the discomfort of a buffalo in a shoe box, so from where I was unlocking my own car, an Impala I bought off a mechanic who owned a gas station up on Las Vegas Boulevard, and which was parked side by side to the Nova in our garage, I could see Jack about mid-chest up, mighty in the shoulders and he stood so you noticed. The problem today was what he called rotten-egg thinking. A dream woke him at three a.m. It had to do with something bad happening to me. Jack was looking like the rattled folk you see on the TV news. Had those eyes. He stood by the Nova and said, "It has me spooked is all I can tell you. It's not like it's a nightmare you can blame on bad food, and I can't pin it down to a this or that, or tell you what's going to happen, but stay on your toes." He looked toward the ceiling—there was a storage attic above us—but he couldn't shuck what had lodged itself in his bones.

I swung the Impala's door wide open. The car was a package of glory, black and red and white body, tuck-and-roll upholstery, bucket seats. It was the vehicle you would hot-wire and take on a rampage across New Mexico. It had, like a raised and clenched fist, a four-on-the-floor Hurst. On the dash, a tach. For the world to covet, chrome reverse wheels you could eat off. Jack buzzed the big garage door open, moseyed a few feet down the driveway, and collected the *Las Vegas Sun* from where it got tossed under the oleanders. He said, "The news two bits buys ain't worth a plugged nickel" and flipped the newspaper at the front door. He acted puzzled, a grinding there above his eyes, as if he was chewing ashes.

The day Lee Harvey Oswald shot Mr. Jack Kennedy was here.

My dad called us Three Jacks, me and him and the President, who

was Jack to my Dad. The two of them met in Carson City in the early sixties. Senator Kennedy then. Dad and Jack sat under a weeping willow tree at the Governor's mansion, guests of Grant Sawyer. They sipped whiskey and imagined Nevada's future. Dad told me he and Jack Kennedy talked the same language.

So it was Jack Fixx and his boy Jack Fixx, and, even after he was elected, if Jack Kennedy came West, he telephoned my dad. I picked up one day, heard, "Jack?" One word, and the accent, the noises money and education make. One word, and it made me want to get smart. It made me think I could read books, adjust my posture, and buy the right shoes, be something other than the Jack Fixx I was. I said, "He's out." I remembered my manners and said, "May I take a message?" I wanted Jack Kennedy to say some more words, there being every chance I might catch whatever it was he had.

He said, "Tell him the Senator called."

"You're the President," I said. Took guts to speak up. Like giving away a secret you're privy to.

He said, "Only to the rest of the country."

Like I was in on something beyond my years and range. I put the phone in its place and felt bigger.

The day Jack and I stood there by our cars was the year I turned eighteen and a couple of afternoons a week drove delivery for Jack's company, Southern Nevada Aire & Sheet Metal. My dad designed and installed refrigeration systems and sold equipment to most of the casinos in Las Vegas. It was about eight in the morning, and we were a few hours away from hearing that news about JFK. How many times have you seen the black-and-white footage, Walter Cronkite deflated, all the air gone out of him, a slow leaking of his soul, and he peels the glasses from his face, glances up and sideways to his right, like he's double checking the clock, and says that the report out of Dallas, Texas, is apparently true, informing the nation that President Kennedy died at one p.m. central standard time?

The garage door wide open, there was Jack, nailed to the spot where he fetched the morning paper. Antsy, though. Like a pal sneaked up and gave him a hot foot. Jack was trying to swallow his nerves whole. Tall, six-foot-five and bald, which he had always been, but today—because of the look on his face—his being so was itself a newsflash, was highlighted, as if he suffered a miscalculation in the a.m. and lost his hair in a split second at day break. The way he held himself made you think his head had been framed for hanging on a wall.

He dangled car keys from a finger. He was wearing a white shirt and a narrow dustybrown tie and his gold-dot clip centered in the wide part. His shoes were his best pair, brown lace-ups, which meant he was meeting someone about a bid, probably one of the casino buyers. His pants

were cuffed. You took a look in the back seat of the Nova, you would see his suit jacket laid out and nipped flat.

There were the Strip people. Then us, the townies, which, the saying went, was not so much a matter of where you lived or worked, but of what end of the stick you took hold of.

Jack said, "Keep your wits about you today."

"You got something specific in mind?" I said.

"It's under my skin is all I can say. Some kind of danger I'm seeing out of the comer of my eye."

"The sky is falling?" I stepped out and checked the heavens for Chicken Little. Didn't see the critter tumbling toward earth. We did that as a family, one hand in salute at our brow, us looking every which way. Eyeballs popped out. We made a show of it. Chicken Little was a family joke. It was our first step in dealing with trouble whether it was big or small.

Jack said, "It's more directed at you."

I said, "I'm about to step in front of a train?"

"That's more like it." He was perplexed. He said, "Something's wrong." Jack stood, so he looked like he was listening hard to a voice I couldn't hear. He said, "There's the dream, but there's something coming, and it's not good."

"You just being a kook?" I said.

Got his attention, like I was pulling him out of a trance. He said, "You're probably right."

I told him I could avoid a train, and he said he knew I could.

Jack was not a man who cried wolf. He was, in daylight, as no nonsense a handshaker as you'll ever meet, but I'll admit he also had a lot of hoodoo about him. He taught us not to put a left shoe on first. You didn't eat apples picked the day after a lightning storm. We got older, and we kidded him. How would you know when an apple was picked? we asked. His answer was we would know. Remained a mystery to me how. If you talked about good fortune, you jinxed it. If you talked about bad luck, you brought it down on yourself. You might as well ask the devil to lunch and invite him home to sleep in the guest room. Jack carried in his pocket, no matter what he wore or changed into, a five-dollar chip from the Horseshoe Club. The story he told us was he was down to it when he quit gambling for good. He didn't wear blue on any part of his body.

Jack opened the Nova's door and said, "There was trouble to do with you, so take it easy," and he narrowed his eyes like he had just come up out of the deep end of a swimming pool into sunlight. He said, "Keep looking over your shoulder."

I gave him my word.

Jack, a few years back, in his early fifties, took up the religion he was born to in Utah, the Mormons. He snapped his fingers and quit cigarettes. To his credit, he didn't call a meeting and announce it to the rest of

us. He didn't drag me or my mother into his reconversion. My sisters, except one, a year older than me, Wendy, were gone from the house, married and in other states. Wendy joined Jack. She got baptized. Then she married a Mormon herself. There was a day Jack was Jack, smoking a Lucky Strike. By afternoon he was a Latter-day Saint. The following morning I salvaged a carton of cigarettes from the garbage I was hauling out front. Jack did a jig and changed. Presto. Period. He hauled in a cardboard box from the garage, filled it with liquor and next day delivered free booze to his pals and the people who worked for him. He stopped drinking his Folger's. Like so much else in life, his return to the fold was a trade off. He relinquished some spark, collected weight that weakened his face, and his eyes faded a shade or two. He got harder to hear as a day went along.

Now, most mornings, he cooked a breakfast for me and him, and he left for work and I got myself to school. I drove the delivery truck Mondays and Fridays, part of a get-ready-for-the-real-world program you signed up for your senior year at Las Vegas High. Weekends and Tuesday through Thursday, after basketball practice, I stocked shelves at Vegas Village, a grocery store off Sahara Avenue and Maryland Parkway.

You need to understand that Jack and my mother were calling it quits. Divorce sat in the comers of our house, waiting to have its number called.

No sooner would the garage door shut and Jack and me drive off than Claire, my mother, would get up and wander down to her friend Betty's where they sat over coffee and talked until one or two. Betty suffered some illness that meant her body couldn't handle what she called the vicissitudes of the world before noon. She canceled the newspaper because it made her nervous. Claire said Betty had a problem with symmetry. You could see that struggle in the way she planted flowers and kept juggling the furniture in her home.

"You caught me," is what Claire said one day when I came by the house earlier than usual on my way to work, and she was turning up our driveway, returning, she told me, like a homing pigeon from Betty's. It hadn't occurred to me to wonder what my mother did when Jack and I left. And here she was out and about, which seemed to me to be no big deal, but she wanted to explain. Claire was wearing capris and flipflops. Her blouse, tied at the waist, was tulip red.

"At what?" I said.

She said, "Living outside the law."

I didn't get it. It wasn't like I discovered her sitting in a closet sipping at a bottle of Vodka.

"Betty's your mother's godsend," Claire said.

So, it was Friday, November 22, 1963. At Charleston Boulevard, behind me in the Nova, Jack continued straight ahead, and I turned right.

There my dad went in my rearview. What an upright creature he was on the planet, him and his two legs. The man as forthright as silver dollars. My girl, Karen, was waiting for me outside the Spudnut Shop. She tossed a sack of doughnuts in the Impala's open window and handed me two coffees. Still outside the car, she lit a cigarette, took two puffs, and flicked it to the ground. She hated the smell in her hair. She got in, and the first thing she said to me was, "Not yet."

I took a sip of my coffee and pulled into traffic. We were waiting on her period.

Mid-morning, getting to be lunch time, and the big joke in English was a sentence in our grammar book. The bell rang, and there was no Mr. Crowder yet. Odd, since he was always sitting at his desk at the front of the room. Joking with us. Shooting the bull. Craig Apple, sitting in the back in a corner, read the sentence out loud. *Mr. Williams asked Joel if he would bring him his rubbers from the mud room.*

Apple's sidekick, a kid everyone called Boots because he wore a brace on his foot to even out his legs, said, "Mr. Williams going to be knocking on Mrs. Williams' door."

A couple of the clowns clapped. Hooted. "In the mud room," a jock named Oliver said.

Kid off to the side named Jonathan wondered what a mudroom was.

And here was Mr. Crowder on the other side of the door, framed by its glass, our teacher putting himself together like an actor in the wings. Then he was inside, and something in the way he moved told us to shut up, which we normally didn't have to do, Crowder being one of the good guys who let how we talked in the hallway into the classroom. He skipped lessons some days and sat and shot the breeze, which usually ended with him quoting Shakespeare, only not serious but like he was always winking about what he was saying. You came in late, he didn't give you a slip and send you to the office. He said, "Ah, enter Puck." Always the "ah." We would get rolling on some subject and all fired up and compounding our angst, our teenagerness, and Crowder walked the aisles, quoting the man he called *the barb.* "Jack shall have Jill. Nought shall go ill," he would say. You could see his heart tapping its feet. The bell would ring, and he would say, "Ah, yes, exit Pucks." We would be on our way out, and he would be yakking, sometimes singing, about shadows and sleeping—slumber—and visions. Even the screw-ups liked Crowder.

He came in and stopped after a couple of steps, the door wide open behind him. He was empty of his usual cheer. Today's tie was green, one of those knit ones. Crowder kept a brush cut, hair so short it could look like a five-o'clock shadow. Right now, it was bristling, and he seemed as confused as Jack had been in the garage. Crowder hadn't really come into the room at all. He had no confidence in what he was doing, not

even in the support his feet gave him. Something was eating at the man from the inside out. He seemed to want to do significant things with his hands, only he couldn't. They weighed too much. He swiped at his mouth and said, "The President's been shot. They shot Kennedy. The President. Over in Dallas down there in Texas." Crowder wasn't seeing us at all. He said, "Sit. Sit." Not that we weren't. "You have homework," he said, and he left.

In the outside cafeteria, no Karen. Her crowd had gathered, like there had been a roll call. They came together at a table out from under the awning, there in the sun where they caught rays. No trespassing written all over them. Karen ran with girls who dated the car club hoods, who, indifference plastered to their faces, rode around in some guy's '56 or '57 Chevy, a name like Rockers or Crusaders lettered on the tail fins. At assemblies, which you had to attend, Karen and her pals sat in the bleachers and invented ways to flip off the cheerleaders down there on the floor. No way did you see them at a game. These were eighteen-year-old women who understood they had us and men twice our age and expertise by the short hairs. Except for Karen, they didn't associate with jocks. She took some crap because of me. Their hair was H-bomb chic. It was humped up and swept and stiff, and it moved as a unit. They wore frosty lipstick and occupied great spaces. The world was already a redundant and boring place to them.

Karen wasn't in line for lunch. "She's looking for you," Brenda told me. She put her arm through mine and was walking me toward the others. Her black hair curled along her jawbone, and then the swoop of it yanked itself clean over the top of her head. She said, "She's not feeling well, and it seems it's your fault."

"Where is she?" I said.

Vicki, a new addition to the crowd, a sophomore already evangelical in her beauty, said, "I saw her walking toward the parking lot."

Brenda said, "You know what they say about morning sickness."

I said, "The walls have ears."

"It means it's a girl," Brenda said. "If you have morning sickness, it's a girl."

"You can tell by the eyes," Vicki said. She pointed at hers and described what you checked for near the pupil. A crescent-moon shape meant a boy. A mark like a star meant a girl.

"Then there's watermelon hips," Margaret said.

Vicki said, "Versus basketball belly."

Brenda said, "Oh, god."

All of it the comedy they saw as life. I stepped from under the school's lunch area and into the parking lot near the football field, and there was Karen coming at me through the cars.

"Where are you?" she was saying. "Your car? Where is it?"

I told her I ended up behind the Mormon church.

"Take me home," she said.

"You sick?"

"Who said that?"

"Brenda."

In the car, Karen told me her friends were treating her like she was in a wheelchair. I asked her who she confided in, and she said Marcia. Big mistake, I was thinking, and Karen said, "Yeah, I know. I might as well announce it over the p.a."

I said, "So you're not going home because you started?"

"That's right, I'm not."

"So you didn't?"

"I didn't."

I asked her if she heard about Kennedy, and she said, "Is he dead?" Like she really cared, and I think she did. Her measure of both time and consequence took in more than I ever would. She understood there was more than the minute we were living in. I told her I thought Kennedy was alive. That he was going to be okay. Not sure why I said that. I didn't believe it. "Coke?" I said.

She said, "Kennedy has to be. Where are we going without him?" We were about to the Boulder Highway, driving past the Blue Onion, and could see the car hops hustling to keep up with a high school lunch crowd, seniors cruising through, honking. "Just take me home," she said. She grabbed her cigarettes from my windbreaker pocket, lit one, took one puff and tossed the fag through the open window. She said, "My father will help us if we need it."

"He'll help us?" I said. Knowing exactly what she was saying and giving her a hard time.

"He'll know someone if it comes to that."

"He going to buy us a house? Food? Furniture?"

"Grow up, Jack. You know what I'm talking about. I don't need you being a smartass."

"You want an abortion?"

"If it comes to it."

"Is it that simple for you?"

She said, "I'm looking down the road, Jack."

Karen had had a dream about our baby. In it, her grandmother was sitting on a sofa and looking like the family poodle in rhinestones. There were roses behind her. There was opera music and there was a bearded old coot saying over and over again, *You have no name, you have no godfather, you have no pious jew.* Her nine-year-old brother was sterilizing a pocket knife to do the circumcision. In the end a man who looked like our history teacher held the baby—who was now a girl not a boy—like she was fragile china. He turned her so Karen could see her face and he

said, "From the father the bones, the sinew, the nails, the white part of the eye. From the mother, the skin, the flesh, the hair, the pupil of the eye." He folded back the swaddling clothes. He said, "From the Holy one, breath, soul, vision, hearing, locomotion, wit and grace and intelligence and charm to beat the band."

"Your dream is like a bad movie," I said.

Karen said, "Why? Because the baby becomes a girl?"

"You know what I'm saying."

"No," she said, "I don't know what you're saying." We parked in front of her house. "Our baby has a heart already," Karen said.

"By now? It's too soon. It can't, can it?"

"Arms and legs like nubs," Karen said. "Lungs are forming, already breathing for her."

I said, "Already?"

"Already."

"You don't know this."

"I'm telling the truth. I'm telling you what I read."

"How big is she?" I said.

Karen showed me, our baby the space between her thumb and finger. She said, "Cells are making cells while we sit here."

I asked her to describe our baby—was she pretty? what color were her eyes?—and Karen said, "I'm done talking for now." She asked me not to come in, and I drove to a diner across from Jack's business.

It was located off Main, half way up the block, not far from Fremont Street, a brick and stucco low-slung hut that was once somebody's home. Party-mint green inside and out. There was a red linoleum floor, an L-shaped counter and one row of booths next to windows. What you saw from wherever you sat was a gas station. All the stools were taken, so I ordered and found a booth, the last one, in a corner where you looked across the table at a stucco wall, my back to two thugs who were talking low, but I could hear them. They were out of place in their expensive jackets and fruit-colored shirts. Walking by, I had spotted pointy boots. I picked up that earlier this morning they threw a scab off a roof. Not so high up death was a certainty. Not so low death wasn't a possibility. There was a sheet metal workers' strike going into its second month. It was hurting Jack's business. It was bankrupting the air conditioning guys. It was slowing down construction all over town. From two stories up these goons tossed some poor working stiff overboard, and now they were debating whether or not to send flowers. He hadn't died.

"What we done, it's better," the one whose back was to me was saying. "A couple of months and he's walking again, only he's not walking so adroitly. He's left with a leg he's dragging like a twig. Things have gone from worst to badder for the son of a bitch."

"He's a gimp until the day he croaks."

"He's what you call an object lesson."

"A reminder. Like string around your finger."

"Like a bookmark."

"We autographed the guy."

Thugs doing a skit, all this—their patter, their talk of flowers, the broken bones. Comics, these minor league felons.

Great big dudes, one jostled the backside of my booth getting out, like someone kneeing your chair at the movies. He touched my shoulder and said, "Excuse me, son." He patted his belly and said, "I need to lose a hundred pounds." He gave me a wink and grin like I was his nephew and he had slipped me a hundred bucks for my first hooker.

At work, I made a doughnut run for Marilyn, Jack's secretary, and then I replaced the radiator hoses in the delivery truck. Last trip north to the Nevada Test Site, I pulled over in the middle of the Mojave Desert and duct-taped a leak before it blew. Marilyn asked me to drop a deposit off at the bank, and I drove to the post office to pay for postage for the stamp machine. I delivered a couple of swamp coolers to Reynolds Electric. I screwed up and let one drop from a fork lift. We'd have to write it off. I caught Jack in his doorway once, scrutinizing me but acting like he wasn't, standing as if he was waiting on a phone call. He said, "You must have heard about the President."

"He die?" I said.

"It looks like it. They seem to be afraid to tell us."

I said, "Maybe he'll make it. He's got a lot going for him." Cronkite had already made his announcement by then, of course. The hope was it was a mistake, like when the news gets a baseball score wrong.

"Fingers crossed," Jack said.

I asked how the bid had gone, and he said it was a lot of backslapping and grinning. "Theatrics," he said. "Cockamamie bullshit and muckamucks."

I nodded like I understood. Had to admit I liked Jack when he talked like he was sitting at a bar and he was thirsty. His talking that way told me he could have been someone else. There was another Jack inside him. Like all of us. I said, "Yeah?"

"Like teaching toads the alphabet," he said. He shrugged and said, "You keeping your eyes open?"

I said I was.

Again, he said, "Fingers crossed."

His premonition, that bad thought in his thinking, it had been about me, not about the president of the United States. It wasn't a global thought. It was personal to us, to our family, and it was still operative. There was danger in the jungle.

I found an envelope in my gym locker. From Karen. Her brother did

this for her. He brought me messages. Dropped off gifts. Her sealed notes. She licked only the tip of the envelope flaps. One spot. The equipment manager opened up for him. *I'm not myself,* this note said. *See you tonight? Lots of love.*

Basketball practice itself had a meanness to it, assistant Coach Baker jerking us around. The man single-minded. No. No. No—the extent of his hospitality and his vocabulary. Kettle, our head coach, was out of town. I came off a cut and a screen Jerry Kirkington set for me and nailed a top-of-the-key jumper. Swish. Baker exploded. Yosemite Sam was coming at me. Steamed. That wasn't the shot we ran the play for. A one-armed blind man could have gotten off the shot I swished. A girl. A three-legged dog. Baker hustled me back to where we started, got in position to guard me, fought through the pick, hip-checking our center sideways. I caught the pass, and Baker was in my face. "Put it up," he said. "Put it up." I faked the shot and bounce-passed to Jerry, who had rolled free and down the lane for a lay-up.

Baker retrieved the ball, flipped it at me, and said, "Put it up." I went to, and he banged into me. Left me on my butt, sent the ball flying. "Lay-ups," Baker said. "You run plays to get lay-ups." He was talking like I was two. He said, "We want lay-ups, not players."

We quit half an hour early, out of respect, he said, for the President and the First Lady. Truth was we had a game Saturday night and always did a light practice the day before. I stuck around and shot free throws, popping thirty-five in a row at one point. There was the sound of the ball, its rhythm, its smack. There was that echo you get in an empty gym. My body knew what was required for any kind of shot I wanted to put up, left or right-handed. I felt distance and arc and heft in my elbow, in my fingers, in my legs. I understood what angles the backboard would give me. I could have built you a regulation basketball court, correct down to the inch, and I painted the lines myself.

Jerry, hair still wet, stopped on his way out and said, "Time to shut it down, man."

I nailed a free throw.

He said, "So, you all right?"

I told him I was.

"Karen?" he said.

I put up a shot. He asked me if I wanted to kick around, catch a movie, and I told him Karen and I were going to see Sammy Davis, Jr. "Right," Jerry said. "So the world ain't all that bad. It continues to have its pleasures."

"Just parts of it."

"Baker's a prick," Jerry said. He glanced over his shoulder.

I said, "He's a big one."

"Or he's a big one because he's got a small one."

Old joke.

Jerry said, "Hang in there."

I said, "Will do."

But something was nagging at me. Not Jack's premonition. Not Kennedy. What did I know about Camelot? Or what a goofball and horse's ass LBJ would be? Who knew Nixon was waiting in the wings and what a disease he would devolve into? There was Karen. Sure. Over a month is scary, and I'll admit her dream ticked me off. Where was my family in all of it? We seemed to have no part. Her grandmother? Her little brother? Circumcision? Who were they to us? But even to the side of Jack-my-dad and Jack Kennedy and Karen, there was something truly mean-spirited hauling itself in my direction, like when you wake up in the middle of the night and there's a split second where you think you're blind, but only in one eye. Your heart sticks to your ribs, and you are one breath away from unleashing a howl and clawing through the walls.

I was inside our garage, vacuuming the Impala's back seat, and I left the door up. Claire came out from the kitchen, hugging herself. November, and it wasn't warm, but it wasn't cold. I hadn't showered at school and was in my practice gear, Las Vegas High School shorts and t-shirt. She told me she and Betty were at Vegas Village buying groceries when they heard about Kennedy, and Betty sank to her knees, then almost flopped down completely but Claire caught her by the shoulders. Kept her from banging her head. Claire said, "She sat in the middle of the candy aisle and bawled."

"He's dead," I said. Coming home, I heard so on the radio.

"We didn't even know that when she collapsed," Claire said. She told me she crouched by Betty, then finally sat down and hugged her. Shoppers kept asking if Betty was all right, and Claire would say it was the news of the President. A woman gave them a handkerchief. "The communists," one man said. Another woman said, "All the beauty has gone out of the world." The store manager showed up and sent a bag boy for a glass of water. He wanted to call for an ambulance. Betty couldn't stop crying. She and Claire came in Betty's car, so, after about an hour, Claire drove her back home to Betty's house. Claire called Betty's husband and couldn't locate him. That's when they turned on a TV and learned that Kennedy died. Betty, not a word said, dropped to the floor. Claire was dialing our doctor, and Betty's husband walked in. Betty was sitting in the foyer and Claire couldn't budge her.

"Her husband took care of things?" I said.

Claire said, "Not really."

"What'd he do?" I said.

Claire sniffed and said, "He was cross with her. He chewed her out right in front of me. I thought he was going to pitch me and her through the front door."

I know I looked puzzled.

Claire said, "He told her to stand up. He stood over her like she was a drunk, and he said, 'Stand up. Get up off the floor.'"

I set the vacuum hose on the ground, and I said, "Can I tell you something?" Claire studied me. Didn't say a word. I got the feeling she had had enough, but I told her anyway. I said, "Karen might be pregnant."

Claire was standing next to a range, our old General Electric waiting on a ride to a couple who bought it. She did this dip and dodge with her head. Made a check mark. "From the time we went to San Diego?" she said.

I nodded.

She said, "It's over a month then?"

I said, "Way over. She was due right after."

She said, "Gil and Rhoda been told?" Karen's parents.

"Not yet."

"Does she want to go ahead?"

"I don't think so."

"You?"

I did. Why not? I said to Claire, "She says her dad will know someone if it comes to that."

"So she has told him?"

"I don't think so. She's counting on him coming through for her."

I got rescued from the hole I was digging for myself by Jack's pulling into the driveway. He parked short of the garage, climbed out of the Nova, and removed his tie. "Something wrong?" he said.

Claire said, "The President."

Jack reached into his back seat for his coat, and I fired up the vacuum. Claire would tell him about Karen later. She would wait until I went to pick up Karen, and then Claire would sit down with Jack. These days they were acting like pals, not husband and wife. He would mix her a drink, but not one for himself. He would wish he still smoked, and he would assume this was the trouble he saw coming. Or it was more of the trouble that was getting wider and heavier between the two of them. I wouldn't be there to tell him it wasn't his bad thought, to argue my side of its just being a thing that may or may not happen. At some point, Claire would say, "A baby on its way." I could see the three of us talking it out after I got home, me and Jack and Claire sitting in the breakfast nook, the TV on in another room, probably Johnny Carson. I would tell them about Karen's dream, how the baby was a boy, then a girl. "You got to trust your dreams," Jack would say, and Claire would say, "Twins, a boy *and* a girl. Maybe. Do you think?"

"Anything's possible," Jack would say.

"You take a round stone," I would say, "and you hang it from a string so it's above her belly, where the baby's heart is, if you can. If the stone circles, it's a girl. If it swings back and forth, it's a boy."

Jack would agree. Nod his head. "And, if it's, like your mother said, twins, a boy and a girl—what happens then?" Jack would say.

I won't know. Can't tell him.

Claire would add, "Each girl robs a mother of her beauty, inch by inch, ounce by ounce."

Later that night what did happen was close to what I had guessed, only I didn't know about the round stone then and wouldn't for another ten years. My dad wanted to call Karen's folks, but we talked him into waiting a day or two.

He said, "Why?" and Claire said, "What's two days?"

I said, "Give her a chance to talk to them."

Claire said to Jack, "What are you going to say?"

"We'll talk, is all," Jack said. "We're adults here. This is real. You don't abort a child on a whim because you're thinking about the future. A child is the future."

"Give it time," Claire said.

He said, "It's illegal."

"Jack," Claire said.

Jack said, "They don't want the baby?"

I said, "They don't know about it."

"But she knows them," Jack said. "She knows how they'll take it is what I'm saying."

"Give them some time," Claire said.

What was hanging in the air here was Jack and Claire splitting up, and a baby wasn't part of that picture. They were divorcing so politely it made you sick.

Our table for the dinner show at the Sands was down front next to the stage. Before Sammy Davis, Jr., came out, Karen and I ate, and her father sent a photographer over to take our picture. In it, we were sitting directly across from each other like adults. It was not really black and white, but more a cream and charcoal, and came in a pebbled folder that had slats you fit the photo into. Karen was wearing a butter-yellow dress. White spaghetti straps, and her shoes were white. She was holding a white handbag that snapped at the top. She had pinned her hair so it was off her neck, was coiled and pinwheeled.

At one point she took my hand, and I'm sure she could hear what I was thinking, which was, Would marrying me be so bad? Us having a baby? Me getting work? You going to school here? Sure, Karen was Strip people, and I was a townie, but she would have to admit that the difference wasn't quite Romeo and Juliet.

The lights dimmed. There was a piano on stage, not far from us. A man in a powder-blue suit came out and started playing get-ready-for-the-show music. Then Sammy Davis, Jr., slipped through the long red

curtains. No fuss. Like he was a stagehand who had wiring to check before the show started. He was wearing tuxedo pants and a bibbed and ruffled shirt. Stark white. No coat. His string tie hung loose, and his collar was open. He held his trumpet like it was a delivery we had to sign for. His hair, slicked to his head, made him look like he was courting some lady on the sly. Like he was a backdoor man. He shuffled his feet to the piano music, did some hoofing, his shoes brushing the stage, that way drummers can do on their drums. Then Sammy Davis, Jr., stood real still, got sad and skinnier. The piano player quit, and Sammy Davis, Jr., said, "I can't be doing a show tonight for you folks." He put his trumpet to his face and he played taps, and when he finished, he said, "That's for my friend Jack."

Years later I would be in a camera shop on Sahara Avenue, and there would be Sammy Davis, Jr., sitting on top of a stool, the man no bigger than a jockey. He was buying a camera from a pal of mine, who introduced us, and I said, "I saw you at the Sands. You were great."

He said, "Still am, man," and he assembled that grin of his, the Hollywood one that said, *yes, he did take that hairpin into hell but had boarded the bus and was on his way back to the top.*

The Sunday after Kennedy was shot, the *Las Vegas Sun* printed a drawing of the United States on its front page. There was a flag pole dead center in the middle of the country, the American flag at half mast. The caption said, A *Nation Mourns.*

The night Karen and I went to the dinner show, the night of the day Kennedy was shot, the night his friend Sammy Davis, Jr., played taps for him, afterwards we left the Impala parked at the Sands and walked along the Strip, going to Foxy's, past the empty land where the El Rancho Hotel burned. Guest houses were all that was left. Short, dead-end roads circled through the bungalows where stucco buildings sat beside olive trees on the flat hard desert. The story around school was hookers used them. You got laid for twenty bucks and sent to heaven for a fifty. It was cold enough Karen wore my coat. I didn't know who she thought she was, but in my head I was Dean Martin, and me and my doll, we were strolling here. Few minutes ago I finished the last show at the Copa. Sent Frank and Sammy and Joey on their way. You happened to be driving by, cruising the Strip, and you saw Karen on my arm. Maybe she was a starlet. Maybe she was a show girl.

At Foxy's, we ate bagels and sipped coffee, then crossed the street to the Sahara Hotel. We rode the elevator to the top where we stood and looked out over the backside of Las Vegas. I found this spot when I was a kid who explored the city on a bicycle. You couldn't see the Strip from here. We were looking at Sunrise Mountain, the Boulder Highway, Paradise Valley, east. We could see my neighborhood and the Hilton on Paradise Road. It was the only casino out there, that and the Landmark,

which didn't count, which was a bust. Who wanted to sleep in a pie shaped room? Sahara Avenue was busy in the direction of the Strip. I pointed out our neighbor's pool. Had done this a hundred times before. A car was cruising along Santa Rita. It slowed and turned toward a drive-way up from ours. Hesitated. There was a gate the driver had to wait for. This was Mr. King.

What, I was thinking, would be so wrong with our living here? With our boy, our girl, our boy and our girl, both of them growing up to be tall and honest in the saddle?

Our baby had a heart. It had lungs.

Las Vegas wasn't a bad city. It had clean air and wide streets. It was safe.

Two days later, Sunday, I picked my pal Fred up, and we drove to Art's sports store. Fred had a key—worked there weekdays after school—and was going to steal a fishing rod for his dad. It was his old man's birthday. I had my eye on a couple of Spaulding starter sets, three iron, five iron, seven iron, nine iron, and a driver. Thought I could sell them for enough to pay for the clubs I had ordered. Fred nixed the idea. Art wasn't that big a fool. The Impala, trunk open, was parked out back, and—pure luck, this—I saw, on Art's lunch-box of a TV, Jack Ruby gun down Lee Harvey Oswald. I'd gotten a Coke, popped off its cap, and was staring right at the screen when Ruby stepped forward and fired. I couldn't believe what I was an eye-witness to. Thugs. You got a problem, wipe it out.

Vicarious

Max Freeman

Say heavenly powers, where shall we find such love?
—Paradise Lost, Book III.1.213

For and in behalf of those dead
before God's love could smother
them. I enter the font and take a baptism.
Buried in the temple's basement, twelve
garlanded oxen balance the precarious

pool on their broad stone backs.
The water feels progressively warmer
as I'm dunked again and again—
now for an 18th century Frenchman,
who may have been tall, gregarious

and proud. Or not. Who knows? He
is only a name mangled
in baptizer's mouth tied
indelibly to a spirit one step
nearer salvation. They harry us,

the dead, sharing our beds
at night and wearing our clothes
by day, driving us ever
to find them, save. And we,
we are devout Mormons curious

to discover ancestors and release
them from ignorance. We feel
for them that vague, indifferent
concern born of personal non-
acquaintance. Call it *caritas*—

a love effortless and light as afternoon.
The love, say, of Jesus on the trail
when he dropped the wooden beam
in the dirt (never mind that we
weren't there) and stooped to carry us.

Wolves

Douglas Thayer

WHEN HE WAS SEVENTEEN, David Thatcher Williams and his cousin Cleon, who was also seventeen, hopped a freight in the Provo yards to start a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit David's Aunt Doris, his dad's sister. Just before they started back, Cleon was offered a job and decided to stay (good summer jobs were hard to get in Provo in 1940), so David came home alone. He knew that if he stayed at night in the big hobo jungles, he would be safe enough. David's Uncle Charley, who had hopped freights to Denver, Cheyenne, and Los Angeles the summer he graduated from Provo High, gave David and Cleon a lot of good advice.

When David left Washington to return to Provo, his Aunt Doris gave him three dollars, which he carried in change to pay for his food. In the jungles the hobos cooked together, and if a hobo wanted a bowl of stew or soup, he had to put something in the pot or chip in a nickel, a dime, or maybe even a quarter. A dime bought a loaf of bread in those days.

David lived three blocks up from the railroad yards. Hobos knocked on his mom's door to ask for food. His mom, Mary, always fed them; they sometimes did odd jobs for her. When David and his friends were younger, they rode their bikes down to talk to the hobos in the jungle at the bottom of Second West and listen to their stories, and the boys also hopped freights for short rides. Most of the hobos had families and were looking for work. Some were college graduates who had good jobs before the Depression. At night falling asleep in his darkened room, David listened to the whistles of the passing trains.

David's dad, Frank Thatcher Williams, ran the laundry at the State Mental Hospital in Provo, and hobos who had gone insane were brought to the hospital. David's dad sometimes brought patients to the house for holidays or family picnics. Some had to be told to eat or, at Christmas, to open their presents. One patient who had been a hobo sat staring at the front room wall for two hours, his eyes blank. Sometimes he couldn't remember his name. In the hospital medical wards patients lay in bed for years, fetal and wearing diapers.

The *Herald* occasionally carried a short article about a hobo found

dead in a jungle or along the tracks, his body mangled. Some bodies carried no identity papers of any kind, and the sheriff could not always be sure if the death was accidental. The county had to bury these men. In the bigger jungles the hobos organized committees to keep order. Men who preyed on other hobos were called wolves.

At seventeen David was tall and thin with thick curly blond hair just like his dad. David was a hopeful, happy boy and always smiling. He was an Eagle Scout, sang in the high school a capella choir, played basketball and softball, and dated any number of girls. Before David and Cleon left for Washington, David's dad brought their families together to kneel in prayer and ask the Lord to watch over the two boys and bring them home safe.

David's mom was expecting a baby, and David wanted to be back home before it was born. David's mom smiled when he said to be sure and have a boy. He had three sisters and wanted a little brother.

The third day coming back alone from Washington, David was in Nebraska outside of a little town called Gothenburg. It was the last week in August. The corn in the vast dark fields was high. It was late evening, almost dark. David walked the tracks looking for campfires in the wide band of willows bordering the cornfields. A hundred yards out, paralleling the tracks, a creek cut through the willows.

Hobos liked creeks so they could get cleaned up, wash their clothes, and have water for cooking. David had been told there was a jungle along the creek. He'd also been told it was a good jungle; people from the small towns sometimes dropped off surplus vegetables from their gardens for the hobos to eat. But in some towns the police would threaten the hobos and drive them away if they were found walking the streets or begging for food.

Although above him the night sky was clear, far to the south David saw flashes of lightning and heard distant thunder. Going out to Washington, he and Cleon were caught in storms in Nebraska and Iowa. They'd never seen so much rain before in their lives, the rain coming down in sheets for hours, flooding the land, the thunder terrible and constant, the flashing lightning turning the skies bluish white, the wind lashing the corn and willows.

David saw two fires flickering deep in the willows and trees, which were already black in the fading light. He hesitated; he knew it wasn't the big hobo jungle he was looking for. But he'd been walking for hours. He was tired, dirty, and hungry; he hadn't eaten all day, and he didn't carry any food or cooking utensils with him, just a bowl and a spoon, which every hobo had to have. He didn't want to be caught out in the open if the storm hit.

David decided if the group of hobos was big enough to need two fires, he would be all right. He figured he knew what he was doing; he

and Cleon had made it all the way to Washington without any trouble, and he was better than halfway home now.

He dropped down the grade but couldn't find the trail through the high, dense willows. Knowing the general direction to the fires, he pushed through. Finally, ahead of him he saw the fires flickering.

He stood back in the willows and looked into the clearing. He saw three men, one sitting, smoking and reading, the magazine turned to catch the light from the fire nearest a lean-to, one smoking and playing a game of solitaire at a table, and one standing by the cooking fire and eating from a bowl. Under the lean-to, which was covered by canvas, was an old mattress with a blanket spread on it. The three chairs and a table had been made from lumber scraps. Laundry hung from a rope stretched between two small trees. Steam rose from an open pot and a covered coffee pot on a grill over the cooking fires.

David was surprised that four or five men weren't around each fire, yet everything seemed okay. The three men had made an effort to build themselves a home out in the willows, but then David was just a tired, dirty, hungry, green seventeen-year-old kid anyway.

He stepped into the clearing and helloed the fire. A hobo had to get permission before he could walk up to a fire.

All three men stood up. "Come on in! Come on in and welcome!" The tall man, who had been eating, put the bowl down on the table and waved David in. The two men smoking took the cigarettes out of their mouths. As he got closer, David saw that the three men hadn't shaved for at least a week. Their pants and shirts were shabby with wear. Two of the three looked middle-aged, maybe a little older; the third, the smallest, looked much younger, perhaps not yet twenty. The two older men carried folding sheath knives on their belts.

"Hello, kid. You look all worn out. You alone?" The tall man stepped around the fire.

"Yes, sir. I need a place to camp for the night, if that's okay. I saw your fires. I can go on though."

"You're more than welcome, kid, more than welcome. Not a good idea to camp all alone out here. Take your pack off. Must be heavy."

The three men gathered around him. The tall man asked David his name and where he was from, and David told them. They did not tell him their names; they did not offer to shake hands. Hobos liked to get to know a person before they talked much about themselves.

All three men smiled.

"Yeah, they're real happy to see you," the young man said, "real happy, real happy. Yes sir, real happy. So am I, real, real happy. Yippee."

"Shut up." The tall man turned back to David. "He's a little simple. You look hungry, kid." The tall man turned toward the fire where the pots were steaming. "Why don't you have a bowl of stew and then take a

bath in the creek. You look like you could use a bath. There's a nice hole for taking a bath."

"Thanks. I'd like to get cleaned up. I've got a dime to pay for my supper."

"Oh, that's okay, kid. You keep your money. Sit down and eat. Got a bowl and a spoon?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

The tall man offered David a cup of coffee, but he said he didn't drink coffee.

The tall man talked to David while he ate. The young man stood next to the table, grinning but silent. After David finished the first bowl, the tall man filled his bowl again.

"There's plenty, kid, there's plenty. Got to keep your strength up."

"You sure do. You sure do. You sure do."

"I told you to shut up."

The camp was deep in the willows; David didn't see any path out. All the big jungles had worn paths through the willows and weeds.

After David finished eating, the tall man walked him back to the creek.

"You got some soap, haven't you, kid?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Come back to the fire when you're ready."

The tall man came back twice while David was standing in the waist-deep water.

"Just checking, kid. Don't want you to drown. You're taking a long time."

"It's really nice to be clean again."

"Sure it is, kid."

When he finished taking a bath, David put on clean shorts from the clothes in his backpack and stood in knee-deep water next to the creek bank to wash his dirty clothes. He wanted to have clean clothes to put on just before he got home. He didn't want his mom to think he hadn't tried to stay clean. He wondered if the baby had been born yet and if he had a little brother.

"Hey, kid."

David turned to see the two older men standing on the bank. The tall man had cut a willow and was peeling the bark off with a long-bladed folding knife. The other man carried a coil of thin rope. The tall man folded the knife and put it in the black belt sheath.

"Yes, sir?"

"Come on, get out. You take too long. What you washing your clothes for? Get out."

"Better do what he says, better do what he says, better do what he says. Better, better, better."

David turned. The young man was on the other side of the creek.

"Have I done something wrong? I'll just get the rest of my clothes on and go. I don't want to bother you. I'll pay for the bowls of stew."

"Just get out, kid."

When he waded from the creek carrying the shirt he'd just wrung out, the man who stood behind him slipped a noose over his head and snugged it against his neck.

"What are you doing? What. . ."

"Kid, we don't want you to ask any questions. You just do what you're told and we'll all have a real good time." The tall man had moved a little off to David's side.

"I don't want. . ."

The slashing blow with the willow across his back was so sudden, so unexpected and savage, that David dropped the washed shirt and almost fell to his knees, his vision blurring to white.

"I told you, I told you, you better do what he says. He's mean. He does things to people."

"Shut up. Now, kid, all you have to do is cooperate so we can all enjoy ourselves."

Understanding finally what they wanted him for, his whole body tightening and shrinking against that knowledge, for he had heard of such things, David said no again.

The second blow across his back was more savage than the first, and then he felt the noose tightening around his neck, lifting him to his toes. The other man had thrown the rope over the limb of a small tree and pulled it tight.

On the second night they started to torture David, and he knew they were going to kill him, had to kill him. They were drunk on three bottles of wine they'd sent the young man to town to buy with David's money. They burned him with their cigarettes and with pieces of fence wire heated in the fire, laughing when he flinched, asking him how it felt. The tall man with the black hair whipped him with the shaved willow and threatened to cut him.

The rope tied to the lean-to frame, the nooses still around his galled and bleeding neck, David was weak, in shock, but still conscious, still able to feel the pain when they burned him. But he didn't scream anymore.

David did not fill his mind with hate, plan revenge, righteous murder, but he thought of his mom and dad, his sisters, the new baby, his grandparents, his uncles and aunts and cousins, his neighbors and friends, bringing their faces and their laughter to his mind. He thought of family parties, reunions, picnics, Sunday dinners, and fishing trips with his dad. He thought of Christmas and Thanksgiving and all the good food, and playing church basketball, and dancing with girls, and

receiving his Eagle Scout badge, and going to church. But mostly he thought of his mom and dad hugging and kissing him when he left for Washington and telling him how much they loved him and to come home safe. David prayed, and he kept repeating his name to himself—David Thatcher Williams, David Thatcher Williams, David Thatcher Williams, David Thatcher Williams. . . .

All evening and into the night he'd heard the thunder, the wind picking up, and then the rain came, great sheets of rain pounding the earth, putting out the fires, and then the fierce wind tearing the tarp off the lean-to. Outside the lean-to, drunken, falling down in the darkness, cursing the rain, the wind, each other, the three men searched for the tarp, their cursing rising to meet the pitch of the storm.

The creek rose, the cool water coming up over the old mattress on which David lay in his shorts. Fumbling with the rope, David loosened the noose and pulled it over his head.

David crawled slowly away from the wind-muffled cursing. In great pain, he entered the dark, bending willows, the water from the rising creek a foot deep. The palms of his hands were burned, so he tried to stand, but the soles of his feet were burned too, the cool water not easing his pain. He fell, stood up, fell, crawled, made his hands into fists to crawl, saw himself in the great flashes of lightning. He came to willows edging the flooding creek and crawled into it, the deep, fast water carrying him. David did not think about wanting to die, or needing to.

He crawled out on the far bank. Standing now, walking on the sides of his feet, holding onto the willows, he pulled himself forward. He saw in the flashes of light the dark wall of a cornfield, the tops bending in the wind. He knew the three men would search for him there, spreading out to follow the rows until they found him. They had to find him; they had to kill him. He turned, moved into a wide band of waist-high grass and crawled into that, let the grass beat down over him, and lay staring up into the darkness.

Fitful, sleeping, perhaps unconscious at times, feverish, the burns becoming sores, some already infected, the pain increasing now, David lay covered with the long grass, waiting until he saw finally the pale morning light coming down to him. The rain had stopped, but the dark clouds hid the sun. David heard yelling, cursing, as the three men searched for him, the voices fading and then coming back on the pulsing wind.

He crawled into a thick patch of willows and lay curled. Listening, he waited, willed himself to wait. Mosquito-bitten except where he was covered with thick mud, the mosquitoes in grey swarms above his head, growing numb to pain, David slipped away into darkness and then came back, slipped away and came back. He heard the rumbling and whistling of nearby trains. He saw his arms, legs, stomach, the burn sores and red insect bites like the marks of a disease, the sores swelling, red and black,

some as big as nickels. He prayed he would not die and that somebody would help him.

In the late afternoon, the only sound the gentle wind, no voices, the clouds still hiding the sun, David followed the creek. Crouched, arms held out away from his body, he moved very slowly because of the numbness, kept stumbling. He lay down in the no longer flooded creek, but he dared not touch his body to rub away the dirt. He waded to the other side, where he knew the railroad tracks were, but stayed in the willows.

He found a farm road, walked along the grassy edge, but he was falling down now. The fever, a heat in his face and head, was spreading through his body, bringing back feeling except for his numb feet. Stooped, he saw across a field a small man on a tractor. The man stopped the tractor and stood silhouetted looking at him. The man was short and thin and wore a hat. David stumbled forward. When he fell, he crawled until he could push himself up again.

He saw a man walking down the road toward him. The man stopped and looked, bent forward, came farther. David saw it was a boy, not a man. He wore a yellow straw hat. The boy came closer.

"Gee. Gee whiz. What happened to you? What's your name?"

David looked at the boy.

"Gee. I'll get my mom. She'll help you. She always helps everybody. She'll bring my dad too. He'll come, and my big brother, Will. Wait. Just wait. Don't go anywhere."

The boy turned and ran up the road. He didn't stop to pick up his hat when it fell from his head.

Standing next to a barbed-wire fence, David reached out and gripped the tight top strand with both hands so he would not fall. It didn't hurt. Flies lit on his lips and under his nose. They lit on the sores. He saw under the mud the red welts on his chest, stomach, and thighs where the tall man had whipped him with shaved willows. David's whole body pulsed with the fever from the growing infections, the beginning delirium masking the pain.

When the boy's mother and father and older brother came, they had to pry David's hands loose from the wire.

"No, no," the woman said, "no, no. The dear God, no."

She was a large woman. She wore a blue apron over her dress. She touched David gently.

They broke a bale of straw in the back of their pickup truck and laid him on that. As the pickup moved slowly up the road, the woman knelt by him smoothing his hair, waving away the flies, and praying for him. He lay on his back. His elbows resting on the straw, he held up his bloody hands, the blood running down his wrists. The woman told him her name was Mrs. Meyers. David closed his eyes and slipped down into the greyness.

When he opened his eyes again, David lay in bed on a rubber sheet. Three women had pans of warm soapy water and they were washing him and putting salve on his sores.

"What's your name, son? What's your name?"

David reached out to touch the woman in the blue apron. He spoke very slowly. "Mrs. Meyers, Mrs. Meyers."

"No, your name, your name."

David looked up at the woman.

"It's the shock and the fever, Martha. It's a wonder he isn't dead. Look at his neck. Who could have done such a thing to a boy?"

"His poor mother."

A woman with a stethoscope around her neck was giving him a shot in the arm with a large hypodermic needle. Slowly the remaining pain ebbed and he slipped into the morphine darkness. For two weeks, delirious, he moved in and out of the darkness. He heard voices when he came up out of it and sometimes the whistle of a train far off, saw shadows, but felt no pain, his body vague, heavy, swollen, hot, indistinct. He could not speak.

Whenever his eyes opened, the women held his head up off the pillow and made him drink. They spooned broth into his mouth, the warm liquid spilling down his chin and onto his neck and bare chest. He knew that under the sheet he wore a diaper. The women put salve on his infected sores, on his neck, and on the welts from the beatings. Some of the infected sores had to be lanced. His hands were bandaged. Three little boys stood in the doorway. David saw vases of flowers and sunlit windows.

"You must eat, son. You must eat."

"What is your name? Where do you live? Who are your people?"

David did not know the answers to these questions. He remembered the boy coming down the lane toward him.

David stared at the women. He sank back down again into the darkness. If his eyes opened in the night, he saw Mrs. Meyers sitting by his bed in her big chair. Her hand lay on his bare wrist. She would stand up out of her chair to kiss him on the forehead and smooth back his hair. She talked to him. He heard her prayers for him. He did not speak. In the darkness he felt his hands inside the bandages. His eyes closed. He heard the faint, far off whistling of trains.

One evening he could keep his eyes open. He lay on his back under a sheet. He stared up at the white ceiling. He was very weak. He heard two women talking. One of them was Mrs. Meyers. He turned his head toward the voices. He saw Mrs. Meyers and another woman he'd seen before, but whose name he didn't know. He watched them. He listened. He saw the black scabs on his arms.

"Look, look, he's awake. Martha, look."

"Praise God—at last."

They came to the bed. They talked to David. They sat on either side of the bed. Mrs. Meyers kissed him on the forehead and smoothed his hair.

"What is your name, son? We need to know your name. Your family will be worried about you. You must tell us your name."

He did not answer Mrs. Meyers. He couldn't speak. He stared at her.

They talked to him, entreated him, begged him, asked repeatedly for his name, his father's name, where he was from, but he did not answer. He stared at them.

The other woman stood up. "He's gone." She crossed her arms over her chest. "He's gone, Martha. Look, you can see it in his eyes. The poor boy. Little wonder, really. Such a nice boy too."

"No," Mrs. Meyers said, "no." She shook her head. Tears slipped down her cheeks. "It's the shock, the fever. We have to be patient."

"It's as plain as the nose on your face, Martha. I've seen it before. My Delbert's got a brother like that named Fred. I've told you about him. Nothing you can do, worse luck. Makes you worry about your own kids. Of course you're not thinking about anything like that when you're getting married. Funny. The families take turns bringing Fred home for Christmas. Just sits there at the table like a stump. You have to cut up his turkey for him; sometimes you have to feed it to him. You're lucky if he don't piss himself. Just like a baby, really. Makes the kids nervous. Of course I don't mind. Used to it I guess. You can get used to anything. Have to." She looked down at David. "Such beautiful hair for a boy. Too bad that he won't be passing that on. He'll end up in the state hospital in Lincoln or some other place. You've done everything you can to locate his family. Maybe he has no family. A lot of 'em don't."

"No," Mrs. Meyers said, turning to David, putting her hand on his, "no, no, no, no."

"No," David said, whispering the word, closing his eyes against a horror he understood only instinctively. Then louder, "No! No! No!" And then he was shouting, not at the woman, but at the possibility of what she had said. Forcing himself up on his elbows, finding the strength for that, he kept shouting, "No! No! No!" Mrs. Meyers took him in her arms, holding him, David holding onto her, shouting, until the shouting turned to weeping.

In the night when David woke up, Mrs. Meyers sat in her chair, her head resting on the bed, both her hands on his arm. He thought her very beautiful.

David became stronger. He no longer had to wear a diaper but could wear shorts and a T-shirt. Except for the lacerated palms of his hands, all the sores had scabs now. People brought him gifts of candy, flowers, new shoes, pajamas, and clothes.

David's memory came back slowly, first what happened in the hobo jungle, his whole body stiffening against what he remembered. He tried to black it out, refuse to remember, pushing it back down deep. He closed his eyes, turned on the bed to push his face deep into his pillow, brought up his hands to wrap the pillow around his head. Lying awake in the night, staring up at the ceiling, he told Mrs. Meyers what the three men had done to him, his eyes filling with tears as he spoke.

"Oh, dear God," she said, "oh, dear God." She took his hands in hers and kissed them.

The sheriff came to talk to him. The bodies of two boys had been found in the last two years, one in Nebraska and one in Iowa. The boys had been tortured and murdered, their throats cut. There had been a short article about David in the county paper.

A man from the big hobo jungle east of Gothenburg came to the house to talk to David about what had happened. David didn't know even the first names of the three men who had brutalized him; they hadn't used their names. The visitor asked David to describe their clothes, belts and belt buckles, their knives, teeth, hair, rings, scars, the color of their eyes, the sound of their voices, the color of their blankets, asked him the same questions two and three times, took notes. The man wore a felt hat, a brown suit with vest, a white shirt, and a tie—all shabby. The man's name was Walter W. Simms. He said he was a member of a special committee of gentlemen selected to look into the matter.

"Son, at one time I was a police officer in Chicago. We intend to see this matter out. There must be justice in such cases." He wrote down the Meyers' address.

One afternoon sitting out on the Meyers' front porch in the sun looking down at his open, healed hands, David knew that his name was David Thatcher Williams and that he lived in Provo, Utah. His whole life came flooding back to him so that he had to close his eyes and hold his head in his hands against the joy of it.

His dad and Cleon came for him. They'd been searching for him for over a month, going from one hobo jungle to another between Provo and Washington, showing David's picture. Cleon had quit his job in Washington to help search for David. The assistant superintendent at the State Hospital, a Mr. Startup, had loaned David's dad his new Buick to drive. His friends at the hospital took his shifts in the laundry so that his dad was kept on the payroll while he was gone.

David cried when he saw his dad. David's dad, his eyes brimming with tears, hugged and kissed David. Cleon shook his hand and then put his arms around him and held him. David's little brother had been born a week before his dad and Cleon came to Gothenburg. David talked to his mom on the phone.

When they left Gothenburg, Mrs. Meyers hugged David and kissed

him. Mr. Meyers shook their hands. David's dad thanked Mr. and Mrs. Meyers over and over again for their kindness. David's mom phoned and thanked Mrs. Meyers. The Meyers boys all said goodbye and brought David gifts. Mrs. Meyers had fixed them a big lunch basket for the trip. The family waved him out of sight. All along the road, neighbors stood by their gates to wave.

It was early evening of the second day when they drove into Provo and turned up Third West from Highway 89. Neighbors stopped watering their lawns or left their newspapers and knitting on their chairs to walk down from their porches to wave to David. Some neighbors brought gifts of food or bouquets of flowers. His sisters came running out of the house, all four of his grandparents walking behind them. His uncles and aunts drove up in their old cars, his cousins jumping out to run over to him. Everybody hugged and kissed him and told him how wonderful he looked.

David went into the house to his mom, who sat in the rocking chair holding his baby brother. She stood and, moving the baby to one arm, she kissed David on the lips.

"He's beautiful, Mom."

"Yes," she said, reaching up to touch the red, indented scars on David's face, "he is."

David's mom took his hand in hers, turned it to look at the palm, and then pressed it against her cheek. David began to cry. His mom pulled his head down to her shoulder. She whispered to him and stroked his hair. She told him to sit down in the rocking chair, and she put his baby brother in his arms.

Later David's dad called all the family into the house to join in prayer and thank the Lord for David's safe return. That night his dad came into his bedroom and lay beside David until he fell asleep. His dad did that every night for two weeks. If David sat too long, or started to cry, his mom asked him to help her; he took care of his baby brother a lot, changing his diaper, feeding him a bottle, and taking him for rides in the baby buggy.

David didn't want to go to church, but his mom said he was going. The ward members shook his hand, patted him on the shoulder, told him how good he looked, and said how nice it was to have him back home. Every week David went to Dr. Clark's office to talk to him. Dr. Clark was the family doctor. He was past seventy. He'd had a practice in Provo for over forty years, but still made house calls night or day. Bishop Matthews came by the house to sit and talk to David and had him come to his office on Sundays to talk.

David's boyfriends came to get him to play basketball and softball and go to parties. David's mom made him go. But David wouldn't go on dates or go swimming. He started high school, but he had to drop out because he would suddenly start to cry in class.

David's Uncle Harold, who was a plumber, hired David on his crew to dig trenches for water lines and sewers. He pushed David hard; it was all pick-and-shovel work. David liked the hard work. At night he did his high school lessons. His mom helped him.

The other three men on the digging crew all swore, smoked, and drank. They were all older and couldn't get better jobs. They were all divorced. Hank had been divorced four times. They told David funny stories about their own lives and the lives of other men they'd known. They were full of funny stories. David listened to the stories, but he didn't often laugh.

David's dad brought a patient home from the State Hospital to share Thanksgiving and Christmas with the family.

Two days after Christmas, David received a letter addressed to him at the Meyers and then forwarded, the envelope bent and smudged. David had just gotten back from an ice-skating party and was sitting at the kitchen table with his dad when his mom handed him the letter. David put down his glass of milk. His mom had made a fresh batch of oatmeal-raisin cookies.

Inside the envelope was a clipping from an Iowa newspaper reporting that three men had been found hanged from a big dead cottonwood tree near the railroad tracks a mile west of the town of Grinnell. The men carried no identification. Their hands and feet had not been tied. The picture showed the tree with the three ropes hanging down. The nooses had been cut off. There was no note, just the clipping.

David handed the clipping to his dad, who read it.

"God rest their souls," his dad said. "God rest their miserable, damned souls."

"What is it, Frank?"

David's dad handed the clipping to his mom. She read the clipping and put it down on the table.

"What a terrible thing," she said, "what a terrible, terrible thing."

David looked at his mom and dad. He didn't say anything. He took another oatmeal-raisin cookie from the plate, ate it, drank some milk, and took another cookie.

David started back to Provo High in January. He didn't want to go to gym and have to shower, but his dad said he didn't know why not.

A Good Sign

Robert Hodgson Van Wagoner

BOBBIE WANTS TO MARRY ME AGAIN. Fourteen months now I've been pointing out the kids, our wedding pictures, our marriage certificate. Gosh, I even show him the mail—"Mr. and Mrs. Robert Franklin," right there on the envelopes.

Doesn't do any good. He just looks at me like I'm the Deceiver in this movie they only show at the Mormon Temple, which is where Bobbie and I were married four years ago. Funny how you grow up assuming a thing like marriage takes up the whole brain. Then your husband gets run over in a crosswalk, and the whole cake unbakes. He gets out of the hospital and takes up on the living room couch. And not because there's anything wrong with the sex part of him. Believe me. I know what he does in the bathroom. I wash his clothes, and his sheets, too. Still, until last week, if I so much as nursed the baby without covering myself, he'd nearly die of embarrassment. He's a gentleman—modest, very modest, honorable as they come. He hasn't touched me like a husband since the accident.

Granted, that's not the main thing to me, but it is a thing. A big thing, and don't think my mind's in the wrong place for saying so. I'm young. Twenty-three. Heading toward my prime. It's not like that mangled patch of gray matter took away the rest of him. He's a doll and he still turns me on. It's been hard, real hard.

Take this, for an instance. One time a while back, he comes home from this burger-flipping job rehab lined up for him, and what's he got? A girl. A date! Some teenage thing he's been working with. I'm not saying it was anyone's fault, though I can tell you the girl had more to do with it than Bobbie. Sure, she was just a kid and Bobbie's sweet and charming, too cute to resist, I suppose. That was the end of Bobbie's burger-flipping days, I'll tell you. He's working at the Deseret Industries now, putting price tags on all the used clothes. They keep an eye on him there, and I feel much better.

So, about two months ago he starts talking about marriage. He'd been watching me real close, too, and not in his usual "Gee, What's-

Your-Name, you sure are nice to me" sort of way. No, sir. I'd seen him look at me that way plenty before the accident. Call me crazy, but I knew then my old Bobbie was behind those puzzled, lovesick eyes. He had the hots for me, full blown Bobbie-loves-Cindy hots. There it was, love, bobbing on his face like a baby in the ocean, safe and floating on the wreckage of a plane crash. I didn't even care he couldn't remember he already loved me. After you've spent fourteen months pining after your husband, aching for your fatherless children, missing stuff as ordinary as your sweet man's toes on yours while you drift off to sleep, well, then you'll know how terrifying hope can be.

Which is why I didn't rush right in, not even when he started bringing me those horrible rings he'd pick up at the D.I. Let's just say I was cautious. I just wasn't up to having my heart broken again. I didn't lead him on or encourage him in any way. But when he came home with that last ring, and the letter, I just couldn't help myself. I knew it was true.

It happened a little with the first baby, but when the second came along, I was always peeing my pants. The doctor gave me these exercises, which I'd been working on. Bobbie didn't really understand, and him being so modest, I never went into much detail. But he'd help, all the same, count for me, encourage me, tell me I was doing real good. Which I was when he came home that day. Squeeze-two-three-four, rest-two-three-four, squeeze-two-three-four, rest-two-three-four. Do those enough you can't hardly walk the next day.

Anyhow, Bobbie'd been at work all morning, or so I thought. He walks in early, all nervous and grinning and, well, it wasn't hard to figure out.

"Count for me," I said, hoping to slow him down a bit. I wanted to help him get it right.

"Sure," he said. "But if you intend to squeeze past ten, you might have to help me count." It was a joke. Bobbie's sense of humor since the accident has actually been quite excellent. We joke a lot like that, kind of laughing at the whole rotten thing. He even seems to like it when I tease him a little.

"This is my punishment for having your babies," I told him.

He smiles like a kid when I say things like that because he's sweet and doesn't want to hurt my feelings by saying what he thinks. This time he surprised me, though.

"It's your punishment for defying God's institution of holy matrimony," he said.

Mind you, we still go to church and all. We have pictures of Jesus and the temple and the prophet on the wall, little quotes from the Book of Mormon magnetized to our fridge. But Bobbie hasn't been much into it. That's one thing that's been real different. He doesn't seem to care much one way or the other about the church, mostly because he doesn't remember, I think. I'm not sure he even believes in God anymore.

When I'd recovered some, I said, "God's a male chauvinist pig. If he'd ever had a baby, I guarantee I wouldn't be doing these dumb exercises right now."

"It's the money, isn't it?" he said. "You not marrying me."

Granted, things have been a bit tight. The old man who ran over Bobbie in that crosswalk didn't have the greatest insurance and the settlement's been slow in coming. The church has helped out some with food, and we're getting a little from the government to hold us over. But the money's coming, that's for sure—that's what our lawyer tells us, anyway. All the same, until Bobbie brought it up, I had no idea he even thought about money.

"Count, Bobbie." I was holding the baby and squeezing down below. It already ached, but I needed a second to form my thoughts.

"Squeeze-two-three-four," he counted. "Because if you not marrying me is all about money, I think you can pretty much start picking out our wedding colors. Rest-two-three-four."

"Oh, Bobbie," I said. "We're *already* married. And besides, you never hear me complaining about money."

Bobbie frowned, and I knew he was done hearing about us already being married. That's when he called me that name he hadn't used since before the accident.

"Baby doll," he said. "I didn't mean it like that. I'm just trying to give you a surprise, here." He dug into his pocket and pulled out what looked like one of those crystals everyone hangs off the rear-view mirror of their car. See, this is it right here. Awful, I know, but I love it.

"It's beautiful, Bobbie," I lied. "But I just don't know. This is all kind of fast, don't you think?" I didn't dare let on how much I wanted to take it.

"It's not plastic," he went on. He was practically begging. "This is 100 percent 24 karat gold." He was talking real fast. "And the real diamond's coming. They had to order it, but it's coming, and that's not even the best part."

My blood pressure was on it's way up, but something about the way this was going wouldn't let me disappoint him. I just wanted to bawl. "It's a good surprise, sweetheart," I said. "I just need to think about it for a while. This is a big decision."

"But, baby doll," he went on. "This is a *real* surprise. I mean this is big-league."

"What did you do, Bobbie?" I asked. I tried not to sound worried.

"Nothing," he said. "Well, except—" and he smiled at me with all his teeth—"except put our winning sweepstakes number on an order for *Sunset Magazine* because I know how much you love it."

I couldn't do anything but stare at him. "You bought me *Sunset*?" I was barely breathing. "Oh, gosh, Bobbie, you sweet thing! *You bought me* Sunset?"

"And that's not even the best part." Bobbie walked over and pulled this big, brown, official looking envelope from the cupboard. I was halfway across the room but could still see the expensive-looking gold star shining through the envelope's huge plastic window. My name and his name were written across the top in fat, black, one-or-so-inch letters, and near the bottom it read, "$$$5,000,000.00."

"It came yesterday," Bobbie yelled, and jumped into the air and high-fived the decorative ceiling beam he thinks makes our trailer look like it's from France or somewhere.

Of course I knew what it was, but you've got to consider everything else that was happening right then. I wasn't about to cut Bobbie off, not when he was showing so much promise. This was the best I'd seen him since the accident.

Anyway, about then, Rusty, our two-year-old, wakes up from his nap. That's the way it is with trailers, the walls are so thin you can't ever be quiet enough to get a kid through a nap. So I handed Bobbie the baby, who he loves like the father he is, and headed down the hall for the kids' room. I studied the writing in the envelope's window, which read something like, "This hereby certifies that Cynthia Elizabeth Franklin and Robert Young Franklin will receive $$$5,000,000.00, plus a bonus $$$1,000,000.00 for timely receipt of the enclosed registration, to be dispersed in 30 annual payments of $200,000.00." Oh, crap, I thought, and that was really my biggest moment of doubt, me standing there, fanning myself with that big gaudy thing. Rusty was screaming, though, so I put off doubting for the time being and went in to grab him.

Back in the living room, I found Bobbie sitting on the edge of the couch grinning. He had the baby across his knees, just like a good dad. The little porker's still at that stage, you know, head and legs up, rocking back and forth on his fat tummy like a beached whale.

I put Rusty down, opened up the envelope—which weighed about ten pounds—and unpacked a tree's worth of loose papers. To humor Bobbie, I quickly perused all those glossy pictures of encyclopedias and cars and little magazine covers made up like sticker stamps, plus of course, that silly letter of congratulations they always have—the one, you know, with the small print on back. Then I zeroed in on the certificate. They really do a bang-up job with those, using paper that feels like money, except a lot thicker and a little softer. You're supposed to think the gold sticker is just that, gold. Close up, the lettering even looked like it was done by hand using a feather pen or something. No wonder Bobbie thought we were rich.

I was thrilled, seeing him happy and sure of himself for the first time since forever. "Bobbie," I said. "Please tell me this is what I think it is. Don't kid me if you're not serious."

"Baby doll," he said real calm. He got up with the baby and strutted

over to get my reaction up close. He held out the ring. "This is what you think. Mail in that paperwork, and we're six-millionaires."

No, I didn't take the ring then either. And it wasn't like you're probably thinking, that I had a brain fark or something. The truth was I had my second thoughts. I even tried to break the bad news.

"Bobbie," I said real gentle. "Sometimes these things don't go like they make you think." But then, looking at his pretty face, I just couldn't finish. I took a deep breath and hung a right: "What if our certificate gets lost in the mail? What if somebody steals it and the people with our money never know we're the ones?"

I looked at the certificate, then up at him again. He was rocking the baby and smiling at me, and Jeez, what a smile. It was so confident and handsome and perfect I got the tingles, which are good but very bad for someone in my condition. Like electricity, they wriggle through my body, straight to my breasts, where my milk's just waiting for something of the sort. I dropped the papers on the counter and grabbed myself cross-your-heart style, which usually embarrasses Bobbie, but not this time. There I stood, mashing my breasts because I wasn't quite ready to stop looking at his face. The palms of my hands were getting wet, right through my blouse.

Bobbie backed away from me, his smiling face on mine because, well, he could see what he was doing and he liked it. Without so much as a blink, he pulled another envelope from the cupboard, this one red, white, and blue with an eagle on it. "Express Mail," it said.

"We send it like this," Bobbie explained. "Certified, guaranteed, overnight mail, insured. Hand delivered by an official US agent of the best postal service on the face of the planet. Six million bucks, baby doll. We can afford Express Mail."

I just started to giggle, though I knew I was in big trouble the minute I did, and I'm not just talking about the big trouble that came later. It starts tickly but goes to the burns real fast. With Bobbie standing there like that, thinking he'd just won six million bucks, and me holding my boobs realizing what I was about to do—well, I just couldn't control myself. I dropped one hand to give my pucker a little back-up and squeezed my thighs together, but that wasn't going to do it, either. So I ran. It wasn't a moment of modesty, let me tell you. I was laughing and knocking into walls trying to get my jumper up and my underpants off without letting go my hold and without unsqueezing my thighs. And somehow I actually got myself unclothed and to the toilet before I had to give it up entirely. What happened next was my fault, too, I suppose, as I'm the one who retrained Bobbie to put the lid down.

"You're buying me new carpet." I was still laughing, still sitting on the toilet, still peeing on the lid if you must know.

"Baby doll," Bobbie called back. "Forget the carpet. I'm buying you a whole new trailer!"

It just kind of happened then. Bobbie said we had to rush because he had another surprise for me and it was being delivered in less than an hour.

"Bobbie Boy, it sounds to me like you've thought of everything," I called from the bedroom, where I'd just nursed the baby and was slipping on some naughty underwear, which as a Mormon you're not supposed to wear, especially if you're leaving the bedroom in them. I admit, I was feeling pretty hopeful.

We met back in the kitchen where I'd left the documentation. We stood breathing for a minute, each of us holding a kid and looking down at the stack of papers.

"Do you want to do it, or should I?" Bobbie asked.

I thought about this. "I guess maybe you better do it," I said.

So he put Rusty down and started digging through the most informative looking papers. He started to read out loud.

"Dear Multi-Million-Dollar Sweepstakes Participant. Only one last stamp stands between you and $$$5,000,000.00. What's more, your quick response secures your eligibility for an additional $$$1,000,000.00 bonus prize! We are pleased to announce that you may also be eligible for one of ten brand new Cadillac Sevilles to be awarded to ten participants who select a second magazine subscription from the enclosed list. As always, we offer our subscriptions at rock-bottom prices, guaranteeing you as much as 90% off the newsstand price!"

Bobbie shook the letter at me. "That's true," he said. "We're getting one hell of a deal on your *Sunset*."

"A Cadillac Seville," I said. "That's a classy car!"

Bobbie went back to the letter, skimming to find where he'd left off. He's still a little slow, but a great reader all the same. I'd already beat him to the important information.

"Look at this, Bobbie," I said. So as not to embarrass him, I acted real pleased to have discovered a short cut when we were in something of a hurry. "They've got all the instructions right here on the return envelope."

Bobbie took the envelope and studied out loud what I'd read once to myself already.

Have you:

*Signed and enclosed the $$5,000,000.00 participant's certificate?

*Acted quickly to secure eligibility for your $1,000,000.00 bonus prize?

*Completed and enclosed your order for bargain subscriptions of your choice?

*Selected a color preference for one of ten available Cadillac Sevilles?

*Enclosed a signed check or money order for your exciting new subscription(s)?

*Mailed this envelope?

"If I'm reading you," Bobbie told the envelope, "I probably haven't mailed you yet." Which was just the kind of cute thing he'd have never said before the accident.

He dug into the return envelope, where he'd already slipped our personally addressed magazine order form, the one with the *Sunset* sticker licked on. Then he looked closely at the page of sticker stamps on the counter until he found the one he wanted. He tore it out, licked it and stuck it to the order form. "Now, baby doll," he said, handing me the form. He slipped the checkbook from his back pocket. "You pick a color while I write the check."

It's significant to note, here, that until this moment, I didn't think Bobbie remembered how to write a check. Frankly, I was pretty surprised to find he had the checkbook on his person. This was a big deal, and when I looked at the check before I put it in the envelope, it was all done correctly. He'd even signed his name in his old scribbly way, something he hadn't been able to do for the doctors just a few months earlier.

One edge of the sticker was curling up on the order form, so I pressed it back down. Bobbie had selected *Fortune Magazine.*

"I don't know," I said, giggling again, though this time without the tingles. I checked the appropriate box. "Twenty bucks is a heck of a good price for a shiny red Cadillac."

This is how we enacted our post office strategy:

It was my job to distract the other postal agents and the customers that weren't being helped while Bobbie performed his job, which was to discreetly mail the Express Mail envelope without giving away any clues to its priceless contents. You know, in case some dishonest person was waiting for just such an opportunity to get rich at our expense.

Before Bobbie got in line, we held a quick pow-wow and decided that the older woman agent looked the most honest, and besides, Bobbie reasoned, being closer to death than the other agents, she would have less time to spend $$$6,000,000.00, a fact that significantly decreased her probable degree of temptation. Bobbie also suggested that he take Rusty as his own distractionary device, thinking the woman, who looked like a grandmother, might be more honest when there was a little kid involved. In fact, Bobbie said, he might even tell the grandmother the envelope was Rusty's, that we were just helping him mail it. I told Bobbie I thought he had excellent ideas, and besides, my job required only the baby, meaning Rusty might be too much for me to handle considering what I intended to do. Bobbie picked up Rusty, then gave me a quick, nervous kiss. I just about conked over, Bobbie's lips on me again after so long.

Bobbie'd made it to the single file line, so I took my place to the side, but also toward the front, positioned where both the customers and the

agents could see me clearly, then I waited and watched. There were still a few people in front of Bobbie, and I was a little worried our timing might be all wrong and we might not get Grandma, as everyone stood in the same line and took the next available agent. But Bobbie had that one figured out, too. It was quite a pleasure, watching him work. When his turn came up and the next available agent was not the old lady, he let the man behind him go ahead. I was so proud—Bobbie didn't panic, didn't even look worried. He just stood there, patiently waiting for Grandma.

That's when I remembered I had a job to do, too. The baby was asleep in my arms, so I slipped a hand inside the blanket and started rubbing his little foot. He hates having his feet rubbed, and I know it wasn't the nicest thing to do, especially considering he was asleep and comfortable. But, well, we were on a mission, and it didn't really hurt him any. Instantaneously, he was awake and screaming, hopping mad, so I told him loudly, but very soothingly, that I was preparing him a snack even as I spoke. From the corner of my eye, I could see the customers eyeing the lady with the screaming baby. I hoped all of them had turned, but I never did check for sure, as a girl only has so much nerve. I moved the baby into another position, kind of hanging under and over one arm, and started unbuttoning my top. When you're a nursing mother, you learn what kinds of clothes give you the best access. This particular top opened up real well, very easy to get into. What I'd forgotten was the naughty underwear, which is see-though, and harder than heck to maneuver out of. At least it was a front clasp, so I did the one handed thing, which Bobbie had once been an expert at himself. Wah-lah, there I was. I figured if everyone wasn't looking before, they certainly were now. Bobbie and Rusty had made it to the grandmother's window. I peeked up and found Rusty sitting on the counter, holding out the back of his hand. Grandma was rubber-stamping something on it. Bobbie was writing out another check. I decided it was safe to give the baby his snack now, so I plugged him on and, like that, he started in with a loud, satisfied sucking.

Within seconds, Bobby emerged from behind the velvet rope carrying Rusty, who was holding out his hand to show me the stamp, which read, "Do Not Bend." Bobbie was flushed and, well, a bit turned on, I think. He was looking right through my open top. By now, my breasts were mostly covered, of course, but he couldn't take his eyes off where they'd been.

"What about the envelope?" I whispered, pretending to be interested in something other than what I was getting right that minute. "Do you think anybody got a good look at it?"

"Look at what?" he said.

Bobbie wasn't about to give me a hint. He pushed the old Buick about as fast as it'll go, not all that fast, but fast enough.

"Bobbie, honey," I said. "This must be some surprise if you're willing to risk a ticket. Especially as you're not really supposed to be driving and all."

"I'm sorry, baby doll," he said, and he slowed down a bit. "I just had to pull some big strings to get our surprise delivered on such short notice. I'd feel real awful if we weren't there to meet it." Bobbie set his jaw and looked at me like maybe he was getting ready to voluntarily die on my behalf. Let me tell you, a girl can go soft on a look like that.

"Well, okay," I said. We were almost there anyway. "Six million bucks will buy a bunch of speeding tickets, I suppose."

"Yes, it will," Bobbie agreed, and he pushed the old Buick back up to speed.

When we pulled into the trailer park, I realized Bobbie was once again ahead of me. A large semi-like-truck was slowly making its way out of the park, right over the speed bumps the management put in to protect life and property from speeding vehicles. Bobbie started honking the horn and flashing the lights and when he was pretty sure he had the driver's attention, he swerved in front of the truck and stopped. The truck driver opened the door and got half-way out, the way truck drivers do. Bobbie hopped out and the two held a quick rendezvous, which gave me the chance to study the truck for clues. It belonged to a large furniture store, the largest in town. I was doing my level best not to worry.

Bobbie was all grins when he climbed back in the car.

"I don't think I can wait, Bobbie," I said. "I think you better tell me about my surprise right now!"

"Just hold on, now," he laughed, cranking the old boat's gears. "We're almost there."

We parked in the driveway, and I got the kids out of their seats and into the trailer. Bobbie waited outside for the truck to back all the way to our trailer, as the street was too narrow for it to turn around.

"How did they get out of here in the first place?" I asked Bobbie on my second trip. But Bobbie was too excited to answer. He was waving his arms and trying to give the truck backing instructions, though I could see the driver wasn't paying any attention to Bobbie. Finally, the truck stopped in front of our place and the driver and his assistant got out. I watched from the porch, where I was barricading the open front door with my butt so Rusty, who was howling to push through, wouldn't escape and get in the way.

Bobbie and the two men wandered up to the front door. The driver and his assistant did not look happy.

"I don't know," the driver was saying. He took out a tape measure and spread it across the doorway. "I'm absolutely positive it's not going through this door."

"What's not going through this door?" I tried.

Bobbie threw up his hands. "Don't tell her," he cried. "It's a huge surprise!"

I could tell the driver and his assistant weren't the least bit excited about my surprise. "It's huge, all right," the driver mumbled.

"Look," Bobbie said, and I must say he seemed very in control, not at all perturbed or confused. "I've already solved the door problem. Out back we've got a sliding glass door over a redwood deck I'm planning to build. It'll absolutely fit through that door. It *has* to fit." He appraised the delivery guys sternly. "Do you understand?"

The two no-necks looked at each other. "Let's see it," the assistant said. I knew they weren't convinced, but it seemed Bobbie'd gotten through. I led everyone through the living room to the sliding glass door. The driver opened up his measurer and checked it out. He looked down the skinny steps, considering the two-plus foot drop into our back yard.

"We'll have to take it from the box first," the driver grumbled.

"And carry it across the yard," the assistant added.

"And heft it up by hand." This time the driver.

"It'll be close," the assistant observed. "He'll have to sign a damage release."

"I'll sign anything," Bobbie informed them. "I'll even help you carry it in."

Bobbie was feeling pretty good right then, but I couldn't let him get too carried away. "No, sweetheart," I said. "You shouldn't be carrying heavy stuff. You know what the doctors said."

Bobbie went blank, but just for a second. Then he smiled. "Tell you what," he told the guys. "You get it all in here, and I'll give you each a ten buck tip."

The bozos looked at each other again. Then they looked at Bobbie. Grunting, they pulled gloves from their hip pockets and headed for the truck.

"Oh my gosh, Bobbie," I yelped. They were the biggest speakers I'd ever seen, but the delivery guys managed to get them through the front door anyway. Standing up, the boxes were almost as tall as me. After the speakers, they brought a fancy glass stand—one at a time, they unpacked the audio/visual components and set them on it.

"You mean this isn't all?" I gasped as the guys trudged back out for another load. "You mean something still has to go through the back door?"

"Not just something, baby doll," Bobbie said. He was too pleased now to keep his mouth shut. "A big screen TV's coming through that door! The biggest screen TV you've ever seen!"

Sure enough, here came the delivery guys grunting and cussing around to the back door, which Bobbie had opened wide in anticipation. One of them was creeping backwards and one was creeping forwards and they had the TV between them. It was huge.

"Don't you help, Bobbie," I warned, grabbing Rusty and the baby both. I'd just had a glimpse of bad imagination.

Bobbie hopped down the back steps and grabbed a front corner of the TV anyway. The dullard walking backward worked to the other front corner, leaving Bobbie holding more than he should. The driver on the other side was all alone, and there I stood pretty much frantic.

"Okay," the front corner guy said, working around the steps. "Rest this end in the doorway first."

Carefully, Bobbie and the delivery guy worked the bottom edge of the TV onto the ledge outside the open doorway. The trailer creaked. The front delivery guy moved around back to help his buddy hold up the airborne side.

"Now. . ." the driver told Bobbie, ". . .you get up in the trailer. . .," everyone was breathing hard, including me, ". . .and guide us through."

"Wait just one minute," I said. I was more than a little upset now. "I *told* you he's not supposed to lift." Bobbie'd taken off around the house for the front door. The delivery guys just gave me this pained look. I couldn't have cared less. I hated them, and besides, I'd already seen what they apparently had not. That TV was too damned big. There was no way it was going through that door. Jeez, can you believe the things guys'll do!

"Okay," Bobbie told them, coming in behind me. "You're about straight on. Just lift her up over the guide and push."

"Bobbie," I whispered as the delivery guys lifted the TV over the guide and pushed. The TV came at us for about one foot before it caught up on the sides, which were actually the TV's front and back.

"One more good push and she's through," Bobbie encouraged.

Nobody did anything for a minute, but I could hear the delivery guys mumbling on the other side of the window. Bobbie started rubbing his hands through his hair, a bad sign. The assistant took the full weight of the TV while the driver examined both sides of the predicament. He looked up at me through the window. I was standing behind Bobbie, still holding the kids. Bobbie couldn't see me, so I started shaking my head at the driver.

"I don't know about this," the driver grunted. "Maybe we should just lift it on out of here."

"No, no!" Bobbie yelled back. "We're almost there. From this angle it looks real good. Just one more push. Ten bucks. I signed the paper!"

The driver shrugged at me, and kind of sneered, too, if you want to know the truth. Then he went back to help his buddy push.

And Bobbie was right—the second push definitely took care of the obstruction. Starting with the aluminum piece around the doorway, the TV cut a new trail. The aluminum strip peeled right back, taking with it a good deal of frame and wafer board and paneling. This allowed the TV

to turn slightly, inflicting that huge gouge in the TV's cabinet the people at the furniture store have been so rude about. The real opening came a minute later, however, when the backside of the now-turned TV bent the frame that holds all the glass in place. If you've ever seen a sliding glass door glass break, you'll know what I'm talking about. First everything turns cobwebby, then it turns to frosted ice. And if you're able to keep enough pressure on the frame, as Bobbie and the delivery guys were, the frosted ice eventually melts to something like crystallized water and rolls, in mostly one piece, right out of the frame. It's particularly spectacular when both pieces of glass turn to crystallized water at exactly the same time. Which both pieces of our landlord's sliding glass door did.

Still, the TV was in the house, and despite my own homicidal fantasies, I considered it a real victory for Bobbie. You should have seen him beam. And I must admit, the TV was a beauty, even with that ugly gouge in the cabinet.

About then the driver had the nerve to say, "Christ, Buddy, sure hope you have homeowner's insurance."

"Oh, I think we're just renting," Bobbie said. Which was true enough.

"Uh-oh," the driver said. He looked a little worried, and he should have. "Hope you have renter's insurance, then."

"Renter's insurance?" I said. Like when did they invent renter's insurance?

Bobbie laughed and flicked his hand like he was tossing the driver's absurd hope right out the window. "We don't need renter's insurance," he said. "We're multi-millionaire-sweepstakes-winners!"

The blockheads looked at each other, then the assistant said, "You just won the sweepstakes and you're only giving us poor losers ten bucks each for practically killing ourselves?"

Oh, *man,* was I pissed! Bobbie's generous, you know, and very fair. He looked like the delivery guy'd slapped him up the side of the head. I mean, if there's one thing that really tears poor Bobbie to pieces it's reprimands of any kind. The only thing worse is if he thinks he's hurt your feelings. I could have killed the jerk.

"Who says he's only giving you ten bucks?" I snapped. "And what is this shit, anyway? What happened to *service*? What happened to *doing the job you're already being paid to do*? Crap, you two are turds! I'll pay you fifty bucks just to get you out of my sight!"

As you might imagine, everyone but me was shocked. All three men looked at the ground. The delivery guys both took a step back.

"Come on, lady," the driver said. "We didn't mean anything." He glanced nervously at the broken sliding glass everything. He'd smelled danger, and he'd smelled right.

"Just shut up," I said, reaching for Bobbie's back pocket. I fished out

his wallet and the checkbook both. I knew they'd cash the check, and when they did they were mine.

Bobbie was much more upset than I'd realized, and it was partly my fault because I'd been so mean to turd one and turd two.

"I broke your house," he said, miserably. He looked close to tears, a fact that surprised me.

"It's our house," I told him. "And I can take care of it. It'll be good as new when I get done with those retards. Now, why don't you go lie down on my bed for a while. You could use a nap after all that exercise." Everything I said was true, and besides, he'd missed his afternoon nap. He really needs those.

"Ah, baby doll," he said. "Everything's spoiled now. I just wanted to make you happy."

"Nothing's spoiled," I promised. "You go on now. After I take care of a few things, I'll come in and check on you."

I put him down, then called Connie Taylor, our bishop's wife, and asked if she'd come get the kids for a while, which she agreed to do. She's the nicest person I've ever met, always willing to drop anything to help. Especially since Bobbie's accident. Like that very day he got run over. I was just two months pregnant, sick as all get-out, and when the phone rang with that horrible news, I'd just finished throwing up for the umpteenth time. Pile of barf on the floor next to the fridge and me too freaked to clean it up. Somehow, I had the wherewithal to call Connie, though, and boy did she come running. I didn't put two and two together for a few days, but while I was at the hospital waiting to see if Bobbie was going to live or die, she cleaned our place, including that throw-up I'd left there on the linoleum. If that's not nice, I don't know what is.

I was still pretty frosted about the way those jerks had treated Bobbie, though mostly I had a nasty case of after-Christmas blues. I'd looked through Bobbie's wallet, see—something I'd been trying to avoid doing. There they were, all those Visa slips, and there was the card itself, tucked in the little plastic sleeve. At some point, he'd snuck it from my wallet, where I store it, though it's in his name. Even in the aftermath of Bobbie's accident, I've never let myself use it. All the same, Visa must think we're great customers, because they keep raising our limit. I could have slapped myself for not canceling the damned thing. I just stared at the receipts, too sick to swallow. I'm not talking any small sum, here. Not unless you think $10,000 is pocket change.

You should have seen the look on Connie's face when she walked through our front door. "Oh, Cindy," she said, squeezing around the big screen so she could get a good look at the new hole in our trailer. "Do you think it can be fixed?"

"Oh, it'll get fixed all right," I told her. "I wish the rest of my problems were that simple." I handed her the Visa receipts.

She sat down next to me on the couch and studied the slips. Her chin kept creasing and uncreasing, her lips mashed thin.

"Four thousand to Zales?" she asked.

I nodded. "He bought me an engagement ring."

Her head popped up at that one. We'd talked plenty about Bobbie—she knew just about everything there was to know. Quick-like, she blinked at the ring, her face a bit horrified.

"I haven't accepted it yet," I explained, twisting my old wedding ring on my finger.

"Four thousand," she sighed. She thumbed through the receipts one more time.

I decided not to mention all the checks we'd written.

"Now listen, Cindy," she said, putting her arms around me. "This can all be taken care of. As soon as I get the kids to my place, I'm going to call the bishop on the phone." She always called her husband *the bishop*. "He's good at this type of thing. He works with banks all the time, and he works with businesses, too. He'll get it all figured out and let us know what we need to do. This can all be solved, I just know it."

I already felt better. Connie has this way with people, and besides, she's real smart, and so is her husband. Things get done when they take charge, and right then I was just too tired and worried about Bobbie to face it all alone.

"We need to think about Bobbie, though," she said, quietly. She knows how protective I am, and she's real careful that way. "Maybe you should take him in for a quick once-over." She glanced at the receipts. "He's been pretty busy, and my goodness, what promising new abilities he's showing, too. It's all a good sign, honey. And the engagement ring, gosh, that's especially great news. Still, the doctors probably ought to know, don't you think?"

I nodded. I'd planned on making an appointment anyway. "He asked me to marry him, Connie," I said. "He's in love with me again."

Connie stood. She tucked the receipts in her pocket, then gave me a hand up. "Cindy, sweetheart," she said, hugging me again. "You're a good girl and I love you very much. Things like this are bound to happen every once in a while. Try not to worry, especially about the kids. We'll keep them as long as you need. I've got my girls to help. We'll have a good time. Right now, I'd say you and that fiancé of yours need a little quiet time."

After Connie left with the kids, I cleaned up the glass and otherwise puttered around for a while, trying to collect my thoughts. Then I went in and checked on Bobbie.

He wasn't asleep, and I knew he hadn't been. He was just lying there, curled up in a ball looking at the wall. He blinked when he heard me, batted his eyes, really, like he was still fighting off tears.

"Hi," I said. I sat down on the bed beside him and petted his face. Neither of us said anything more for a long time. I didn't know how he felt about me being there, touching him, but eventually he rolled over and looked at me. Then he put his hand on my face and petted me for a while. It was wonderful.

"You're going to take me in, aren't you," he finally said. "Back to the hospital." I figured he'd overheard Connie and me, which made me feel terrible.

"Just for a checkup," I said. "And I'll be right there with you."

He sighed, touching my neck. I think he already knew it wasn't going to be that easy. "I guess I wouldn't make a very good husband." Not once since the accident had I seen him so sad. Not even when he had those horrible headaches the doctors couldn't do anything about.

"You are a wonderful husband, Bobbie," I said. "Nothing's changed about that."

Bobbie smiled, and I knew he was as sad for me as he was for himself. "I wish I could remember marrying you," he said. "I would love to remember that." Then he started to cry.

It was the first time I'd seen Bobbie cry. Before the accident, he never even came close, but sometimes in the months since, he'd looked like he might. Even with everything he'd been through, though, it'd never come to actual tears. Now, he just lay there, crying like the end of the world.

"Bobbie," I said. "Where's that ring you bought me, huh?"

I could tell the crying embarrassed him. By now, he was moaning and hitching and wiping his face. I took his hands in both of mine and uncovered his eyes.

"Bobbie," I said. "I really want that ring. I've made up my mind. I'm going to marry you."

Bobbie laughed a little but didn't stop crying. He just shook his head and sobbed harder.

"Oh, Bobbie," I said. "Stop, now, baby. I'm serious. I'm not just saying it to make you feel better." I started patting his pockets. It wasn't hard to find, big as a knuckle in his front jeans' pocket. I slipped my hand in, careful of his modesty, and tweezed the thing into daylight. I held it out to him. "Come on," I said. "Ask me again."

For a minute, Bobbie looked at my face. He was still crying but not so hard as he had before. Finally he took the ring.

"Ah, baby doll," he said, sadly. "You know it wouldn't be right, you marrying a mush-brain like me. I'd be real wrong to do that to you. Your life's hard enough as it is."

"Listen to me, Bobbie," I started. But he just curled his fist around that ring and clenched it tight. "Please, sweetheart," I said, and I took his clenched fist and put it here, against my breasts. "I'm a big girl. I love you."

Bobbie didn't unclench his fist, but he looked me in the eyes, and for that half minute or so, his eyes were as clear and pure and wise as I'd ever seen them. They were better than the old Bobbie's eyes, smarter and more tender, but so full of grief I just started to bawl.

"Don't cry, baby doll," he said. "Please don't cry." Slowly, he turned that clenched fist until the heel of his hand was against my sternum. Then, using just his pointer finger and thumb, he unbuttoned my top all the way to my belt. Smooth as skin, he moved around and put his head in my lap, then he just lay there and looked at my breasts in their see-through bra. He still had that ring clenched tight in three fingers, but he touched me anyway. Right here on the sides of my breasts, almost too soft to feel.

He stroked my face again, all the way back down my neck, to where he'd just been. He didn't smile, didn't push, didn't forget how we were. One-handed, he delicately unclasped my bra. I'd long since started to leak, but he caressed me for a while, anyway. He painted designs on my breasts and stomach with the milk. He was still crying, and so was I, but eventually he drew me in and began to nurse. We rocked that way for a long time, until he fell asleep.

I took the ring then, Bobbie asleep and drawing me in like breath. I moved my wedding ring to the other hand and slid the engagement ring on where the wedding ring had been. I propped up pillows and got comfortable, then played with Bobbie's hair and studied my rings for a long, long time, until a stream of milk had sopped my skin. Gently, I wiped Bobbie's face and the corners of his mouth with an old burp cloth I'd left on the night-stand, then I reached under and wiped my belly, where the milk and sweat, Bobbie's and mine both, had pooled in my navel.

It was a good night, that first one. Bobbie didn't wake 'til morning.

Sanctuaries

Margaret Blair Young

IT'S BEEN TEN WEEKS since Liz (my mother) came to collect me from the islands and pack me back to Michigan. She wanted me to tally my losses and get on with things.

Liz has always been one for getting on with things. She long ago learned to get along without my dad, who failed to survive bypass surgery. I haven't quite forgiven her for never letting me see his body and say good-bye. She thought she was protecting me, figured she could manage my grief without my particular input.

In her mind, she can manage anything. She has every remedy. Some remedies come from Gospel Doctrine class. Others come from avoidance. The rest are from Aloe Vera. Liz is on the pyramid point of the Forever Living Aloe Vera Sales System. As far as she's concerned, there's nothing she can't control, clean up, cure, or deny. A scripture or two, a little cactus juice, and voila! Take up your bed and walk.

But no one's packed up. Not yet. It's winter in Michigan, and Liz has decided she'll wait it out. She'll do a little whale watching, and she'll flirt. I had not known her to flirt before, but Hawaii brings out strange things in people. So we've become The Jogging Widows of Hukilau Beach. While the rising sun bleeds gold onto the ocean, we jog barefoot. We are long, lean, and freckled. Our hair is bleached and cropped. I'm tanned. Liz is most definitely not. She wears 40-spf Aloe Vera lotion even at sunrise.

Her last words to me before I flew to Hawaii were, "You're not going to solve anything by sunning yourself into cancer, you know." That was as intimate and loving as anything she had ever said. "Like the Lord tells us," she went on, "don't trust your own understanding. A man who hires himself as a lawyer has a fool for a client."

"The Lord didn't say that. Some ambulance chasing lawyer said that."

"The Lord said the first part. Anyway, truth is truth, so where's the conflict?"

The look on Liz's face when she quotes scriptures, clichés, or Forever

Living sales scripts fascinates me. She keeps herself detached, and it shows in her eyes. My guess is, she doesn't want to feel guilty about using words or people for her own ends. She doesn't want to feel guilty about her footprints on anyone's shoulders in the Aloe Vera pyramid. But don't let her fool you. She once paid extra tithing so our bishop would ask where she was getting all her money and she could unfold the Cactus Plan to him.

I left the pointy parts of church when I left Michigan. No more steeples for me. No more pyramids.

"Too much sun is guaranteed to turn you into a prune," she said the night before I flew away. "At least take some Formula with you."

My response was that I liked prunes. In the morning, I cabbed to the airport and sent myself to Oahu. I chose the Mormon town of Laie, which I had visited as a child. I still remembered holding my dad's hand outside the temple. Laie felt comfortable. If you're not quite Mormon anymore, but not unMormon either, and if you have sweet memories to relive, Laie is cozy. I didn't even know it was an ancient refuge, the destiny of Hawaiian prisoners trying to outrun death. If they could get to Laie, they'd be safe. When I found out, I knew I'd made the perfect move.

The Laie temple is the prettiest I've seen, but I didn't get married there. I married Marv on Hukilau Beach and didn't invite Liz. I didn't even tell her about it until it was old news, until my beautiful, azure-eyed husband was terminal.

Liz never met him. The week of his funeral, she claimed she had a Forever Living seminar which she "absolutely couldn't miss." She never saw Marv's body. That was her choice, not mine. Three weeks later she arrived, greeting me at the airport with, "You've lost weight."

Those words held a huge congratulation. To Liz, the Big Four are: Make money, keep thin, clean the house, go to church.

Until Marv, I had always been chubby. From my middle school days, Liz told me that if I didn't drink "Product" every morning, I would never lose an ounce and would be lucky to attract a maggot.

"Yeah, Liz. I have lost a little," I said. Right there was the transition. She wasn't "Mom" anymore. She was Liz.

She didn't balk. On our way outside, I gave her the skeleton details of my seaside wedding, of Marv's death and funeral, and she glanced away.

"So you're a widow. I know how that is," she said into the breeze. "You need family support, Tanya. Why don't you come home?" She didn't look me in the eyes. She rarely did.

I was picturing Liz's version of family support: everyone crowded into a thorny triangle in front of the Salt Lake temple, holding onto each other's pockets for dear life.

"Marv's family is real supportive," I said.

"But it's not a blood tie."

"Just a different kind," I said—meaning thornless. No blood at all.

"So. You've hardly filled me in on a thing. Let's start with the happy parts. How'd you meet him?"

I didn't tell her. Not about the night I closed up the print shop and Marv aimed himself at the glass door, hand outstretched, mouthing, "Let me in." Not how I shouted, "We're closed—read the sign!" and he shouted back, "Break the rules, I need you!" Not about our first argument (over my artist's fee for the magazine cover his students were designing). Not about our negotiations: he'd pay full price if I'd go with him on a midnight dive where hammerheads fed. Not about the cabin.

"Business," I said as I started the car. "I met him through business. He was a customer."

No more questions from Liz. "Business" explained it all.

In Laie, I introduced her to my in-laws. That's when I caught her flirting. She was shameless with Marv's much older, much divorced brother, Policeman Jack. Liz sucked in her cheeks, the way she does when she smells money. He asked her out to a movie, and she borrowed my make-up. When we took to beach jogging a week later, she assumed my paisley one-piece. I wore white shorts and a thick t-shirt, no bra.

Hukilau Beach surrounds a coral reef. The surf is never fierce, though in the distance you can see rougher waters, furious waves shouldering into Goat Island like a punishment, like they're trying to undo it. The waves explode, shoot themselves up into mad geysers. We could see them as we jogged. There are sharks out there too—big ones, tigers. A too-brave kid once surfed beyond the reef and saw a black form move under his board. He turned to look. When he faced forward again, the shark's head was out of the water, waiting, jaws open in a jagged yawn. The kid's feet were mangled, but he made it to shore.

I told Liz about that, and she answered exactly as I knew she would: "Forever Living has this vitamin E gel. That kid should know about it. It absolutely erases scars. Absolutely. You remember the little scar I had under my right eye? It's gone."

I said, "No, it's not." I didn't look.

"Nearly," she said.

In later days, we found Japanese floats—blue glass balls like Christmas ornaments—which had escaped the fishing nets they were intended to weigh down. I always figured we'd find something amazing someday. Hadn't figured it'd be a corpse.

I had been a widow two months to the day when we found the body. Liz had been a widow for a decade.

I was focused on a memory and not expecting corpses on my path. Never had.

My memory was of the cabin, just beyond the cove of palms and pines.

Marv leads me to it. He says, "Let's go inside—want to?"

I laugh. "I'm sure it's locked."

But he turns the knob easily. Inside, a card table is set with gold-rimmed china. A red candle sits in a bed of moss and eucalyptus. Steam rises from white rice and baked swordfish. It's a feast.

"Marv! We can't!" I use my giggly voice. It's a version of my mother's from decades ago when she was the age I am now.

He pulls me by the wrists. "We can do anything." He kicks the door shut. "Anything." He kisses my neck, moves me towards the bed.

"Did you arrange this?" I kiss his chin.

His answer is to lift off my shirt. "Why do you care?"

"I just want to know how quick we need to be. Someone's expecting to eat pretty soon."

"That would be me. We can do anything. We can take as much time as we want."

And we do. The feast is for us. For me.

Two months later, he notices that he's blind in his left eye. The tumor is diagnosed soon afterwards. I begin learning new words, starting with "Retinal Blastoma."

My memory loves to inhabit the cabin. It was fully inside when Liz saw the corpse.

Of course, she had to see it first. Liz was always watching for dorsal fins in the water and rapists in the woods. She half expected dead bodies to fall on her trail.

"What on earth?" she said.

Then I saw.

The body was grotesquely turned, one arm stretched across the back, the head tilted sideways, open-mouthed, open-eyed. Sea salt had dried in pale stripes on the cheeks, crusted on the brows. The body was naked. Samoan. I recognized him as one of Marv's students, Mikele. Big shoulders, thick, coarse hair, no marks on his body to accuse sharks or gangs.

We stared for a moment before Liz whispered, "Do you know him?"

"Yeah." Marv had worried over him, had actually said, "That guy will get himself killed one of these days."

"Seventeen? Eighteen years old?" Liz whispered.

"Around that."

"It's pretty recent." She knelt beside him. "No rigor mortis." She raked her fingers through her fresh-cut, fresh-bleached hair.

I knelt, too. "Marv knew him pretty well."

"Someone's heart will break today."

"I know."

She shook her head. "I'm glad I don't have to break people's hearts. Wouldn't you hate a job that made you break people's hearts?"

"Like God's job, you mean?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't blaspheme."

I take in a long breath. "I'd rather sell aloe vera."

"Don't knock Aloe Vera. I've seen miracles like from the Bible with Forever Living. I've told you."

"Don't blaspheme, Liz. And this is not the time to sell me Product."

"You can be so sassy. Even at a place like this, with someone dead at our knees. Why are you like that? Where did that come from?"

"Too much TV?"

"You're blaming me for not reading you *Curious George* every day. Aren't you?"

"Liz, you're not responsible for the world's woes."

"You had everything you wanted."

"Everything cactus juice could buy."

"You're blaming Product for your mouth?"

"We owe this kid some respect, okay?"

"I should say we do. No more sassing. One of us should go for—what? An ambulance? A bishop? Was he LDS?"

"Most everyone in Laie is."

A wave rolled in, pushing foam to the body's waist.

"Bishops break hearts too. When your dad died, Bishop Olson broke the news. Not a doctor, not a cop. I had fallen asleep. Bishop woke me up to tell me. Do you remember Bishop Olson?"

"Sure."

Her eyes teared, which came as a surprise. For the briefest moment, she appeared almost vulnerable. Then she looked straight at me, eye to eye. "I'm sorry," she said. "I am truly sorry."

I let her words hover, not sure if she was quoting what the bishop had said or if she was apologizing to me. I finally managed, "Bishop Olson seemed like a nice fellow."

"Absolutely."

"Did he ever agree to sell product?"

"No."

"What? Never converted? Not even after you paid all that extra tithing?"

"I wasn't being deceitful. Giving someone a chance to get health and wealth is not being deceitful."

Another wave, and the ocean sucked itself back in. Sand shifted under our knees. "Do you believe in God?" I asked vaguely.

"Yes." She gazed at the sea. "Of course I do. Without God, we're miserable creatures. You know what the scriptures say."

"I think I do. That's gotta help."

"I should say so."

"Do you believe in God as much as you believe in Aloe Vera?"

She shrugged slowly. "God made Aloe Vera, so where's the conflict?"

"But God didn't sell it."

"He provided it. Honey, it's not a bad plan. You've always judged it too harshly. That plan would've bought your prom dress if you had gone to prom."

"If I'd been thin enough to go to prom. You always judged me too harshly."

"You were a beautiful girl, just heavy around the hips. Not much on top, but heavy around the hips. Formula could've helped, and I didn't keep it a secret. Don't blame me."

"I don't blame you. For anything."

Another wave frothed its last hurrah over the body.

"Well, I don't blame you either," Liz said.

"Did you really have a meeting? When Marv died, did you really have something that important?"

She sent her eyes over the corpse. "Sometimes it's hard to understand why we do certain things. It's hard to know what's most important."

"If I'd married him in the temple—"

"I should go find a policeman."

I knew what she wanted. Policeman Jack.

"Okay," I said. "You get him, Liz. Go for it."

She stood, dusting her knees. "A wave could take that boy back if we left him."

"Don't worry, he's not going to disappear. And his name's Mikele."

"Are you all right with staying?" She was poking into her swimsuit top for lipstick. That's where she kept it. Forever Living in shrimp pink.

"You got some on your teeth," I said after she applied the stuff. "You know where the station is, right? You won't get lost?"

She licked her teeth. "Did I get it off?"

"You look lovely, Liz. Slim and trim and lovely."

"I'm glowing." She swept the droplets from her forehead and temples. Her freckles stood out like splotches of nutmeg. She was what I would be in twenty years, and it wasn't a bad future.

"You look really good," I said.

"This is terrible, what's happened here. Some mother's going to weep like the wind tonight. How silly to worry about my looks! I am not that shallow."

"You look pretty."

"Thanks." She jogged towards the street, towards Policeman Jack.

The waves were moving foam up the boy's midback, where it settled. The way his body was twisted, his penis was just visible between his legs. One leg was bent backwards under the other, so the penis touched the beach sand. I knew he would want to be covered. If he were my son, I'd want his body laid out better. The ocean had sprawled him into a mass of confused joints, unmuscled twists.

"I'm going to straighten you out," I said aloud. Bishop Olson—the guy who broke my mother's heart—once told me a spirit sticks with its body until burial time. "Help me if you can—God? Angels? You're heavy. Your body is." Moving the trapped arm from behind, I pushed him onto his back, uncrossed his legs, set them straight. His penis lay towards his right thigh. I found a sea-mangled bit of black plastic a few feet away, brushed off the sand, and set it over his groin. "Best I can do just now." Aloud again. I took his head in my hands, then set it gently down, held my fingers on his lids. The eyes wouldn't stay closed, nor would the mouth.

Some parts of him were sand crusted. I removed my shirt so I could wipe him off. The waves were receding, foaming only partway up his legs. After each wave pulled back, I spread the moisture onto his skin. I wet my shirt in the sea and washed him—every bit of him. "If you were my son," I said, "I'd want someone to wash this off." I covered his face with my shirt so the sun wouldn't dry his eyes or tongue. I shielded my naked breasts with one arm. When I licked my lips, I tasted salt.

"I'm trying to decide what I love best about you." Marv is talking. He's sitting up. We have spent ourselves on and in each other, bedded in some stranger's bed, and he's fingering my pre-bleach hair. "Copper head."

"Isn't that a snake?"

"That's my wife. Copper hair-head."

"Did you just call me an airhead?"

"Never. Amethyst eyes. Peach fuzz skin."

"Peach fuzz. Some romantic you are."

"Why do you love me?" He whispers it.

"Hair like wet tar." I stroke it.

"Geez."

"Eyes like a smashed robin's egg."

"Thanks. Wow."

"Mouth." I kiss it.

I had never let myself get close to another person until him. Never let a man into me, body and soul. I had grown up with a keen sense of borders, compartments, triangles, self-loathing. I abandoned them all for Marv. Married him four weeks after he asked me to break the rules, to let him in. And I did and I did and I did. We planned on going to the temple eventually. When we were ready. Which we never were.

Within three months of our wedding, masked doctors would shave his head to prepare him for surgery—which would fail to save him. Both his eyes would go blind. I would still kiss his mouth, and he would be able to kiss me back—until the last week.

I wouldn't tell Liz about that either. All of my Hawaiian scenes I lived away from her.

"You're on Hukilau Beach," I said to Mikele. "Your body is. The sun's up—barely. Were you trying to get to Goat Island? People try to

walk the coral out. There's a point where the waves hit you from both sides. You can lose your sense of direction. Especially if you're alone. Were you drunk?" I dropped my arm. My breasts were white compared to the rest of me, like they didn't belong, like they should be in Michigan. "Doesn't matter, does it. Marv and I went to Goat Island every now and then. It's a bird sanctuary. Not for goats. You must know that. A sanctuary for almost extinct species. Most of it's roped off so humans don't intrude. You can see the nests. It's trespassing to step over the rope, so you have to be sure no one's looking. One time, Marv found a baby ibis."

The first time Marv leads me to Goat Island, it's nearing dusk. The sun's a brilliant peach behind us. I don't know about the coral wall—walkable in low tide—so Marv dupes me easy.

"At the Missionary Training Center," he says, "they taught us to walk on water."

"Right."

"Watch me." Then he stands on the quiet ocean and starts walking. His steps are even, graceful, feet barely submerged, arms raised slightly. He is an almost Cristus, floating himself out to sea.

"Good Lord," I breathe, "you were serious!"

His whole face breaks into smile lines. "There's a coral reef here. Be sure your sandals are on tight. Them congregated critters make rough walkin'."

"A coral reef?"

"This here's the Affiliated Titillated Coral Critters Society, yes ma'am."

"Geez, how do you titillate coral?"

"Easy. So easy. Follow me."

I walk over those rocky animals who have died in each other's pockets, until opposing waves confuse me and I have to swim.

Marv climbs onto the island—a hill of white-grey coral like cement with a bad complexion. There's a rope around the entire thing. The island is the size of two baseball diamonds.

He helps me up, then scissors himself over the rope. I stand next to it, looking beachward for any guardian police who would no doubt arrest us quick and make us pose as felons. I see no one, but can't relax. Maybe Policeman Jack is watching, clicking the shutter of a telephoto camera, building evidence. Maybe that's what the cabin is—the hidden lookout where authority figures observe criminal motion on Goat Island.

"The sign says don't climb over," I announce.

"I don't believe in signs."

"What if I believe?"

"Ah, my dear, remember what the Bible says: 'A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.'" Marv was once a Mormon missionary. Celibacy, however, was a problem. He has a good relationship with God even without a temple recommend, though. He teaches holy son-

nets and D.H. Lawrence at Kahuku High—his own alma mater. And he knows the Bible and Book of Mormon better than Liz ever did. When he quotes the holy writ, it seems he'll rupture the air.

"They're pretty signs," I say. I'm a graphic artist, so I know how much work has gone into them. The bird images (stiff but not bad) are done in blue foil, "NO TRESPASSING" in block style, black. No mistaking the message here. Underneath, in navy ink, the cursive plea: "This is our sanctuary. Please let us make our nests in peace. It is easy to crush our eggs, and we're nearly extinct as it is. Please do not come past the rope."

These are damn polite birds. Damn friendly islands.

Marv says,"That's the biggest problem with graphic artists. They're sign-seekers."

"Depends on the pay."

"You and the money thing," he says.

"You and the felony thing." The ocean is wild just beyond the island. I shout above the hiss and crack of unreefed waves slapping rock-spears on the far side.

"You know what I want," he says.

"Don't even ask me to make love with you behind that rope, Marv. I have my limits."

"I love your limits. Makes it so fun to go beyond them." His grin. "Oh, look at this bird," he sighs. It's a ball of grey down. Marv's hands cup it. The down shudders, but the baby allows itself to be cradled.

"Don't even ask," I say.

"You've got to hold this bird, Tan. You have got to feel how this feels!" His voice goes low, but I can hear him.

"I said I'm not going there with you."

"You'll live to regret that. You may not get another chance."

"I'll live."

"You can never be sure."

"And I'll come visit you in prison. At least once a year. I'll bring you a lei."

He lifts his brows. "Yeah?"

"L-e-i. Lei."

He sets the bird next to its nest. "Take off your clothes." This he whispers, but I can hear him fine. His voice is being carried to me.

I laugh.

"There's no one here but you and me and these birds. Off."

"Marv, I told you—"

"Please. I can't tell you what it'd mean."

So I do. Just for him.

"Now turn so you're in profile." He sighs prayerfully as I turn. "You make the most magnificent eclipse. Look at you! All your arm hairs and

leg hairs—oh, and that hair too—all shining! Lord. There's such light between your legs. I'm telling you—you were made for this moment."

I lift my hands so I can see it myself: Yes, I have been glorified. I had never believed I could be beautiful.

"Please," Marv says. "Let me love you."

"No. Not here."

"I'm begging you on my knees."

"It's getting dark. I don't want to be here after dark."

"Don't be afraid. Perfect love casts out fear."

"No. I mean it."

"Then stay there—for one minute. Just stay. Let me look at you."

I meet his gaze. I am being worshipped.

A sea breeze lifted the plastic from the boy's groin, I covered him again, then found some shells and coral bits to weight the plastic. Still no sign of Liz or Policeman Jack.

"My husband was the unruly sort," I told dead Mikele. "You knew him, right? Always heading into places he wasn't supposed to."

The remnant of an enthusiastic wave foamed over the body, washed the plastic off, moved my shirt from the face, and bubbled between the ribs. I grabbed my shirt, wet it, washed the body again. Once more I covered the face and groin, once more I weighted the plastic with white shells and detached coral.

"I'm not a real strong woman. Good thigh muscles from all the jogging, but not much in the way of biceps. If I had biceps, I'd move you back from the waves."

Marv and I go to the stranger's place again, Marv hoping the romance of it all will lure a good erection, make him feel better. We both know something's wrong, but we haven't talked about it yet.

Nothing works.

"Is it me?" I ask.

"No."

"Am I too fat?"

"Someone's got to burn those tapes."

"Do I smell bad or something?"

"Honey, you're not responsible for the world's woes. No, no. You smell like—you. Sometimes I just think about you and get hard. What's up here? Nothing's up here."

"You haven't been eating much. Maybe you've lost some strength?"

"I have no appetite. Not for food, anyway. I've always had an appetite for you." He takes his flaccid self between his thumb and middle finger. "Just what do you think you're not doing?" he says to it.

"Marv? Are you sick?"

He blinks. "Why?"

"You look pale. I thought you looked pale yesterday. Thought I'd make you a good plate of liver and onions."

"Thanks. Wow. That'd cure me for sure. Just like raw liver." He fingers himself again.

"I can stroke you."

"I don't want to play games." There's an edge to his voice.

"Come on, you're always playing games."

He drops his head. "I've been throwing up every day."

"You stupidhead!" I slug his arm. "Why didn't you say something?"

"Thought you'd slug my arm if I did. Thought you'd call me stupidhead. Can't stand it when you call me stupidhead."

"Sticks and stones?" I open my arms and we try again.

Nothing.

When he turns away, I press my breasts into his back. That's the moment I sense he's leaving me behind, heading to paradise without me. I'll be a witness, nothing more. He—my intimate interlude—will become a set of photos, dimming memories primed to hit me in odd moments like some transparent wave.

I hear him whisper—or think I do, or dream it: "God. Please. Let me love her."

"If you were my son, I'd want you cleaned up," I told Mikele's body.

The incoming wave was carrying a Japanese float, bigger than what Liz and I usually found. Big as a softball. I identified it before it hit land, though it was covered with barnacles and sea moss. It would need to be scrubbed, then it'd glisten. A gift from the Pacific, carried all the way from Japan. Someone I'd never see had made a glass globe, and now I'd claim it for my collection. The wave pushed it almost to my hand, and I accepted. The float was blue-green under the dross, like a crystalized piece of ocean. Someone else's work, someone else's memory, but you could touch it, feel it, claim it.

My father, when he died, left only a closet full of old suits. Liz put them on consignment at a generic men's clothing store. I went there once to see if I could smell him in the fibers. I couldn't even tell which suits were his. Everything reeked of dry-cleaning. I told this to Marv just before we swam with the hammerheads. I said, "My father left a closet full of suits when he died."

"And he left you," Marv answered.

"Very inconsiderate of him to not survive that bypass."

"You." Marv made the word a miracle. "He left YOU."

My last conversation with my husband was this:

"Did God tell you it's your time, Marv?" (Did Liz ask my dad that before he went? I can't imagine it. I'm guessing it was more like insurance claims, low fat yogurt, Aloe Vera, the fence in need of painting.)

Marv moves his eyebrows to mean "Yes." He can't speak.

I don't ask if he feels he's being punished. I have wondered, but right now I know the answer. He is loved. I feel it so strong in the room and wonder who's waiting for him where I can't see. I sit by him while he

dies, holding his hand, knowing in my whole soul that he will find a magnificent welcome.

I won't tell Liz about this sacred moment. It is safe with me.

Above Goat Island, a heron circled like a predator. Guarding its young, no doubt. Or just checking out the security of the sanctuary. Never landing. Its wings went bright when the sun caught them.

I said to Mikele, "They do funerals up beautifully here. Marv, when he passed, he had whole wreaths of bleeding hearts. Did you come to his funeral? I don't remember you. A big Tongan sang 'Aloha Oe.' I remember purple orchids and white ginger. You'll have those too. And there will be a feast in your honor—even if you did die drunk. No one will be mad at you anymore, ever again. There will be a feast like a great celebration. No pity in it, no tears. A feast for sinners and mourners. Like nothing you've ever seen or tasted. You turn the doorknob. You think it will be locked, but it isn't. The door opens, and there's the feast, all for you. Biggest surprise of your life. It's your moment. You can't hurry, and you can't cry because there's too much love around you. Everything you touch is love, and everything you eat. It's like you're being worshiped. And all you can say is thank you. Thank you for loving me. Merciful God, thank you."

The sea breeze moved the plastic off the body despite the shells and coral I had used as weights. I chased it down.

"If you were my son," I said to Mikele, covering him again and securing the plastic with bigger pieces of coral, "I'd want you guarded."

"There they are!" That was Liz's voice.

And there they were. Liz and Policeman Jack. Big, brawny Policeman Jack. He was Marv plus thirty pounds and a mustache. Liz was getting to know her son-in-law through his brother. Trying to make up for distance, lost time, lost love. Jack's hand on her shoulder sent me a quick deja vu. (Whose hand was I remembering? Dad's or Marv's?) Liz was trying to look serious, but she was beaming, in love with adventure and youth, pointing at me and Mikele with her whole hand, not just a finger. An invitation. An accusation. A mirror. A vision of the past. A glimpse into the could-have-been future. Behind them was the fully-dawned sun like a brilliant whale—the god of whales—making them glorious and gold.

And there I was, topless as the day I was born. Naked before my gilded mother and Policeman Jack. I reached for my shirt, then pulled back. It didn't feel right to take what I had offered this boy for his protection.

"If you were mine. . ." I said, then covered my white, white breasts with one arm—my hand still holding the float—and with the other started waving like a one-winged bird, sweeping semicircles in the air.

Righteousness Express: Riding the PG&R

Molly McLellan Bennion

A NEW LITMUS TEST of righteousness has swept the church: the shunning of all R rated and the de facto acceptance of all PG and PG-13 movies. I don't like litmus tests. They are too easy, too narrow, and too unreflective even when they purport to measure that quality for which they are being used. This one is particularly disturbing because church members have adopted the rating system as though it were a moral standard. It is not. We sought this life to prove we could learn to make good moral choices. There are no shortcuts to the process, certainly not the substitution of a highly political, expressly non-moral standard of the motion picture industry.

Individual, daily going-about-life moral decisions interest me far more than once-in-a-lifetime moral decisions. Small enough to seem inconsequential by themselves, these daily decisions sometimes do not rate our attention. Even if we take time to consider them, we may make the wrong choice, thinking it will be easy to make up for it later. Making the right choice yields little perceivable gain. Yet I do believe it is our response to daily life that develops our understanding and character, that largely determines our eternal fate. Consequently I believe our entertainment choices matter. Scribbled on a post-it above my desk, Proverbs 4:7 challenges: "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding." Daily living teaches me I know more and less of wisdom all the time. I do know that humility paves the path to wisdom. Humility tells me I know very little and I have very little time to know more. Yet God tells me I must try. I approach this subject of moral interpretation fully aware of my limitations. I share with you now less a speck of accumulated wisdom than a philosophy of how to go about gaining more.

Humility also teaches, writes Hunter Lewis in his intriguing study of the formulation of values, *A Question of Values*, "too many answers. . .

may become a sort of drug. Like other drugs, it may lead to a cycle of craven dependence alternating with boundless pride, a deadly combination that virtually guarantees misery for believer and unbeliever alike."[1] In my ward, pride in choosing dependence on the easy answer movie rating system is rampant. Were we to allow the Motion Picture Association of America, the National Association of Theater Owners, and the church members who have swallowed the system whole to define our film choices, on whom would we be dependent? What are their values? Does their rating system serve or hinder an effort to live a righteous life? How did we get to the rating system?

Let's start with the last question. The history of the movement for film censorship is full of surprises. In reviewing it, we will see who makes the ratings and the values which guide them.[2] Chicago led the nation, censoring *The Scarlet Letter* in 1914. Only those over 21 received a "pink permit" to enter a theater showing so scandalous a subject. Chicago stood almost alone until 1922 when two movie star scandals coupled with industry economic problems fueled moralists and reformists who claimed salacious films and shoddy movie-star behavior had caused a drop in attendance. Actually, competition from radio beginning late in 1921, fewer films and theaters after a brief post-war recession, and the increased use of the automobile for entertainment probably cut hardest into movie profits. The industry hired President Harding's Postmaster General and former chairman of the Republican National Committee, Will Hays, to handle film public relations and stave off legislative censorship.

Because few films survive from the 20's, the great silent film decade, we know little of their content. Several great films do endure: Buster Keaton's *The General* and Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*, for example. Whatever the general content of silent films, we know critics concerned about the moral impact of film picked up steam by the end of the decade. Between 1928 and 1932 William H. Short published hundreds of pages of unscientifically conceived and conducted studies to prove the negative impact of movies on youth. He even hooked teenagers up to electrodes to measure their responses to films. Many other researchers joined him. It is important to note critics feared not only sex and violence, but also any threat to the established social order. Mack Sennett's Keystone films depicted all manner of social chaos. The early Marx Brothers' films, notably *Duck Soup* which challenged the legitimacy of government

1. Hunter Lewis, *A Question of Values* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), 60.

2. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). Throughout this essay, I have relied heavily on Sklar's definitve cultural history of American movies for history of the ratings movement.

and *Horse Feathers* which attacked higher education, a domain largely upper-class at the time, questioned a social order already suspect as the depression lingered. The Catholic church picked up the banner and in 1933 organized the Legion of Decency to boycott films the church considered indecent. In just ten weeks 11 million people, including many Protestants and Jews, signed boycott petitions. Simultaneously, the depression emptied the theaters; attedance hit a five-year low. The industry would again fight back with self-censorship.

Just as a decade earlier, the industry pre-empted the censorship movement, this time by hiring Irish Catholic politician Joseph I. Breen as Hays's Production Code Administration boss. Breen had the power to censor or reject outright any US film, and he had the confidence of the Catholic Church. For two decades Breen maintained stringent control over the movies. From 1936 into the 50s, films extolled the social order: class, race, and sexual distinctions. Hollywood tamed even the harmless nihilism of the Marx Brothers. The characters in screwball comedies tended to be rich and powerful, proving just how delightful and harmless the powerful could be. Breen ordered the udders on Disney's cartoon cows removed as too titillating. It was a white male, G-rated world. What would change so satisfying a status quo? The answer is the same force that moved the movies to add sex, violence, and a questioning of the social order in the 20s,: a dwindling box-office. Just as radio threatened movie economics in the early 20s, television threatened them in the 50s. The industry jealously watched less censored European films, works of Bergman, Fellini and Renoir, among others, create a small art-house market. They knew, of course, that the sex, violence, and subversion of those films could be translated into a mass market again. Weaker, the church posed less threat. Society began openly to question racial and sexual politics. The scene was ripe for change. Change came as Breen retired and his successor, Geoffrey Shurlock, adopted his own standard of allowing real human behavior he did not believe audiences would find gross or offensive. Talk about a vague standard.

Still the box office disappointed. When Jack Valenti, like Hays a politician, succeeded Hays in 1966, he preempted the 44 local censor boards, irritating Hollywood by devising the voluntary rating system. The system copied a British rating scheme, but with fewer categories and more vagueness. From its inception, the rating definitions have constantly changed with social change and the make-up of the board. Actually several groups provide input to rating. The main group is the board made up of the Motion Picture Association of America and the National Association of Theater Owners representatives. They consider the opinions of a committee of Los Angeles parents. Another board of fourteen to eighteen industry people can consider appeals. Rulings are by simple majority vote. The boards are political responses to the threat of censor-

ship and the industry's desire to entice the public into the theaters. Politics affects the voluntary enforcement of the ratings too. When, in the aftermath of Columbine, the president of the NATO announced a crackdown on under-aged entry into R movies, the New York Times reported he admitted he was trying to stave off legislation.[3]

A pattern is clear: the industry's objectives in self-censorship have always been to sell tickets and to discourage legislation and litigation. Presuming we are not concerned about the profits of the industry, why would we support a rating system? First, we may wish to protect the weak who have no other means of protection. Over 1000 studies point to a causal connection between media and violent, aggressive behaviors in some children. Researchers continue to see a relationship between promiscuity and insecurity and the media in young people. Profanity is everywhere. All parents do not protect children from violence or sexual immorality, so shouldn't society intervene? Here is the best better-than-nothing argument for the ratings; however, the system is severely flawed. I believe most teenagers figure it out quickly. I suspect we undermine the possibility of youth respecting us and our rules if the rules aren't based on sound principle, much as the public disregards arbitrarily low speed limits and disrespects the lawmakers who set them.

Let's consider the flaws. The MPAA board says there are no automatic rules regarding violence or nudity.[4] We can see that in the unpredictability of the ratings. The ratings board is lenient with violence. Touching a woman's breast rates an R; cutting off an arm with a chainsaw rates a PG-13. The Board makes no attempt to differentiate a Biblical moral war from an evil slaughter or gratuitous violence from historical violence. *Glory*'s study of a black unit in the Civil War is rated with a slasher movie. R violence is, according to the Board, "too rough or persistent."[5] What is rough? What is persistent? A sexually-derived expletive gets a PG-13 if used once in a non-sexual context but an R in a sexual context or if used twice. Sex is equally arbitrary. A trailer for *Six Degrees of Separation* was banned for including a nude shot of Adam depicted by Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel.

Appeals can wear down the Board, which must see each film again in its entirety even if only 5 seconds has been excised. Roger Ebert has joked he would give *Wild Orchid* a G to avoid seeing it 20 times. My favorite *Beat the Appeals* story actually goes back to Hays and Breen. Mae West purposefully filmed lots of scandalous "throw-away" scenes she

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3. David E. Rosenbaum, "Theaters Will Ask to See ID's for R-Rated Films," *The New York Times*, June 9, 1999, 1.

4. http://www.mpaa.org/movieratings/about/content.htm.

5. http://www.mpaa.org/movieratings/about/content5.htm.

knew would never pass the Code. The Board was so overwhelmed excising those, it left in many otherwise objectionable items. *A Clockwork Orange* dropped its rating from X to R by excising 30 seconds of sex. Kubrick made no changes to the ultraviolence of the film. Clint Eastwood personally smiled at the Board and they changed an R rating for *A Perfect World* to PG-13 with no changes to the film. I can't tell you whether they were right; I was so appalled by the reviews which described a film which celebrated kidnapping, exposing a child to sex and robbery, and ridiculing his family's religious values that I made no attempt to see it. Films can be re-released years later with no changes but a lower rating, for example *Midnight Cowboy* from an X, now NC-17, to an R. The economic pressures on the industry have never been greater. No longer does Hollywood produce many movies. The big studios now risk so much money on so few films they can ill afford any box office flops. The right rating can mean the difference between profit and loss.

The great and inevitable flaw in the system screams at us: The ratings board does not consider morality, theirs or ours. The ratings say nothing of the moral perspectives of films. A more moral world could never be the ratings' aim. Moral unanimity is impossible in a pluralistic society. Whose morality should dictate? We could spend hours discussing the harm done to social justice by Breen's concept of truth, and only he has had anything approaching the power to enforce his view of morality on an entire art industry. Furthermore, the more basic question of whether art can be created where maximum profit is the primary goal has never been answered. How much less likely is the creation of an art exhibiting nothing but capital-T Truth where maximum profit is the primary goal?

The Board publishes a telling disclaimer to its rating conclusions. It reads: "In any appraisal, what is 'too much?' becomes very controversial. How much is 'too much' violence? Are classic war films too violent with scenes of marines storming a beach and slaying hundreds, wounding thousands? Is it the graphic cop killing, the gangster shoot-out, or the slap across the face of a woman that determines 'too much'? How much is 'blood spilled' to be given emphasis? Where is the line to be drawn between 'this is all right' and 'this is not all right'? The same vexing doubts occur in sex scenes or those where language rises on the Richter scale, or where behavior not considered normal is revealed on the screen. What follows is disagreement, inevitable, inexorable, and often times to endure and confront. We understand that."[6]

Church members who adopt the rating system and suspend all further thought do not understand that. It seems to me the rating system is

6. http://www.mpaa.org/movieratings/about/content5.htm.

so flawed it serves only as a vague warning to look further at the film. Better-than-nothing may be an aid, but it is not an acceptable moral standard. Can we devise a personal selection system based on moral values? Of course we can. How do we determine our values anyway? I agree with Lewis's conclusion that we obtain our values from six sources: Authority (Scriptures, Revelation), Logic, Sense Experience (what we see and hear), Emotion (what we feel), Intuition (subconscious thinking), and Science. Some Mormons fool themselves into believing they need and use only authority. This denial of human nature and free agency would fill many other papers. I mention value development only to underline my belief in the importance of considering authority (leaders who advise me not to see R rated films), weighing any input logically, studying scientific conclusions of the effect of viewing, and respecting the impact of what I see, hear, and feel in the development of my values. An important point of art is to broaden our sensory experience in the pursuit of truth.

Movies draw close scrutiny for good reason. They do appeal to our emotions, our senses, and our logic. They do reach a mass audience. Unlike a book whose slower pace and printed page invites us to create our own pictures, a movie moves so quickly and visually that it precludes much viewer creation. The picture supplants the thousand words we would create in our minds. Tolstoy lived to be jealous of the screenwriter. He lamented that, writing, he couldn't pass quickly enough from one scene to another. He knew film montage would eliminate that problem. I know a movie can quickly and powerfully alter my perceptions. I celebrate and appreciate the strength of this art form. As much as any sensory experience, it is to be respected and chosen carefully.

Some argue from our pulpits that the power of film is so dangerous we should never see a film with profanity, nudity, or violence. The same critics do not call for a boycott of Michaelangelo or Shakespeare. But if *Hamlet* is worth reading, it is worth viewing. Furthermore, the Bible is not just a collection of principles. It is a colorful presentation of man's baser and finer history; we need to know both. As much as any book, the Bible illustrates the power of story over bare principle. We must judge the morality of the message. If the message is good, a more effective presentation will not make it bad.

I choose films that I believe will bring me joy (not necessarily pleasure) and which will expand my understanding of the human condition and its promise. I approach film with an Old Testament freedom of inquiry, secure enough of my little place in God's world that I can make decisions regarding art, secure enough in my faith that I can accommodate new discoveries, even celebrate them. Sometimes I ask only entertainment—no serious message, or perhaps not a message I feel I need to reinforce, but escape. A marshmallow. Marshmallows would be boring

and harmful as a diet, though. So most often I am looking for films which expand my ability to understand myself and others, to listen to people unlike me, to get inside their skins. If, as in *My Left Foot*, they are lower class Irishmen, I do not ask them not to swear or brawl if they will show me how ordinary people can live with cerebral palsy until they prove the highest values of love, perseverance, integrity, and self-sacrifice. Few films depict the power of a mother's love better than *My Left Foot*.

Need a reminder of the beauty of God's earth? Rent any number of John Ford's or Akira Kurosawa's films. Both directors revered and captured that beauty. Two of their films are on so many ten best films of all time lists, not because they excite us with sex and violence, though that, as in the Bible, is ungratuitously, informatively there, but because they invite us to get inside the skins of human beings wrestling with the most taxing of issues. Ford's *The Searchers* immerses us in racism and family commitment; Kurosawa, like Ford a storyteller at heart, confronts egoism in his greatest film, *Rashomon*. He tells us we have a sinful need for flattering falsehood to make us feel we are better than we are.

We can look for films which expose us to a wide variety of human behavior over time and across cultures so that we will know enough of human capacities for evil to be realistic and of human capacities for good to be hopeful. Good film explores without exploiting our behaviors. Vittorio de Sica's *Garden of the Finzi-Continis* lays bear the danger of ignoring the capacity for evil as the Italian Jews depicted deny the danger of Fascism. The brief moment of upper body frontal nudity which garnered an R is included as an immoral and an intended-to-be moral act. The young woman engages in an affair as an expression of "What does it matter considering what's going on?"—a posture of despair and therefore of evil. She exposes the affair to the man she loves and who loves her to drive him away and save him the pain of seeing a loved one suffer. She anticipates the suffering ahead. It is an understandable but immoral self-sacrifice. It is not titillating; it is tragic and instructive.

An *Ensign* article in August 1989 stated that anything that is offensive to chastity or modesty is pornographic.[7] With some clarification, I could probably agree with the basic premise. But I could not agree every consideration of immorality or example of immodesty is offensive to either. De Sica's heroine's, Micol's, brief exposure stuns us to see not only the immorality of anti-Semitism, but the weakness in some of its victims, a weakness that made it easier for evil to gain sway. Both *The Searchers* and *Rashomon* deal with abduction, rape, and the blaming of the victim. Because I have close associations with several rape victims, rape is my least favorite screen subject. Ford and Kurosawa appropriately do not

7. R. Gary Shapiro, "Leave the Obscene Unseen," *Ensign* (August 1989): 27.

film the rapes; Hollywood could learn something here. Nevertheless, the subject is offensive to chastity, but the treatments are not. The films are not pornographic. Both move us to compassion for the victim; both are good moral examples. Anything which brings me to a greater understanding of the wisdom and necessity of God's laws, the complexity of choice, or compassion for my brothers and sisters and myself in trying to live righteous lives, or inspires me to the possibility of the courage to live such a life cannot be pornographic. That which exploits, degrades, cheapens, depicts depravity for depravity's sake, and exhibits no thoughtful consideration or impetus toward God's truths is pornographic. We know it when we see it, just as the justices wrote. All that is not pornographic does not rest in a box of well-clothed, sweet-spoken and gentle, perfect people.

I don't want to see pornography. Furthermore, I know myself well-enough to know I also don't want to see the thoroughly mindless, cruel humor, gore, banality, vapidity, endorsements of adultery, the human body exhibited for titillation, the only weak and cartoonish adults of a teen movie, unquestioning worship of materialism, celebrations of stupidity or the unexamined life, acceptance of promiscuity, and any number of other film treatments which would do nothing to strengthen me. That list alone eliminates as much that is rated PG and PG-13 as R. I also don't want to be frightened à la the horror genre. We must know ourselves. Some films are ok for some and bad for others. Some love a roller-coaster ride. Some enjoy Edgar Allen Poe. I don't. If the rating system is of little use to us in avoiding what we want to avoid, how can we?

I read multiple reviews before seeing any movie. The *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The New Yorker*, and two local papers are constants. The Catholic site is especially interesting because their rating system adds more categories and discusses the moral messages of films. Check out their reviews and ratings at http://domestic-church.com and www.nc-cbuscc.org/movies/index.htm. Compare the Catholic and Motion Picture Association ratings on three popular films. *Austin Powers* gets a PG-13 but an A-III, adults only, from the Catholics. They describe the movie as silly shenanigans alternating with gross toilet humor and lame sexual innuendo for a mixed bag of goofy, truly tasteless entertainment. Powers is travelling back to the 60s to recover his libido. *American Pie*, an R, rates a Catholic O for offensive. They see a scornful treatment of premarital virginity and sex as mere sport, sexual situations involving masturbation and oral encounters, some nudity, gross toilet humor, occasional profanity and recurring rough language. Sounds like a real moral peach. The Catholics take *Daredevil* from PG-13 up 2 notches to IV—adults with reservations—for the film's brutal violence, an "unnecessary trip to the bedroom," and a sympathetic treatment of vigilante justice. The last two are moral concerns with which the motion picture rating system is unconcerned.

Ebert's shows and books are also useful, as is the Halliwell guide. *The New York Times* periodically republishes large collections of its reviews. TV, radio, and the internet help. We are not at the mercy of the rating system. Get to know your reviewers. They, like writers, directors, and actors, present you with their biases. Learn to detect them. Peter Travers in the *Rolling Stone* is a most knowledgeable critic, and I find his insights useful, but I know he is comfortable with sex and violence I consider gratuitous and to be avoided, so I watch his language carefully.

I want to respect my religious community. I do not respect social pressure based on rules that don't embrace the community's highest principles. I do not respect an urging to park my dignity and free agency at the feet of the Motion Picture Association of America or the National Association of Theatre Owners. I do not respect any suggestion that we are unable to make responsible entertainment choices without a rule that is an unprincipled and, unlike a principle, constantly changing crutch. I do not respect the suggestion that my understanding of and faith in the Gospel could be undermined by depictions such as those in *Schindler's List* of Nazi attempts to dehumanize the Jews with immodesty and murder. I am puzzled by the thought that any single image in that film could be more powerful than the lasting awe I feel for an ordinary, flawed human being who rose to such love and courage. Let's use the rating system as a beginning in the important decisions of what films we and our families will see. Let's teach our children every message has a messenger and every messenger has a bias. Teach them to discern the bias. Is it moral? Is immorality depicted in such a way it moves us to see the wisdom of morality? Does it increase our compassion for others? PG can mean pretty ghastly and R can mean righteous. Let's work hard to understand the Gospel and develop the wisdom and inspiration to choose worthwhile entertainment.

Childhood Homes

Lewis Horne

"A crackerbox," my mother called it,
Her marriage's first scene.
My first home, my brother's, tucked
Far back for remembering,
The place where she dyed feedsacks
To curtain the windowscreens.

The house behind my grandmother's
Was home for a different season,
Close to town and the picture show.
We tailed the water wagon
Damping the unpaved street. There,
A baby sister happened.

The house we rented from Mr. Rhodes
We scrubbed with water and lye.
My father took a scythe to the weeds
As tall as my brother and I.
The dust of a country road hung hours
After a car went by.

I count them one by one, these homes,
Mark their surfacing.
Though later homes still stand, these make
A wholly other thing,
Not entirely lost to the heart
In the hale of their recurring.

Without Mercy? Neil LaBute as Mormon Artist:

A consideration of *Your Friends and Neighbors*, *Bash*, *The Mercy Seat*, and *The Shape of Things*

R.W. Rasband

PHILIP ROTH ONCE NOTED that American writers were divided into two camps: "palefaces," followers of the refined genteel tradition of Henry James and William Dean Howells with their elevated sensibilities and decorous language, and "redskins" like Mark Twain and Theodore Dreiser who were "vulgar" in vernacular and themes. Roth proclaimed himself a redface, a hybrid—one who is compelled to examine and re-examine high moral precepts and equally compelled to do it through shocking, coarse rollicking comedy. Add to this the vision of Roth at war with himself over his own cultural Jewishness and you have an explosive mix: the perversely entertaining spectacle of a sincerely religious writer provoking outraged responses from his own co-religionists. And simultaneously leaving pieces of his own skin strewn about from the controversy.

Neil LaBute is one of the few Mormon writers who could legitimately be called a redface. Again and again he demands from his audience moral responses to hard questions about his characters. How could this one possibly do such a thing? How can that one live with herself after this? Generally speaking, Mormon audiences simply are not used to being challenged in the brutal territories LaBute ranges over in his work. His rogue's gallery of predators and victims can produce bafflement in LDS viewers unaccustomed to the depiction of a full range of human behavior. But faithful readers of Roth and another fierce moralist, Tom Wolfe, will recognize the technique of confrontation through the satire of

thoroughly rotten conduct. LaBute also shares a common trait with two well-loved but seemingly disparate LDS essayists, Eugene England and Ann Cannon, and fiction writer Levi Peterson. They also can write unpretentiously, straight from the heart, without condescension and self-righteousness. Some critics have accused LaBute, like his cinematic soul mate Stanley Kubrick, of a heartless mercilessness. A lack of mercy is not the feeling one gets from him; rather, a rueful sadness. We're told in scripture that God weeps at the sight of human folly (Moses 7: 28-9).

It could be that LaBute, as a convert to the LDS church, was not socialized as a child and young adult into the omnipresent culture of "niceness" (in the Elouise Bell sense of the word). Many Mormons who try to write are hobbled by that artificial, superficial niceness that has nothing to do with the charity mentioned in the scriptures. LaBute, however, is not afraid to cause his audience profound discomfort. He can probe into areas few want to consider at length because he is not a victim of the internalized impulse towards avoidance and denial that is so common with LDS artists.

His second film, after the unexpected triumph of *In the Company of Men*, was 1998's *Your Friends and Neighbors*, a movie of startling power. It tells the story of a small group of college-town dwellers adrift in a sea of relativism. Ben Stiller plays a weaselly college drama teacher (the little beard, glasses, and job description of Stiller's character make me wonder if LaBute is not self-laceratingly basing the character on things he does not admire about himself.) Aaron Eckhart, in a truly astonishing performance for those who saw him play the ruthless misogynist in *In the Company of Men*, plays a pathetic, clueless man married to Amy Brenneman, a sweet but foolish woman who drifts into a humiliating sexual affair with Stiller. Catherine Keener plays Stiller's girlfriend, a bitter woman who can't stand the sound of another human voice during sexual encounters. Jason Patric plays the incarnation of pure male sexual aggression. These characters proceed to betray and back stab one another in scary, hilarious ways. They talk to each other in clichés and fragmented sentences. Ironically, the only strong, clear voice belongs to the vile Patric. He delivers a couple of truly evil monologues proclaiming his warped view of life. Eckhart asks Patric whether he thinks someday he will have to pay for the things he does in this life, and Patric replies, "Someday we may find out there is eternity and God and all that. But until then, we are on *my time*."

There is strong language and strong sexual content in this movie, and almost all of the things the people do are appallingly dysfunctional. Some have labeled this a depressing film. I found it too darkly funny and clear-eyed to be a downer. One of LaBute's special gifts is to make you identify with his characters. I was horrified to see some of myself on the screen, and after viewing the film, I wanted to treat people better than

what LaBute had shown me. Some of the critical responses to this film were revealing. The film presents a relatively conservative view of life that apparently made some reviewers deeply uncomfortable. One wanted to know "who made this guy judge, jury, and executioner." Another critic said that LaBute's Mormonism was obvious because of the shock he exhibits at the actions of his characters and suggested that LaBute "get over it."

LaBute ran into trouble with his church over his 1999 play *Bash: Latter-day Plays*. One could compare *Bash* to Kevin Smith's Catholic farce *Dogma*. *Dogma* also has a core of genuine religious feeling, but nevertheless brought down the wrath of conservative Catholics who questioned Smith's loyalty (he says he is a faithful member of his church). Interestingly, the cause of the controversy over Bash may have been identified by an Orthodox Jewish journalist in *National Review*, the conservative magazine. In a July 26, 1999, review titled "LaBute and the Beasts," David Klinghoffer said he admired *Bash* although it was only good for people "who already have a moral framework in place." The New Yorkers who flocked to *Bash* may have had a different moral framework than LaBute and his fellow Mormons. Instead of receiving the play as a preachment of eternal Mormon values, the hipster audience may have seen *Bash* as an attack on religion, "wrenching the mask from the face of the Mormons, revealing the satanic face underneath." Perhaps LaBute's church leaders made a mistake similar to the one Klinghoffer claims New Yorkers made. Yes, LaBute was laying bare human—and Mormon—weaknesses, but he was doing this from a moral standpoint connected to his Mormonism. Although LaBute's work is subject to misinterpretations by both LDS and New York audiences, it remains the duty of the writer to speak truth as he sees it, without undue concern about how it will be received. If you are always anxious that you might be misinterpreted, you might never write a single word. Because somebody will get it wrong.

Bash is a trilogy of one-act plays, each of which climaxes with a murder. (The book edition is dedicated, "for emma, chet, and billie," the names of the victims.) Two of the titles of the mini-plays that make up the sequence refer to Greek tragedy: *Iphigenia in Orem* and *Medea Redux*. The first is a monologue by a young businessman from Orem who is staying in a Las Vegas hotel room. As he tells his story to an unseen stranger, a creeping sense of horror unfolds. The nameless yuppie describes his conventionally Mormon background, and it feels eerie to hear the actor Ron Eldard talk in the chilling context that unfolds about "the U" and "the Y" and "relief society" and a "mission." *Iphigenia* has the nasty sting of an O. Henry story suddenly turned lethal. The penultimate line, the cliché "be good to your kids, there's nothing like 'em in the world, believe me" has never sounded so sinister.

The middle playlet, *A Gaggle of Saints*, involves John and Sue, part of

a group of young Mormons from New England who visit New York City for a church activity. While in Central Park, away from their women, John and his friends encounter a gay male couple and beat one of them to death in a park restroom. The savagery of John and the obliviousness of Sue are trademark LaBute; we get a glimpse of the fearful reality behind the smiles. The final playlet, *Medea Redux*, is another monologue, this time by a rural young woman who was seduced by her junior-high school teacher. It has the thinnest connection to the church (she is apparently not LDS, but lives for a time with Mormon relatives in Utah). The seduction has tragic consequences that can be guessed from the title.

Bash was LaBute's first work with overtly LDS characters—although the ruthlessly competitive young men with short hair and ties and white shirts of *In the Company of Men* reminded me of the politics I encountered in the mission office during my own mission. LaBute knows male one-upmanship like no writer since David Mamet. The married couples of *Your Friends and Neighbors* could be sexually unexperienced marrieds at BYU; they hurt each other out of timidity and sheer ignorance. The young man in "Iphigenia in Orem" turns out to be a patriarchal monster in sheep's clothing. He may in fact sit next to me in sacrament meeting. In *Bash*, victimization begets violence. But this is the human condition that Mormons share with everyone else. Murderous homophobia is hardly confined to just Mormons, though Bash does raise the question of whether the cultural side-effects of Mormonism predispose us to self-righteousness.

Bash was eventually televised on the pay cable channel Showtime with Eldard, an almost unrecognizable Calista Flockhart, and Paul Rudd, who would later show up in *The Shape of Things*. In recent published interviews, LaBute has said he was disfellowshipped by local church leaders for writing *Bash*. Although a bystander can't know all the facts of the case, on the merits of LaBute's work this action seems unjustified. If the concern is about publicly depicting LDS members in a bad light, perhaps the *Deseret Morning News* should stop covering Mormon criminals. Is it the duty of LDS writers to present only flattering images of LDS people? Philip Roth once said that for him, the finest literature is the literature of self-indictment. Perhaps LaBute's self-lacerating honesty could increase his credibility with non-Mormons and help his "preachments" win a wider audience. In a *New Yorker* profile of LaBute, John Lahr wrote that LaBute's next film, *Nurse Betty* (2000), was his first with a happy ending and it's one "for the Mormon brethren, and maybe even for his wife, who wanted him to delight the world rather than disenchant it."

But his most recent play, *The Mercy Seat* (2002) continues at his full-blown, wide-open scurrilous best, much like *In The Company of Men* and *Your Friends and Neighbors*. That is, the language is profane, R-rated, and calculatedly shocking, using frank talk of sexual matters to symbolize

life's more fraught issues. The blurbs on the cover compare LaBute to Edward Albee, Sam Shepherd, August Strindberg, and David Mamet: some pretty tough customers. But as the critic David Thomson once wrote, tough guy writers are frequently sensitive souls saying, no matter how tough times get, I can take it. And often these writers try to find beauty in the harsh mechanisms of survival.

September 11, 2001 seems to be entering our national consciousness as the contemporary counterpart of December 7, 1941: an epochal, terrible event that changes many things forever. But we seem more confused in our responses than our grandparents were. *The Mercy Seat* is not really about the attack itself, but about our individual reactions to an overwhelming atrocity. In a preface, LaBute writes that he was on an airline flight when the idea for the play came to him in a flash. He says he "ordered a ginger ale" (perhaps a wink and a nod to his fellow "Saints"), pulled out his laptop, and went to work. The play, he writes, is not about politics but a "particular kind of terrorism: the painful, simplistic warfare we often wage on the hearts of those we profess to love."

The play opens in the apartment of Abby Prescott, not far from Ground Zero in Manhattan, on the morning of September 12. A fine white ash covers everything (the cover of the book is a field of white ash with the play's title written out as if by a finger). Abby is in her forties and a woman of some prominence in an investment firm located in the World Trade Center. (In the New York production she was played by Sigourney Weaver.) Seated on the couch is Ben Harcourt, a man in his thirties, Abby's junior at the firm, and her lover. Ben was supposed to be at work in the Twin Towers, but was in the apartment getting oral sex from Abby when the planes hit.

The Greeks said "character is destiny." This man and woman are forced by soul-shaking events to confront who they really are. Abby is a strong, competent, mature woman who begins to see that her relationship with Ben is a superficial caricature of what she really needs. In Ben, LaBute presents us once again with a character who makes us painfully aware of our own weaknesses. LaBute's men are generally either sad-sacks or predators. Ben is a sad-sack who aspires to be a predator. Ben is married with small daughters. He confesses to Abby, "I always take the easy route, whatever it takes to be liked, get by. That's me. Cheated at school, screwed over my friends, my marriage is a fiasco. . ." He's a stunted man. He doesn't get Abby's references to the Amazing Kreskin and Audie Murphy; he explodes, "knowledge that isn't practical is crap, education that isn't an MBA is shit. . ." (Unfortunately, I have heard similar sentiments expressed in my own circle of acquaintances. Maybe LaBute heard such sentiments from fellow students at BYU.)

Ben sees 9/11 as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to escape, without financial, legal, or emotional complications. He is presumed dead; his

cell phone continually rings—who knows who is frantically trying to reach him. He wants to run away and start over, and he wants Abby to go with him. LaBute manages to raise a lot of questions about American society in this short piece. Ben and Abby both know that their affair is sexual harassment according to the strictest most current definition of the term. Ben argues that his plan to run away is all-American. "That's what Americans do, overcome, do what it takes, we're still going to have Christmas and the World Series." LaBute, however, remains a fire-and-brimstone moralist. In a profane speech by Abby about their bedroom habits, LaBute gives us an unforgettable image of Hell. And his dialogue, as always, remains scaldingly and disturbingly funny.

LaBute places three epigraphs before the play. One is an excerpt from a hymn about "the mercy seat, where Jesus answers prayers." The second is from Edna St. Vincent Millay: "A wind with a wolf's head/ Howled about our door/ And we burned up the chairs/ And sat upon the floor." The third, and most important, is from rocker Nick Cave: "And the mercy seat is waiting/ And I think my head is burning/ And in a way I'm yearning/ To be done with all this measuring of truth." LaBute shows us how ironically painful it is to live in the presence of the mercy seat, to know our actions have eternal consequences and that we can't take the easy way out without abdicating our souls. As another song says, would you want to see, if seeing meant you had to believe, in things like Jesus and the saints, and all the prophets. . .? What does that responsibility really involve? In the end, Abby decides to show Ben "more mercy" than he's ever shown her, but it's mercy of the cruel-to-be-kind type. In this little play LaBute remains one of the most tough-minded of our artists, a generous dispenser of what he calls "the hardest, coldest currency on the planet"—honesty.

The Shape of Things (2003), LaBute's most recent movie and his strongest yet, is a bracing examination of the consequences of treating other people as objects. It's also a stunning anatomization of some vicious contemporary mindsets. At first it appears to be a straightforward love story. Nerdy Adam (Paul Rudd) meets charismatic, renegade art student Evelyn (Rachel Weisz). She then proceeds to remake him, urging him to lose weight, lose the eyeglasses, get a more stylish haircut, dress better, and even get a nose job. This all happens much to the consternation of Adam's more conventional friends, the sweet, demure Jenny (fetchingly played by Gretchen Mol) and the sexist pig Philip (Frederick Weller in the Aaron Eckhart role). A disturbingly shocking ending puts everything we've seen in a new light.

There are traces of BYU all over this movie. Apparently "Mercy College" is in a rather conservative community. Philip remarks that Evelyn's preferred performance art will not find much of a response in "this kind of town. We're not Berkeley." Much is made of PDA (public displays of

affection) by students. Jenny and Philip are, for young undergraduate students, very preoccupied with marriage. Evelyn strenuously avoids caffeine in her drinks. The serene physical layout of Mercy College (complete with stained glass windows) suggests a church as much as a university. Jenny is the very model of a BYU co-ed; she doesn't like swearing in her house.

The plot is, of course, a parody of the story of Adam and Eve[lyn]. But there is a unique LDS spin to it. Contrary to orthodox Christian thinking, this Adam is not a perfect man living in a flawless paradise. He's a sweet guy, but very much a doofus, ignorant as well as innocent. His fall is in some sense a fall upwards. As Evelyn secretly notes, Adam's capacity for action increases as he "progresses" or becomes more attractive. The price is agonizing, but Adam's eyes are indeed opened; he comes to know good and evil. However, the film raises the question of whether the price of that knowledge can be too high.

The cast of the film is expert, having performed the play in London and America. Paul Rudd is brilliant and touching as he moves from goofball in love to something else entirely. But this movie really belongs to Rachel Weisz. This is a part many actresses would kill for—Weisz makes the most of it. She is irresistible and terrifying behind her Mao button in her Che Guevara t-shirt.

The Shape of Things has gotten a decidedly more mixed reception than LaBute's previous work from critics who are perhaps discomfited by LaBute's essentially moral stance. Evelyn may proudly proclaim that moralists have no place in the gallery of art, but her creator has proven himself one of the toughest-minded moralists in American movies and theater. J. Hoberman in the *Village Voice* calls LaBute a Puritan and yawns that he's seen it all before. Andrew O' Heihr in *Salon* sneers that this movie is the most cutting edge movie of 1982. In other words, it is ideologically retrograde, stuck in the Reagan era. Haven't we all, he seems to ask, moved beyond the concern for individual morality? Aren't appearance and attractiveness everything in modern America? Hasn't it become clear to us, as it has to Evelyn, that all things are subjective—that if you feel it's true, then it is true, for you?

LaBute challenges this moral relativism, and with his brutal portrayal of characters we find both reprehensible and yet familiar forces us to challenge it as well. *The Shape of Things* is a bookend to *In the Company of Men*, only this time the demonic figure is, instead of a corporate male drone, an avant-garde woman artist. No one in LaBute's world is privileged—no one absolved of the capacity for evil—not even the audience. Some may find this disturbing, but I find it exhilarating. LaBute is an essential American, Mormon writer.

Night Light

Dixie Partridge

". . .artificial light tempts us to forget the meaning of night."
—Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers*

With a neighbor who couldn't tolerate light,
I took stairs in the dark,
felt for knobs and shapes
of cabinets in windowless rooms. At home,
more and more I left off switches
and felt a vigilance in the eye's
delicate instrument: by day we forget
other presences that move in beside us after night
has had time to soften everything,
and shadows seem to dissolve *into*
rather than out of existence. . . .
In the dark we remember the pen
left in its certain spot, but forget
the obvious: on our way to retrieval
trip over the chair.

I sit without lights and hear sounds of leaves
crisping in wind, a clock's tick
enlarged from another room.
Books on their shelves rise
like a whole range of mountains, and I think
of my father, once a high-wilderness guide,
awaiting dawn's first tinge from a bedroll;
or skies like the many shades of bruises;
how I learned to love bittersweet
from the darkest chocolate.
Around me, a sense of past scenes ripens
to a climate that shapes what is
and is to come. At times daylight
recognitions seem misperceived, the forgone
fused with what's real
and what's out of sight
into some great continent. . .
undiscovered, unexplored.

God, Man, and Satan in *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint*[1]

Bradley D. Woodworth

A well-known American novel begins with this:

> *NOTICE*
>
> *PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.*
>
> *BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR, Per G.G., Chief of Ordnance.*
>
> (Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)

BRADY UDALL HAS GIVEN the same sort of message to readers of his fiction. In an interview with the journal *Irreantum*, Udall said, "I don't want to teach readers a lesson of any kind. I simply want them to have a hair-raising, heart-thumping, mind-numbing, soul-tearing experience."[2]

The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint is certainly not a didactic novel. However, like *The* [heart thumping] *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it contains deeply literary and morally-informed themes and artistic material that enrich the story and raise the novel's aesthetic power as well as its spiritual resonance.

The novel describes the suffering of a young, half-Apache boy, often in black comic style, though the events are truly horrific: he loses his parents; he is run over by a mail truck and suffers through years of recovery; and he undergoes physical and psychological torture at a boarding school. Udall's book is powerful, not because it captures the specifics of Edgar's native culture, but because the author does not flinch from the suffering and evil that are endemic in life. Edgar does not dramatize his

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1. Prepared for the Association of Mormon Letters conference, February 2003.
2. "Interview: Brady Udall," *Irreantum* 3, no. 4 (Winter 2001-2002): 15.

own suffering. Childlike, he takes it in stride, accepting the world for what it is. He survives simply by enduring; he just keeps moving forward. And he draws the reader irresistibly in through a vast and vulnerable human capacity for coping.

Dialogue's reviewer complained that the book is marred by what it isn't, an inculcation of Edgar's distinct tribal identity. For her it sends the wrong message in the wrong voice.[3] For me, however, the book is made aesthetically and spiritually profound by what it is, a likeness of universal human experience, achieved through a combining of the engaging primary story—Edgar's heroic journey through his youth—with the deeply Mormon cosmological world in which Udall places his hero and other characters. At the center of the action of the novel is the relationship, on the one hand, between Edgar and an old and broken alcoholic named Art and, on the other, Edgar's ties to a one-time physician, Barry, who stalks the boy throughout the book. As the novel progresses, these relationships seem increasingly allegorical, for the relationships between man, God, and Satan in their traditional Mormon conception. Edgar is a kind of "everyman"; Art takes on the attending father role of God, and Barry mimics Satan. This spiritual, cosmological element reveals the ambition of this novel.

> what is low raise and support;
> That to the height of this great Argument
> I may assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.
> —John Milton (*Paradise Lost*, Book I, 23-26)

I hesitate to lay out all the figurative events and circumstances in the book that I think refer to the Mormon variant of the Christian account of the relationship between man and God. For an LDS reader, one of the real pleasures of reading Udall's novel lies in discovering these parallels. Nor will I have time in this brief note to mention all the allegorical and metaphorical material in the novel, but I will present a few key examples.

Let's start with Barry. Many readers, professional book reviewers included, have had a hard time understanding why this alternately annoying and terrifying character keeps appearing. After Edgar, Barry is the character the reader spends the most time with. Who is Barry? At the opening of the novel, he is a young doctor, both driven and caring, who

3. P. Jane Hafen, "Speaking for Edgar Mint," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 179-181.

saves Edgar's life after his horrific accident with the mail truck. But when Barry does not get the credit he thinks he deserves for saving Edgar, his sense of injured merit and thwarted ambition quickly destroys his career as a doctor. He is forced to leave the hospital—significantly named St. Divine's—that is, he ceases to be a chosen angel. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Isaiah 14:12) He soon becomes a drug-dealing devil, ever at Edgar's heels, trying to bring him into his orbit of influence. As Satan had his own plan for mankind's salvation, so does Barry for Edgar.

Let me mention a couple other points about Barry's allegorical identity. In the Utah sequence, when Edgar is in the Indian Placement Program, Barry seeks to get close to the boy through flattering and tempting Edgar's foster mother, Lana. What goes on between Edgar's foster parents and Barry clearly parallels events in the Garden of Eden. Lana, married to Clay (like Adam, "of the earth"), is the more educated and inquisitive of the two. Just how successful Barry is with his seduction of Lana is unclear, but there is no doubt about what is going on: Lana and Clay, Edgar's adoptive parents, are in a struggle with Barry over the boy's future, just as Satan entered the Garden and contended with our first parents over the future of humankind.

Why does Udall devote so many pages to Barry? Udall's first book, the collection of stories entitled *Letting Loose the Hounds* (Norton, 1997), conveys a rather dark view of the world. His characters have to contend with Barrys much more than they get to spend time with people like Art.

From the diabolical to the divine: The very choice of Art's name suggests creation. Moreover, Art in his own way is certainly a shepherd for Edgar, a role to which his surname—Crozier—points. (A "crosier" is the shepherd's hook used by high-level officials in several Christian churches.) Art and Edgar meet in St. Divine's hospital, and as Edgar begins to recover from his accident, Art watches out for him. In this passage, Art assists Edgar in getting loose from the restraints of his hospital bed while at the same time he helps Edgar move from his bed to solid ground:

> [Art] unbuckled the restraints—it took him awhile to figure them out with only one good hand—then stole every pillow and blanket he could find in the room and placed them around my bed, creating a landing pad. That night I threw myself off the bed twice, and both times Art was there to help me back up, make sure I didn't have any lasting injuries, and to argue with the nurses when they came in wanting to know why the restraints had been taken off.[4]

4. Brady Udall, *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 34.

Before Edgar leaves the hospital, Art gives him an old manual typewriter, a "Hermes Jubilee" model (Hermes is a messenger of the gods in Greek mythology). Throughout the book, Edgar types out his thoughts, his fears, and occasionally, letters to Art, which like prayers or petitions to God go unanswered in any literal way.

I find Art to be moving especially as he is not depicted as omnipotent or all-knowing or even as particularly virtuous. He is flawed, an-all-too-human Father on Earth, and like Edgar, he too suffers. Art, desolate and lonely, "has descended below all things."[5] That is how and why he understands Edgar. The anthropomorphic view of God is, I think, the most Mormon aspect of the underlying theology of the book. It is extreme, probably heretical, but like the Cowboy Jesus in Levi Peterson's *The Backslider*, I find it deeply moving. Art cannot save Edgar from suffering and pain; he is limited by the universe they both live in. What he can do is be there when needed to show that he understands and that he cares.

I treasure this traditional Mormon anthropomorphic view of God. I don't mind at all that God might be finite, subject to the constraints inherent in the physical universe. I feel more comfortable with a contingent than with an absolute deity, one who is more like than unlike me in nature.

Towards the end of the novel, Art and Edgar meet again. (For me the scene has clear parallels with LDS temple worship.) We find that Art treasures the contact he has with Edgar: he needs it to get himself through his own suffering. In Udall's vision, both acolyte and master are co-sufferers. I find the notion that Edgar and Art need each other to help give meaning and substance to their lives profoundly theological. I think this is one of the most forthright books I have ever read about how happiness and divinity, suffering and evil, really do work in our lives. In a recent interview Udall said:

> [T]hough I'm not the most spiritual or religious guy in the world, I know that God plays a central role in the lives of people everywhere. It's hard for me to understand why so many contemporary writers seem to be reluctant or downright afraid to confront God in their work. I guess I write about God because God is in our lives, whether we want Him there or not." [6]

One of the amazing aspects of this book is that one can read and enjoy it merely for its rousing, touching, and often very funny story, while remaining unaware of the theological elements I have discussed here. You do not need to see the theology to enjoy the book though in my

5. See D&C 88:6, 122:1-9, esp. 8.
6. Brady Udall, "Interview," available at http://www.bookbrowse.com.

case it certainly gives the book even greater aesthetic and spiritual power. At times in the novel Edgar's mundane world and the deeper theological world in which Udall has placed him come together and merge. God chooses Edgar; then Edgar chooses God:

> The Elders taught me all they could and I tried my best to get it all sorted out. I learned that my mother and I could be reunited and live on together into eternity where nobody got old or sick or—Elder Spafford promised me—bored. I learned that Jesus, God's only son, had suffered for every one of my sins, for all the guilt and sorrow they caused. This did not seem very fair to me, but I kept my mouth shut. I learned that cigarettes, beer and coffee were all no-nos, and that chastity, which I understood to mean keeping away from females entirely, was a must. And most importantly, I learned about this God who presided over this place called heaven where my mother was, who had a plan for me, who loved me without qualification, who watched over me. God, I learned, would never die, would never disappear without notice, would never beat anybody up, would never grow sick or old or tired of living. He might become angry or disappointed, yes, but He would never abandon you.
>
> Okay, I would accept Him, I decided. I'd have to be an idiot not to.
>
> So, I typed Him a little prayer that said: *God. This is Edgar. I will take it.*[7]

7. Udall, *Edgar Mint*, 226-27.

Archaeopteryx

Ken Raines

Quarry workmen slice open the past,
pry limestone chunks with picks,
shave each delicate layer
with a chisel and a sledge.
Sometimes they are rewarded
with the memory of a bird
leaping from the stone.
They do not lean or strain
forward as if expecting a squawk
from the meticulous slab.
They barely notice
the preserved minutiae of scales
and of fine veins
which lace the feathers.

Bones fallen
into random angles.
A gaping beak in a grimace,
baring teeth, anachronistic
in the silt, a rictus whispering
across millions of years.

With its head bent back,
wings and legs akimbo,
it is a dancer fallen
from a great height.
Fallen out of a dim past,
like some mythical fish
which circumvents turbulent water,
choosing instead to evaporate
and ride dark clouds back
to the spawning grounds.

Announcing the Mormon Literature Database

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY'S Harold B. Lee Library has recently launched the Mormon Literature Database (http://MormonLit.lib.byu.edu), a comprehensive bibliography of all literary writings by or about Mormons, destined to be an invaluable resource to scholars and readers of Mormon literature. Some 2500 authors and 8000 publications are currently entered in the database, with thousands more to come as the database editors complete and expand entries in a variety of genres and media.

"We began with conventional genres such as fiction, poetry, drama, and literary criticism," explains Gideon O. Burton of BYU's English faculty, who oversees the MLDB committee, "but we have expanded our parameters to include other genres that reflect the richness of Mormon literary heritage and that are increasingly the focus of literary and cultural scholars—biographies and memoirs, journals and diaries, letters, folklore, and especially the personal essay. In future phases we will add Mormon speeches, and before long some 2000 films that have been created by or that depict Mormons."

The database also classifies works according to numerous subgenres that reveal the depth and breadth of Mormon writing. These include various categories of fiction—historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, scripture-based fiction, romance, etc.—as well as genres more specific to Mormonism, such as missionary fiction, hymns, and even literature-oriented Relief Society lessons. Each genre or subgenre is annotated so that someone looking for "personal essay" is first given an overview and history of the genre, including suggestions of the most important publications or authors in that genre. In this way, the MLDB is something of an online encyclopedia of Mormon literary studies. The records for individual works are annotated with summaries, awards received, and links to other works to which a given work is related.

"We are so excited to have this data in a fully relational database," explains Burton, "because now a given work is linked directly to any other to which it has a relationship–a book review is linked to the book that it reviews, a poem or essay is linked to the collection in which it was

published, a story is linked to the periodical where it appeared, a translation or a film is linked back to the work from which it was translated or adapted, a book or article in a series is linked to a head record that explains and lists the members of that entire series, etc. And any work, of course, is linked to its author and to its publisher or periodical, which also have their own profile pages and bibliographies." Thus, one can quickly see a list of all Mormon literary publications from a given publisher, whether that is Bookcraft, The University of Illinois Press, or Knopf; or, one can just as readily see a list of all Mormon literary publications from a given periodical, whether that is *The Times and Seasons*, *BYU Studies*, or *The New Yorker*.

Mormon authors and creative personnel are a principal feature of the MLDB, which is not only a bibliographic but a biographical database. "This is comparable to an electronic Dictionary of Literary Biography for Mormon writers," explains BYU librarian Connie Lamb. "We intentionally imitated the format of *Contemporary Authors*, where library patrons could not often find information about the LDS authors they were researching." In the MLDB, a "profile page" is established for each author where details can be provided about his or her background, education, career, awards, professional affiliations, etc. Where possible, photographs of authors appear. Appended to each author profile is a complete listing of his or her publications. "We have a long way to go to complete our author profiles," admits Robert Means, the BYU librarian who heads the biographical portion of the database, "but living authors can now submit their own data through an online submission form, and we urge them to complete and update their data."

The MLDB is the result of many years of bibliographic work on Mormon studies, first done by Chad Flake, Scott Duvall, David Whittaker, and others, which has been published over the years in *BYU Studies*. "Eugene England began gathering bibliographies and entering these into an offline database in the 1980s," explains Burton. "While still at BYU, he approached me about finding a way to track and publicize the wealth of Mormon literary writing that he had been working so hard to identify in his own scholarship." During the late 90s, a Mormon Authors project was begun by Larry Draper, Connie Lamb, and Robert Means of BYU's Harold B. Lee Library in which they identified some 1000 Mormon novels and their authors. Burton and the BYU librarians put their data together, obtained sponsorship for the project from the Harold B. Lee Library, and began the new Mormon Literature Database. The Database was officially launched at the February 2003 meeting of the Association for Mormon Letters, where Mormon authors and critics greeted the new resource with enthusiasm.

"It took us two years to complete the necessary prototypes and to get the parameters and programming pounded out," Burton explains. "But

now that it is up and running, we can hardly enter data fast enough. As we work through various periodicals and publisher lists to enter data, we are continually astounded at how industriously literary the Mormon people have been. Not everything published is of compelling aesthetic quality, of course, but the literature shows the shape and shaping of our culture over time. We have every proof that the Mormon experience has sparked a huge outpouring of literary expression, and more reasons than ever to appreciate Mormon literature as a thriving ethnic literature to be studied in its own right."

"With this expandable database, students of Mormon literature will be able to mine countless topics to study, and the intelligent accessibility of both biographical and bibliographic data will promote scholarly dialogue within and beyond BYU," explains Brad Westwood, Chair of BYU's L. Tom Perry Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee library. "Within seconds, students and scholars will be able to set research parameters by author, genre, topic, span years, or publisher; find and often read the latest literary criticism; read excerpted works; find links to complete literary works found on stable Internet sites; study biographical data on hundreds of authors; and read listings of complete oeuvres. What would have taken days to assemble for reading and examination, can be brought together in only seconds. This scholarly literary resource will, in my opinion, do more to monitor, appraise and encourage the study of Mormon literature than any academic/reference product of the last decade."

Visit the Mormon Literature Database at http://MormonLit.lib.byu.edu or write its editors at MormonLit@byu.edu.

Red's Tire Barn Titans

Ken Raines

They are overmatched from the beginning.
Even the black block numbers on their backs
seem to loom on the jerseys that hang slack
and flap about their narrow bodies, smooth
and sinewed as peeled twigs. Unfurled and loose,
they imagine rising with every gust. Winning,
at least to the sidelined boys who grab at dry
tufts of grass, jostle each other, and fall
to their backs, laughing at the autumn sky,
winning, to them, is still hypothetical.
To them, even the rules are abstract and fluid.
It's not strictly soccer, but what else can we call
the way they flock and wheel around the ball,
their random grace, like leaves spinning in liquid.

Reaching toward Heaven, Rooted on Earth

Falling toward Heaven, by John Bennion. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000). 312 pp.

Reviewed by Paul Guajardo, Assistant Professor of English literature, University of Houston.

ONE AFTERNOON WHILE EATING MY sandwich in the faculty lounge of the English Department at the University of Houston, I couldn't help but notice a 1989 dissertation that was nearly a foot thick: *Court of Love*. I was surprised to learn that it was about Mormon culture. I took it back to my office, reclined my chair, and became engrossed. I read throughout the night and most of the next day until I finished it, exhausted and depressed—exactly the kind of book I love. I wanted to call the writer and find out more about his work and his characters, especially because the novel ends somewhat ambiguously, allowing readers to decide for themselves. Bennion, in fact, had two possibilities in mind: "One was that Howard and Alison would find a way to live together again, the other was that Howard would end up absolutely isolated from human contact" (p. xxv). The ending he gives perfectly allows for either possibility.

This was my introduction to the prose of John S. Bennion, now a tenured BYU English professor known for the award-winning collection, *Breeding Leah and other Stories*.[1] *Falling toward Heaven* is a revised version of *Court of Love*. His work now in progress includes a novel, *The Burial Pool*, a nineteenth-century polygamist mystery novel, *Water Killing*, and *Desert Women*, a collection of essays about women in Tooele County, Utah.

Falling toward Heaven begins with Elder Howard Rockwood serving a mission in Houston while his "soul was in a waning phase, narrowing to a sliver" (p. 3).

> [His] mission was like thermal underwear, useful for safety and warmth, but hampering his free movement. . . .He had thought that, because he was a doubter, he should leave his mission, but he knew that would break his mother's heart. He had decided to muddle through to the end. His prayers seemed superficial. . .God had always seemed to Howard to be a stern teacher, one focused on obedience to rules. (p. 4)

Then, at a 4th of July concert, Elder Rockwood meets the wispy, free-spir-

1. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991.

ited Allison Warren,[2] who holds a degree from MIT. For her he not only considers breaking mission rules but also risks a dishonorable discharge.

Although doubt is a recurring theme, the novel's major conflict is the result of the mismatched pairing between the atheist Allison, who writes software for oil companies, and the idealistic Howard, who wants to restore his father's ranch to its former glory. Allison questions Howard's religion and culture. She struggles with marriage and her desire for a career, and Howard struggles with his faith, his heritage, and his roots in the town of Rockwood (modeled on Vernon, Utah). He comes from a pioneer family that had farmed and ranched 1200 dusty acres of desert for five generations. Howard "nearly [leaves] the church for [the] aggressive, careless, independent, powerful" (p. 177) Allison, described as a man-eating pagan, who is the liberal daughter of a Rice University professor, and, at the outset, the lover of a man who does sex research at the University of Houston.

On their way to Anchorage, where they will live together without matrimony, Howard and Allison make a stop in Howard's hometown. The visit lasts just long enough for Allison to learn that she has serious questions about small-town life and Mormon culture. Later, just before Howard is called into a church court, Allison reluctantly agrees to marry him, and as a result, he is disfellowshipped instead of excommunicated. Gradually these two work out some of their differences through compromise. Although they ultimately endure a family tragedy, the novel still ends somewhat hopefully, as positively as a novel with these themes can. As much as I *like* and recommend *Falling toward Heaven*, however, I simply *love* the greater emotions evoked by the more tragic *Court of Love*. In this earlier version, Howard and Allison actually stay in Rockwood, where increasingly Allison feels trapped by her boyfriend, his family, his ancestors, his church, and by small-town insularity—all of which leads to heart-wrenching and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to deal with differences.

For me, the beauty of Bennion's fiction is his faultless writing with apt use of metaphor and figurative speech, yet sufficient plot, humor, and insight to keep readers interested. His dialogue is perfectly peppered with lines worthy of the wittiest sit-com banter, yet his characters would do Thomas Hardy proud. Reading Bennion's work, I can't help thinking of another odd couple, Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*. Indeed, what Bennion does best is to portray couples in conflict. Bennion is also particularly adept at depicting oddball characters, religious mystics, fanatics, Jack Mormons, and other varieties of doubters and back-sliders. He is superbly gifted at rendering the internal workings of an anguished mind.

Most of Bennion's minor characters are vivid, and his women are especially strong and well-wrought. Howard's mother has the gift of healing and counseling. She starts a reading group where women discuss their pet peeves: "The power structure of the church or the ways men think they own women's bodies. . .authority. . . patriarchal attitudes toward land and work" (p. 207). Allison laments, "It's sad. Your mother's made to be a preacher, a healer, and she's born into one of the only churches in the country that won't let her do either" (p. 208). Indeed, one of Allison's functions is to

2. The character is named Allison in *Falling Toward Heaven*, Alison in *Court of Love*.

help us see the church and Mormon culture through an outsider's eyes. She calls Rockwood "Howard's tight-assed Mormon town" (p. 85).

In this arguably feminist novel, traditional male/female roles are inverted. Allison works; Howard stays home or looks for work. He is something of a homemaker who cooks the dinners: "'We've got apple pie and ice cream.' He was Mr. June Cleaver" (p. 251). She is the more educated one; he continually borrows money from her and is dependent. There are references to *his* biological clock; *he* is the one who wants children. She "rejected all wifeliness; her pill, which he wanted to flush down the toilet, kept her from motherhood" (p. 176). She states "I'm not going to give up my job for him" (p. 206). The narrator frequently describes Allison as wolf-like. Ironically, Howard reads romances of the American West, where the "roles of men and women were clearly defined" (p. 205).

Howard's recurring doubt serves as a leitmotif: "All his life he had been taught that the universe was simple and unitary; now he knew it was not. Opposites were true, paradoxes were as commonplace as stars" (p. 110). Sometimes he wonders if "his fresh desire for faith was merely a retreat from a fear he could not endure" (p. 146). While in church, "Howard felt like a foreigner, seeing the meeting with new eyes. He wondered at the simple faith. His own was so tangled that it hardly existed. Instead of a stern and unforgiving patriarchal father, he tried to imagine a distant and pure god, one who didn't traffic in any kind of power" (p. 139). Nevertheless, part of Howard's development concerns his growing belief; he wonders "if he could do the same with his faith, reconstruct faith out of the flashes of light he had felt since meeting Allison. Could he embrace hope by choice, giving it priority over fear?" (p. 148). Eventually he learns "that prayer was a form of eternal calculus, a way of making closer and closer estimates of God's person-ness. But for the first time since he was a child, he had faith in the process" (p. 184). Howard's faith waxes and wanes, and ultimately Allison is able to offer more consolation and understanding of grief and loss.

I must confess my initial surprise at how candidly Bennion, a BYU professor, writes about sex, feminism, hypocrisy, patriarchy, and polygamy. However accurately he may depict the diversity of the church, at first I came away with somewhat negative images. Call me simplistic. In spite of my overwhelming enthusiasm for Bennion's writing, I first naively questioned its suitability for non-members or the weak of testimony. What I might call *negative* depictions, however, Bennion would call *realistic.* These aspects of his fiction are placed in perspective on second reading. Yes, his characters make mistakes, criticize Mormon culture, and honestly harbor considerable doubt, but all this adds to the strength of the writing and the ideas. I believe that Bennion's candor is ultimately beneficial to anyone who has struggled with testimony, obedience, or matters of faith.

John Bennion has thought carefully about what it means to be a Mormon writer and about the purposes of fiction in the essay "Popular and Literary Mormon Novels: Can Weyland and Whipple Dance Together in the House of Fiction?"[3] For the sake of

3. *BYU Studies* 37.1 (1997-1998): 159-182. Rpt. at http://jackweyland.com/review3.html.

simplicity, literature can be classified as literary or popular; similarly, Mormon literature has been divided into: literature of faith and belief, versus what Karl Keller once called "jack-fiction."[4] In discussing orthodox Mormon fiction that reverberates with heart-warming conclusions, Bennion writes, "My academic training makes me want to mock this kind of extended plot, but Weyland's books sell like peanuts at a circus."[5] Elaborating on the distinctions, Bennion comments that

> In popular fiction, truth is easily understood; good and evil are clearly marked. But in literary fiction, outcomes are uncertain and characters ambiguous. The reader is invited by literary fictions to judge between relative truths and to questions former truths. The focus is not on a didactic outcome but on the experience of the character, the career of their lives. (p. 8)

Bennion acknowledges that many readers, including some of his students, are not interested in fiction "that deals ambiguously with good and evil" (p. 7). Nevertheless, he argues, the value of this literature lies in requiring "moral decisions in a fictional universe that approaches the complexity and ambiguity of the universe we find ourselves in. . .[thus]. . .careful readers can still grow morally by being forced to decide in the world of the literary novel" (p. 9). Ultimately, Bennion calls for a balanced narrative diet, and that is exactly what he gives us in *Falling Toward Heaven,* a decidedly literary work about the complexity of relationships and religion. Go forth and read.

Dissent Without Definition

Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters, edited by John Sillito and Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 376 pp.

Reviewed by Stephen C. Taysom, Associate Instructor of American Religious History, Indiana University

ALL GOOD HISTORY is as much about the present as it is about the past. Sillito and Staker's volume, which includes biographical sketches of dissenters ranging widely across the 180-year history of the LDS church, is firmly grounded in the polarized present. In compiling the volume, the editors sought to find out "What. . .the lives and beliefs of these independent spirits tell us about Mormonism, ourselves, and the larger world around us" (p. x). The "independent spirits" dealt with in the volume include Amasa Lyman, John E. Page, Sarah Pratt, William Smith, T.B.H. and Fanny Stenhouse, James Strang, Moses Thatcher, Fawn Brodie, Juanita Brooks, Thomas Stewart Ferguson, Sterling McMurrin, Samuel W. Taylor, and D. Michael Quinn. Sillito and Staker at-

4. Quoted in jackweyland.com/review3, 1.
5. jackweyland.com/review3, 4.

tempt to make the case for the philosophical and theological diversity of these individuals by noting that some eventually left the church while others did not. All of them, however, sought to promote "truth in the face of falsehood" (p. x). In fact, however, the vast majority of the people profiled found themselves outside of the church. The selection process is thus not quite so open as it may appear. The editors seem to have privileged a certain type of dissenter—one for whom dissent becomes the defining element of his or her relationship with the LDS church. It might have been instructive to also include individuals for whom some degree of alienation and dissent was keenly felt, but for whom such impulses were reined in due to their ultimate belief in the metaphysical truth of Mormonism. Richard Poll, Lowell Bennion, and B.H. Roberts come to mind as examples of such dissenters.

Nevertheless, the profiles are generally engaging and occasionally brilliant. William Russell's essay on James Strang and Richard and Mary Van Wagoner's piece on Sarah Pratt are particularly good examples, but for different reasons. Russell points out the difficulty Mormons had in simply dismissing Strang as unbalanced. Because he claimed prophetic experiences nearly identical to those of Joseph Smith, Strang forced Mormons to examine more closely charges of irrationality in dealing with other expressions of faith—something that Mormons continue to struggle with today. The Van Wagoners offer a moving portrait of the long-suffering and independent Sarah Pratt. Her husband Orson's frequent church-induced absences and polygamous intrigue finally led her out of the church and her marriage, but this is a story that has been told before. What is most valuable is the timely acknowledgement that even among the elite of Mormon society, martial difficulty, divorce, and general unpleasantness were as much a part of life as they were for those, then and now, of the rank and file. Edward Leo Lyman's look at the difficulties Moses Thatcher faced serves a similar purpose. Lyman provides a compelling look inside the pre-correlation hierarchy and a taste of how strong-willed but religiously dedicated individuals fail to see eye to eye. In a day when the unanimity and brotherhood of the church's presiding quorums are celebrated (however cosmetically) within official and orthodox LDS culture, it would no doubt come as a surprise to many to learn that "President [Joseph F.] Smith felt so strongly at odds with Thatcher that at one point he refused to partake of the sacrament as long as he held such resentment" (p. 170). Loretta Hefner's look at Amasa Lyman's spiritual odyssey offers a unique glimpse into how apostles in the early period often fought over central, important doctrinal issues—disagreements which led to Lyman's excommunication, but not to that of Orson Pratt or Orson Hyde though they continued to share his views for years. All of these serve to illustrate how the current church's emphasis on historical continuity and unanimity has distorted the rich tradition of dissent, public and private, within the nineteenth-century church.

The profiles of more recent mavericks are generally somewhat less compelling. Richard Cracroft's essay on Samuel W. Taylor and Newell Bringhurst's piece on Fawn Brodie are the exceptions. Both of these provide fresh insights into the lives of individuals whose relationships with the LDS church were almost obsessive and whose identities were simply incom-

plete without that tension. Cracroft and Bringhurst offer sensitive and revealing portraits of people who produced literary works of great value from their sense of religious disillusionment. Stan Larson's essay on Thomas Stewart Ferguson, by contrast, seems somehow out of place. Although Larson produced a brilliant book on the same subject, Ferguson comes across in this piece as less a maverick than a rather sad, shattered, pathetic man. Unlike that of many others profiled in the volume, Ferguson's dissent seems to be born of a certain center-less-ness, and as a result he is never able to make sense of his disillusionment enough to qualify as a true maverick. Brigham Madsen's ode to Sterling McMurrin, while rich in personal detail, is simply too personally involved. Madsen and McMurrin's intimate friendship leads Madsen into a sentimental and even apologetic mode, both of which present an obstacle to a truly insightful interpretation of McMurrin's complex religious thought. Lavina Fielding Anderson has a similar problem in her discussion of D. Michael Quinn. Quinn, a true maverick and perhaps one of the most polarizing and enigmatic figures in recent Mormon intellectual culture, is paid tribute to in this very moving essay, but one gets the sense that perhaps Quinn's ordeal is too recent, too raw, to be included in this book.

But that gets back to my initial quarrel with the editorial style. The editors are not clear about whether this collection is an anecdotal celebration of dissent in the Mormon tradition or a scholarly examination of what it means to be a dissenter within a religious tradition that is averse to such a stance. As is evidenced in the essays, of course, it functions in both capacities. A more methodologically sophisticated introduction, one that explores issues of orthodoxy and dissent, center and margins, and the history of dissent within Mormonism, would have aided the book immensely. As it stands the collection is a useful, if far from groundbreaking, approach to dissent in Mormonism.

No Other Way?

Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity, by Jeffrey A. Trumbower (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 206 pp.

Reviewed by Keith Norman, Associate Editor, *Dialogue,* Solon, Ohio.

WHEN CHARLES THE HAMMER conquered Friesland in 692 C.E., he generously offered baptism into the Christian religion to the defeated Frisian chief Radbod. Just as he was stepping into the font, Radbod hesitated, wondering aloud what had become of his dead forefathers. Bishop Wolfran, presiding at the ceremony, answered forthrightly that they were "in Hell, with all other unbelievers." Radbod, not spiritually mature enough to take this strong doctrine, drew back from the water. "Very well," he replied, "then I will rather feast with my ancestors in the halls of Woden, than dwell with your little starvling band of Christians in heaven" (p. 148). Radbod obstinately remained loyal to his pagan ancestors his entire life.

Had Radbod lived a few centuries

earlier, he might have had some hope of finding his ancestors in heaven or even been instrumental in getting them admitted. For nearly four hundred years Christians had speculated on the problem of salvation for those outside the church, especially those who had already died. What could Christ do for the righteous of the Old Testament, for one's own ancestors, for catechumens ('investigators') who died before baptism, or for pagans who had lived according to the best they knew? If, according to I Tim. 2:4, God desires that everyone receive salvation, how could he exclude the dead, particularly those who had no chance to hear Gospel while they lived? Christian scripture referred to Christ's descent into Hades to do just that for those who had rejected a biblical prophet (I Pet. 3:19-20; 4:6); and Paul even cited approvingly vicarious baptism for the dead (I Cor. 15:29). Stories and visions about the prayers of fervent Christians being efficacious for saving the dead flourished in early Christianity.

Eventually, however, the idea that this life alone is the time to prepare to meet God won the day, particularly in western Christianity. As with many crucial doctrines in the early church, it was Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa from 395 to 430, who rationalized and solidified what became the orthodox position in the church in the West: nothing can be done for an unbaptized person after death, there is no escape from the eternal fires of hell, and prayers for the dead and even purgatorial suffering for one's own sins are only efficacious for baptized Christians.

Trumbower's treatment of salvation for the dead, focusing on "those traditions wherein the living undertake specific actions to benefit the dead," (p. 11) is fairly comprehensive, if not in great depth, for the first four centuries of Christianity. He mentions earlier Greek, Roman, and Egyptian actions to benefit the dead, including libations or offerings of food left on the grave, coins placed in the mouth or on the eyelids, and ritual 'trials' of the deceased. Jewish piety generally rejected such practices although scattered apocryphal writings from the intertestamental period refer to intercessory prayers and atoning sacrifices to ensure the resurrection of individuals who had died. Christianity was born in a Jewish milieu which debated whether repentance after death is possible, whether suffering for sins is eternal, and whether pious sons can rescue their fathers from Gehenna.

The New Testament reflects similar controversies. The story in Luke 16:19-31 of the "great chasm" fixed between the rich man in Hades and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, along with Paul's dictum that we will receive recompense at the judgment for "things done in the body," seem to preclude any change in one's saved status after death. The second century writer of 2 Clement declared, "Once we have departed this world, we can no longer confess there or repent any more" (8:3). On the other hand, the biblical references to preaching to the dead and baptism for the dead in I Corinthians and I Peter were not the discovery of Mormon missionaries. Early Christians were well aware of them, and subsequent Christian literature reflects the attempts to come to terms with them. Here Trumbower covers some of the same territory Hugh Nibley traversed fifty years ago in his exploration of baptism for the dead among early Christians. The second century *Shepherd of Hermas* speaks of "apostles and teachers" preaching to righteous

spirits who had died after they themselves had "fallen asleep" [died] and then going down with them into the water to receive the "seal" [baptism]. (*Sim.* 9.16.1-7; qtd. pp. 47f.). Although Hermas's vision does not appear to portray vicarious baptism of the *living* in behalf of the dead, it expresses the same concern for the salvation of worthy souls who had died without baptism. A number of texts from this period focus on salvation for Old Testament heroes and other illustrious figures from earlier times, bolstering the paradoxical claim of the small sect of Christians to be a universal religion. "The analogy with early Mormon baptism of George Washington could not be more apt," Trumbower notes (p. 49).

The author devotes a chapter each to two famous texts about women from the post-apostolic period who effected some measure of salvation for the dead: Thecla and Perpetua. The *Acts of Paul* tells the story of Thecla, whom the apostle converted to Christianity and chastity. Thecla humiliates an official in Antioch by rebuffing his embraces and is condemned to the beasts for "sacrilege." While awaiting her ordeal, she converts Tryphena, a prominent woman in whose keeping she had been placed. Meanwhile, Tryphena was visited by her deceased daughter Falconilla in a dream and told that Thecla should "pray on my behalf and I might be transferred to the place of the righteous" (p. 61). Thecla complied, and the outcome was that she was protected from the other beasts in the arena by a lioness and then released. Christians already had a tradition that "confessors"—those risking martydom by refusing to compromise their faith—had the power to forgive sins. Thecla's story carried this further by extending that power to benefit the dead, particularly one who had died as a non-Christian. Although it did not address the issue of baptism for Falconilla, it did take a stand on controversies such as whether there was a separation of the dead according to their righteousness or religious affiliation, whether progression or repentance was possible after death, and whether "eternal punishment" could ever end for an individual.

Perpetua, martyred in 203 C.E just after her conversion to Christianity, had her prayers similarly answered regarding her younger brother Dinocrates, who had died of cancer at age seven. While awaiting her ordeal with beasts in the arena, Perpetua had a vision of her brother in torment in what we would call 'spirit prison.' Following prolonged tears and prayers, she saw Dinocrates in another vision, no longer suffering, while apparently still in the same place. Although there was never any firm or uniform doctrine on the subject of salvation for the dead, the popularity of both of these stories attests to the concern of early Christians for dead relatives and others and the widespread belief that they were not beyond hope. Again, Trumbower sees a parallel with modern Mormon practice:

> In all three cases the persons undergoing persecution for their faith find meaning and solace in their ability to rescue the dead, and the primary focus is on persons close to the one persecuted: the daughter of a friend, a long lost little brother, and for the Mormons, any person who can be specifically named, the majority of whom in the early years were deceased friends and relatives. (p. 86)

The author goes on to discuss the

history of the tradition of Jesus' descent into Hades (also a focus of Nibley), which shows a gradual shift in the thinking of the Church Fathers away from literal exegesis to the allegorical. By the later fourth century, the prevailing view was that neither repentance nor salvation were possible after death though this was by no means universal. Doctrines favorable to eternal progression and universal salvation similarly lost favor in this period. The *Apocryphon of John*, a Gnostic text dating to the second century C.E., provides for opportunities—though not guarantees—of salvation beyond death that are open to all except apostates. This is "strikingly similar to Mormon theology," as Trumbower notes (p. 112). After Augustine such universalism survived only in eastern Christianity though even there it was controversial. The Council of Carthage in 397 expressly forbade baptism of dead bodies, a practice which was apparently the last vestige of vicarious baptism for the dead. By then Christianity had become so prevalent that few could claim that posthumous salvation was needed to preserve justice and equity. A favorite topic of sermons was the folly of postponing baptism until you were too old and infirm to enjoy sinning: get baptized now because your status at death cannot be improved afterwards.

Clearly, *Rescuing the Dead* will be of interest to many Latter-day Saints because, although Trumbower concedes that his scholarly expertise does not extend beyond the early Christian period, he is so struck by the parallels between early Christian and Mormon thinking and practices that he cannot resist bringing them up from time to time. His sources on Mormonism are solid if not extensive, indicative of the care he has taken even with minor points. Critics of the notion of salvation for the dead will find his well-reasoned and judicious conclusions difficult to criticize. He lays out the pros and cons for such historical practices dispassionately, and though he disavows taking sides on the issue, he notes in his conclusion:

> Those Christians, like Augustine, who reject posthumous salvation find themselves in the paradoxical position of affirming the continued existence of the personality after death, but rejecting the idea that the personality of the unbaptized. . .might grow or change as they did throughout life. (p. 155)

By the way, has anyone done Radbod's work for him?

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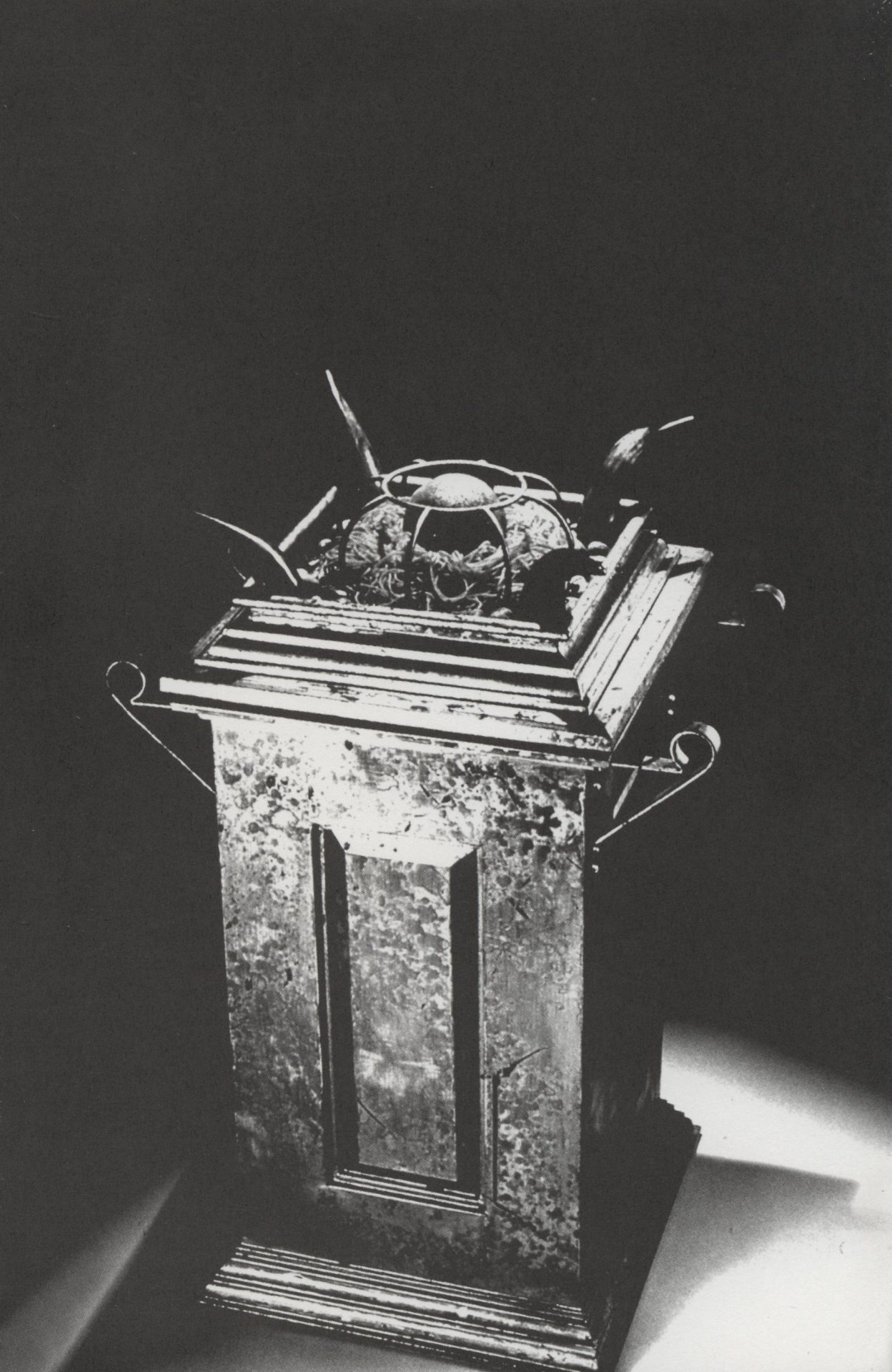
MARGARET BLAIR YOUNG has been working for the past five years on a trilogy of historical novels about black Mormon pioneers, *Standing On the Promises*, co-authored with Darius Gray. The publication of this story indicates her return to fiction other than that involving the race issue. She teaches creative writing at BYU.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

FRANK MCENTIRE received an associate degree with an emphasis in theater arts from Lon Morris College in Jacksonville, Texas and a Master of Arts in theater and cinematic arts from Brigham Young University. He was Art Editor of *Dialogue* during the editorship of Mary Bradford as well as that of Linda and Jack Newell. He was Art Critic for *The Salt Lake Tribune* and *Salt Lake Magazine* from 1992 to 1998. McEntire presently serves as Executive Director of the Utah Arts Council. Fascinated by religious objects and symbols, McEntire brings together scraps, odds and ends, and found objects into sculptures which evoke the sacred.

THE COVER ART

Cover:	*Scripture Writer* mixed media, 9 x 11/2 x 71/2 inches on a 38 inch pedestal Photography by Keith Proctor
Back Cover:	*Divination at Cumora* pastel and charcoal, 22 x 30 inches
Inside Back Cover:	*Incense Altar* mixed media, 40 x 24 x 18 inches Photography by Keith Proctor



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