

WENDOVER

T. J. Mathews

Judges 19

*We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger,
that is not of the children of Israel*

Elder Casey Martin had been Zone Leader for over eight months, longer than any other Zone Leader in the mission at the time. He loved the position and seemed to do the work effortlessly. But now he faced his first painful decision. He had been awake most of the night considering the possible outcomes. The facts were these:

1. Sister Larwood had run away and apparently gone home to her family in Sacramento.
2. Her companion, Sister Allred, had called Martin begging that he find some way to get her to return to the mission field without telling the President ("you owe her that much," she had said);
3. Elder Martin, as Zone Leader, did have a mission car, so he and his companion could drive to Sacramento and get her.
4. It was now Wednesday, so they could conceivably go and get back in two days and not really be missed. They might not really be missed until Sunday.

The considerations were as follows:

1. It probably was his fault that she had run away. One week before, he had called Sister Larwood to repentance in a rather inelegant way. It was a Monday evening, when missionaries go back to work after P-day, and Sister Allred had called and reported that Larwood wouldn't leave their apartment to teach a third lesson. No, she wasn't ill. No, they hadn't had a fight. No, it wasn't that time of month (he was embarrassed later that he had

asked that). She was just tired and didn't want to go out that night. Martin and his companion, Elder Stevens, had no teaching appointments that evening, so they went over to the sisters' apartment. Martin had reminded Larwood that she had been "called by the Lord to serve with all diligence," that she was behaving as a "slothful servant," that the investigators she was supposed to be teaching might only have this one opportunity to hear the gospel, and then he told her that if she wasn't "up to doing the work with all her heart, might, mind and strength" she might as well just quit and go home. Martin thought his rebuke was perfect--"reprove betimes with sharpness"--but Sister Larwood looked him straight in the eye, crumpled her brow the way she would if she had just tasted something really awful, and told him to "go to hell." She then went into the other room and gently closed the door. Sister Allred's response: "Great. You did good Elder," as she showed them out. Anyway, it seems Larwood took him up on it and decided to go home.

2. If Sister Larwood didn't come back before the President learned about it, she would be "sent home" with all the attendant disgrace and social shame that entails. (*Is that irony?*, thought Martin). If he could get her to reconsider and come back quickly, she could complete her mission honorably.
3. If they went to get her and President Barlow were to find out, both he and his companion, as well as Sister Allred would all be in serious trouble. Right now, it was only Larwood that faced trouble.
4. Leaving the zone without permission was not allowed, although he was the one who usually gave permission. Leaving the mission was forbidden and no one he could ask could give him permission. Leaving the state, crossing another and going into a third was unthinkable. So against the rules! But Sister Larwood had already done it and if he and his companion could get her back soon (before the crap hit the fan) she might not have to suffer the consequences of her rash decision (which was, again, partly his fault).
5. He, like all Zone Leaders, had a cell phone, so he and Elder Stevens wouldn't really be missed for the two days they'd be gone.
6. Jesus went after the lost sheep, leaving the other sheep to fend for themselves while he did it.

7. Going to Sacramento to fetch Sister Larwood would mean driving all the way across Nevada. Elder Martin was from Michigan and had never been to Nevada, but he knew of the sin and corruption that was there--gambling, drinking, legalized prostitution. The missionaries joked about the ranches in northern Nevada, right along the route they would have to follow--"ranch" being a demeaning euphemism for whore house. He and his companion would have to drive straight through and not stop for anything but fast food and gas.

And these were the possible outcomes:

1. If successful, Sister Larwood could complete her mission and continue to bring souls to the Lord. He would regain some stature in the eyes of both Sister Larwood and Sister Allred.
2. If Sister Larwood refused to return, he and Elder Stevens could just drive home and then report to President Barlow what she had done. At least he would have tried.
3. If, while he was gone or sometime after, the President were to find out about the trip, he might lose his calling as Zone Leader. He had his eye on Assistant to the President and that would never happen.
4. If he didn't try, President Barlow would surely find out that Larwood had left after he basically told her she should. This might be enough in itself to lose him his position as Zone Leader.

So, when he arose the next morning, he knelt by his bed and said a perfunctory prayer for the Lord to confirm what he had already decided, and that was to grab Elder Stevens and head out for Sacramento. Over breakfast at 6:30 (corn flakes with milk and a glass of juice), he realized that Elder Stevens had come to the same conclusion. After Stevens joined him at the small kitchen table the first thing he said was, "So, are we going to take Sister Allred along or leave her here?" Martin had not considered this.

"Dunno." He answered. "You really think we should go get her?"

"Yeah." Said Stevens, meaning "duh. . . of course," and sounding a bit stunned that Martin was even asking. He continued with his previous topic, "She's not supposed to be alone, but she is now. If we take her along they'll be together as companions that much sooner." Stevens had

obviously given this some thought. "And," he added, "she might be able to help us convince Sister Larwood to come back."

Martin had little doubt that he could convince her to come back. Yesterday, when Allred had called with the news, she said that she had just got off the phone with Larwood, and said that she, Larwood, was having second thoughts. Going home without completing the mission honorably was second only to being sent home in disgrace. Either way, the shame would be unbearable. Maybe not quite so serious for the sisters, since missionary work was more like voluntary, but still, there would be pressure for her to come back and finish. Larwood had taken a bus out there. She hadn't been home long.

"Well, Sister Larwood is already alone. We'd be breaking more rules by taking her along. One sister--two elders. That wouldn't look good. She can just lay low. Tell anybody who asks that Sister Larwood is sick and that they can't go out. We'll be back in two days--one night--with both of us driving. We won't stop at all except for gas and food at McDonald's or Taco Bell."

"Whose going to pay for gas?" asked Stevens.

"We'll use my debit card. I'll think of something to say to my parents about where the money went," Martin said. "This is kind of my fault. I didn't help things the other day. "

"I think she's responsible for her own actions," said Stevens. And then after a pause, "When are we going to leave?"

"Now. . . right now." Martin got up, put his dishes in the sink, put the milk back in the fridge. "Put on your tie and grab your jacket, and a spare shirt."

Ten minutes later Martin and Stevens were in their mission-issue white Toyota Corolla heading through downtown Ogden on their way to I-15. They had, as they did every morning, knelt by the coffee table and said their morning prayer together. They did this morning and night. Today they prayed for guidance and for safety as they were to drive the 700 miles or so to Sacramento. Elder Martin, whose turn it was to pray that morning, asked the Lord to keep them on "the right path" and "to keep our purpose quiet so that Sister Larwood can be returned to the mission and to Your work without causing further damage to herself and her reputation, to her companion, Sister Allred, and to the mission and the Church."

Elders Martin and Stevens got along well. They talked easily to one another. Two hours later they took the off ramp into Wendover, Utah. Here they topped off the tank. It was too early for lunch; they would stop in Elko or some other disreputable city in Nevada. Wendover lies smack on the border between the two states. The city on the Nevada side, originally

called State Line, was much more populous and much more profitable than its Utah sister. State Line had changed its name to West Wendover. The main and really only road through town--parallel to Interstate I-80--made a spectacular transformation at the border. The Utah side contained a few cheap motels and a couple of gas stations. Behind these were small homes, shacks really, and old, and a few trailers. Drive across the state line, a literal wide white line painted across the street, and there were large well groomed casinos. Parking lots full of cars. Neon lights glowing even in the daytime. There was fast food and there were truck stops and supermarkets and a discount liquor store. Gas in Wendover, Utah, was five cents more than it was just a few hundred yards away in West Wendover, Nevada. But they had already filled up. They got back on the freeway and headed straight west into the State of Sin.

The previous Christmas, Elder Martin had received a dramatized tiple-combination CD collection. It was all contained on 35 disks! It had at appropriate and strategic moments a rather silly sounding musical accompaniment that reminded Elder Stevens of the theme to *Little House on the Prairie*. There was one main narrator, but important characters and quotes were read by other actors. They began with First Nephi shortly after they got back on the Interstate after leaving Wendover. Like most Mormons, they were very familiar with the first few chapters of *First Nephi*, just as they had read many times the beginning chapters of the book of *Genesis*. Starting a book of Scripture, with the noble intent to read it cover to cover is easy to do. Giving up after forty or fifty pages is even easier. Listening to a full baritone read the scriptures to them made it somehow seem like entertainment; they were both of a like mind to think that the spiritual blessings would not be the same, but it was a positive and uplifting way to pass the time. Elder Stevens commented on how the narrator was able to read "and it came to pass" so many times without making it sound repetitive or dull. Sometimes he read it quickly and on the same tone rushing into the following phrase. Other times he drew out the word "came" for a three count --"and it CAAAME to pass"--or paused noticeably after the word "and"--or inserted a like pause after "pass". Stevens after about an hour, announced that he had tallied seven distinct ways to say "and it came to pass." Elder Martin pointed out that he had for the past hour not been paying the least bit of attention to the message of the Scriptures and that treating the BOM as a game was not going to earn him any points in heaven. Elder Stevens responded that this whole trip was not likely to earn them points much of anywhere.

They didn't speed, but kept the car at a near constant 75 miles an hour. Most of the traffic seemed to pass them. They stopped for gas and

lunch at the McDonalds in Elko and got right back on the freeway. At about four o'clock they filled up again in Sparks, just before entering Reno. Stevens took over the driving at this point. They were both somewhat reassured by the sight of the temple in Reno, just barely visible from I-80, and they drove on, up the mountains, into California and through the Donner Pass.

A bit after 7:00 they left the mountains and entered a city called Roseville. They figured they were probably only an hour at most away from Sister Larwood's home. She actually lived in Woodland, a suburb about 15 miles west of Sacramento. Roseville was about the same distance east. But if they went on now they would arrive unannounced and rather late. So they stopped at a Motel 6 right off the freeway. They parked the car about ten feet from the door of their ground floor room. From the room they called the home of Sister Larwood.

Elder Martin had learned, by calling the mission office, that her father's name was Robert, and he asked for him when someone answered the phone. It was Robert Larwood. Elder Martin introduced himself.

"My name is Elder Casey Martin and I am the Zone Leader of the Central Ogden Zone of the Utah Ogden Mission. Sister Larwood is in my zone."

"Oh. OK." Then a pause. "I'll go get her."

"No!" Elder Martin said, almost too loudly.

"What?"

"Please, don't tell her I've called. She may not wish to speak to me."

"Oh." Brother Larwood grunted again.

"My companion, Elder Stevens and I are in Rosewood, California, right now. We will be in Woodland early tomorrow morning, or, well, whenever you think we should get there." Now Elder Martin paused. "We have come to invite Sister Larwood back to Ogden. To take her back to Ogden."

"OK. Uh. What time then?"

"When would be most convenient?"

"Uh. Let's say 8:30 or 9:00. I should be at work by then, but since she's home I've already decided to take some time off. Couldn't today. She's a mess, you know."

"She. . . how is Sister Larwood?"

"I just said. She thinks she's made the biggest mistake of her life."

Brother Larwood continued, "Should I tell her your coming?"

"Don't know. Do you think she'll want to go back with us?"

"Well. I can't tell. I guess we'll find out tomorrow."

"Ok, Brother Larwood, we'll see you then."

"Yeah. Come at 8:00 or so. We'll make you breakfast."

Elder Martin felt uneasy when he hung up. It had been an odd and awkward conversation. But it must be a trying time for the Larwood family. It certainly was for him.

Elder Stevens then asked, "So, where are we going to sleep?"

"What?" Martin said.

"Look!"

There was only one large king sized bed in the room. A large bed, but just one.

Martin felt this was his fault. The whole trip was his fault. But he had also arranged for the room when they checked in. "I'll sleep on the floor," he said.

They got back in the car and drove to an Arby's for dinner. The round trip in the car consumed one half of one dramatized chapter of the book of *Jacob*. Once back in the room, they were tempted to watch television. Well, Elder Stevens was tempted. He raised the remote control like a gun and threatened to shoot. But Elder Martin was not amused and so he put it down. They read until about 10:00 and turned the lights out.

The next morning they were in the car and on their way by 7:00. The travel was quick, the freeway mostly uncrowded. In Sacramento they switched to the I-5, the "Golden State Highway," and in about ten minutes they were in Woodland. They arrived at the Larwood home, a small yellow wooden house with white trim, a shake roof, and a well tended front yard about twenty minutes early. They drove by, parked the car on a nearby street, and waited.

At five minutes after 8:00 they parked in front of the little yellow house and approached the front door. Nothing new about this. Like any other missionary visit, except that Sister Larwood opened the door before they got to it. She stepped out, cracked a tremulous smile--though it appeared to both Martin and Stevens that she had been crying--teetered for a second, and threw her arms around Elder Martin. "I can't believe you came!" she cried. Martin stood uncomfortably as she pressed against him. Stiff. Arms glued to his sides. She pulled away quickly. At this moment a man and woman appeared in the doorway--presumably Brother and Sister Larwood--and young Sister Larwood turned to Elder Stevens. He extended his hand and she shook it vigorously.

Brother Larwood and his wife invited the elders to please come in. They did and were immediately in a small living room. After shaking hands all around, they sat next to each other on a couch under the window. The older Sister Larwood went into the kitchen to finish with breakfast, which she said would be ready in "two shakes." Brother Larwood sat in an easy

chair facing them, Sister Larwood, the runaway, sat in a wooden chair near her father and also facing the elders. She was a pretty girl, but not in the classic sense. She was blond, like both of her parents. Her hair reached her shoulders and lay mostly flat, but it had a slight wave to it; no way to know whether this was natural or not. She was not really fat, but she was round. Her face was round. Her head was round. Her shoulders and her breasts, large but not overbearing, and her hips were round. Sister Larwood was circular. Curvy. Rotund. Well proportioned. Babyish. Cute.

Brother Larwood spoke first, surprising Elder Martin, who had been staring at Sister Larwood. "Thanks for coming elders. You are an answer to my prayers."

Martin and Stevens were both without words.

"And Sister Larwood's too. I mean, my wife, Marianne."

"It is odd you know," said Elder Stevens. "I don't think I've ever been in a situation where there are two people with the same name that we need to call 'Sister Whatever' and get the names confused."

Elder Martin just stared at him. Brother Larwood smiled as if too agree. And Elder Stevens continued. "You know, usually one is enough younger that you can use her first name, or his I guess, but in this case Sister Larwood is a sister missionary and so we can't use her first name and your wife is, well, you know, older, so we can't use hers either."

Sister Larwood, the young one, interrupted this discourse and asked, "Are you here to take me back? Am I in trouble?" Her plump lower lip began to quiver. Now Elder Martin saw that her eyes were puffy and a bit red. "Can I go back?"

"Uh, yeah." He answered. "We came to get you. Sister Allred told us you had left."

Then he added what he had hoped to say to her alone and later, "Sister, I'm sorry I said what I said to you the other day. It was out of line. I should have let you and your companion handle things."

At this point Sister Larwood (again the young Sister Larwood) bent in tears, only to be interrupted by her mother who announced loudly from the next room, the dining room, that breakfast was served. They all stood and made their way the fifteen feet into the adjoining room. Sister Larwood stayed behind and as Elder Martin got up to go she asked him what he thought the President would do.

"He doesn't know," he said. "We have discussed it, prayed over it, and decided that if we can return you quickly, he doesn't need to know."

Young Sister Larwood stared blankly. Elder Martin feared for a second that she was going to cry again. But she didn't.

He actually whispered to her now, "This is as much my fault as it is yours. I was. . . insensitive."

"Yes," she replied very softly.

They all sat down for breakfast. Brother Larwood blessed the food. Sister Larwood, the mother, got up often to return shortly from the kitchen with more waffles, more orange juice, more milk, and more bacon as it continued to sizzle away in the frying pan. The elders, as is always the nature of an elder, ate more than seemed possible. But it was all done in about forty minutes. Elder Stevens commented that he hadn't eaten a breakfast that good since he'd left home.

Elder Martin downed the last of his glass of milk and set the glass purposefully on the table. He placed his now sticky butter knife so that its blade intersected the tines of his fork on the plate at the four o'clock position, he placed his napkin on the table near his plate and turned seriously to Brother Larwood. "If we leave now, or soon--as soon as Sister Larwood can get packed--we can drive straight through and get home."

Brother Larwood looked at him as if he had said something completely nonsensical. "You can't do that. It's too far. It'll take you thirteen or fourteen hours if you drive without stopping. And you lose an hour driving to Utah."

Elder Martin tried to interrupt; was going to say "but. . ."

"No. And you just drove all day yesterday. It's too dangerous. Today we'll show you around. You can leave in the morning early and get a fresh start."

Again Elder Martin was preparing to disagree. Now he did say "but. . ."

"That sounds great," chimed in Elder Stevens.

"You can sleep here in the front room. One on the sofa another in a sleeping bag."

So that was the plan.

"Ok, sir," said Elder Martin.

About an hour later, after the older Sister Larwood did the dishes, refusing any help, and the younger Sister Larwood got herself together in her room upstairs, the five of them got into the Larwood SUV and headed off. They drove right into downtown Sacramento and went first to the Gold Rush museum. This took about an hour. They learned that the first men to see gold in the race at Sutter's Mill were Mormons working their way home from the Mormon Battalion. They then drove over to the California state capitol building. The only thing to see besides the parks around it, according to Brother Larwood, was the rotunda. Elder Stevens

commented more than once that he wished he'd brought his camera. Elder Martin enjoyed the capitol rotunda. It was well proportioned.

At about 1:00 they stopped for lunch at a Subway and Brother Larwood insisted on paying, even though the elders offered twice to pay for their own.

Then they drove out to Rancho Cordova to see the Sacramento Temple. Both elders agreed with Sister Larwood, the younger, that this temple was much prettier than the Ogden Temple. Brother Larwood said that wasn't saying much. They toured the visitor's center and then drove back to Woodland.

Just an hour later they left again and went to the local Olive Garden, south in Vacaville, for dinner. The Sisters Larwood both had only soup and salad. But the men ate well and again Brother Larwood paid for all of it.

The next morning the elders had tidied up the front room by 7:30 and were waiting, in their coats and ties, both sitting on the sofa. Sister Larwood's mother came down first, said good morning, asked them how they slept and went off into the kitchen.

Brother Larwood and his daughter came down next together and sat in the same chairs they had the day before, him in the LazyBoy and her in the straight backed wooden chair next to it. "I see you're ready to go," he said.

"Yes, sir," they both answered, almost in unison.

"Well, we'll have breakfast first. And then there's been a problem." A pause. "Last night the Stake President called. He knows that Julie's home. We didn't tell him. Must have been a neighbor saw her. Anyway, he wants to talk to her this morning. Nine-thirty. He's a dentist. In his office."

"Can we go along and assuming everything's OK, leave straight from there?"

"Yes, I suppose."

Breakfast was still plentiful, but a much more dreary affair than the previous morning. Sister Larwood had made oatmeal and baked biscuits and scrambled eggs. The elders still inhaled the food, but with less gusto, fewer smiles.

At nine they headed over to the Stake President's office about twenty minutes away. Sister Larwood, the missionary, went with her father in the SUV. The elders followed behind. Sister Larwood went into the building alone, a typical one story suite of offices in a strip mall. Brother Larwood and the elders stood loitering in the parking lot.

After a lengthy silence, he spoke first: "I guess this means you should probably leave tomorrow."

Elder Martin seemed to be expecting it. "No sir, we must go today—assuming she can go. We'll already be missed."

"I thought you'd say that." He reached into his pocket and pulled out his wallet. "So here." He handed them two hundred dollars in twenty dollar bills. "This will help you get there. You can stay in a cheep motel in Nevada if you need to. And this will offset the cost of gas."

"I can't take this, sir."

"Yes. You can. Take care of her. She's a good girl."

Elder Martin put the money in his wallet. They all remained silent for the next ten minutes or so. Then Sister Larwood came out. All smiles. No problem. The president just wanted to make sure she was OK and to know what was going on. She skipped over to her father and gave him a hug. She was much shorter than he was and her head nestled into his chest. She had, it appeared, not considered that they would not be leaving immediately. "Tell Mom I lover."

So they piled into the little car--Sister Larwood in the back, the elders in the front and her bags in the trunk. Stevens rode shotgun. They waved to Brother Larwood and drove back to the interstate. It was almost 10:00.

The drive home through Nevada was in most ways similar to the drive out, except, of course, that Sister Larwood was in the back seat. But she was mostly quiet. So were, for that matter, the elders. The BOM CD's were put in almost as soon as they were on the highway, and the fact that all three of them were probably really quite sick of listening to them (some of the sermons in Mosiah seemed interminable), none of them dared suggest that they listen to anything else. Sister Larwood knew from experience that, in fact, the only thing to listen to on the radio in much of northern Nevada was county and western--and she was no more keen to listen to that than she was to hear about Abinadi and his travails.

They stopped for a very late lunch in Lovelock. A little Mexican restaurant called La Casita. It was that or McDonald's. Lunch took almost an hour. Elder Martin wished they had gone to the McDonald's.

They had made good time, but as they approached Elko it was after 8:00. The sun would be down soon. Elder Stevens and Sister Larwood favored finding a hotel in Elko. They argued that they would never make it all the way back to Ogden that night. That driving in the dark was dangerous. That Brother Larwood had given them money--this in fact sealed the deal for Sister Larwood, who had not until then known about the cash. But Elder Martin put his foot down as Zone Leader. No, they would not stay the night in Nevada. It was a sinful state. They may as well stay at a brothel and let Sister Larwood earn her keep. He apologized

after he said that, but still, insisted that they would drive on to Utah, and stay in a hotel where there was no legal gambling and no legal prostitution.

They did stop for gas in Elko, but there was no further discussion of stopping for the night.

After 10:00 they drove through West Wendover, Nevada, and now since it was dark they saw the bright signs on the brilliantly lit casinos and the happy fifty foot neon cowboy waving at the border. They drove on past the wide white line in the road between the State Line Casino and its parking lot (which was in Utah) and at last Elder Martin let out a sigh of relief that they were back in Zion.

In fact, in about a quarter mile (about half way through the Utah side of town on the left side of the road) they found a motel call the Zion Inn. An omen, thought Elder Martin. He went into the not too brightly lit office and got two rooms, next door to each other. One for him and Elder Stevens (with two beds this time) and another room for Sister Larwood. He distributed the keys which hung on large wooden fobs and within less then ten minutes they were in their rooms.

Sister Larwood asked about diner. They hadn't eaten anything since about 4:00, so they got back in the car and looked for a restaurant. There was not a single one in Wendover, Utah, and they had to cross back into Nevada. The McDonald's was still open, so they ate there and were back to the Zion Inn and in their rooms just before 11:00. Elder Martin announced that they would need only seven hours of sleep, and that they should be ready to go by 7:00 in the morning. That way they could get to Ogden by 10:00 and maybe get some missionary work in and not loose another whole day.

In their evening prayers, as Elders Martin and Stevens knelt beside their beds, Elder Stevens thanked the Lord that all had gone so smoothly and asked Him to bless them with a safe trip back to Ogden the following day. As they got into their beds, Elder Martin said, "I still think if we get back and no one noticed that we were gone, it will be a miracle."

"I believe in miracles," said Elder Stevens with a grin.

Both elders were awakened with a shock. A loud bang and a scream from Sister Larwood's room. Elder Stevens slept in nothing but his garments while Elder Martin wore pajamas over his. They both scrambled out of bed. The screaming continued next door, mostly wordless but frightened. She was shouting "No!" Was she having a nightmare? Was she hurt?

They both quickly and simultaneously pulled on their pants. Elder Stevens was first out the door and saw that Sister Larwood was being dragged by her shoulders and upper arms by three men. Dark men. She continued to scream, but with less power than before. One of the men got into the front of a pickup and the other two literally tossed Sister Larwood into the bed of the truck and then jumped in with her.

Elder Stevens just stood and watched. By this time Elder Martin came out of the room. He had put on a white shirt. It took him a second to register what was happening since Sister Larwood's screams were now soft cries and whimpers. "Stop!" he shouted. "Help!" But his voice was drowned out by the squeal of tires as the pickup pulled out of the parking lot and drove right across the main street and off toward the east.

"Oh my God!" said Elder Stevens. "What. . . what?"

Elder Martin ran to the motel office. Stevens followed. It was open but there was no one there. Martin pounded on the counter and shouted "Hello!"

Elder Stevens noticed that it was 2:30 in the morning, and then, suddenly felt naked in his suit pants and garment top. He ran back to the room to get a shirt. While there he saw the phone and dialed 911. Elder Martin was still trying to get someone to come out into the office.

Three minutes later there was a police car in the lot and the manager had come out to see what all the fuss was.

Elder Martin was quiet. Elder Stevens was now dressed and answered the policemen's questions.

"No, he was in the room, but I saw all of it."

"Yes, it was a pickup."

"No, I didn't see it. I didn't look."

"Dark blue, maybe. Blue, I guess."

"Yeah, older, but not beat up."

"What? Regular, I guess. Just normal."

"They put her in the back, I told you. Two got in the back with her. She was screaming. One got in the front and drove."

"No. I didn't see them that good. They were wearing, you know, like hoodies."

"Yeah, baggy pants."

"I don't know. Didn't get that good a look. It happened real fast."

"They looked dark skinned."

"Yeah, one, the driver I think, he had a mustache."

"No, I didn't see them that well."

"Off across the street there. They were going pretty fast."

"It was about 2:30. I looked at my watch right after they drove off."

The officers also questioned Elder Martin and then the Tooele County Sheriff arrived, claimed he had driven 100 miles an hour from Grantsville, and he re-questioned both of them as well as the Zion Inn's night manager. This was Sheriff Sücher (he actually gave a business card to each of them showing the dots over the "u"; his name was pronounced SUE-ker, first syllable rhymes with "true" and "crew"). Before this all the questions had been asked in the parking lot, but when he arrived they moved into the motel office and the manager found a few chairs for them all to sit at. Sheriff Sücher, however, did not sit down.

Elder Martin was feeling calmer now. At least he didn't feel as nauseous as he had. Sücher seemed to know what he was doing. He was tall, athletic, in his late 40s probably. He appeared to be taking meticulous notes.

After about an hour, when Sücher had made it clear that the elders would not have to go "downtown" to be questioned further, another police car pulled into the lot. It was a regular car, but had flashing lights. A single officer got out and as soon as Sücher saw him he went out to the lot to speak with him.

A moment later Sücher came back in. He looked judgmentally at Martin and Stevens. He and the officers had clarified time and time again that they were Ogden missionaries and that they were out of their mission. "OK elders. You'll have to come with us. We've found Julie Larwood. We need you to come and identify her."

Elder Martin responded. "Huh? Is she OK?"

"We'll see when we get there. You both coming?"

"We aren't supposed to be apart."

So all four of them, the officer who had just driven up, Sheriff Sücher, and both of the elders got into the car. The elders sat in the back, realizing almost simultaneously once they were there that the doors couldn't be opened from the inside.

They drove only about a half a mile, first to the east then turned right on a dirt road toward the south. They were in a sparse neighborhood as far as they could tell. A few small houses here and there and few trailer homes as well. Elder Stevens saw the body before Elder Martin did and he elbowed him gently in the upper arm and then pointed out the front window to the right side of the road. She was lying face down, naked it appeared, dumped half way into a shallow ditch that ran beside the dirt road. There was a brilliant street light stuck to the top of a tall pole only about fifteen feet away, and although it did relatively little to illuminate the dirt and weeds, it made her naked body shine the way a toad stool does on a green lawn. Her body was basically parallel to the road with her feet

toward them. But her head was a little farther from the edge of the road and a little lower down the slope. The result was that her thighs and buttocks seemed all the more obvious. She was very clearly not sleeping, not comfortable, not alive. The car stopped about even with the light pole and Sücher quickly opened the door to let first Stevens and then Martin climb out of the back seat.

Sücher approached the body.

"Shit. Has anybody touched her?"

"No sir." The officer's name was Thompson. He wore a plaque, much like a missionary would, over his left shirt pocket. "Trooper Thompson." Elder Martin couldn't look at the body. He wondered briefly if the sheriff had ever been "Trooper Sücher"--"Super Trooper Sücher".

Sücher spoke: "Who called it in?"

Thompson: "Dispatch got a nine-one-one about ten, maybe fifteen minutes ago. Anonymous. Male. Cell phone. Said where to find a body."

Then Sücher turned. "Mr. Martin, can you identify her from here? Is that Julie Larwood?"

Now, forced to look, he couldn't tell. He'd never before seen a naked girl. He spoke haltingly.

"I . . . don't. . . it could be. I can't see. . . her face."

"I think it's her," said Elder Stevens.

"Are you sure?"

"Uh. Yeah. It's gotta be her."

Now speaking again to Thompson: "When will the examiner get here?"

Thompson: "They've got a call into the clinic in West Wendover and are sending out a doc who works for the Elko County Coroner to make a preliminary exam."

Sücher: "When will he get here?"

Thompson: "I dunno."

Sücher: "Call again and find out. OK?"

Trooper Thomson returned to the vehicle.

Now Elder Martin could not help but look at her. The blond, slightly wavy hair was strangely parted in the back, leaving her neck bare and empty. Her right arm trailed down the side of the berm, but her left arm was bent unnaturally under her belly--like it was somehow twisted at the elbow while the forearm and hand (that he couldn't see) were upside down. Her rear end was high--because she was big (curvy, rotund) or because she was dead, he couldn't tell. He thought of high school science. This was the *lordosis position*. She was *presenting*. Then he noticed the blood. There was blood on her back. Blood on her neck. Blood on her

arms. Between her legs. On her curves. On her thighs. Her inner thighs. Where the curves came together in darkness--bloody, awful crimson darkness.

Elder Stevens sighed, as if to himself, "Oh God." Under normal circumstances Martin would have considered this a curse and would have felt offended, but now it seemed very appropriate. Elder Stevens turned and went back to the car.

Sücher was speaking now. "We'll have to wait so you can give us a positive ID. It shouldn't be too long. A few more minutes."

By the time they were all done by the side of the road it was getting light. They all drove back to the Zion Inn. There the two officers who originally showed up at the scene had papers for the elders to sign. They were told that they would most likely have to travel to Tooele, perhaps several times, to testify, assuming they caught "the bastards." Sücher commented that it was lucky for them that they had spent the night in Utah. Had this happened on "the Nevada side" they would have had to go all the way to Elko whenever they were needed in court.

At about 8:00 in the morning, they were told they were free to go. Sücher had Elder Martin's cell phone number and got the Larwood's number in Woodland as well. He said he'd keep in touch.

This is how things settled out:

1. Sheriff Sücher called President Barlow so Elder Martin didn't have to break the news. But later he did have to explain and his explanation sounded pretty feeble. Elder Martin was sent home to Michigan by the end of the month. He was released from his mission "under special circumstances." This was not the usual "release with honor" but it meant he wasn't otherwise disciplined. Still, people in his home ward, seeing him home six months early, assumed the worst and spoke openly, though behind his back, about what a shame it was. What a fine boy he had been. What promise he had shown.
2. President Barlow, about six weeks after the fact got a letter from his leaders in Salt Lake City, prompting him to "take better control" over the behavior of the elders and sisters in his mission.
3. Two days after the rape and murder of Julie Larwood, the police in Wendover, Utah, arrested three men. They were all white, all high school drop outs and all unemployed. Two were brothers: Jared and Allan Henderson. The mother of the third figured

things out, mostly based on her recognition of her son's blue truck from the description on the news, and she turned him in. His name was Tommy Yoder. The brothers pleaded not guilty; Yoder, as the driver, copped a plea on a lesser charge and promised to testify against the others.

4. The Tooele County coroner, having examined the body and conducted seemingly endless tests, reported after three and a half months that Julie had been raped by two men. DNA results also proved that the men were brothers.
5. A month later, in a preliminary hearing, the Judge Frank Easton bound the Henderson brothers over for trial, and then astonishingly let them out on bail. "These men come from a good family, and they have no previous record. They have lived in Wendover all of their lives. I see no risk of flight." The trial for them as joint defendants was set for almost a year away. Yoder pleaded guilty to felony charges, but no kidnapping, rape or murder, like his accomplices. He was given five years of probation and told that if he didn't cooperate in the prosecution of his friends he would be sent to prison.
6. Elder Stevens, as a junior companion, allowed President Barlow and others to believe that he had been persuaded to go along with his senior companion. Elder Martin had maturely admitted total responsibility and Elder Stevens let him take it. Stevens was reassigned, still as a junior companion, to work in Hooper.
7. Sister Allred, in mission lore, became a great martyr. She was given a new junior companion and continued to work in the same area. The elders and the members all treated her with deference and pity. She quite enjoyed it.
8. Sister Julie Larwood's legacy was divided. On the one hand, her story was seen as a morality tale: obey the rules or suffer the consequences. To some degree her brutal end was seen as appropriate punishment for her having run away. Whether this was actually attributed to a vengeful God or just to some sort of undefined Mormon version of karma, the details were not elaborated.
9. For some time, the elders in the mission had vigorous discussions of retribution, divine or otherwise, against the rapists in Wendover.