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Douglas H. Thayer

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# Zarahemla

Douglas H. Thayer\*

In pajamas and robe, Jared walked up the dark hall from their bedroom, where Ann sat brushing her hair. He passed Craig's and Brad's half-open doors. Their lights were out. He walked into the living room. Gedder's letter and the contract lay on the pedestal table. Jared picked up the letter again and held it up to the window and the moonlight. Gedder had a Los Angeles dentist who would pay cash for the stone house Jared's Great-grandfather Thatcher had built. "Upon receipt of the signed contract, I will be pleased to send you a certified check for the full amount of \$6,000 by return mail."

"Well, do as you want, dear," Ann had said. "The house means a lot to you, I know that, but we don't get down there very often to enjoy it." They could use the money for Craig's and Brent's missions. "Your great-grandfather would be pleased if we did that I think."

The offered price went higher each of the four years Gedder had been after him to sell. His Great-grandfather Thatcher, stonemason, polygamist, had built the stone house Jared had lived in until he was eighteen. His great-grandfather had built a stone house for each of his four wives and her children, although Jared's house was the only one in good repair, the other three lost out of the family before he was born. Except for the row of Lombardy poplars, hedge of lilacs, and wrought-iron fence, each house was different.

Jared looked up from Gedder's letter to his great-grandfather's large oval picture on the wall. The matching

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\*Mr. Thayer, a widely known creative writer, is an associate professor of English at Brigham Young University.

oval-framed picture of the four wives and thirty-two children hung over the brass bed in Craig's room. He had wanted it when he found it in the hall drawer. Jared's grandmother had dusted the two pictures every day. She had been born in the stone house and lived there all of her life, and it was she who had made his great-grandfather real to him. "My son," she said to him often, "your Great-grandfather Thatcher was one of the noblest men who ever drew a breath of air on this earth. He was God's servant, and if ever a man inherited the celestial kingdom he did." The two pictures had hung over the fireplace. His great-grandfather wore a full beard and long hair. He was not a tall man.

He had named Zarahemla, chosen the name of the greatest city in the Book of Mormon, been bishop for twenty-five years, laid out the town, built the stone warehouse (sketched the scenes for its six stained-glass windows), built all of the original stone houses and town buildings, dug the canal, planted many of the trees, fed and fought the Indians, been judge and jury, and he had healed the sick and raised the dead. The last ten years of his life he had been a patriarch, people bringing their children fifty and sixty miles by wagon to receive their blessings under his hands. The last year, sitting up in the big brass bed, he had to reach out to lay his hands on the child's head. Brigham Young, prophet of God, stayed with him on his trips south through the villages, the other white-topped wagons carrying the apostles, special witnesses for Christ. "Be like your great-grandfather, my son," his grandmother said, "for no boy ever had a nobler example."

In five generations his Great-grandfather Thatcher now had ten thousand known descendents, the blood brought over a millennium before to England by the marauding Danes carried by him to the edge of an American desert. But the family was scattered now over the whole country, not located in one village, that sense of blood and relationship gone, the first two generations and most of the third dead. The white shaft of stone his great-grandfather had cut stood at the center of the family cemetery lot, which was enclosed with a wrought-iron fence. Every stone but three had embedded in it, sealed under glass, the daguerreotyped face of the relative whose grave it was, proof of who was buried there to rise in that likeness on resurrection morning.

Jared laid the letter back on the table, put his hands in his robe pockets and turned to look out through the large picture window at the valley below. The full moon filled the valley with detail and turned Utah Lake silver. His great-grandfather had lived in Provo for a year after he returned from his mission. President Brigham Young had called him to serve in the Southern States just two years after the saints had arrived in Salt Lake Valley.

Leaving his pregnant wife and five children behind him, he had served nearly three years, been hunted by mobs, tarred and feathered, shot at, arrested a dozen times; his journal was full of accounts of the danger and persecution which made daily miracles necessary. And in those three years he converted over six hundred people to the gospel, each name carefully recorded in his journal: "This day I did baptise and confirm members of Christ's true church the following persons. . . . The mobs continue to hunt us from village to village." And now this convert posterity was part of the tremendous growth in the Church his great-grandfather had foretold.

Nathaniel Thatcher had had perfect faith, vast energy, splendid individuality. His life had been full of things to accomplish, and he had done them, always with a sense of God in his life. As a boy Jared had always thought that *his* life would be like that, but it had not been. He had one wife, two sons, a doctorate, a professorship, and a house other men had built. Compared to his great-grandfather's, his life seemed abstract to him at times, simple, not deep, as though he had followed the wrong stars or no stars at all. And although he believed, his life did not use or need a faith like his great-grandfather's.

Nathaniel Thatcher knew that the gospel was true when he read the Book of Mormon, for he had received that promised revelation of its truth, the fire of that testimony through the Holy Ghost burning in him as he did God's work on earth. All his life he preached and taught the latter-day restoration of the gospel, the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, taught the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, the divine sonship of Jesus Christ, the perfectibility of men, the literal resurrection, taught the gathering of the Jews, the return of the Saints to Zion in Jackson County to prepare for the millennium and Christ's second coming. And he taught all this as fact, taught

through the strength of the holy Melchizedec priesthood, God's power given to man on earth.

His patriarchal blessing, given under the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith's father, said he would be a savior on Mount Zion among the American Indians. And he had been, for he had preached the gospel to the Utes and the Navahos. Now the areas of greatest growth in the Church were in Central and South America, where the Lamanite blood was most abundant. And the Church was using new proselyting techniques, language schools for the missionaries, the standardized six-lesson approach, television, radio, films, exhibits at the world and national fairs, techniques that Jared hadn't even heard of when he was on his mission.

It was as if the Church no longer needed the pioneer heritage and testimony, the desert and mountains, needed only faith, doctrine, programs, money, and organization, with leadership to be the new adventure as the Church spread the gospel through the whole earth. The new generations did not value and feel the past as he had, did not need it to make religion concrete for them.

Standing there in the semidarkness of his own front room, Jared saw the spire of the new ward chapel rising above the house roofs below him, the high narrow milk-glass windows glinting in the moonlight. He had been on the building committee. The Church architect's office allowed only seven or eight basic chapel designs. The chapels were big, efficient, carpeted, air-conditioned; they housed two and three wards, members going to meetings in shifts.

But whenever he sat in a meeting, looked up at the windows, Jared always thought of the old stone warehouse in Zarahemla. In the last rays of the evening sun the room would fill with a hazy golden glow, and it was as if Brigham Young, the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Angel Moroni, the Father, the Son, and the other figures stood suspended in air, each window a vision.

Jared pushed his fists deeper into his robe pockets. He knew now that in many ways the past was more necessary and more real to him than any present or any future. To his right the small solid-oak end-table gleamed in the corner, the finish all but reflecting the moonlight. Ann had wanted the table, his grandmother's rocking chair, the brass bed (which

had been Jared's as a boy and was now Craig's), the two solid-oak chests of drawers, and the china closet out of the stone house. His grandmother had been dead eight years, and he had kept the stone house empty, getting down to Zarahemla two or three times a year to air out the place. His Uncle Charley and Aunt Laura, who lived down the road, had kept an eye on the house for him. They turned the water in on the lawn every time they irrigated. His Uncle Charley was his grandmother's half-nephew.

Jared had planned to make a summer home out of the place. Except for the indoor plumbing and electric lights, it was still the same as when Nathaniel Thatcher built it, because his grandmother didn't want anything changed. Jared had even thought that after he retired he would spend part of the year in Zarahemla farming. But Zarahemla was too far away from Provo for a summer home. He was too busy at school, and he and Ann were busy in the Church, their Sundays always full. Craig and Brent, now that they were both in high school, wanted to stay in Provo for the summer to be with their friends and go on the trips with the ward explorer post.

Jared had always wanted Craig and Brent to feel what he had felt as a boy. For him, real belief in the Church seemed impossible without that attachment to the past. He had told them all of the family stories, just as his grandmother had told them to him. He had shown them all of the same pictures in the old family albums, named the uncles, aunts, and cousins. He read to them from his typed copy of his great-grandfather's journal, described his own boyhood, but his sons hadn't lived in Zarahemla and didn't know the valley, river, mountains, and desert. They were another generation removed from the past, couldn't feel it. (Craig brought his friends in to see his bed, the polygamy picture, and his great-great-grandfather's picture.) But then Zarahemla had changed, deteriorated, even from the time when Jared was a boy, the whole town still suggesting the depression.

Except for an occasional house being remodeled by retired people moving in, the houses were old, dilapidated, the lots trashy. The center of each block was a jungle of hundred-and-twenty-year-old fruit trees, lilacs, hollyhocks, rotting pioneer barns and outbuildings, and rusting junked cars and

farm machinery. Only the retired people moving back from Los Angeles and the other big urban areas after forty years away painted houses and planted big flower gardens. Gedder sold most of them their houses, and if not the houses then the solid hard-wood furniture and brass beds they all wanted *for* their houses. For four years Gedder had phoned him every time he came through Provo. "Just wondering if you're ready to let me have that house yet," he always said, and then he would laugh.

Jared had always wanted Craig and Brent to live at least one whole summer in the house to know what that was like. He had saved the ledge swimming hole on the river to show them when they were both old enough to really appreciate it, but they wore their trunks, didn't run wild and free under the big cottonwoods, and they didn't yell and holler when they swung in wide arcs on the rope swing. He told them how he and his friends swam naked like the Indian boys he was certain swam in the ledge hole centuries before he had. He described to his sons the arrowheads he found along the river, and he climbed through the ledges to show them the petroglyphs.

He and his friends had carried water to the clay beds, wrestled and fought in the splendid wet red clay, their bodies completely red, then ran and dived off the ledge, the water blood where they hit. He described for his sons the trout they caught and broiled, the smell and taste of potatoes and fresh corn buried under the coals to cook for their feasts. It was marvelous and cool in the shade under the big cottonwood trees, and they lay on their backs in the sand to watch the fluttering leaves, the cottonwood smell sharp and clean. Sometimes they went down at night to swim, build fires, the mountains black against the incredibly starry sky, the south end of the valley opening toward the desert beyond, their bodies alive even to the silence.

"Sure, Dad, it must have been great down here, really great," Craig said. "You must have had a lot of fun in those days."

His sons had different emotions, pleasures, values, different attachments than he had had. They didn't want to go to the cemetery with him to take care of the family graves, wipe off the glass-covered pictures in the headstones to see the

faces, read the names and dates, hear the stories. They didn't want to help their Great-uncle Charley cut hay and irrigate and they didn't even particularly want to go down to the Thatcher family reunion on Pioneer Day anymore. (It had surprised Jared that Craig wanted the brass bed and the picture.) They liked Provo and their friends, their girl friends, their hi-fi, the color TV, their closets full of clothes and their twice-daily showers in summer. Both Craig and Brent took swimming and tennis lessons every summer and played league baseball.

They had never felt his boyhood sense of poverty, had not been motivated by that, yet they both studied hard in school, already knew that they wanted to be lawyers, talked about it to their friends. The boys in Indian Hills talked about college, going into the professions, mostly law or business, each wanting to be finally president of a corporation, chairman of the board, or be in government, an ambassador or in the president's cabinet. And some wanted to go to the military academies, wanted to be generals, admirals, or they wanted doctorates in chemistry, physics, and mathematics, wanted the Nobel Prize.

That was the new future, the kind of power they would have, the Church breeding that kind of ambition in his sons and friends' sons. BYU was changing, the administration and faculty full of young men now who intended to use the gospel, the university, and the Church to change the world. The mountains, desert, and valleys were no longer necessary to salvation. Doctrine was more important than any heritage. At times Jared felt tired, exhausted. He wanted then to return to the known past, avoid the new future.

Driving back from Zarahemla after the family reunion, he had always tried to go through Manti after dark so that Craig and Brent could see the lighted temple their Great-great-grandfather Thatcher had gone on a year-long work mission to help build. Brilliant white in the darkness, lighted, it stood before them like part of a celestial city. When the boys were younger, Ann always told them the story again of how Moroni, the Book of Mormon prophet and general, had dedicated the hill fifteen hundred years earlier for the building of the temple. And she always told too how Moroni, now an

angel, had appeared to Joseph Smith and led him to the golden plates.

Twice a day, driving back and forth to school from Indian Hills, Jared saw the progress on the new Provo Temple. The big sign listed the architect, all the contractors, and the expected completion date. The new Provo and Ogden temples looked almost alike. The real strength of the Church was in the big urban areas like Los Angeles, the Bay area, Denver, and Washington, D.C., not in the rural towns. It had been this way for forty years. The ninety miles between Ogden and Provo was becoming one city, as his Great-grandfather Thatcher had foretold in his journal: "God will prosper his saints in this land and all the valleys will be filled with a righteous people." The Church's population had increased five to six times since his own birth. And Salt Lake had developed in the last twenty years the administrative know-how and standardized programs to run the big urban wards. The new central office building would house next year, finished, nearly three thousand salaried clerks, secretaries, and administrators.

"Dear, it's getting late. Have you got a headache?"

Jared turned from the window. Ann stood in the hall doorway. "I'm all right, just thinking a little."

"If you don't want to sell, you don't have to."

"It's probably the only sensible thing to do."

"It would be nice to have the money in the bank for the boys' missions."

"I suppose it would."

"Well, honey, don't stay up all night worrying about it."

He watched her walk down the hall past the pictures gleaming in the light from the bedroom. She had arranged pictures of his boyhood, highschool activities, mission, college days, and marriage on the wall to tell the story of his life, each picture framed and glassed.

Jared picked up Gedder's contract from the table and raised it to the light. Gedder had included a stamped self-addressed envelope. He had called earlier in the evening. The signature lines on each page were checked.

Jared laid the contract back on the table and turned to look out the window again, his hands back in his robe pockets. All they could see of the new temple from their place was the spire. When he drove past the temple he usually thought of

his grandmother. Every September until he was fourteen she took him to Salt Lake. His Uncle Charley drove them up the canyon and over to Sigurd where they caught the bus. They bought his new school clothes, visited relatives, and went to see the Salt Lake temple again. After each trip, both coming and going, his grandmother narrated for him his Great-grandfather Thatcher's journey from Provo to Zarahemla in 1851 with twenty-seven families. Brigham Young had called him to leave Provo where he had settled after his mission and go build a city at the edge of the desert.

The youngest daughter of the fourth and youngest wife, not born until years after it all happened, still she knew all of the stories and had memorized long sections of her father's journal. She knew the springs, camping places, where the Indian parleys had been, the place the wagon and team went over the cliff, the canyon the Johnson children had been drowned in during a flash flood, knew where all the graves should be. His grandmother talked of it all as if the ashes of the cooking fires were still warm, the wagon tracks still visible in the sand, the songs and prayers of thanksgiving and faith still audible on the night breeze: "Today, the Sabbath, the company rested. We spent our time in singing praises to God and bearing testimony to his work in the latter-day kingdom. Thus we renewed our minds and bodies to his service."

"They were faithful, Jared, my son, remember that," his grandmother had told him a thousand times. She would take his great-grandfather's picture down for him to hold and have him name again all of the faces in the polygamy picture. She made her stories part of his memory and emotion, his sense of family, blood, and God. As a child sitting between her and his mother in the old warehouse, he looked up at the stained-glass windows, each a scene out of Church history. The six window spaces had been filled with ordinary glass for twenty years, until the saints in Zarahemla could raise the money to have the stained-glass windows made in Italy. Sunday evenings, the windows alive with light, he looked for his great-grandfather among the figures.

Jared took his hands out of his robe pockets and folded his arms across his chest, held himself tight. He was perhaps the last person in the whole family for whom the past was

vivid, personal. It was necessary to his belief. Craig and Brent didn't really need the past the way he did. He saw that now. It was obvious in the whole Church, which had gone beyond the pioneer sense of the physical to doctrine and the millennial hope.

His freshman year at the University of Utah, where he had gone on a state scholarship, his first time away from Zarahemla, he began to understand that his belief was almost physical, an accumulation of all he had smelled, seen, touched, tasted, and heard for eighteen years. His whole mind, memory, and emotion were suffused with these things, his blood taught. And he could not comprehend, understand even, the students who spent their days and nights trying to cleanse themselves of everything Mormon. In their dedicated rage to change their way of feeling and knowing, they turned to gambling, drunkenness, fornication, homosexuality, or they became fanatic about science, literature, psychology, and art. They forbade themselves any longer to be limited by the injunction "be ye therefore perfect," denied prophets, revelation, cursed the idea that man could progress through the eternities to become like God.

Jared's mother had been dead fifteen years, his grandmother half of that time. And yet in the summer evenings when he was alone in the silent stone house, their memory was so strong that he turned to see them or raised his head to listen for their voices. He touched the furniture, the brass bed, his grandmother's handmade quilts on the beds, the old gunmetal-grey Maytag, the marred surface of the kitchen table, all of it still a braille for his hands. In the cellar the rows of fruit jars glistened before him empty, dusty, when he turned on the light, some of the old glass-topped jars his great-grandmother's. When they ate the fruit from one of those jars, his grandmother made it a sacrament.

"We all have great reason to be grateful," she said. "We have food to eat, clothes to wear, a good roof over our heads; we have the iron rod of the gospel to cling to, and we have the family."

Jared relaxed his arms across his chest. Fewer house lights burned below him in Provo now; west of town fewer cars moved along the freeway. Utah Lake was silver under the moon.

His grandmother had been wrong about the family. Even during his boyhood the family had already been gone for thirty years, the farms divided too often to be productive, the family spread over the whole country, driven by the depression, those thousands of descendents of one man and four women, the sense of blood dissipated. But still there were the old family houses, barns, outbuildings, and fields, which his grandmother named for him. She described the relatives, their lives, showed him their old pictures, told their stories, even read him their patriarchal blessings, and so he knew them all. He went with his grandmother to paint the wrought-iron fence around the family graves. He cut the grass, raked the leaves, washed the headstones, the faces in the embedded pictures watching him, waiting for the morning of the first resurrection. His grandmother described even that to him, his Great-grandfather Thatcher and his four great-grandmothers and the whole family visiting and talking together in the shade under the trees, the graves open.

His grandmother seemed always to walk in sunlight, her hair in a tight bun, blazing white. She put on every morning and every afternoon one of her clean starched cotton dresses. Because his mother worked every day at the store, his grandmother did the housework. She kept the house immaculate so that it seemed always to shine inside. Daily she opened his dresser drawers to straighten his shorts, T-shirts, handkerchiefs, and socks. Work was theology, the idler damned, a lesson he had learned working in his Uncle Charley's fields under the white desert sun.

For fifteen years his grandmother took in dress shirts to wash and iron in order to earn money for his mission and college savings account. She had started the account by mail the day he was born. His father, who was from Price, had been killed there in a coal mine three months before his birth. His grandmother filled the house with smells of cooking, baking, bottling, washing and ironing, smells he had remembered all of his life, smell for a boy as important as sight or sound, no smells ever better than those.

And often when he came home from school in the silent afternoons, he found a note on the kitchen table: "Jared, my son, I have gone over to help Sister Johnson." Or it would be the Grays, Oldroyds, Tuckers, Lunds, or someone in the

family; wherever there was sickness, injury, birth, or death in Zarahemla, his grandmother went to help. No doctor within fifty miles, no hospital within a hundred, no wonder drugs, no health insurance program, no automatic washers and dryers, no funeral home—charity was a required part of existence. And when his grandmother returned at night, she told stories of suffering, death, the priesthood's power to heal, to call back from the dead. She told stories of family members coming back from paradise in dreams and visions to comfort the living.

Cemetery hill rose beyond the fields behind the stone house. Evenings sometimes, shafts of sunlight deflected by a high layer of clouds slanted down to strike the hill, turning the headstones white, like windows into the earth, the Thatcher family shaft glimmering at the top of the hill under the trees. Then the light changed and the hill grew dark, the fading sun slanting out to color the desert beyond the valley, turning the distant plateaus violet and gold before they too vanished. Standing in the backyard, the evening breeze stirring the poplars looming above the house, he watched the mountains, valley, and desert fade into darkness, the evening stars close to the earth.

But Jared knew now that the land in Southern Utah could not have been beautiful to the pioneers, most of whom came from England and Europe and the American east knowing what rain and green fields were. The desert had to be an enemy, something their faith overcame, for they had no affinity for sandstone, alkali, sagebrush, pinion forests, sandy soil, and irrigated fields. In the alien dry land diphtheria killed whole families of children or took one at a time. The pioneers were the Israelites in the wilderness, their Caanan and their Zion always Jackson County in Missouri, with its green hills and rain. For some the desert and the mountains were only a necessary refuge, and it had required two and three generations for the fear of these to die out.

And the small pioneer towns like Zarahemla could not have been paradise on earth, not when a man killed his neighbor in his own garden with a shovel because of a stream of irrigation water. There was drunkenness, lust, ignorance, bigotry, pride, hate, pillage, and theft, all of the evils of life. Men were flogged, imprisoned, hanged, and some executed

by shooting to wash away their guilt with blood to save them in the life to come. And Nathaniel Thatcher had recorded it all (a group of Zarahemla boys out cutting wood had murdered an Indian and hid his body), recognized too his own weaknesses in the sight of God, taught repentance, sought forgiveness of his mortal sins. All these details made the past real, gave the insights.

Jared counted the white roofs below him on Cheyenne Avenue in the moonlight. The houses were all comfortable, the families young, self-sufficient. Death and suffering always came by surprise. Living in Provo and Indian Hills, Craig and Brent did not have that pioneer sense of neighborhood the daily physical need for charity created. The emphasis now was on the great growth of the Church, the Church developing new programs in education, welfare, genealogy, social services, chapel construction, missionary work, and family life to meet new needs.

Above all, the Church needed leaders on every level to assume the responsibilities of a world organization. This was the new excitement for the youth. It wasn't necessary to endure and overcome the land now; that sense of God's work had vanished. The Church embraced the whole world, not letting a man love a place, things, a neighborhood more than God, the gospel, and the salvation of all men. Jared knew his love for, his absolute need of the past weakened him, made it difficult for him to accept the future, love it, glorify God in it.

Unfolding his arms, he turned from the window and walked over to touch his grandmother's rocking chair shining in the moonlight. The chair had belonged to Nathaniel Thatcher's fourth wife, Lily, Jared's great-grandmother. The wood was warm to his fingers. He and Ann had refinished all of the furniture they had brought up a piece at a time from the old stone house, all of it solid, none of it veneer. Gedder had offered to buy all of the furniture still left in the house. He had offered Craig a hundred dollars for the brass bed. "A lot of California tourists coming through are nuts about brass beds," Gedder said.

"No thanks," Craig said, "I want to keep it."

"Well, son," Jared said, "it's your bed now and you can

do with it what you want. But if you're going to sell it, I'd like to buy it."

"No, I want to keep it."

Craig had spent the first week of the summer vacation taking the bed apart and polishing it. He had had his friends over to help him. As a boy lying in the brass bed, Jared listened to the wind blowing through the poplars his great-grandfather had planted. In the spring the scent of the hedge of century-old lilacs came through Jared's two open windows; it all seemed to make doctrine unnecessary. Whatever the brass bed meant or came to mean to Craig, it would not be the same thing it meant to him.

Lifting his hand from the back of the rocking chair, Jared looked across the moonlit room at his Great-grandfather Thatcher's picture. He looked at the room itself. He and Ann had sketched the plans for the house they wanted, and after ten years of scratching for every dollar, they had the house built on the valley-view lot they bought before Provo land prices went out of sight. And nearly every evening in those months they had driven up to see how much the contractor had done that day, walked through the skeletal house to guess at the progress.

His great-grandfather had taken a crew up Pine Canyon to cut his own timber for his permanent houses, put it through his own mill. He had seasoned it for two years before he ever built with it. And with his own hands he helped to cut and shape the stone for each of his wives' houses, which he designed, each of the four houses different except for the poplars, lilacs, iron fence, and the wood and the stone. He had built his first wife's house first, for everything had its order. And then in his daily journal he wrote: "Today we began to build my beloved wife Lily's stone house. We will finish it by September so that she may be comfortable and have her own place like my other three wives." After each house was finished, he blessed and dedicated it.

And it was in that house that Jared's great-grandfather lived the last ten years of his life. He gave patriarchal blessings in the front room, all the parents wanting their children to receive blessings through him. He had known the Prophet Joseph Smith, known Brigham Young, been driven out of Nauvoo by the mobs, crossed the plains with those first com-

panies in 1847, a man who had been pioneer, missionary, faithful husband to four wives, father of an Abrahamic posterity. This appointed man, God's mouth, gave blessings, told each child his lineage, Dan, Benjamin, Joseph, Judah, what his blood inheritance was, what God proposed for him if he proved faithful. In those ten years he gave over a thousand blessings, his mind clear until the day he died.

He was ninety-two that year, his three other wives dead before him, and he died in the brass bed in the bedroom of a stone house he had built nearly fifty years before. And after a hundred years that house, because it had been taken care of, was still true, the two-foot thick walls still solid, no squeak or give in the double-thick pine floors joisted every four inches, the house silent in a storm. Like his neighbors in Indian Hills, Jared had planted his own lawn, braced his frail new trees, put in a patio, and built his own grape-stake fence.

"Jared."

He turned. Ann stood in the hall doorway again.

"Honey, you're going to be tired in the morning."

"I know; I'm coming."

"Don't get in a stew about the house. You don't have to sell it if you don't want to."

"I know."

"Well, I'm going to bed."

"Okay, I'll be right there."

He watched her turn and walk down the hall past the pictures of him she had so carefully selected and framed. To get Craig and Brent thinking about their missions, she had emphasized his missionary pictures. Jared pushed his hands into his robe pockets and looked out the window again. He wondered sometimes what kind of a missionary Craig would make. His own mission had ended just as the Church introduced the new standard lesson program, use of the flannel boards, film strips, tapes, and the referral system. Five thousand missionaries preached the gospel when he was out; now the Church had fifteen thousand in the field, and in a few years there would be thirty, forty, fifty thousand, whatever it took to carry the gospel to every corner of the earth; the gospel, true because it had the same meaning everywhere, was universal.

A new tri-ward chapel was planned for the neighborhood

north of them. In the three years they had lived in Indian Hills, he had watched the new subdivisions and mobile-home parks going up around Provo, farms vanishing, Provo, Orem, Springville, and the other towns beginning to merge along the freeway, becoming part of that ninety-mile-long city between Ogden and Provo.

But now the Church was moving to an international emphasis, was no longer the Utah or American church of a people persecuted and driven to the frontier. That image was being played down. History was used only to prove the possibility of the future, the future more important than any past. The four huge bas-relief designs on the new thirty-story Church office building in Salt Lake were of the whole world, the general conference sessions sent out by the Church-owned shortwave radio stations all over the world in nearly a dozen foreign languages, the Church publications in seventeen languages now.

That spring day in 1851 when the thirty-two covered wagons had pulled down out of the canyon and stopped on the hill above Zarahemla where the Daughters-of-the-Utah-Pioneers monument now stood, Nathaniel Thatcher had written in his journal: "Praise God, we have come to the end of our journey. Here we will begin to raise a beautiful city on the edge of a great desert. We will call the city Zarahemla." And all that afternoon the white gulls, came up from the river, followed the plows in white flocks. By the next day his great-grandfather had surveyed a ditch, and they brought water from the river to soften the ground to make the plowing easier.

It became a town, not a city. But it was beautiful—houses built, trees, flowers, hedges of lilacs, grass, gardens planted, the yards all fenced, order visible. And the people had during the town's first fifty years a sense of brotherhood in the gospel of Christ, of being a chosen people governed by the holy Melchizedec priesthood, none of that unity dissipated by radio, cars, freeways, television, which would have been unnecessary contact with the outside world. The irrigated fruitful fields, the herds of sheep and cattle in the mountains, the growing families all proved faith and works triumphant against the desert, God's mercy and bounty known to his people. And it was that original pioneer beauty taught to Jared by his grand-

mother as still existent that became part of his imagination, his concept of what God's work was.

But Zarahemla and many of the other rural pioneer towns had been dead now for over forty years. The rural town and county governments were poor, inefficient, the services all substandard or nonexistent, and the wards had gone to seed, the possessions of a few active families. The small towns had the highest per capita liquor consumption in the state, the most people on welfare, high rates of juvenile delinquency, divorce, and suicide. The young left as soon as possible to escape the boredom and poverty. Some land was being bought up by outside money for recreational development.

Jared's sons played basketball, football, tennis. They skied, swam, did not work because there was no work for them to do in Indian Hills except take care of the lawns, which wasn't really work anymore. Their work was to learn to play the piano, to study, earn college scholarships, be active in the Church, develop strong testimonies. They needed to prepare themselves for their missions, and after that for marriage, college, graduate school, to prepare to become national leaders in business, government, and science. And, finally, they needed to prepare themselves to become the new bishops, stake presidents, regional representatives, and apostles that the expanding world Church needed.

Jared had stopped telling Craig and Brent stories about work, about the sweat, heat, smells, the awareness of fields under the desert sun, fields his Great-grandfather Thatcher had been the first to break under the plow and irrigate. Jared knew the time of day and years by the shadows, position of the sun, color of the fields, mountains and distant desert plateaus, and by the earth's smell. He had stopped telling his sons how in the late afternoon, naked, his body wet from swimming in the river, he ran with the other boys across new-plowed fields to fight their spring wars, the soft clods exploding against their bodies, the air full of the rich smell of earth. How finally, exhausted, bodies brown, they lay down in the soft sun-warmed sandy loam, vanished in the brownness, lay there in the silence, each of them alone, staring up at the blue sky, watching the white circling gulls.

At night, his whole body tired from work, he lay in the brass bed that was now Craig's. His grandmother had kept

the bed polished, and it shone in the darkness. "It was the bed in which your Great-grandfather Thatcher died, Jared, my son," she told him, repeated the story many times of her father's death, led Jared to stand and stare up at the picture, his great-grandfather looking down at him. The last entry in the journal, which was now in the Mormon Collection at BYU, was written from that bed: "My beloved wife Lily nurses and cares for me. God must take me home. My work is done."

"A thousand people came to your great-grandfather's funeral, Jared, even the apostles from Salt Lake City."

In that brass bed twelve children had been conceived, born, four to die in infancy, but the earth replenished. And at the side of that bed, kneeling, his great-grandfather had uttered his thousands of prayers. Every day of his boy's life in Zarahemla, Jared had seen one or two, sometimes all three of the other stone houses, two already abandoned, their roofs caved in, the yards high with weeds, half the row of Lombardy poplars dead, the lilacs wild, the wrought-iron fences broken. He had crept through those abandoned houses, thought of the three other beds, the wives and other children, all those other thousands of prayers. His Great-grandfather Thatcher spent one month with each of his families, was sent by one wife to the next with his basket of clean clothes, loaves of fresh bread, fresh pies behind the carriage seat. At night, reaching out in the darkness, Jared felt the brass bed's cool metal.

He had gone to the Manti Temple many times to be baptized for the family dead whose names his grandmother had researched. And it would not have surprised him then on a late summer evening to have one of those relatives knock at the door and ask for his grandmother. Every time he took Craig and Brent to Zarahemla, he got the key and walked with them in the evening to the old ward house to see the windows, the Father, the Son, the Angel Moroni, and the prophets made alive by the last rays of the sun.

When his grandmother took him to Salt Lake every September to buy his school clothes and visit relatives, he saw the Angel Moroni, a great gold statue on top of the highest tower of the Salt Lake Temple, his grandmother pointing up to it, and thus he knew that the Book of Mormon was true.

Moroni's people had fought against the Lamanites, from whom the Indians were descended. His great-grandfather wrote: "Today we met with Chief Walker and his people to preach the gospel of Christ unto the remnant of the Lamanites. We distributed winter flour, fifty sacks. My good wives and daughters had baked a great store of fresh bread for the chief which he and his people much delighted in."

Standing there in his front room looking down at Provo, Jared blotted out all the lights below him, the buildings, houses, freeway, business section, subdivisions, made it all again sagebrush, grass, willows fringing the creeks, cottonwoods following the river to the lake. And near the river stood the log-walled Fort Utah, the log cabins scattered around it. The thirty-two covered wagons, oxen and mule-drawn, stood lined up, tops white in the morning sunlight, a small herd of cattle off to the side. Nathaniel Thatcher knelt with the company, leading them in prayer: "This day we began our journey, which we asked God to bless to his glory. May our faith increase to the measure of our tasks. God willing, it shall be so."

And his Great-grandfather Thatcher, then husband to two wives; father to six living children, three of the wagons his, rode at the front. Stonemason, farmer, bishop, architect, engineer, explorer, Indian agent, missionary, patriarch, man of God under a prophet's mandate, he led them all to face the daily reality of Indians, drought, hunger, disease, death, loneliness, and the desert. And they would help build the kingdom of God on this earth, their faith as useful and necessary to them as the water they brought down from the river onto their crops, all their visions grand, their triumphant lives caught up in the meaning of things and their share of God's work.

Jared watched the valley lights. There was hardly any freeway traffic now. He turned from the window and looked across the room at the picture of Nathaniel Thatcher and then down the hall to the glass-fronted pictures of his own life. The last picture was of Brent and Craig and him with a mess of trout they had caught at Strawberry Reservoir. Jared stood there for a moment, then he relaxed his hands in his robe pockets, walked over to the desk and got a pen. He picked up Gedder's contract, looked at it, and then in the moonlight

coming through the window, signed on each of the lines. He refolded it, put it in the self-addressed stamped envelope and sealed it.

Walking down the hall, he passed Brent's room but stopped at Craig's and pushed the door open another foot. Craig lay on his stomach, his blue pajamas dark against the white sheets, one arm above his head. The picture of Craig's four great-great-grandmothers and thirty-two cousins hung on the wall above the polished brass bed. Jared stood there a moment looking at his son; then he turned and walked down the hall.