

# Without Romance

a play that questions all your answers  
by  
Eric Samuelsen



Newport, Maine

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## **WITHOUT ROMANCE**

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Elder Goode  
Elder Boyd  
Elder Hartvig  
Elder McCarty  
Sister Ellison  
Sister Wilde

Gudrun  
Ian  
Bjorkland

**Time:** Late 1990's

**Place:** Norway, Oslo Mission

**NOTE:** With the exceptions of Goode, Boyd, Ellison, Hartvig, doubling could be used. The play could conceivably be done with seven actors (4 men, 3 women). But 6 men and 3 women would be preferable.

**SET:** The play takes place in a number of locations in and around the Skien, Norway area. A fairly minimal set, with a few chairs and tables to indicate location, is much to be preferred.

**LANGUAGE NOTE:** While I have tried to keep it to a minimum, some of the play is in the Norwegian language. I would prefer that these scenes be performed in that language. I believe that the intentions in those scenes are clear enough that the scenes should communicate. I have included footnotes with translations of the Norwegian dialogue.

**NOTATION:** A double dash (--) indicates an interrupted line. When a double dash appears in the middle of line, the next speaker is to begin his/her line there. An ellipsis (... ) indicates a pause, a collecting of thoughts. An ellipsis at the end of a line (...) indicates a voice trailing off, an uncompleted sentence.

**CURSING:** The words written in the script, usually spoken by Elder Goode, (mainly 'crap' and 'butt' or 'butts' could be changed to stronger epithets, if an audience will not contain children or those others sensitive to language.

**WITHOUT ROMANCE** by *Eric Samuelsen* 6M 3W. An unconventional missionary play set in the Oslo Norway Mission. The concepts and conflicts that sometimes divide us, that really should unite us through tolerance and understanding are explored in this tight drama about mission life, testimony, and Church Doctrine. It is a fine commentary on missionary work, what it means to follow the spirit or letter of the law, and what role obedience plays in our decisions. A quote from the play: "Blindly through the darkness--The mist is the world, its noise and confusion. The mist is the adversary, dragging us with him. And our best guide is a compass. Our only guide is a handrail." We do the best we can. Each of us. We obey, or try to. We understand, if we can. We struggle, climb, reach, fail, try again. Hey, it's not about just the mission, it's about life! What makes it work -- love from pure hearts. And the surprising thing is, you never know where or when you will find that pure heart. **ORDER #2025.**

**Eric Samuelsen** taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who has designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright. He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at [Mormoniconoclast.com](http://Mormoniconoclast.com). Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with many illnesses. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## ACT ONE

*(District meeting for the Skien district, Oslo Norway Mission. Elder WILL B. GOODE, district leader, presiding. Elder HARTVIG sits, with his new greenie, Elder MCCARTY. Elder GOODE is playing guitar chords. To either side of the stage, lights on them, are the two sisters, Sister ELLISON, and Sister WILDE. They speak.)*

**ELLISON:** Without Romance.

**WILDE:** A parable...

**ELLISON:** Of liberal and conservative,

**WILDE:** Convention.

**ELLISON:** Unconvention.

**WILDE:** Exact obedience versus--

**ELLISON:** The spirit of the law.

**WILDE:** Rules--

**ELLISON:** Or going outside the rules. Towards inspiration, perhaps.

**WILDE:** Or anarchy.

**ELLISON:** A parable.

**WILDE:** A parable.

**ELLISON:** The world is full of mists and vapors--

**WILDE:** Dark clouds, smoke and shadows--

**ELLISON:** And we grope our way -- blindly ...

**WILDE:** Blindly through the darkness--

**ELLISON:** The mist is the world, its noise and confusion.

**WILDE:** The mist is the adversary, dragging us with him.

**ELLISON:** And our best guide is a compass.

**WILDE:** Our only guide is a handrail.

**ELLISON:** A compass, its needle swinging, shifting, pointing a general direction, depending on the warmth with which we hold it --

**WILDE:** A handrail, firm and anchored, marking a straight path through the dark--

**ELLISON:** Contingent--

**WILDE:** Unfailing.

**ELLISON:** Liahona.

**WILDE:** Iron rod.

**ELLISON:** And the Liahona only works when we truly love our brothers.

**WILDE:** The iron rod, and it never fails those whose hearts -- are pure.

**ELLISON:** We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they receive a little authority as they suppose it, they will immediately practice unrighteous dominion.

**WILDE:** There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of the earth upon which all blessings are predicated, and when we receive any blessing, it is only by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

**ELLISON:** Contingent.

**WILDE:** Unfailing.

**ELLISON:** Sad experience, and therefore agency -- discernment.

**WILDE:** Irrevocably decreed, and therefore faith -- obedience.

**ELLISON:** ... Has made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life --

**WILDE:** And the Angel said unto Adam, why do you do sacrifices unto the Lord. And Adam replied, I know not, but the Lord hath commanded it.

*(GOODE begins singing If We Could Hie to Kolob. One by one, the others join in. After a few lines, WILDE speaks.)*

Hath commanded it.

*(She joins in singing. Lights up on the group. They all bow their heads as the last notes fade. A few seconds pause, then they all speak.)*

**ALL:** Amen.

**GOODE:** And this district meeting is now in session.

*(A certain amount of shifting in chairs.)*

Okay, good news first. The sisters have a commitment from Brandviks.

*(All ad lib congratulatory noises.)*

**ELLISON:** (Stands, bows, clowning.) I'd like to thank the Academy, my mother, my agent--

**WILDE:** It was nothing really.

**ELLISON:** You like me! You really like me!

**HARTVIG:** Brandvik? Set a date?

**WILDE:** The tenth.

**MCCARTY:** What, for baptism?

**ELLISON:** I think they're solid.

**MCCARTY:** Sweet! Dude, that's awesome!

**HARTVIG:** Hey, enjoy it while you can, greenie --

**ELLISON:** Elder McCarty--

**HARTVIG:** Odds are these are the only investigators you'll see take the bath your whole mission.

**GOODE:** Not entirely true, Elder.

**MCCARTY:** Still, my first week. Cool.

**HARTVIG:** So how'd you pull that one off? Me'n Martin taught them for three months, couldn't get anywhere.

Hand 'em over to you and you've got 'em committing in two weeks.

**ELLISON:** What can I say, Hartvig? You know how it is with sisters. We have something you can't match. It's called sex appeal, and it--

**WILDE:** *(Whapping her.)* Jen! You're awful.

**HARTVIG:** Seriously. How'd you do it?

**WILDE:** Seriously, I don't think it had much to do with us.

**ELLISON:** It had nothing to do with us. The Spirit did the heavy lifting.

**WILDE:** We just happened to catch 'em when they were ready.

**ELLISON:** A lot of it was his son.

**HARTVIG:** Yeah, Erling, we met him too.

**WILDE:** He's got a sambo<sup>1</sup>, what was her name?

**ELLISON:** Liv. Anyway, I think Brandvik was hoping they'd get married, you know, the grandkid thing. And when she and Erling broke up, I think it bugged Brandvik more than Erling. Got him to thinking, you know.

**WILDE:** We just built on that, brought in plan of salvation. Got 'em to pray. They're great people.

**GOODE:** Well, good work, you guys. I just got some stats from the apes. Okay, it's August, we got twenty-eight baptisms this district alone since January. The rest of the mission... Drum roll please...

*(They all begin a drum roll.)*

Seventy-four baptisms the same period. Six of us with twenty-eight, eighty-some other missionaries with forty eight between 'em.

*(More cheers.)*

**ELLISON:** Uh, Goodie, forty six ...

**GOODE:** What?

**ELLISON:** *(Teasing him.)* Seventy-four minus twenty-eight?

**GOODE:** Yeah, whatever.

*(Dismissively.)*

Numbers.

**MCCARTY:** Those numbers say we're doing good!

**GOODE:** Those numbers mean crap. Still, a big pat on the back from the apes to the Skien district. And they keep off our butts for a while.

**WILDE:** *(Plaintively.)* Goodie, would you please watch your language--

**HARTVIG:** What about the rest of the stats? Tracting hours and so on?

**GOODE:** I've got it all here, if you wanna look at it. Okay, let's go through the rest of the list. Hartvig. First on your list is Jensen?

**HARTVIG:** PFer I think.

**MCCARTY:** PFer?

**WILDE:** Professional friend--no interest in the Church, but likes the attention.

**HARTVIG:** Herr Jensen's a classic PFer. Won't read, won't pray, just likes kjekke Amerikanske gutter<sup>2</sup>.

**GOODE:** Okay, time for some member involvement. Who hasn't thrown a party lately?

**ELLISON:** Olsens?

**GOODE:** Good, Hartvig, set it up. Andreassens?

**HARTVIG:** Dumped us.

**WILDE:** Is he the guy with the trains? Bummer.

**MCCARTY:** Trains?

**WILDE:** He had, like, this big electric train set in his basement.

**GOODE:** So what happened?

**HARTVIG:** I dunno, just said he wasn't interested anymore.

**GOODE:** When I get the new guy this afternoon, we may drop by.

**HARTVIG:** He's my area.

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<sup>1</sup>Sam-bo. 'Together-living'; live-in girlfriend. Norwegian for 'the person I'm living with.'

<sup>2</sup> 'nice American boys'

**GOODE:** Yeah, we're like real big on area boundaries in this district.

**HARTVIG:** Yeah, okay, but why waste your time? Andreassen's a loser.

**GOODE:** Not a word I'm real fond of.

**HARTVIG:** Yeah, all right.

**GOODE:** I know he felt the Spirit that one time--he couldn't help it. We have something to build on there. Let's keep after it.

**HARTVIG:** You're the boss.

**GOODE:** Okay, anyone else?

*(HARTVIG shrugs.)*

Okay, sisters?

**ELLISON:** Okay, we have Olga Tonnesen, med student, we're fellowshipping with Helge Lundahl, making good progress.

**GOODE:** Reading? Praying?

**WILDE:** She won't read or pray, but there's a nice spirit when we teach her. She's really great.

**GOODE:** Good. Next?

**ELLISON:** Linnea Aslaksen, divorced, maybe forty, kinda anti-men, priesthood may be a sticking point but she's reading, got her to pray this week.

**GOODE:** That's a good sign. Fellowshipping?

**WILDE:** We're taking Jorunn Helgeland next visit, already set it up.

**GOODE:** *(Making notes.)* Good, they can grouse together about the perfidy of men.

**ELLISON:** Ruth Norman and her nine-year-old son. A tricky one. A sambo situation, you know what that means, besides the guy's a creep.

**MCCARTY:** Sambo?

**WILDE:** Really it's 'samboer.' Sam equals same. Boer equals living. Same-living...

**MCCARTY:** They're living together?

**HARTVIG:** You got it.

**MCCARTY:** That happen a lot?

**GOODE:** The majority of children born in Norway last year were out of wedlock. In Norway, sambo is the rule, marriage the exception.

**MCCARTY:** Wo.

**ELLISON:** Anyway, that's Ruth Norman.

**WILDE:** We may hold off a bit teaching law of chastity.

**GOODE:** As usual.

**ELLISON:** No real progress on the others on the list. Brandviks you know about.

**GOODE:** Great work.

**WILDE:** How about your area, Goodie?

**GOODE:** Ranalds are making some progress, but he's out of town the next ten days or so. Ivar and Aage are just waiting for their Dad's permission; they loved Youth Conference. Vesaas are coming along--I'm fellowshipping with Havrevolds. Kiellands, I've got to get them to a party or two--they need to have fun with some members. Any suggestions?

**ELLISON:** Borgens?



**GOODE:** *(Making a note.)* Yeah, that's a nice match.

**ELLISON:** Goodie, we still haven't formally met our newest missionary.

**GOODE:** That was next on the agenda. Elder McCarty, welcome to the district. Tell us about yourself.

**MCCARTY:** Uh, well, Dave McCarty, I'm from Orem, uh, like to ski a lot.

**HARTVIG:** Too bad. Against mission rules.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah, I heard.

**ELLISON:** Yeah, everyone in Norway gets to ski except us.

**WILDE:** Stakkars<sup>3</sup>.

**GOODE:** We may fudge on that rule a bit. If you can figure out how to use skiing to get in with someone, go for it. I have your back.

**MCCARTY:** Cool.

**ELLISON:** Girlfriend? Waiting ... ?

**WILDE:** *(Whapping her.)* Jen!

**MCCARTY:** Actually, she, kinda, dumped me while I was in the MTC.

*(General response of sympathy.)*

**WILDE:** Wo, two months, that's lame.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah, well, it happens.

**GOODE:** Parents, family?

**MCCARTY:** My Dad's in the bishopric, manages an office supply store. I'm the fourth of six kids, 3 brothers, two sisters.

**HARTVIG:** How old are the sisters?

**ELLISON:** How old are the brothers?

**MCCARTY:** Both my sisters are married. My older brother is too, my other brothers are fifteen and twelve.

**HARTVIG:** Bummer.

**ELLISON:** Ah, well.

**GOODE:** Welcome to the district. I'm Elder Goode, Will B. Goode, my friends call me 'get real.' Sisters?

**ELLISON:** Jennifer Ellison, nice to meet you.

**WILDE:** Sister Judy Wilde, I've got friends from Orem, we'll talk.

**GOODE:** And Hartvig, of course, you've met.

**MCCARTY:** Hi.

**GOODE:** I put poor old Grant on the bus this morning. All the way up to Harstad--Northern Norway may never be the same.

**ELLISON:** He'll do great up there.

**GOODE:** Let's hope so. The new guy comes in tonight. Hartvig, I see you got Martin off all right this morning?

**HARTVIG:** Yeah. Hey, Goodie, what was with that?

**GOODE:** What was with what?

**HARTVIG:** Telling him we had to spend that hour tracting before we took him to the station?

**GOODE:** I thought you guys could do that apartment complex by the harbor. Bully your way past some little old lady, teach a-couple-a cheap firsts, get your numbers. Keep the apes happy.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Poor baby.'

**HARTVIG:** Carrying Martin's suitcase?

**GOODE:** I told him to rent one of those lockers at the station for an hour.

**HARTVIG:** Well, we did.

**GOODE:** Great.

**HARTVIG:** It's just... What's with the gung-ho act all the sudden?

**GOODE:** I'm hungry, boys. Hungry for baptisms.

**HARTVIG:** Yeah, yeah.

**GOODE:** I'm serious. We're number one. And when you're number one... ?

**THE OTHERS:** (*Half-heartedly.*) You try harder.

**GOODE:** So, did you do it? Tract before Martin left?

**HARTVIG:** We got in a half hour, yeah.

**GOODE:** That's all I'm asking.

**HARTVIG:** Marty and I were friends, you know. It woulda been nice to say goodbye.

**WILDE:** I think a goodbye kiss is against mission rules.

**ELLISON:** No, it's okay if you don't use tongues.

**WILDE:** (*Whapping her.*) Jen! Gross!

**HARTVIG:** It woulda been nice to take it easy this morning, that's all.

**GOODE:** (*After a moment.*) Look, chill a sec, okay? The apes have been on our case bad enough about numbers. Especially since they told us we couldn't count coaching junior soccer as tracting.

**HARTVIG:** We do anyway.

**ELLISON:** And why not? You guys generate more good will from those soccer games --

**GOODE:** The point is, number one or not, I've been getting a lot of grief.

**HARTVIG:** Yeah, okay--

**GOODE:** And I don't like playing number games on my reports any more than I have to.

**ELLISON:** (*Feigning shock*) You lie on your reports?

**GOODE:** Besides, Martin's going to South Fjord district, and you know what that means. Forsyth.

**WILDE:** (*To MCCARTY*) He's kinda famous in the mission. Rules and numbers.

**ELLISON:** (*To MCCARTY*) We don't like him.

**HARTVIG:** It's just not like you, Goody.

**GOODE:** It was an hour you could be getting work done.

**HARTVIG:** I still don't get it.

**GOODE:** What's not to get?

**HARTVIG:** You sit around all morning playing the guitar. Which you bought on your mission. And learned to play on your mission. You break every rule in the book, lie on your reports--

**GOODE:** Look. Hartvig--

**HARTVIG:** And then I want to spend one morning goofing around a bit with Martin, and you make us go tracting. Which you yourself admit is a waste of time. I don't get it. I really don't, man.

**GOODE:** I play guitar because ... Look Norwegians think Mormons are weirdos. So I hang with the kids in the park, play like Radiohead, Red Hot Chili Peppers, crap like that...

**WILDE:** Goodie, language...

**GOODE:** ... and suddenly I'm a cool American, not some kind of Moonie fanatic. Or at least weird in a cool

kinda way. McCarty, see, tracting's mostly a waste of time. But when you've got an hour to kill, like you did this morning, Hartvig, tract. Better than sitting around with your thumb up your butt.

**HARTVIG:** Yeah, okay.

**GOODE:** McCarty, you've probably been looking at us thinking we're a little unconventional. Thinking: what kind of burn-out district is this? But the thing is, what we do works. All I ask is that you listen for the Spirit, try to follow your promptings. Maybe we'll be guided down some unorthodox paths; no problem. All we're trying to do here is find a way to bless some lives.

**ELLISON:** Right.

**WILDE:** Amen.

**HARTVIG:** I've heard the speech, man. Geez.

**MCCARTY:** Hey, I'm here to work.

**GOODE:** Great. Okay, what's next? Jen, you guys have the lesson, right?

**ELLISON:** Yeah. The lesson this week is called Weird Situation. Judy and I got caught last week in a J Dub circle. You ever been there?

**MCCARTY:** J Dub?

**WILDE:** Jehovah's Witnesses. They're kinda big in this area.

**ELLISON:** I wasn't ready for 'em, you know. They just weren't the problem in Trondheim.

**WILDE:** Anyway, they got us in this room, and were real polite, you know, friendly. At first.

**ELLISON:** We were in these chairs facing the sofa, didn't even notice other chairs like real casual set up behind us.

**WILDE:** They were real slick about it. Next thing you know, we're in this circle, completely surrounded. And then they started tossing us questions.

**ELLISON:** Yeah, only like we'd get one sentence out was all and somebody on the other side of the circle would come back us with something totally unrelated.

**WILDE:** They knew their stuff, too. Greek stuff outta their Bible they'd throw at you.

**ELLISON:** Wacko quotations from Brigham Young out of the Journal of Discourses.

**WILDE:** Yeah, like out of context.

**ELLISON:** I mean, it was horrible.

**WILDE:** Forty five minutes of sheer heck.

**GOODE:** Great. Okay, so that's the situation. How do we handle it?

**MCCARTY:** Well, in the MTC, they'd tell us ...

*(He hesitates.)*

**GOODE:** Yes?

**MCCARTY:** You book. I mean, you're outta there. It's a hopeless situation, why bother?

**GOODE:** Sisters?

**WILDE:** Well, that's right. I mean, I was scared to death. Surrounded like that. We left, as fast as we could.

**GOODE:** Okay, that's one response. What else could you do?

**HARTVIG:** Goodie, we're not here to bible bash with J-Dubs. I'm with the sisters.

**GOODE:** Another vote for leaving. Jen?

**ELLISON:** We left. But I didn't feel good about it.

**GOODE:** Exactly. Why not?

**ELLISON:** Well, we didn't do our job. We didn't teach them. We got scared and panicked and we left.

**GOODE:** Right. I mean, I'm not blaming you for feeling scared. Nobody likes to get trapped like that. And you are right, Hartvig, we're not here to bible bash. We are here to preach the gospel.

**WILDE:** How? What should we have done?

**GOODE:** Lots of things. Bear your testimony, get them to feel the Spirit. Stay calm. Laugh.

**MCCARTY:** Laugh?

**GOODE:** Well, yeah. It is kinda funny, isn't it? Like Indians surrounding a wagon train? Or maybe you shoulda booked. I mean, if that's what the Spirit was telling you...?

**WILDE:** I don't know.

**ELLISON:** I don't think so.

**WILDE:** No, you're probably right. I think we were just scared.

**GOODE:** There's your answer. I mean, maybe you get this feeling you should laugh at them, they see the point, laugh too, suddenly they're human beings and you can really talk.

**WILDE:** It wasn't funny at the time.

**GOODE:** My point is, okay, they're J-dubs. Fine. But we are here to preach the gospel. To anyone willing to listen. Maybe they've got, I dunno, body piercings, tattoos. Maybe they got their hair in an orange mohawk. Maybe they're sambos. Maybe they tell you they're gay, or maybe they've had an abortion, or maybe they're gang members or prostitutes or drug dealers. Or Jay-dubs. It doesn't matter. We are here to teach them, see if we can bless their lives. Help them feel the spirit--let the Lord lead them to repentance. That's what we're about.

*(To the sisters.)*

I love you guys. And you did great with Brandviks. But I think you wussed.

**WILDE:** *(Pretty ticked.)* We wussed.

**ELLISON:** Great.

**WILDE:** That's our lesson, guys. Don't wuss.

**ELLISON:** *(Tightly.)* Thanks, Goodie. We really didn't need that.

**GOODE:** 'Perfect love casteth away fear.' I call 'em like I see 'em. I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings.

*(Senses the tension.)*

Okay, meeting's over. I made those cream cheese brownies, in case anyone's interested.

*(He holds out brownies. They take them, reluctantly.)*

Change of pace. I've got a new companion coming in this evening. Anyone know anything about him?

**WILDE:** What's his name again? Boyd?

**ELLISON:** First name?

**GOODE:** S. Boyd. That's all it says on the move sheet.

**HARTVIG:** Wait a minute. That couldn't be old pizza face?

**WILDE:** From Ålesund?

**HARTVIG:** Remember, Mac was telling us about him at the Stavanger conference. Wasn't he Boyd?

**GOODE:** What'd you hear?

**HARTVIG:** Pizza face Boyd. Major acne. I mean, his face looks like he lost an acid fight.

**ELLISON:** Like it caught fire and someone put it out with a track shoe.

**HARTVIG:** And he's uptight about it.

**WILDE:** Poor thing. Who wouldn't be?

**HARTVIG:** No, I mean, real uptight. He has this little tweezer thing, spends ten minutes every morning popping zits. Mac was saying, he'd go in the john, could hardly see to shave on account of these little pus wads on the mirror.

**WILDE:** (*Distastefully.*) And there's cream cheese on these brownies. Thanks, Hartvig.

**HARTVIG:** No problemo. Anyway, apparently, he's got a personality to match.

**WILDE:** If it's the same guy, the apes got you this time, Goody.

**GOODE:** Will he work?

**HARTVIG:** I didn't hear.

**MCCARTY:** He doesn't sound so great.

**GOODE:** McCarty, did I tell you the story about Garfield and Tucker?

**MCCARTY:** I don't think so.

**GOODE:** Ken Tucker was this big guy, on the BYU football team, as nice a guy as you'll ever meet. He was in West Oslo with Adam Garfield, tater tot from Pocatello, major league weirdo. Star Trek nut, he like shaved his head so he'd look like Jean-luc Picard? On top of which, he was a bad missionary. Anyway, nobody could stand him, so the apes assigned him to Tucker, figuring Tuck could put up with anyone. They kept them together for *seven months*. *Seven months*; you can imagine how much work they got done. I ran into Tucker at a zone conference, and I asked him, I said "Tuck, you've been seven months with that little creep Garfield." He just smiled. Then I said, "how in the world do you do it? How do you put up with him?" Tuck said to me, "Goody, there's just one thing that keeps me going. Just one thought that I keep in my mind, I just keep telling myself one thing. How can I make it look like an accident?"

**MCCARTY:** (*Laughing.*) If I ever get stuck, I'll keep that in mind.

**GOODE:** All right, guys. Enough district meeting for one night--that's a good hour for the report. Time for language study.

*(He holds up Norwegian comic books.)*

Donald Duck or Asterix?

**HARTVIG:** Asterix for me.

*(GOODE hands him a comic book. WILDE faces the audience.)*

**WILDE:** And with that, district meeting concluded.

*(The other actors all exit, clear the set.)*

**ELLISON:** Cream cheese brownies, jokes and stories from home.

**WILDE:** Making the greenie feel welcome.

**ELLISON:** The district, another home.

**ELLISON:** Later that evening, Elder Goode made the trek down to the bus station in town, to meet Pizza-face Boyd, his new companion.

**WILDE:** Liberal, conservative.

**ELLISON:** Iron Rod meets Liahona.

**WILDE:** Scene two. The meeting.

*(GOODE waits by the train station. BOYD enters.)*

**BOYD:** Unnskylde meg. Er De en Mormon misjonær?<sup>4</sup>

**GOODE:** Wo. Sorry, man, you took me by surprise.

**BOYD:** Det gleder meg til å treffe Dem. Jeg heter ...<sup>5</sup>

**GOODE:** (*Extending his hand.*) Will B. Goode. Don't blame me, my parents are optimists, my friends call me "Wishful Thinking." You must be Boyd.

**BOYD:** Jeg heter...

**GOODE:** Wo, cool it with the language, man. Save your Norsk for the Norskis.

**BOYD:** The mission rule is that we're to speak Norwegian anytime we're in public among Norwegians.

**GOODE:** Yeah, well, the rules say lots of things that don't make sense.

**BOYD:** Rules are meant to be obeyed. The first law of heaven --

**GOODE:** I know, the first law of heaven is get your numbers.

**BOYD:** Obedience is the first law of heaven --

**GOODE:** First law of heaven, no kidding? You'd think that'd be in the scriptures-- someplace.

**BOYD:** Missionary handbook. It is only by obedience to the laws on which--

**GOODE:** (*Speaking simultaneously.*) D & C 145? D & C 150?

**BOYD:** Obedience is the most important principle of missionary work.

**GOODE:** And love your neighbor is somewhere down the list. Look, I don't want to get off to a bad start here--

**BOYD:** It's all right. You're District Leader, if you want to talk English, briefly, I'll go along.

**GOODE:** Look, I'm sorry. I apologize. It's been a long day.

**BOYD:** (*Stiffly.*) No apology necessary. Twelve hours on the bus has made me a bit testy myself.

**GOODE:** How about we start over?

**BOYD:** Fine.

**GOODE:** First of all, my name really is Will B. Goode. My Dad was inspired when he blessed me. And yes, I have a brother named Johnny B.

*(Holds for a laugh that does not come.)*

Call me Goody. I know you're Boyd. S. Boyd. What's the S for?

**BOYD:** Beg pardon?

**GOODE:** What's your first name, Elder?

**BOYD:** Elder.

*(A pause, then grudgingly.)*

Sterling.

**GOODE:** Sterling, huh?

**BOYD:** It's a family name, and one I'm proud of.

**GOODE:** Of course, certainly. Nothing wrong with that, hey? Where you from, Sterling?

**BOYD:** I'd prefer Elder Boyd.

**GOODE:** Yeah, that's cool. Whatever.

**BOYD:** And Elder Goode.

**GOODE:** Look, this is Skien, I don't know what you've heard of us.

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<sup>4</sup> "Excuse me. Are you a Mormon missionary?"

<sup>5</sup> "It's a pleasure to meet you. My name is... ."

**BOYD:** You're baptizing. I know that.

**GOODE:** We're number one. Not that that matters. But we have kind of like a style, you see?

**BOYD:** A style?

**GOODE:** Well, for starters, we tend to be pretty informal here. People mostly call me Goody, but Elder's fine, whatever. Can I help with your luggage?

**BOYD:** Thanks.

*(After a moment.)*

Elder Goode?

**GOODE:** Yeah?

**BOYD:** Look, since we're getting to know each other ...

**GOODE:** Sure. Let's sit down, bus doesn't come for twenty minutes.

**BOYD:** Another bus...

*(Sits heavily.)*

Look, I don't know what you've heard about me.

**GOODE:** Only good things, I promise.

**BOYD:** I doubt it. I doubt I'm particularly well known.

**GOODE:** Elder Hartvig was saying he knew you in Ålesund?

**BOYD:** Maybe so. Anyway, the point is ... you must understand that...

**GOODE:** What?

**BOYD:** I don't get a lot of joy from missionary work.

**GOODE:** Who does? It's hard, especially here.

**BOYD:** I don't mind working. I just ... I don't like it much, being a missionary. Maybe it's this country; I try to love the people but ... No morals, no ambition, socialism ... Socialism. If they weren't floating in oil they'd have gone under twenty years ago. I even struggle to like the members. I hate tracting. I'm a private individual, I'm not very outgoing. Not ... personable.

**GOODE:** I see.

**BOYD:** I really hate tracting. Bothering people in their homes, trying to communicate in a foreign language. And this language, all that sing-songy ... I still don't get it. You say 'takk'<sup>6</sup> it means thank you, 'tak'<sup>7</sup> it's the ceiling. I don't know.

**GOODE:** Well, the language--

**BOYD:** Look at my face. What was my nickname in Ålesund? Zit-face, something like that?

**GOODE:** Actually--

**BOYD:** My face, after years of dermatology, had just about cleared up when I left. Missionary cooking, that's what did this. My personality is abrasive, and my appearance is repulsive --

**GOODE:** No, wait a minute--

**BOYD:** It is. To most people. I have nothing to offer Norway or Norwegians. Nothing. I don't like it here, and that's not going to change.

**GOODE:** *(Stunned, at a loss.)* Uh huh. I see.

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<sup>6</sup> Pronounced 'tock'; abruptly.

<sup>7</sup> Pronounced with a drawn out vowel. 'Ta ak'

*(Recovering.)*

Have you talked to ... Uh--

**BOYD:** I have talked to President Waal, and I told him the same thing I'm telling you. I don't like being a missionary, but I do love my Heavenly Father. Because of who I am, I have nothing much to offer His service, but I can offer my obedience. And if this is where he wants me, then that's my cross to bear. And so I have committed to obey absolutely every mission rule to the letter. I will study this language I despise, the ten hours a week the mission goals call for. I will study the scriptures, which I love, in Norwegian, a language I can barely comprehend. Above all, I will tract every hour required of me. I am here to work. Nothing else.

**GOODE:** Yeah. Look, Boyd--

**BOYD:** Don't expect much else from me, is what I'm saying. Just work and obedience. That's me.

**GOODE:** Yeah, well, okay.

**BOYD:** I have no imagination.

**GOODE:** Excuse me?

**BOYD:** No imagination. I give the same approach, every door. I cook the same meal, every supper, baked cod, boiled potatoes, frozen peas. I've got a pancake recipe; that's breakfast.

**GOODE:** No imagination. P-days?

**BOYD:** Are for laundry, shopping and letters home. And tracting in the evenings.

**GOODE:** I see. The thing is, we have sisters in this district, and on P-days, we've been kinda--

**BOYD:** I don't work with sisters.

**GOODE:** You don't?

**BOYD:** I'm not ... comfortable with sisters.

**GOODE:** Well, the point is, we have them in this district, and we do trade off --

**BOYD:** You do the trades. I would prefer not to.

**GOODE:** Right.

**BOYD:** Otherwise, I'll be no trouble. You ask me to do something, it'll get done, efficiently and quickly.

**GOODE:** But unimaginatively.

**BOYD:** Exactly.

**GOODE:** Okay.

**BOYD:** Any questions?

**GOODE:** No. I guess not.

**BOYD:** Anything I need to know about you?

**GOODE:** I can't top that.

**BOYD:** What do you mean?

**GOODE:** Look, Boyd, it's only for a few months, right? Two, three months.

**BOYD:** We haven't a lot in common, I suspect. I know something of you from Elder Dunstan.

**GOODE:** Okay. But we can still work together.

**BOYD:** Emphasis on work.

**GOODE:** I wasn't made district leader by goofing off.

**BOYD:** I didn't think so.

**GOODE:** Look, I'm a little unorthodox, okay? Maybe a lot unorthodox by your standards. But I'm here to work



too.

**BOYD:** Then we'll get along fine.

**GOODE:** I hope so.

**BOYD:** Now then, that's fifteen minutes we've been speaking English in public. Hvor treffer vi bussen?<sup>8</sup>

**GOODE:** We meet the bus right here.

*(They stand, not looking at each other. Enter ELLISON and WILDE.)*

**ELLISON:** Goodie and his new companion shared a hybel--

**WILDE:** A small missionary apartment--

**ELLISON:** ... with Hartvig and McCarty, and so the other Elders in the district met Boyd that first night.

**WILDE:** The sisters had to wait for trades, two days later.

*(BOYD exits; GOODE joins ELLISON and WILDE, tracting.)*

**GOODE:** So then he says, "whatever you tell me to do, it'll get done." And off we went home.

**ELLISON:** This guy I got to meet.

**WILDE:** What did he say when he saw the hybel?

**ELLISON:** You guys did clean it up for him, I hope.

**GOODE:** I don't think he cares. Roof over his head, bed to sleep on. Lube and oil every five thousand miles, and Sterling Boyd's a happy little robot.

**WILDE:** This door's a reject, and the next three. That white one with the trim's the next call-back.

**ELLISON:** He can't be that bad.

**GOODE:** You didn't hear him. He's gonna be a numbers guy and a rules guy and I hate him already.

**ELLISON:** Now look. Last week you were complaining about Martin. At least he's gone. And you've replaced him with someone who wants to work.

**GOODE:** That's right, Jen. Always the silver lining.

**WILDE:** Whose turn?

**ELLISON:** Mine.

*(Knocks on a door. A WOMAN appears.)*

God Dag. Vi representerer Jesu Kristi Kirke av Siste Dagers Hellige, vi var her for et par dager siden, husker De oss?<sup>9</sup>

**WOMAN:** Tja. Det passer meg ikke så godt akkurat nå, skjønner du.<sup>10</sup>

**ELLISON:** Kan vi få lov å komme tilbake? Det tar bare femten minutter.<sup>11</sup>

**WOMAN:** Ja, gjerne det.<sup>12</sup>

*(She shuts the door.)*

**GOODE:** Reject.

**WILDE:** She said we could come back.

**GOODE:** Lots of enthusiasm, I noticed. Typical statskirke husfru.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 'Where do we meet the bus?'

<sup>9</sup> 'Hello. We represent the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We were here a couple of days ago. Do you remember us?'

<sup>10</sup> 'Uh. It's not very convenient for me right now, you understand.'

<sup>11</sup> 'Can we have permission to come back? It will only take fifteen minutes.'

<sup>12</sup> 'Sure, fine.'

<sup>13</sup> 'State church housewife.'

**ELLISON:** My, we're being cynical tonight.

**GOODE:** I notice you didn't make an appointment.

**ELLISON:** Hard sell didn't feel right. We'll try her again tomorrow, cas<sup>14</sup> and friendly.

**WILDE:** Okay, next one is that duplex, end of the block.

**GOODE:** A duplex. How fun. Isn't tracting a joy?

**WILDE:** It can't all be fun, Goody.

**ELLISON:** I thought things had cleared up with Martin.

**GOODE:** Oh, he was so burned out. Three months left, and all he can think about is that chick of his. Or chicks period. Great guy to send to Scandinavia, huh, the way he practically stares at everything in a skirt.

**ELLISON:** I know what you mean. Every district meeting, he was giving me the old up and down.

**WILDE:** Me too.

**GOODE:** Like I said. Desperate.

**ELLISON:** Thanks loads, Goody.

**WILDE:** Speaking of Martin, what was that all about at district meeting?

**GOODE:** What was what all about?

**ELLISON:** That business about making him and Hartvig tract before he left.

**WILDE:** Kinda out of character, wasn't it?

**GOODE:** I know what Hartvig wanted. He wanted us to drop him off at the station early, let him spend an hour checking out Vi Menn<sup>15</sup> and Penthouse at the station kiosk.

**ELLISON:** Ick.

**WILDE:** Come on, Goody. You're kidding, right?

**GOODE:** Wish I was.

**WILDE:** Look, if Hartvig has that kinda problem, you need to tell President Waal.

**GOODE:** Yeah, I can really see me doing that. Nark on a guy.

**WILDE:** I'm serious, Goody.

**GOODE:** Look, I don't know that he has ... that kinda problem. Or Martin, for that matter. Just didn't want to take the chance.

**WILDE:** My door.

*(At door; another WOMAN answers.)*

God Kveld. Husker De oss? Vi var her tidligere idag. Vi er misjonærer for Jesu Kristi Kirke ...<sup>16</sup>

**WOMAN:** Ja, jeg husker det. Det passer meg ikke ikveld.<sup>17</sup>

**WILDE:** Javel. Kanskje vi kunne komme tilbake imorgan.<sup>18</sup>

**WOMAN:** Jeg, kanskje det. Morna.<sup>19</sup>

**WILDE:** Til gjensyn.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Casual, only abbreviated.

<sup>15</sup> 'We Men.' A Playboy-type Norwegian magazine.

<sup>16</sup> 'Good evening. Do you remember us? We were here earlier today. We're missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ...'

<sup>17</sup> 'Yes, I remember. It's not convenient for me this evening.'

<sup>18</sup> 'Ah, well. Maybe we could come back tomorrow.'

<sup>19</sup> 'Yes, maybe so. Goodbye.'

<sup>20</sup> 'See you later.'

**GOODE:** Til gjensyn. I like that. See you later. End on a positive note.

**WILDE:** Get the last word in. I hate it when they win.

**GOODE:** Surely that was a reject.

**ELLISON:** Call back. You're scaring them off.

**GOODE:** No. This innocent face?

**ELLISON:** Hey, we're Mormons, here's a guy with two good looking women. What are they supposed to think?

**GOODE:** Cool. We're confirming their darkest suspicions.

**ELLISON:** Yeah, like anyone in this country worries about polygamy.

**WILDE:** Okay, we're done with this block. Let's try the next one over, four houses down.

**ELLISON:** The point is, you lose Martin, who doesn't want to work, and replace him with McCarty, a greenie, who's gonna do fine. That's not such a bad trade.

**WILDE:** Besides, if Hartvig has that kinda problem, you don't want him paired with Martin.

**GOODE:** True enough. But then I've got Boyd to deal with. Boyd for Grant--I don't think so.

**ELLISON:** Goody, you have to give Boyd a chance.

**GOODE:** The thing is, I think he may be a spy.

**ELLISON:** A spy? Come on.

**GOODE:** I'm serious. President Waal has never liked me much, and the apes flat out hate me.

**ELLISON:** Oh. Stakkars.

**WILDE:** Poor baby.

**ELLISON:** Don't the Assistants wike ouw poow wittle Goody boy?

**GOODE:** I'm serious. If we weren't baptizing, I'd be out of here. Maybe even sent home.

**ELLISON:** Sent home?

**GOODE:** That night we spent disco contacting?

**ELLISON:** That was weeks ago.

**GOODE:** The James Bond film festival?

**ELLISON:** We got three good contacts from that.

**GOODE:** The ward camp-out, playing euchre until three in the morning?

**ELLISON:** Toralf Brekke joined the church after that camp-out.

**GOODE:** The swimming party down at the town pool?

**ELLISON:** That was a baptism.

**GOODE:** We were in the water two hours.

**ELLISON:** A very long baptism.

**GOODE:** I know that. But they'll be suspicious. What was Jennifer Ellison doing in the pool too, they'll ask.

**ELLISON:** Practicing for when we get the priesthood. And in the meanwhile, perfecting my backstroke.

**WILDE:** Sister?

**ELLISON:** It was before you got here.

**WILDE:** You went swimming?

**ELLISON:** I was wearing P-day shorts, heavy tee-shirt, it was fine.

**WILDE:** Jen, come on, 'the devil rides the waters...'

**GOODE:** Yeah, right, like we're supposed to take that scripture literally.

**ELLISON:** The point is, it was a baptism. The work's getting done.

**GOODE:** The point is, the apes want numbers.

**WILDE:** We're getting numbers, Goody. You read 'em to us at district meeting.

**GOODE:** But tracting hours. Study hours.

**ELLISON:** We've met every goal they've set for us.

**GOODE:** They're suspicious of the numbers I send in. They should be, of course, most of them are made up.  
And I think they sent Boyd to catch us.

**ELLISON:** Okay, so have Hartvig and the greenie handle the soccer league. And we get the branch to throw the parties. If they invite us, that's not our fault.

**GOODE:** All right. But I think you guys have to make up the slack.

**ELLISON:** Us?

**WILDE:** We hold up our end.

**GOODE:** You hold up more than your end. I need you to do more. I want you to average seventy tracting hours the next month.

**ELLISON:** The best we've ever done is fifty-two.

**GOODE:** Rededicate yourselves. Write the president, say you're really caught the vision of this numbers thing.  
Big push time.

**ELLISON:** On paper.

**GOODE:** Of course, on paper. Nobody could do seventy in real life.

**WILDE:** You want us to lie on our reports.

**GOODE:** You already are.

**WILDE:** Uh uh. No way.

**ELLISON:** We're pretty accurate.

**GOODE:** You pad.

**WILDE:** No we don't.

**GOODE:** Come on, the week we set up that Monopoly tournament you reported forty-two tracting, and you spent the whole week in our hybel. I've been doing it for months. But I can't report hours that Boyd doesn't see me work.

**ELLISON:** Why is it always us that has to bail you out, Goody?

**GOODE:** Because we're buds.

**ELLISON:** Buds?

**GOODE:** Buds. Aren't we?

**ELLISON:** Fellow missionaries with a shared, somewhat iconoclastic vision.

**WILDE:** Iconoclastic? We're iconoclastic?

**ELLISON:** You can look it up when we get home.

**GOODE:** Buds. Because we both know that all those goals and numbers are just things they make up to make lazy missionaries work. Because we're better than all those tiny little number brains.

**ELLISON:** Goody, why do you hate the apes so much?

**GOODE:** I don't hate the apes.

**ELLISON:** You do too.

**GOODE:** Not hate, exactly.

**WILDE:** Thinly disguised contempt.

**GOODE:** Because they're brown-nosers. Because the way to make Assistant to the President is to bully your way into enough little old ladies' homes to compile real eye popping numbers, all for another line on your resume. Another step up the GA ladder.

**WILDE:** Doug Porter was in my group at the MTC and --

**GOODE:** All right, not all of them. But you wouldn't believe the letters I get from those little Nazis. Like I'm this close to apostasy because my district's tracting hours are down.

**ELLISON:** Okay, look, we'll be your super sisters. But give Boyd a chance. The apes wouldn't send him to spy. They're not smart enough, and he's too obvious.

**GOODE:** Thanks, Jen.

**ELLISON:** Sister Ellison.

**GOODE:** Jen? I'm hurt.

**ELLISON:** I'm serious. We each have six more months. Let's keep it professional.

**GOODE:** In front of him, fine.

**ELLISON:** All the time, Goody. This talk about "buds," I don't think I care for. You're my district leader, not my pal.

**GOODE:** I thought we were friends.

**ELLISON:** A little formal distance never hurt anybody.

**GOODE:** You're no fun anymore.

**WILDE:** This one.

**GOODE:** My door.

*(A MAN answers.)*

God kveld. Jeg representerer Jesu Kristi Kirke av Siste ...<sup>21</sup>

**MAN:** Aeesjhh ...

*(Slams the door resoundingly.)*

**GOODE:** Now that's a reject.

**WILDE:** *(To audience, as Goode exits.)* And so it was.

**ELLISON:** And so were most doors.

**WILDE:** However iconoclastic Goodie may have been.

**ELLISON:** He was right about tracting.

**WILDE:** As Elder Dave McCarty the greenie, was learning, his first week in Norway.

**MCCARTY:** *(Enters with Hartvig, flings his tracting bag on the ground.)* Man!

**HARTVIG:** Yep.

**MCCARTY:** *(Mimes washing his face.)* I just ... I just can't... Makes me so--

**HARTVIG:** I hear ya.

**MCCARTY:** Never in my life--

**HARTVIG:** Get used to it.

**MCCARTY:** Did I get it all?

**HARTVIG:** I think so.

**MCCARTY:** Elder Hartvig?

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<sup>21</sup> 'Good evening. We represent the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day ...'

**HARTVIG:** Yo.

**MCCARTY:** Could I get like, I don't know ... sick?

**HARTVIG:** I doubt it.

**MCCARTY:** I just heard ... saliva--

**HARTVIG:** Dude, like I know.

**MCCARTY:** (*Panicked, shrill.*) That guy spit on me, and if he's HIV positive or something--

**HARTVIG:** Dude, mellow. People trade saliva when they kiss, right? And don't get sick.

**MCCARTY:** I guess that's right.

**HARTVIG:** Look, I thought you did fine. I mean, I nearly punched the guy, first time I got spit on.

**MCCARTY:** I wanted to.

**HARTVIG:** Of course you wanted to. But you didn't. You dealt with it.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah, I guess.

*(Pause. A thought.)*

The first time you got spit on? So this is like a regular occurrence?

**HARTVIG:** It's happened to me twice in eighteen months.

**MCCARTY:** So I just got lucky my first week.

**HARTVIG:** Bad luck, that's right.

**MCCARTY:** I shouldn'ta called him what I called him.

**HARTVIG:** In English. He probably didn't understand.

**MCCARTY:** I can't even cuss in Norwegian.

*(He sits.)*

**HARTVIG:** You're doing fine.

**MCCARTY:** (*Depressed.*) I didn't understand a single word a single person said to me today. The only guy I understood even a little bit was the guy who spit on me.

*(With a wan smile.)*

That was a reject, right?

**HARTVIG:** It's just speed. When they come over to the States, they think we all talk English too fast. You'll get it.

**MCCARTY:** I guess.

**HARTVIG:** Look, let's get something to eat.

**MCCARTY:** (*Close to tears.*) Elder Hartvig, I want to go home.

**HARTVIG:** I know.

**MCCARTY:** I have never in my life wanted anything as much as I want to go home right now.

**HARTVIG:** No you don't.

**MCCARTY:** Oh yes I do.

**HARTVIG:** And you'd get home, and you'd have to explain to everyone who came to your farewell, embarrassing... You're better off here, getting spit on.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah.

**HARTVIG:** Look, you really kinda lucked out. Getting Skien for your first assignment, Goody for your first DL. One of the best hybels in the mission and me as your greenie trainer. You really hit the jackpot.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah, I feel real lucky.

**HARTVIG:** I know how you're feeling, man. There are good times too, okay?

**MCCARTY:** Yeah, okay. So what do we do now?

**HARTVIG:** You're still looking shaky to me. Let's just take it easy, get an early start on middag<sup>22</sup>.

**MCCARTY:** Middag? That's dinner, right?

**HARTVIG:** Yeah. It's our turn to cook.

**MCCARTY:** A word I know.

*(Paces impatiently.)*

It's only two-thirty, man. I say, let's go back out again.

**HARTVIG:** You sure?

**MCCARTY:** Like when you fall off a bike, you have to get back up right away. Right?

**HARTVIG:** Yeah.

**MCCARTY:** So let's go.

**HARTVIG:** Well, sure. If you think you're up to it.

**MCCARTY:** Lets go tracting. Rock and roll!

**HARTVIG:** Yeah. Look, Elder McCarty, the fact is, you're not a lot of help to me right now.

**MCCARTY:** I know that! That's why I'm saying--

**HARTVIG:** I'd basically be doing all the work.

**MCCARTY:** All the more reason--

**HARTVIG:** Will you listen?

*(MCCARTY stops.)*

See, the thing is, we're in Skien.

**MCCARTY:** Best district in the mission. Number one, right?

**HARTVIG:** Sure.

**MCCARTY:** So we need to keep up with the others, right?

**HARTVIG:** What I'm saying is, we may not work quite the way you expected.

**MCCARTY:** How do you mean?

**HARTVIG:** Well, like three times a week, we coach soccer.

**MCCARTY:** Goody mentioned that --

**HARTVIG:** Don't worry, it's a breeze. See, the thing is, tracting's a waste of time. You saw it today, people just get pissed off. So we look for more fun kinda stuff, get to know the people, show them we're not some kinda weirdos. More fun stuff.

**MCCARTY:** Right, but then we also tract, right?

**HARTVIG:** Not a lot.

**MCCARTY:** Oh.

**HARTVIG:** See, me and Martin, the guy you're replacing, we thought we'd figure out our own way of doing things too. Sort of follow Goody's lead?

**MCCARTY:** Okay.

**HARTVIG:** Some of it stuff Goody doesn't even know about.

**MCCARTY:** Like what?

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<sup>22</sup> Literally 'midday.' Short for 'midday meal' i.e. dinner.

**HARTVIG:** Well, example: I'm not really much of a soccer coach. Goody and Grant, his old greenie, they played a bunch in high school, but I wasn't much of a jock, more your ath-a-letic supporter type.

**MCCARTY:** What are you saying, Elder?

**HARTVIG:** Well, see, Elder Martin and I, my old companion, we used to slide a bit on the coaching, do other stuff instead.

**MCCARTY:** Like?

**HARTVIG:** Movie theatre contacting. Video arcade contacting. That kind of thing.

**MCCARTY:** Oh.

*(A long pause, while he considers this.)*

**HARTVIG:** Beats getting spit on.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah.

*(After a moment. He sits.)*

That sounds okay, I guess.

**HARTVIG:** See, I just knew we'd get along. What do you wanna do for middag?

**MCCARTY:** Whatever you say.

*(Enter ELLISON, WILDE, GOODE, BOYD. Exit MCCARTY and HARTVIG.)*

**ELLISON:** Iron Rod and Liahona.

**WILDE:** Spirit of the law, and strict obedience.

**ELLISON:** Agency, free or otherwise.

**WILDE:** A parable.

**ELLISON:** A parable.

**WILDE:** About ways of knowing, approaches to life. About ... just getting along.

**ELLISON:** Elder Goode and Elder Boyd.

**WILDE:** Scene four. On the bus, home from an appointment.

*(GOODE and BOYD, on a bus. After a considerable pause.)*

**GOODE:** So. What did you do before your mission?

**BOYD:** We're in public.

**GOODE:** Oh, for crying out loud. The bus is nearly empty, there's nobody within ten seats of us.

**BOYD:** Mission rules explicitly state --

**GOODE:** Give me a break--

**BOYD:** Hey, rules are rules. I'm breaking a rule even arguing with you in English.

**GOODE:** Fine.

**BOYD:** The rule was established --

**GOODE:** The rule ... see, it's like a courtesy; we try to speak Norwegian when among Norwegians. It's a good rule, and generally I support it. It doesn't apply here. In this situation. Will you relax a little?

**BOYD:** We're in public, we're supposed to speak Norwegian.

**GOODE:** All right, fine. I asked you a question: Hva gjorde du før misjonen din?<sup>23</sup> Answer me. I can talk Norwegian, you know. I speak it better than you do.

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<sup>23</sup> 'What did you do before your mission.'



**BOYD:** All right. Jeg arbeide oppå en fabrikk<sup>24</sup>, og ...

**GOODE:** You work on top of a factory? I thought you were a missionary.

**BOYD:** You know what I meant.

**GOODE:** I have no idea what you meant. Must be exciting, working on top of a factory. Come on. What else?

**BOYD:** Leave me alone.

**GOODE:** You're breaking a rule. Thou shalt get along with thy compan--

**BOYD:** All right, my Norwegian's not as good as yours. You've made your point. How am I going to improve if you insist on speaking English?

**GOODE:** You won't improve by speaking with other missionaries.

**BOYD:** Why not? What's wrong with --?

**GOODE:** You pick up too many bad habits. I've heard you speak. You speak English with Norwegian vocabulary. English idioms, English pronunciation, English grammar. You've spent too much time obeying a silly rule, and not enough time actually learning the language.

**BOYD:** I've never claimed to have any facility for languages.

**GOODE:** But you can listen, can't you?

**BOYD:** I try to listen.

**GOODE:** But you translate. In your head, you listen and translate it to English. That's why you can't speak it.

**BOYD:** I haven't notice you listening. You're too busy talking.

**GOODE:** I've put in my time listening. I think Norwegian; that's why I can talk it.

**BOYD:** You spend your study time reading comic books.

**GOODE:** Comic books are meant for children. The grammar's correct, vocabulary is simple, and they give a good grasp of idiom.

**BOYD:** I prefer to read the scriptures.

**GOODE:** Which are not contemporary, not idiomatic, badly translated--

**BOYD:** They're good enough for me.

**GOODE:** Look, I know you don't like the language. But if you speak it well, you're a better missionary, a better servant of God, if you want to put it that way.

**BOYD:** I know that.

**GOODE:** Then forget the rules, and talk English with me; we'll get along better. But when we're in public, listen to the Norwegians. Listen to the images of the language, the word-pictures they draw. What's the Norwegian word for vacuum cleaner?

**BOYD:** I ... I don't know.

**GOODE:** Støvsuger. Dust sucker. I mean, is that great or what? I mean, look at our word for it; dry, technical, a description of the operating principle: vacuum cleaner. But dust sucker. How can you not love a people that call a vacuum a dust sucker?

**BOYD:** I ... see your point.

**GOODE:** All right. Good. Let's start over. You work on top of a factory.

**BOYD:** Just for a year. I had a year at Ricks, and had a religion class that persuaded me to, you know, make the leap, go. I earned the money by working for a year at a pre-fab house assembly line.

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<sup>24</sup> 'I work on top of a factory.' Obviously, he means to say 'I worked in a factory.'

**GOODE:** Pre-fab houses. That sounds interesting.

**BOYD:** You think so? Assembly line work, working with a nail gun, everyone else on the site was Hispanic.

The money was good, though. I saved enough for the whole two years. If I budget carefully.

**GOODE:** This was in St. George?

**BOYD:** Las Vegas. I stayed with my sister.

**GOODE:** Vegas? Cool!

**BOYD:** Sodom and Gomorrah combined.

**GOODE:** So you were, what, twenty when you went?

**BOYD:** I went the week after my twentieth birthday. How about you?

**GOODE:** I was twenty two. Nearly twenty four now.

**BOYD:** Really?

**GOODE:** Had two years of college, worked for a while. I had everything, Boyd, great job, spending cash, little four by four pickup, a hot girlfriend. All those cliches. Then ... just decided to ditch it all and go.

**BOYD:** So what about after this?

**GOODE:** After my mission? Back to college, I guess. Marketing or something.

**BOYD:** This is our stop.

*(They get out of the bus.)*

Okay. We start with that house over there.

*(As they cross.)*

**GOODE:** So what about your plans?

**BOYD:** I'll be married within six months. With any luck, my wife will be able to support us for a while, until I finish my CPA. Unless children come first, and of course, they likely will. But we'll struggle through.

**GOODE:** You got someone waiting?

**BOYD:** Oh no. But I'll be married within six months all the same.

**GOODE:** But how can you say that? How do you know when you'll meet someone?

**BOYD:** My door, I think.

**GOODE:** Help yourself.

*(BOYD rings. A MAN answers.)*

**MAN:** Nei, oh nei!<sup>25</sup>

**BOYD:** God kveld. Vi representerer Jesu Kristi Kirke av Siste Dagers ...<sup>26</sup>

**MAN:** Jeg er ikke interessert, absolutt ikke.<sup>27</sup>

*(He slams the door.)*

**GOODE:** (Marking the tracting book.) Reject. Now what's this about ... what are you doing?

*(BOYD rings again.)*

**BOYD:** That's one.

**MAN:** *(Opens the door.)* Er du duv? Jeg er overhodet ikke interessert.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> 'No, oh, no!'

<sup>26</sup> 'Good evening. We represent the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day...'

<sup>27</sup> 'I am not interested, absolutely not interested.'

<sup>28</sup> 'Are you deaf? I am completely not interested.'

*(He slams the door.)*

**GOODE:** Boyd, he's not interested. Reject. Let's go.

**BOYD:** They have to say it three times.

**GOODE:** What?

**BOYD:** They have to tell me they're not interested three times.

**GOODE:** Are you crazy?

**BOYD:** It's what I do.

**GOODE:** That's not a rule!

**BOYD:** It's my rule.

*(He rings again.)*

**GOODE:** Boyd!

**MAN:** *(Livid.)* Er du gall? Må jeg ringe politi?<sup>29</sup>

**GOODE:** Unnskyld oss. Vi er amerikaner, og vi forstår ikke ...<sup>30</sup>

**BOYD:** Herr Bjorkland. Unnskyld meg. Men jeg representerer Jesus Kristus, og han har et budskap for deg. Og jeg må og skal gi deg dette budskapet.<sup>31</sup>

*(A long pause. The MAN looks them both over intently.)*

**MAN:** *(Holds the door open.)* Du får komme inn, da.<sup>32</sup>

*(GOODE stares at BOYD, amazed.)*

**GOODE:** You are amazing.

**BOYD:** We're in.

**GOODE:** You almost got us arrested, you know that.

**BOYD:** Get in there and help me teach him.

**GOODE:** You ... maniac.

*(They enter.)*

**ELLISON:** And so they taught the lesson.

**WILDE:** A lesson Boyd could not have taught.

**ELLISON:** In a home where Goode would not have gotten in the door.

**WILDE:** Liahona and Iron Rod.

**ELLISON:** Together.

**WILDE:** Later that day, the elders met back at the hybel. Goode and Hartvig went to play with Herr Andreassen's electric trains. McCarty and Boyd worked on dinner. And Boyd told the tale of the three reject door.

**BOYD:** It was the most amazing experience I think I've had my whole mission.

*(The missionary apartment. BOYD and MCCARTY are fixing dinner. Soundgarden is playing on a CD player.)*

**MCCARTY:** *(He skins a knuckle peeling potatoes.)* Ouch.

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<sup>29</sup> 'Are you out of your mind? Do I have to call the police?'

<sup>30</sup> 'Please excuse us. We're Americans and we don't understand...'

<sup>31</sup> Mr. Bjorkland. Forgive me. But I represent Jesus Christ, and he has a message for you. And I must, and shall give you that message.

<sup>32</sup> 'You'd best come in, then.'

*(Sucks on a finger.)*

**BOYD:** It helps if you peel away from your body.

*(Demonstrates.)*

**MCCARTY:** Thanks.

*(Looks around.)*

So this is dinner.

**BOYD:** I know it's not very exciting, but fish, potatoes, boiled mixed veggies, nutritious and inexpensive.

**MCCARTY:** Right.

**BOYD:** Some elders spend half their money at pastry shops. Easy enough to do in this country. I can't afford it.

*(As he talks, he crosses to the CD player and turns the sound way down.)*

We don't need this quite so loud, do we?

**MCCARTY:** Actually, I kinda like--

**BOYD:** This kind of music is against mission rules anyway.

**MCCARTY:** Goodie said it was okay if we--

**BOYD:** I know. I know what Elder Goode said.

**MCCARTY:** He's the district leader.

**BOYD:** We should at least keep it down.

**MCCARTY:** So anyway, you get in--

**BOYD:** We're in, I'm teaching the lesson, telling the Joseph Smith story, and the guy's kind of squirming in his chair, like he wasn't that interested.

**MCCARTY:** Gee, after two rejects, you'd think --

**BOYD:** Yeah, I wondered too. What's going on? I'm thinking, the dramatic way we get in, and then suddenly he's acting bored. And ... Well, I have a confession to make, Elder McCarty. My Norwegian is not that strong.

**MCCARTY:** *(Politely.)* It's still better than mine. We just stick the fish in frozen like this?

**BOYD:** You can wrap it in tin foil if you like.

**MCCARTY:** Could I, like, add an onion or something?

**BOYD:** I'm allergic to onions. And we can cook the veggie with the potatoes in about fifteen minutes. Elders Hartvig and Goode said they'd be back soon; I hope they're not late.

**MCCARTY:** Me neither.

*(Unobtrusively, he crosses back to the CD player, and turns it up a bit.)*

**BOYD:** Anyway, the language. I miss a lot of nuances. I can teach, but that's the extent of it.

**MCCARTY:** I know the feeling.

**BOYD:** So anyway, I just kept plunging along, telling the story the best I could, and suddenly Goode leans over and says, "Herr Bjorkland, there's something else bothering you, isn't there?"

**MCCARTY:** Do we do anything for dessert?

**BOYD:** Certainly not. Just empty calories. Besides, it's not good for your complexion.

*(Crosses to CD player, turns it down again.)*

**MCCARTY:** I can see that.

*(Hastily, as BOYD starts to glare at him.)*

So he interrupted? Right in the middle of your lesson?

*(We see GOODE teaching BJORKLAND in mime, in dim light.)*

**BOYD:** That's right. He leaned over, and, I don't know, there was this ... gentleness. Like he really cared. And he said, "Herr Bjorkland. Tell me about it."

**MCCARTY:** Just like that.

**BOYD:** Turned out that Bjorkland's brother had died, hit by a car playing on the sidewalk. The state church priest had given a sermon, said it was "God's will" that he died.

**MCCARTY:** That's terrible.

**BOYD:** Turned him completely off from religion. He said he wanted nothing to do with a God who could want an innocent child to die.

**MCCARTY:** And then Goode taught him.

**BOYD:** Plan of salvation. But it was more than that.

**MCCARTY:** Yeah?

**BOYD:** It was just amazing. I could never have taught like that. The way he remembered scriptures, and telling personal stories, the spirit so strong. There was this bond, it felt like they were the only two people in the room, just Goode and Herr Bjorkland. And Goody, he listened, he had this compassion. And the spirit. Like the light in the room surrounded just them. Leaving me out. A piece of furniture, off in the corner.

**MCCARTY:** I know what that's like.

**BOYD:** I didn't say another word after Goode interrupted me.

**MCCARTY:** But you got him in.

**BOYD:** Yes I did.

**MCCARTY:** Nobody else could have gotten in that door.

*(Turns up music again on CD player.)*

**BOYD:** No. No one else could have.

**MCCARTY:** So. That's something.

**BOYD:** That's my mission. The obnoxious jerk. Other elders get the spirit, do the teaching. I get the door slammed in my face. Three-reject Boyd.

**MCCARTY:** *(Uncomfortable.)* Hey, I just sit there and try to radiate. You know? When Hartvig teaches, I can't even follow the conversation. I keep hoping there's maybe some Spirit or something radiating out from me they can feel a little.

**BOYD:** Yes.

**MCCARTY:** I know what it's like.

**BOYD:** Yes.

**MCCARTY:** We just try to do our best. Everybody does something.

*(A little joke.)*

I'm getting real good at carrying the tracting bag.

**BOYD:** You're right. We all have our talents, we're to use them in God's service. Not envy others their gifts.

**MCCARTY:** Listen, elder Boyd...

**BOYD:** Yes?

**MCCARTY:** Just mixed veggies, potatoes and fish? You sure that's all we want to have?

**BOYD:** It's what I cook.

*(Turns the music off completely.)*

**ELLISON:** And, as it happened, Elders Hartvig and Goode did make it back in time for supper.

**WILDE:** A meal full of nutrients. If not much imagination.

**ELLISON:** The elders ate together. And then back to work in the evenings, a routine day in many ways.

**WILDE:** The hybel had two bedrooms, bunks for Hartvig and McCarty, singles for Boyd and Goode.

**ELLISON:** One of the few pleasures missionaries have is conversation, and four elders to an apartment makes for a comfortable enough life, without so much togetherness it becomes stifling.

**WILDE:** But companions are still companions, and talk late at night, alone.

*(Late at night. GOODE and BOYD are in bed.)*

**GOODE:** Elder Boyd?

**BOYD:** Yeah?

**GOODE:** You asleep?

**BOYD:** No, Elder Goode, I'm not.

**GOODE:** Do you mind if we, you know, just chat a bit?

**BOYD:** For a few minutes.

**GOODE:** Do you ever think about getting married?

**BOYD:** Not really.

**GOODE:** You don't? Not ever?

**BOYD:** On a mission, I don't think it's appropriate.

**GOODE:** Just to think about it? I don't mean think about sex and all. I just mean, you know, the general idea. Being married.

**BOYD:** Why do you ask?

**GOODE:** You said one time that you knew you'd be married within six months of finishing your mission. I just wondered.

**BOYD:** Well, I will.

**GOODE:** How do you figure? Nobody's waiting for you.

**BOYD:** No.

**GOODE:** So how can you be so certain?

**BOYD:** Well, here's the way I figure it. I'll finish my mission next August; I'll start the fall semester at BYU that September. I'll go to church, my student ward, look around. I'll be looking for just the right girl.

**GOODE:** Okay, so who will you look for? Who's your dream girl?

**BOYD:** I'm not looking for some fantasy. I'm looking for a realistic mate and helpmeet.

**GOODE:** Describe her.

**BOYD:** I'm not an attractive man, Elder Goode, either in terms of physical appearance or personality. I'm not looking for romance. Or even love.

**ELLISON:** *(Appears with WILDE)* Every ward has girls like this.

**WILDE:** Mid to late twenties.

**BOYD:** Maybe a little heavy, perhaps a complexion to match mine. Many of them not all that interested in a career, clinging to the hope of temple marriage.

**ELLISON:** Most guys wouldn't give them a second look.

**WILDE:** You see them every Sunday outside the bishop's office.

**ELLISON:** They ask for counsel, but they know that he has little to offer them.

**BOYD:** He knows and they know why they haven't been dating. He knows and they know that there is little he can do to help them.

**ELLISON:** Every student ward has them, depressed and lonely women, desperate for some kindness and attention.

**WILDE:** Lining the outer edges of dance floors. Changing majors to avoid graduation.

**BOYD:** But with testimonies, and a strong relationship to their savior. That's the kind of girl I expect to marry.

*(WILDE and ELLISON leave)*

**GOODE:** I've known girls like that.

**BOYD:** I'll go to church, and I'll look around. I'll find the right girl for me.

**GOODE:** You'd be willing to settle for --

**BOYD:** Physical imperfection? Look at my face, Elder Goode. I know all about physical imperfection.

**GOODE:** You're too hard on yourself.

**BOYD:** I'm realistic. And I know what matters in a woman, and what doesn't.

**GOODE:** Good for you.

**BOYD:** I can find a wife pretty quickly, I think. I'll take her out a few times. Then I'll propose.

**GOODE:** Okay.

**BOYD:** And I'll be truthful. I'll say, "We don't know each other well, and I don't expect that you love me. I'm not even certain what love is. I don't expect you to find me attractive, nor do I regard attractiveness highly. But I respect you, and I value you. I cannot promise you romance. But I believe any two righteous people can make a righteous marriage. I can promise you 100 percent fidelity, 100 percent devotion to you and to our children. If you can accept me on those terms, I would be honored if you would be my wife." And she'll be a little hurt, a little offended, I suspect. But she'll think it over. And she'll accept. And that is how I will be married.

**GOODE:** That's just ... that's just horrifying.

**BOYD:** What do you mean?

**GOODE:** How can you live like that? How can you live a life so completely without ... romance of any kind?

**BOYD:** I don't believe romance is even once mentioned in the scriptures, Elder Goode.

**GOODE:** Joy is, and love, and affection. You're talking about ... some kind of nightmare.

**BOYD:** I'm talking about reality. About recognizing who I am and making the best of it.

**GOODE:** Settling for some kind of passionless ... arrangement.

**BOYD:** Much like the marriages of most our ancestors, Elder Goode.

**GOODE:** You'll just ... 'I don't love you but that doesn't matter, let's get married.'

**BOYD:** I won't say 'I don't love you.'

**GOODE:** You just don't think it's relevant? Whether you're in love or not?

**BOYD:** Don't judge me, Elder Goode. You asked me a question that was frankly rather personal. I don't appreciate being attacked for my answer.

**GOODE:** I'm sorry. It just seems awfully cold.

**BOYD:** Some of us haven't had much warmth in our lives.

**GOODE:** But you can try and make some warmth, can't you?

**BOYD:** I don't know how. I do know how to live without it.

*(Pause.)*

**GOODE:** Look, I'm sorry.

**BOYD:** I'm not offended.

**GOODE:** I shouldn't judge.

**BOYD:** I'm not you, Elder Goode. I lack your ease, your poise. Your assurance with members of the opposite sex.

**GOODE:** What do you mean?

**BOYD:** Well, the sisters, for example. They like you. They like being with you. I've never had that.

**GOODE:** They like you too.

**BOYD:** Nonsense. They put up with me for the sake of the work.

**GOODE:** Jen was telling me just the other day ...

**BOYD:** See, there you go. Jen. Not Sister Ellison. Jen.

**GOODE:** We're friends.

**BOYD:** More than just friends, I'd say.

**GOODE:** She's just a fellow missionary.

**BOYD:** A good one, under all the joking.

**GOODE:** Oh, sure. She should be district leader, really. She's been my right hand man since they made me DL.

**BOYD:** Your right hand man. Watch it.

**GOODE:** Give me a break.

**BOYD:** There are standards of appropriate conduct.

**GOODE:** Tell it to someone who cares.

**BOYD:** You're planning to marry that girl, aren't you?

**GOODE:** Oh no. No no no no. Not going to happen.

**BOYD:** I'm sorry. You seem awfully friendly, that's all.

**GOODE:** Look, you may want a life without romance. I don't. I want slow dancing, candlelight, flowers, a guitar serenade. Not a lifetime swapping stories with some mission buddy.

**BOYD:** You'll look her up when you get home, won't you?

**GOODE:** Well sure.

**BOYD:** There you go...

**GOODE:** I plan to look up lots of people. Who knows, I may even look you up.

**BOYD:** I won't hold my breath.

**GOODE:** Of course I will.

**BOYD:** I have no illusions about how you feel about me.

**GOODE:** I don't, like, hate you. You're just so ...

*(Pause.)*

**BOYD:** So what?

**GOODE:** So weird. I mean look at this conversation.

**BOYD:** What about it?

**GOODE:** Doesn't it strike you as weird? I mean, can't you see how weird--

**BOYD:** The point is, whoever you marry, Jennifer Ellison or whoever, even with those little romantic gestures you plan to make, you'll be doing the same thing I plan to do. Weighing options, making choices. A selection. We all make our unromantic adjustments to reality.



**GOODE:** Look, just forget it, okay? Forget I ever mentioned it.

**BOYD:** Fine. Good night, Elder Goode.

*(Pause.)*

**GOODE:** I can't sleep now.

*(Gets out of bed, picks up his guitar.)*

I'm going to play for awhile. I hope you don't mind.

**BOYD:** As a matter of fact, I do mind. It's against mission rules and I'm trying to sleep.

**GOODE:** Tough.

*(Strikes a few angry chords. Blackout on him.)*

**ELLISON:** End Act One.

**WILDE:** There will be a short intermission.

*32 additional pages in Act Two*