THE FARM BOY AND THE ANGEL

the scabbard at his side, the General snatched a glittering blade and raised it above his head.

"I call upon God and angels to witness that I have unsheathed my sword with a firm and unalterable determination that this people shall have their legal rights... or my blood shall be spilt upon the ground like water, and my body consigned to the silent tomb... I would welcome death rather than submit to this oppression; and it would be sweet, oh sweet, to rest in the grave rather than to submit."

For an hour more Joseph stirred the emotions of his people. And in the last minute of his appeal, he transformed himself from soldier in uniform to prophet of the Lord: "God has tried you. You are a good people; therefore I love you with all my heart. Greater love hath no man than that he should lay down his life for his friends... I am willing to sacrifice my life for your preservation..."

"May the Lord God of Israel bless you for ever and ever. I say it in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and in the authority of the Holy Priesthood he has conferred upon me."

As the Prophet-General-Mayor left his makeshift platform, it was obvious to his prominent associates that he had made the crowning effort of his life. Before the Legion of Nauvoo, the largest military unit in the frontier states, he had defied the infuriated mobs still gathering in the river towns on both sides of the Mississippi. He had tried to make it clear that he regarded the publishers of the Expositor as criminals disturbing the peace, as inciters to violence, and therefore not entitled to federal guarantees of freedom of the press. But he had ignored the fact that he and the other Mormon leaders had for some time been practicing polygamy. Had he chosen to admit this, the bitterness of the anti-Mormons in the area would unquestionably have brought about an invasion of Nauvoo and civil war.

It is impossible to know how many of Joseph's wives heard his ringing speech that Tuesday afternoon. It would be equally impossible to state definitely how many of the thirty or more women with whom he had gone through marriage ceremonies were "spiritual" wives—wedded to him only "for eternity"—and hence not sharers of his bed. There can be little doubt, however, that among his admiring hearers were several women whom he had married "for time" and with whom he had experienced connubial joys.

Perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most widely known of these was pretty, tiny, blond Lucinda Pendleton Morgan Harris, of whom Joseph had heard much in the days of his upstate New York treasure-digging before he had married his first wife, Emma Hale. Lucinda's first husband had been the William Morgan who had threatened to reveal secrets of the Masons and had been kidnapped and murdered by fanatic members of that fraternity. One of the first of the Prophet's plural wives, Lucinda had, for the seven years since she was thirty, been married to a Mason—George Washington Harris. It was then, living at the Harris home in Far West, Missouri, that Joseph had converted her to acceptance of the plural-marriage principle. Among other spouses (aside from the omnipresent Emma) who may well have listened pridefully to their eloquent husband on that sunny June afternoon in 1844 were twenty-nine-year-old Louisa Beaman,
generally thought to be his first plural wife (he had been married to her for three years), and Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, who later reported, "I was sealed to him in the Masonic Hall over the old brick store by Brigham Young in February, 1842."

That same year he had wed Eliza Roxey Snow, poetess, sealed to him in June both for time and eternity; Sarah Anne Whitney, his bride of July; and Elvira Cowles, whom he soon after won for time and eternity. In the spring of 1843 he had added to his mates the Partridge sisters, Eliza, twenty-three, and Emily, nineteen; the Lawrence girls—Mary, twenty, and her sister Sarah, seventeen; Almira Woodward Johnson, thirty-one; Lucy Walker, seventeen; and Olive Frost, twenty-seven. That fall he married nineteen-year-old Melissa Lott, who seems to have been, according to his biographers, the last wife wedded before his murder.

Hence several hearts beat faster as the tall General jumped lightly down from the wall. A black boot reached for a stirrup and a second flashed over the rump of the prancing black stallion, Charlie. As one man, the white-clad dozen of the bodyguard swung into their saddles. In the dark blue uniform, surmounted by the star-splendid plumes, Joseph had become a black eagle floating in a white cloud of doves. The brass band struck up a march, and sharp orders punctuated the music as the officers of the Legion of Nauvoo moved their men into line. Their Lieutenant General and his staff led a great parade up the slanting Main Street toward the unfinished tower of the Temple of the Latter-day Saints, standing lone and high in the rays of the westering sun, while thousands of the Mormon faithful cheered.

"I Have Unsheathed My Sword"

After the Legion broke ranks on its parade grounds General Smith rode back to the Mansion House. Messengers had been galloping into town all the afternoon, and they awaited him. They said mobs were forming nearby in the towns of Appanoose and La Harpe, Rocky Run and Green Plains, Pilot Grove and Spilman's Landing. In their opinion, the excited horsemen reported, invasion of Nauvoo was certain. There was even talk of mobs arriving by steamboat at Nauvoo Landing.

After Joseph had gone to bed he was awakened by a persistent knocking on the Mansion House door. When he unbarred and opened, he was just able to recognize in the darkness Shadrach Roundy, a Nauvoo policeman. The officer warned him that a man named Norton had been overheard in the streets making wild threats to shoot him. After some questions and answers, faithful Shadrach resumed his duties, and Joseph went back to bed.

The Legion paraded along the riverbanks every morning in the next few days, and every day the Lieutenant General in full uniform reviewed them. At his order small detachments were constantly galloping over the brown muddy roads that patterned the flat prairie. Pickets were sent out to stand guard on all the approaches to Nauvoo. Families of refugees, driven from their homes by their non-Mormon neighbors, appeared in the streets. A company of the Legion marching from Macedonia to Nauvoo came upon an anti-Mormon unit twice as large as their own, marching under two red flags. These foes at once deployed at the edge of a wood. The Legionnaires "opened file about ten feet apart" and resolutely kept to the road, though under sporadic fire that did no damage.