

Greg Kofford Books



The Garden of ENid

Adventures of a Weird MORMON GIRL

a graphic novel by
Scott Hales

foreword by
Theric Jepson



Part Two

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GREG KOFFORD BOOKS
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For
Ella Kiley

From the Author

In an interview I gave with the blog *Rational Faiths* in 2014, I said *The Garden of Enid* was my love letter to Mormonism. Maybe that was a cheesy thing to say, but I stand by it.

I was about eight years old when I first knew I wanted to tell stories. A box in my closet has pages of comics I drew or stories I wrote as a kid. My first comic, which I can't seem to find, had a Bart Simpson knock-off blowing away this bully named Mac with a Thompson submachine gun. For the record, I think I've put my talents to better use since then.

None of those early comics or stories engaged my Mormonism in any way. In fact, I remember thinking once that I would have to keep my Mormonism out of my work if I ever wanted to be published. Since I'd never seen Mormons portrayed in movies, TV, comics, or fiction before, I assumed that if I wanted to tell stories I would have to tell them about people who were like me—but not quite.

As I got older, probably fifteen or sixteen, I realized I didn't want to tell stories about those kinds of people. I wanted to write compelling stories about Mormons in the throes of interesting conflicts. Other Mormon writers—Margaret Young, Levi Peterson, Douglas Thayer—were already telling these stories, but I had no way of getting ahold of their work. This was in the mid-1990s, when the Internet was still a toddler and Amazon.com was barely more than a dream. If a teenager in Cincinnati, Ohio, wanted to read a Mormon novel, he had to settle for Jack Weyland, Gerald Lund, or Orson Scott Card.

I've written a number of Mormon stories since then, most of which can be found online or in the hidden recesses

of my computer. *The Garden of Enid* was my first full-length comic worth noting. As I drew it, I tried to make it as Mormon as possible, refusing to make its Mormon content more accessible for non-Mormon readers. I wanted her to be as much a product of Mormonism as Anakin Skywalker was of the Force. But maybe that's not the best analogy. I figured if I did the comic right it would have universal appeal, despite its heavy Mormon content.

Mormonism is a world, after all, and storytelling is about building convincing worlds. If you are honest about the world you build, readers will want to explore it, even if it's strange and unfamiliar. They don't need hand-holding or explanatory billboards to help them along. They just need an honest world and reason to care.

I don't know if *The Garden of Enid* has this kind of universal appeal, but I hope its weird Mormon world is honest and real and worth exploring. I hope readers see it as a funhouse, where every turn takes them somewhere new and disorienting and thought-provoking. Mostly I hope it encourages them to explore the depths of their own imaginations—Mormon or otherwise—and share the stories they find there.

Scott Hales
Eagle Mountain, Utah
December 2016

Foreword

by Theric Jepson

... then he was like, “Mind if I hang out here for a while?”

I first wrote about *The Garden of Enid* in its earliest days, back when I assumed it was written by a woman (possibly a girl?) and the strip itself was still figuring out Enid’s exact appearance and how to balance its skeuomorphic style with readability. Enid, like the art itself, started as an awkward Mia Maid, and by the end of this book she will find herself a more grounded and confident Laurel.

Watching Enid grow up has been one of the great pleasures in comics these past few years. Maybe because she not only grapples with difficult concepts like faith vs. history or human love vs. human behavior, but because her grapplings remind us what it’s like to be young and insecure—and to know absolutely everything.

When we last met our hero, she had overcome her strident adolescent individualism just enough to recognize a need for other people. This volume begins with her first truly honest attempts at communion and then Enid starts reaching outside the tidy world she’s created for herself, where her best friends have been dead, metaphorical, or over the fourth wall.

She manages to make this leap through a simple realization: just as she is not who she thinks other people think she is, other people are not who she thinks they are—a step toward humility, allowing her to nurture real friendships.

Meanwhile, her previous (and ongoing) claims of self-sufficiency ring equally honest and untrue to someone who made the same claims at the same age, but Enid’s gradual

recognition that we are not alone fuels the narrative. Many of these and other moments aren't funny per se, but the strip never drops its commitment to humor—a humor that works because we know Enid now, and we have entered her world.

At times, *The Garden of Enid* might seem to break with Roland Barthes's assertion that "literature is the question minus the answer"—and certainly Enid does present sound insights on everything from the so-called Big Tent to some Mormons' discomfort with fiction to the "answers" I'm suggesting it implies about human connection—but everyone has moments of certainty at age fifteen. Knowing something today doesn't mean knowing it tomorrow. And while Enid has never talked with Walt Whitman, she too is willing to contradict herself. She has to. She's not a purely intellectual construct—she's a creature of emotion and pain and confusion and joy and wonder.

So see for yourself what happens—and decide for yourself what it means. Because even though Enid seeks answers, she is unquestionably literature.

And that means the answers are something we must work out on our own.

Ha ha ha.

Theric Jepson
El Cerrito, California
December 2016

All comic novels that are any good must be about matters of life and death.

—Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*

The Latter-day Saint girl should conduct herself properly at all times and in all places.

—*The Young Woman's Journal*, December 1914

Eden is that old-fashioned House

We dwell in every day

Without suspecting our abode

Until we drive away

How fair on looking back the Day

We sauntered from the Door

Unconscious our returning

But discover it no more

—Emily Dickinson

The bishop asked me to bear my testimony today about How EFY... helped me to grow...



...So I started with a joke about how I grew five inches last week...



...but seriously No ONE laughed... So I pretty much said EFY was Fun!



...and AWESOME... and AMAZING
...and SPIRITUALLY TRANSFORMING
...and TRANSCENDENT... and LIFE-
CHANGING... and TEAR-PROVOKING...



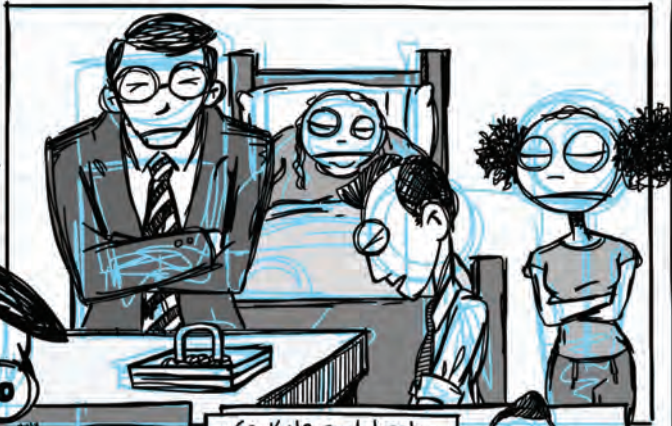
...and STILL no one laughed...



Enid vs. The Apology

August 3

The Bishop
came over with
Kyle later to
give the Sacra-
ment to my
Mom
...



And—of course—my
Mom had something
she HAD to speak with
the BISHOP about...



... So Kyle and I got ...
banished to the Kitchen



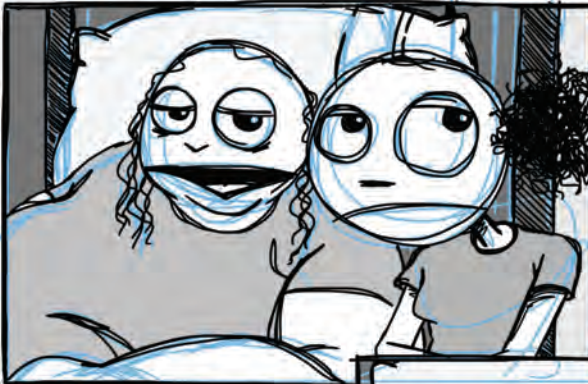
Funny... I used to
be too shy to talk
to Kyle...



But... I've kinda
learned that he
isn't much of a
conversationalist
... like... I've had
better conversations
with cereal boxes...

Enid vs. The Apology

continued



At any rate
... after they left
my mom decided
SHE had something
important to say
to me... which
happens almost **NEVER**.

She said she'd been
thinking a lot about
me... since the hos-
pital... and wanted
me to know that she
was **sorry** for putting
me through that.



I know she meant well...
but after she finished...
I stormed outta the room

... because that's
what I do when
she tries to parent...

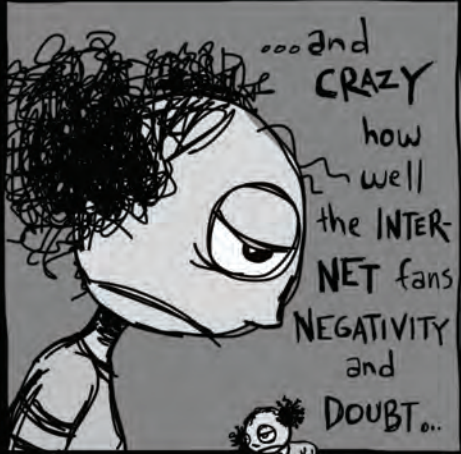


Don't
ask me
why.

Enid vs. The Apology

continued

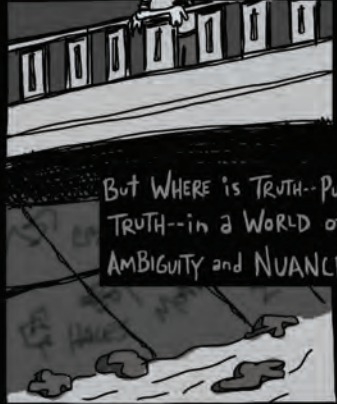
It's FREAKY how ONE minute
your TESTIMONY can be OK
...and the NEXT... NOT...



...and
CRAZY
how
well
the INTER-
NET fans
NEGATIVITY
and
DOUBT...



What I want is
ONE CLEAR BRIGHT
SPOT of TRUTH...



BUT WHERE is TRUTH--PURE
TRUTH--in a WORLD of
AMBIGUITY and NUANCE?



It's like...
with
So many
VOICES...
how can I
KNOW who
to TRUST?



And WHY can't I just...
walk
by FAITH?

Enid vs. A Dark Night of the Soul

August 17



Enid vs. Trusting

August 26



Enid vs. The Struggle

August 31



The next thing I knew... we were FLYING through SPACE in a CHEVEROLET...

...talking about my STRUGGLES with ... FAITH and KNOWLEDGE ... and STUFF about the CHURCH that confuses and troubles ME SOMETIMES...

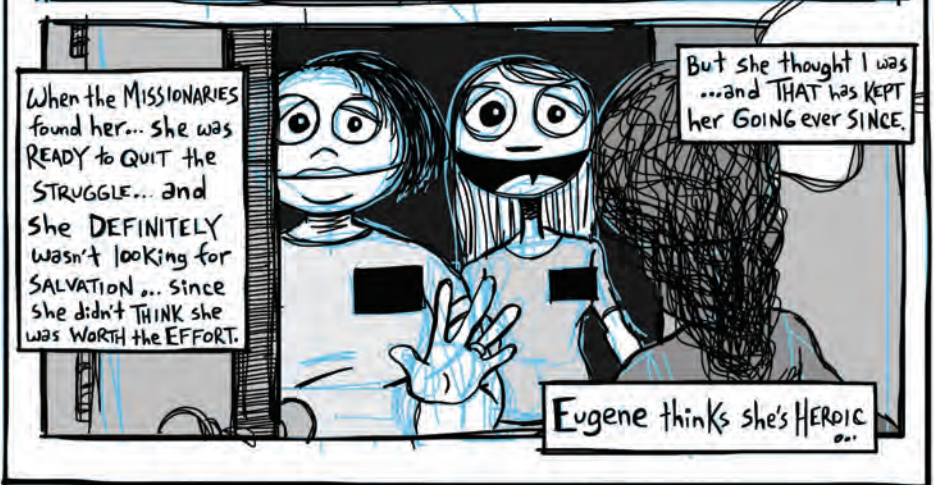
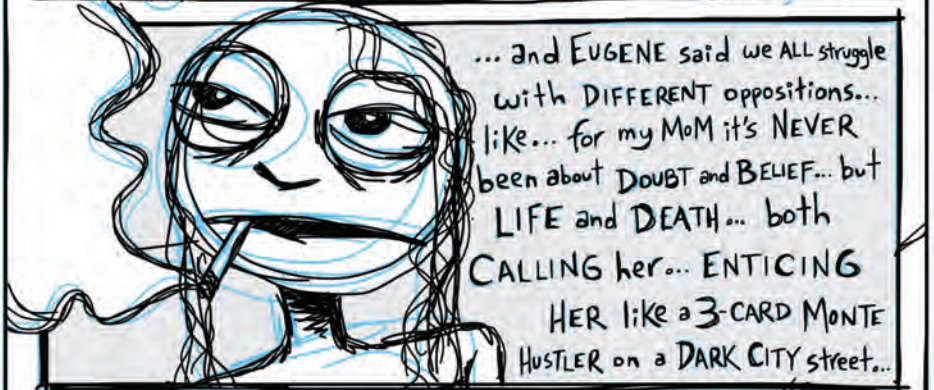
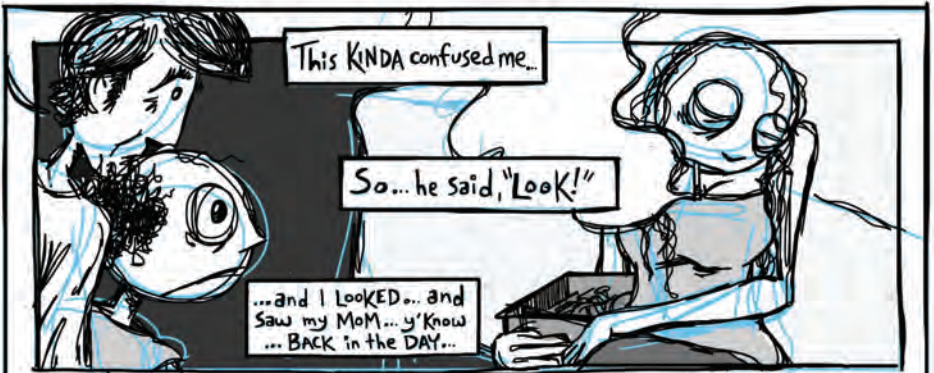
...and he said LIFE in this UNIVERSE is FULL of such TENSIONS ...

... that they are PART of the PROCESS LEHI described when he TAUGHT that our PURPOSE and PROGRESS depend on OPPOSITION...

... that by PROVING CONTRARIES ... or GRAPPLING with WHATEVER paradox our MORTAL life throws at us ... we can BETTER SEE and BENEFIT from the TRUTH that makes us like our HEAVENLY PARENTS...

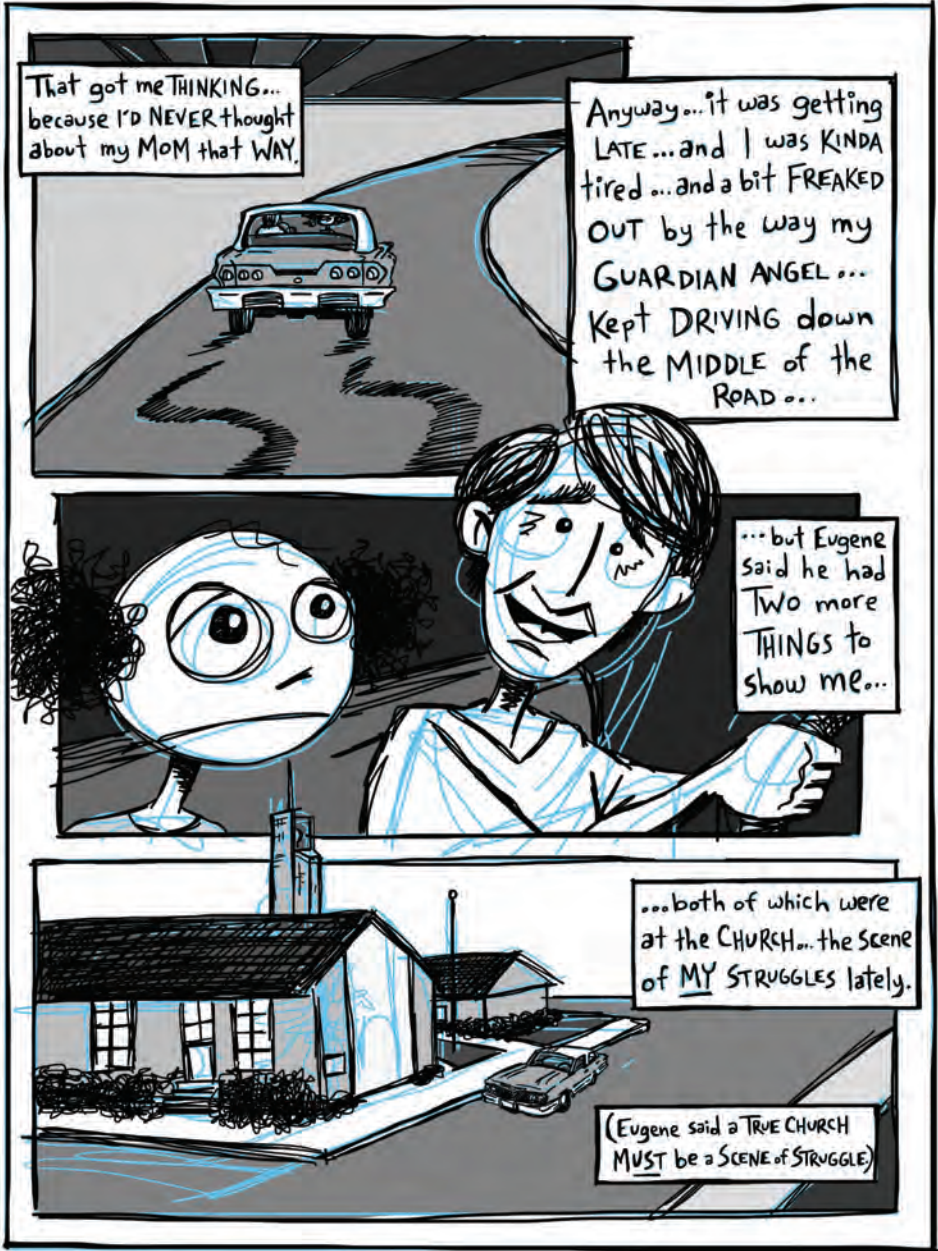
Enid vs. The Struggle

continued



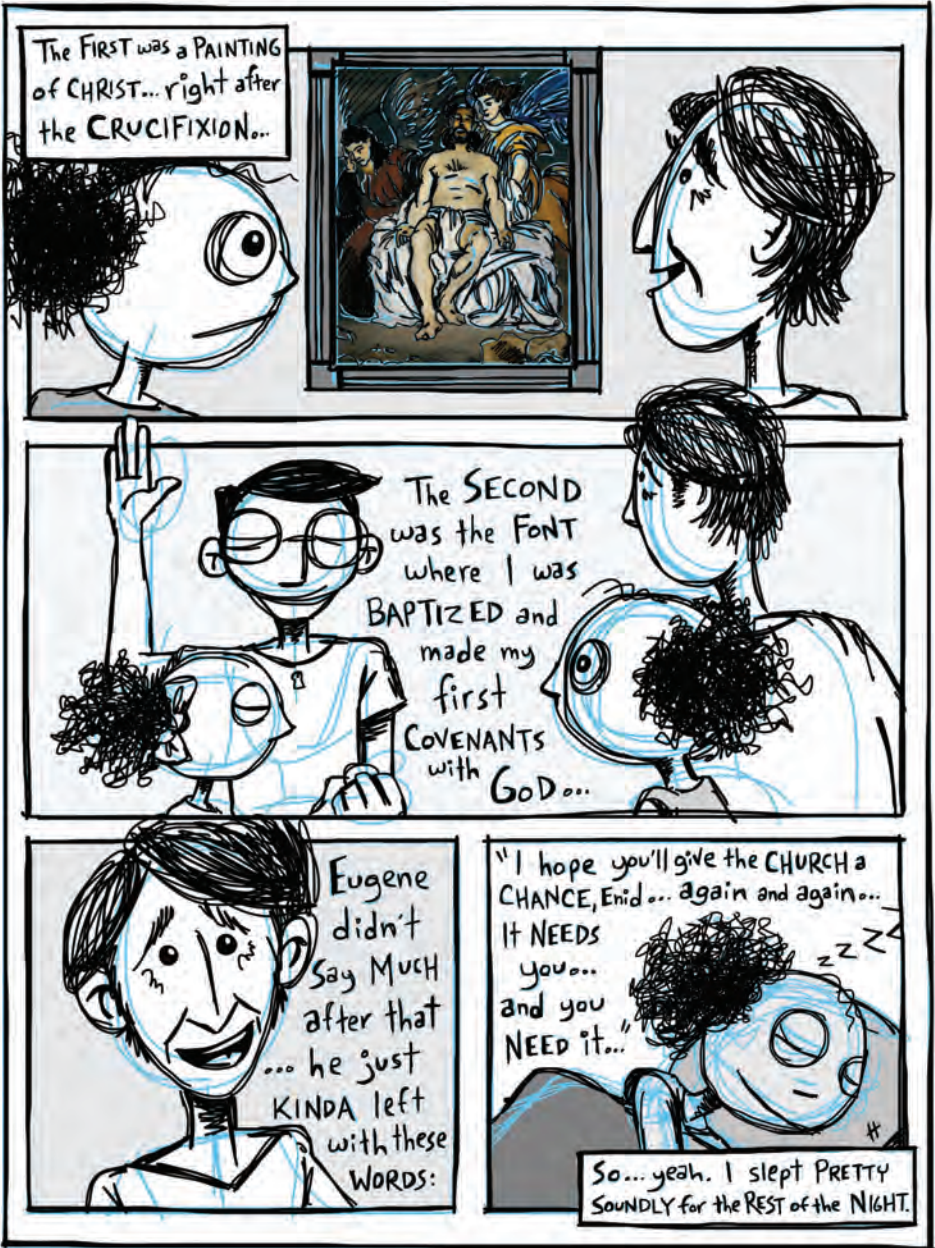
Enid vs. The Struggle

continued



Enid vs. The Struggle

continued



Enid vs. The Struggle

continued

Selected Notes and Commentary

Enid vs. The Apology The first page of this comic is new to this edition. I drew it to create a stronger bridge between Enid's EFY experience, which concludes Part One, and Enid's mother's apology, which begins a story arc that focuses more intensely on Enid's relationship with her mother. The new page doesn't really contribute much beyond that arc, but I like the way Enid riffs on post-EFY testimonies in front of a congregation that is not really equipped to appreciate the humor. **Enid vs. Austenmania** My wife and I enjoy watching BBC period dramas, and this particular comic was inspired by Andrew Davies's adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, which obviously has nothing to do with Jane Austen. But at the time I thought Justine Waddell, the actor who plays the main character in the film, looked like a twentysomething Enid and that got me thinking about Enid being in a period drama and that got me thinking about how much Mormons love Jane Austen. Anyway, Shannon Hale (or her publicist) saw the comic on Tumblr and reblogged it. **Enid vs. The Fangirls** I can't say for sure, but I think this is the first time *Preach My Gospel* has appeared in a comic. **Enid vs. The Talk** I don't ever remember getting "the talk" outside of health class, which may or may not explain my very Mormon discomfort with talking about sex. In fact, just writing this note makes me uncomfortable. In the fifth panel I have Enid reading Moriah Jovan's *Magdalene*, one of the steamiest Mormon romance novels out there. **Enid vs. The Big Tent** I drew this comic because I dislike the term Big Tent Mormonism for the reasons Enid provides. I think Zion is something bigger and more amorphous than a big tent, which is why I favor the metaphor of an expansive, dynamic, and creatively accommodating city. Caricatures of me and my daughter Emily appear on the final page. She's wearing a Charlie Brown shirt. Enid's "More Good" shirt alludes to Joseph Smith's translation of the name Mormon. **Enid vs. The Chalk** I don't remember what inspired Enid's conversation with Karl Maeser, but I'm a huge fan of chalk. I used it all the time when I was a teacher. I hate whiteboards and dry erase markers, which never seem to hold enough ink. **Enid vs. The Sand** This is another new comic. In the original series, Enid had a faith crisis shortly after EFY, but I didn't do much to explain why Enid was struggling. I drew this comic to set up that story arc better. In the comic, Enid alludes to Jesus's parable of the wise man and the foolish man, which is the source of the hit primary song. Her experience, however, is similar to the sort of thing that would always happen to me when I was a

“Tell It and Tell It Honestly”

An Interview with Scott Hales

by Katherine Morris, *Mormon Artist Podcast*, 27 December 2014

Katherine Morris: Tell me about the genesis of *The Garden of Enid*.

Scott Hales: It could be a long story, but I'll try to tell the shorter version of a long story. I have been cartooning since I was a kid, and I always enjoyed comics and comic strips. When I was in school—high school, junior high, middle school, that sort of thing—I was the kid who was always drawing and doodling in my notebooks. It was just always part of who I was. I did cartooning for the school newspaper one year. So, that was my thing.

I did a year at Ricks College as an art major. I left on my mission, and during my mission I was cartooning as well. But when I got back, I was kind of sick of it. So, I set it aside and went to school, got my degrees, studied English. I was about five or six months away from finishing my PhD, and I had just finished up a chapter. It was my last chapter, and so I started drawing again, just to blow off some steam during the Christmas break. *Enid* is what came out of that.

That's partly the genesis of it—I just started drawing her one day. I drew up one comic and thought she was a fun character, so I started drawing some more, and then I didn't stop after that.

I had been wanting to do a comic for a long time, and I had been wanting to do something with Mormon themes. I had been operating a Twitter account called Mormon Shorts for a long time, writing these kind of short, funny Twitter fictions that became kind of popular. I realized that I could tell Mormon stories that people liked. It gathered a following, and I said, “Well, what if I could do this with cartooning?”

I'd kind of become bored of Mormon Shorts anyway, so I switched over to that, and I think that account on Twitter is pretty much dead now. So, that's also where it came from as well—I realized people liked my humor, and I thought, “Well, what if I could do this with a cartoon character?” And that's where *Enid* came from.

Katherine: So, why a weird teenage Mormon girl?

Scott: I don't know. I think that's one of the questions people ask the most. I think part of it has to do with my own study of Mormon fiction. One thing

that I noticed, at least in serious—what is sometimes termed “serious” Mormon fiction (and that’s a controversial term)—is that a lot of it has to do with the experiences of men and boys. So, you look at the fiction of Douglas Thayer or Levi Peterson and it’s all about the experiences of young men. I like it—I like their fiction a lot—but I didn’t think I could add anything new to that genre at this stage.

So, I was kind of interested in trying something different. And, frankly, it was just what I drew. I was trying out a lot of things, and she’s the character that stuck. So, it just happened to be a weird teenage Mormon girl. I don’t know; there’s probably a lot I could say about that—it’s just the character that seemed to work best.

Katherine: So, let’s talk more about the story arc—the personal journey that Enid takes. She’s an illegitimate child in a single-parent household. Her mother is not terribly active in the Church.

Scott: Well, I would say her mother is as active as she can be.

Katherine: Right. Which is something that Enid has to deal with and think about and develop some sympathy for. So, I feel like one of the themes is very much—Enid’s not just weird, but she’s not in an ideal Mormon scenario. So, a lot of the struggles are her family doesn’t match the ideal, she’s kind of weird herself, she doesn’t really fit in completely at church, she doesn’t really fit in completely at school.

So, talk to me about those themes and developing those themes.

Scott: From the beginning, the whole theme was to make Enid not fit the mold of the standard Mormon. By doing that I put her in a situation where her mother is sick. She has suffered from many, many different health challenges, the mother. When she was younger, she suffered from addiction and depression—and that’s something that continues.

Her relationship with her mother is not ideal, and it’s also not the typical parent–child relationship you would hope to find in the Church. So, Enid does struggle with that. She doesn’t know who her real father is, and a lot of her story, especially near the end, is about her trying to find out who he is and where she comes from.

She struggles socially with people. She has a hard time making connections with real people. There’s a boy she likes. She has people who are friends—they’re more acquaintances, but they’re not really friends. They’re mostly friends by default because they’re in the same ward.

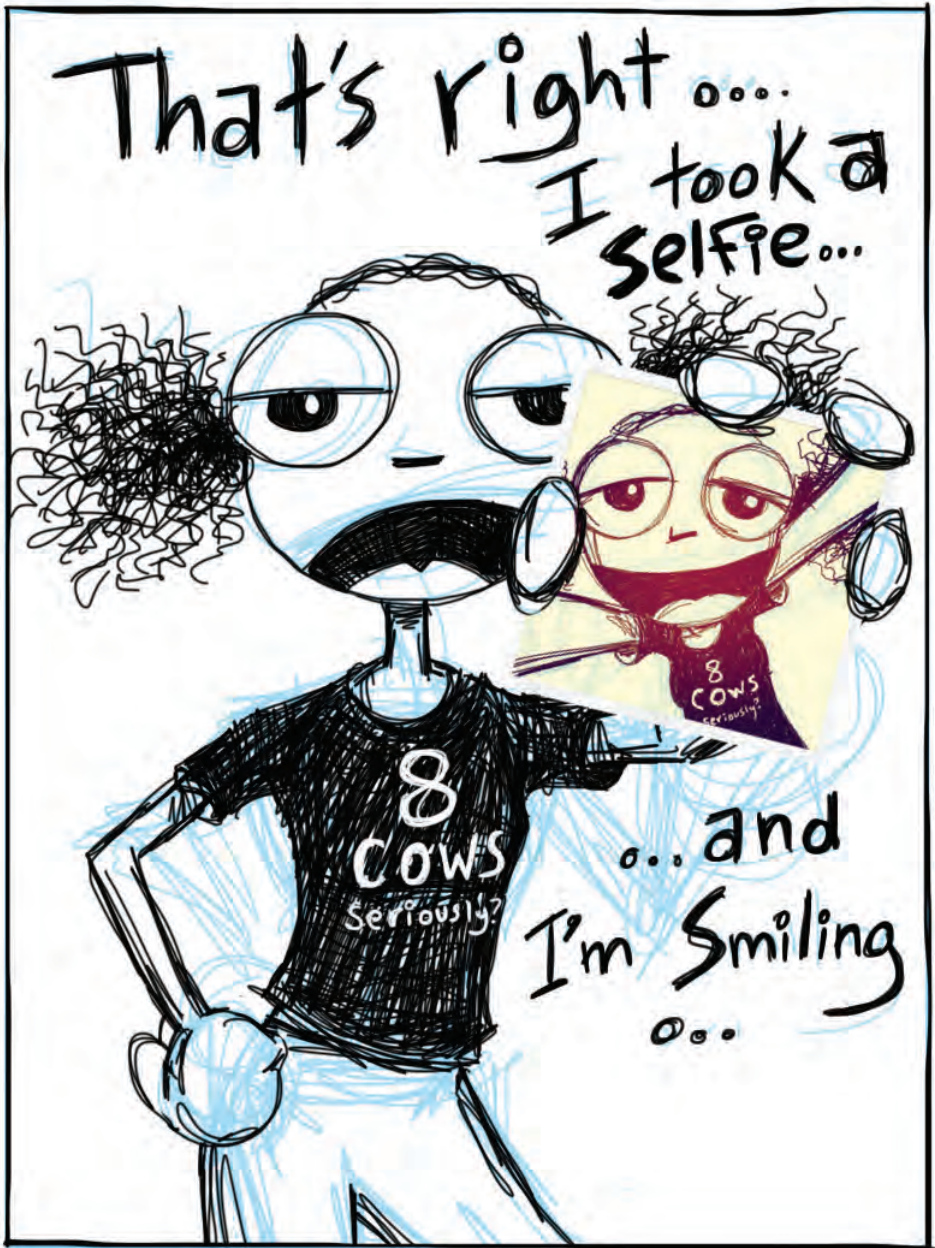
So, she does struggle to make those kinds of human connections. Except, she seems to connect well with adults. So, she has these women who step up and kind of fill the mother role for her. And she also has a good relationship with her bishop. So, they’re her support group and the ones she has the most human connection with. They kind of provide the love that she needs.

The Compost Pile:

Scraps from *The Garden of Enid*



This Enid selfie served as the profile picture for Enid on Facebook and Tumblr for a long time. It remains one of my favorite early images of the character. It is the first picture I ever drew of her smiling. Her t-shirt is an obvious allusion to *Johnny Linga*.



This cartoon, which recycles the profile picture, was originally part of the webcomic. I left it out of Part One because I didn't think it contributed much to the story. Notice Enid has four fingers instead of her usual five. At this point, I was still trying to figure out the look of Enid's hands, which early on were like floating blobs.



Scott Hales is a writer and cartoonist from Cincinnati, Ohio. He is the creator of the webcomics *The Garden of Enid*, *Adventures of a Weird Mormon Girl* and *Mormon Shorts*. Scott has an MA and PhD in English from the University of Cincinnati and a BA in English from Brigham Young University. He has published on American literature, comics, and Mormon fiction and poetry in various journals, including *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, *International Journal of Comic Art*, and *Religion and the Arts*. He has also published fiction and comics in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* and *Sunstone*. Scott currently lives in Utah with his wife, Sarah, and their five children.