

At sixhour of the morning of 26date, the final Oneday of Tenmonth in the Forever of TheFounder, quietudehours had shifted to awakeninghours. In the bedroom of Flat Number 317 in Residence Building Number 1912 on Fourteenth Street, a ceiling tube had flickered. The Devices had blared trumpets, declaring the day's first Exaltation of TheFounder. On the monitor the flag of FounderLand had waved, the center of its ruby field showing the golden visage of TheFounder.

A three toned gong rang through the Devices, heralding the appearance of the Woman in White. On the monitor, her ivory skin was smooth, and her white hair was piled high upon her head. She wore a trim white suit and sat at an expansive white desk bearing the relief of the Crossed Swords. The ruby and gold flag of FounderLand flew from its corners. In a stentorian voice, she announced, "Companions! Exalt in TheFounder!"

Rising stiff from the bed, Lowell set aside the thin, coarse blanket. On the cold floor. his feet sought a pair of wool slippers, the same wiry material as the blanket. He desired an hour of additional sleep but was careful to feign sufficient enthusiasm for the lenses and the watching Surveyors, pressing his fist against his chest in mandatory salute as he recited the Code of Loyalty.

I Pledge Fidelity To TheFounder
Father and Protector of All Companions
Liberator and Peacemaker

Two minutes of enforced silence followed. Lowell set his steady gaze upon the visage of TheFounder on the wall across from the bed. He silently offered the required thanks for his food, his shelter, his health, and his job. He had no other choice. If he had made a gesture against TheFounder, the monitors would have witnessed the offense. If he had shouted insults against TheFounder, the radios would have recorded them. If he had silently uttered curses, TheFounder would have read his mind and known. He remained a self-imposed unthinking, mute, and still Companion.

At the conclusion of the two minutes, the Woman in White ordered, “Companions! Exalt in TheFounder!”

The three toned gong struck again, and the Woman in White issued her final command. “Companions! Stride forward with TheFounder!”

The second sounding of trumpets blared through the Devices. The monitor awoke to share a NewsBrief of DEFACT, the Department of Factuality, on the latest medical innovation of TheFounder. At the same time, an educational Announcement of DECACT, the Department of Culture and Activities, issued from the

radio. Like all Companions, Lowell attempted to listen to the dueling reports of the monitors and the radios concurrently. The effort exhausted him, as neither monitors nor radios possessed levers to decrease their volume or switches to interrupt their power. They operated at reduced levels during quietudehours, the curfew period of twenty-fourhour until sixhour, but during awakeninghours, the allowed period that extended from sixhour to twenty-fourhour, they bellowed their reports.

Lowell pulled the nightshirt tighter against his skin. Engineers of DEBCON, the Department of Buildings and Congregants, waited until Twelvemonth to fire the boilers that heated the buildings of FounderCity. He glanced out the window. No light pierced the dark street, and he remembered the black night of 30date of the Ninemonth prior. During quietudehours, a carrier had arrived to take David Lowell to the Tower. He quickly cloaked the memory.