

In the midst of war announcements and a continuation of disagreements within every political and public faction in the world, a bit of good news was splashed across front pages less than a week ago. Elizabeth Smart, now age 15, has been rescued and returned to her family after being kidnapped from her Salt Lake City home nine months ago in June of 2002. The suspects in custody are two homeless people, whose interests in Elizabeth as well as their effects on her are presently in question.

In an area that revolves largely around religion and specifically, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this recent piece of news involves a distinct dichotomy of faith. Church services and personal and public prayer have played a major part in the search and wait for Elizabeth Smart, but it turns out that the kidnappers were also working and living “in the name of God.” The religion that the Smart family turned to for comfort and safety was the same religion from which the kidnappers were extracting their reasons for kidnapping. The two suspects, Brian Mitchell and Wanda Barzee, were a couple of self-proclaimed prophets, preaching and sermonizing to other homeless and destitute people. They kidnapped Elizabeth from her affluent home on June 5th, 2002 and have kept her in nearby Utah campsites and cabins and may have even taken her to California for a period of time in October. Despite all the law enforcement and searching that occurred during the summer, Elizabeth was never found, and her unresolved story quickly dropped from the newspaper pages. Many feared that her body would eventually turn up, not unlike two younger California girls who were also kidnapped near the same time. However, Elizabeth was finally discovered and brought back to her family last

week after being recognized on the streets, dressed and pretending to be a person named Augustine Marshall.

What actually happened to Elizabeth during the past nine months is still being debated. Convinced that she experienced massive amounts of brainwashing by Mitchell and Barzee, thus explaining why she didn't attempt to escape even in nearby and possibly familiar surroundings, doctors and numerous relatives are keeping Elizabeth from the press and interviews and want the girl to recuperate on her own time and schedule. Sexual assault and polygamy, among other things, are still uncertainties lingering in the case.

Ed Smart, Elizabeth's father, has been the main and dominant spokesperson for the family during the entire case, starting in June and continuing now. He's appealed to the public, helped with the police investigations, kept the hope up and the community rallied, and even discussed national bills with Congress. He has been the ultimate protective and outspoken head-of-the-family figure. So it seems rather ironic now that Ed Smart, caring and fatherly, who has consistently insisted on revealing little detail and attention on Elizabeth's well-being and present state, is in the midst of considering numerous offers to turn Elizabeth's ordeal into a movie or film.

Make the best of despair, right?