

“Mister Pullen, me father would speak with thee shortly.” It was the voice of Elizabeth. Pullen had a most special place in his heart for this child. Her smile always welcomed Pullen when he saw her on the streets of the village. He had known her and her family for many years and grown close to them seeing them each week at church, going to dinners at their home and sharing Christmas after Christmas with them.

“Elizabeth, please tell your father that I will see him at his leisure.” He smiled as he spoke. This little girl was more precious than silver. She stood before him in her play dressing, a small smudge of dirt on her red check, her hair somewhat disheveled from playing out of doors.

“The innocence of children is a spark to the fire of our faith,” Pullen thought to himself. “I thank thee, Father, for the joy of the child, the beauty of the ignorance of evil, the hope of our eternity. Could I return to this innocence? May it be – that I might enter into the kingdom of God as one of these. When I look into the eyes of this little girl, I see eternity waiting for the children of the Saviour.”

The news of Phineas seeking his audience had a strange mood about it. His dear friend did not always approach him with such formality. There must be an issue of importance.

“Mister Pullen, how do you fare this fine day?” Phineaus’ eyes betrayed his salutation. There was concern in his voice. Something was wrong. Something un-nerved Pullen by this dear friend’s manners. “Are you staying warm and dry this winter’s morn?”

“Yes, Phineaus, things are well.” His responded warmly. “And yourself and family? Things are well?”

“No, Mister Pullen, I’m afraid things aren’t as well as we could wish for.”

“Pray tell thee me what is amiss.” He was asking for the inevitable but he knew he must ask.

Phineaus took yet another long hard breath into himself before beginning. Whatever this would be, it would be taxing.

“Mister Pullen, my wife and I speak most regularly about a subject in which we are long overdue speaking openly with yourself about. We are troubled. We feel as if we are playing the part of Annanias and Sapphria and we need to beg of your forgiveness. If we do anything at all, we should first start by asking your forgiveness.”

“Phineaus, that is always understood that you walk in my graces as I feel I do with yourself. But I imagine you are no sinner. I can not imagine a demon that would make his camp in your good heart. The Evil One has no foothold on you. What matter troubles the hearts of you and your wife?”

“Mister Pullen,” He hesitated, “We know the things of the spirit hold the greater realities and that the flesh has no answers for our hearts on which to lay hold. We give no credence to the things our eyes behold. Indeed, faith, as invisible as it is, is the only anchor by which we may take comfort. Our eyes are liars and deceiving. Only the Holy Spirit of our Father truly teaches us the things of truth in this world of lies.”

Pullen was slightly taken at the seriousness of his dear friend. He expected something of this gravity, but the words brought him more fear than he predicted.

“Of course, we agree on these things, dear Phineaus. Our Lord is the embodiment of truth. Christ Himself named His own name as the definitive Truth. We bth know the gospel of John too well to deny its meaning in our lives. We know that truth is not bound by the measures of this world just as the Saviour was not bound to death or the grave. But these things are our joy – not our fear or our dread, yet you are acting as if these things trouble you?”

“Mister Pullen, our eyes do see things. Perhaps, the things they see are lies but they are beheld nonetheless. Our eyes are lights into our souls and our eyes have been allowing great pains into our

souls of late, my dear friend.” He frowned and looked fully into Pullen’s sad eyes. “What our eyes see make no good sense to our minds nowadays, Pullen.”

There was a silence as the words were spoken. There is a sadness with the confession. The matter was exposed, thought not very concisely. At least, the beginning of the matter was finally pronounced and the remainder of the matter should be more easily followed in its definition.

Pullen must now take the matter forward. If for nothing more than the sake of his dear friend’s feelings.

“Speak freely with me, Phineaus, I cannot have you in confusion if I am to be part of the solution.”

Another long breath was drawn and Phineaus got up from his chair to find strength in pacing. After a moment, he stopped and stood within feet of Pullen and looked directly into his face.

“Dearest Mister Pullen, we have come to know that you are different than we.”

At last. A sigh of relief with the announcement was instantly felt by both men. The beginning of any problem is the admission of the problem itself.

Pullen knew this conversation was coming. Too many times, he’d endured these conversations. But this time, he felt as if the love between he and his friends would smooth over the edges of what could otherwise be quite painful. People hate to discuss the things they cannot come to understand. In frustration, people often resort to horrible alternatives to find some sort of realization they can embrace or take control of.

They may become angry. They may become faithless to their empty form of religions, they may find some one or some ideal to blame for the situation. The worst case may be that they become something altogether unbecoming.

This conversation would not turn that way, Pullen felt. He’d known these people too well for too long. His ‘family’ loved him too much to turn into their frustration and let it rule them at the sake of poor feelings.

“Yes, Phineaus, Yes, I am.” This was what his friend needed to hear. It was the peace Phineaus was looking for. It was in loving gratitude that Pullen spoke to his dear friend. “I am ... somewhat different.”

Before a confession could proceed further, Phineaus quickly came forth with words that should soothe the moment.

“Pullen, thou art a gift from Heaven for us. You contain a peace that we cannot attain to and we have long sensed it.”

“Phineaus, it is altogether right that you have brought this matter up between us.” Pullen said this to further cause his friend not to feel uncomfortable in what he was troubled about.

It seemed to work. Phineaus seemed to take on more peace.

“Pullen, may I be so foolish as to ask what we think in our mortal minds?”

“Yes, dear Phineaus. Speak freely.”

“Art thou an angel, Mister Pullen?”

Phineaus looked boldly into Pullen’s face for reactions. He needed no lies at this point. His soul was reaching for answers beyond his faith. He had to trust this strange friend of his even if he didn’t fully want to do so. He must have an answer that explained many things to himself, to his wife, his

precious Elizabeth and the other who spoke in whispers in the pubs and over tea. This was the time for Pullen to announce what his was – in all its fullness – to this friend of his.

“Phineas ...” Pullen started slowly and grinned somewhat.

“I need to know, Pullen.” He said quickly, “Please don’t patronize me – this is rather difficult for me to say.”

“These questions are considerable and well-deserved. You may always speak to me in any manner you deem appropriate as you are unconditionally loved. Will you hear that before you hear anything else?”

“Yes, yes, I hear you and I honour what you say.”

“Phineas, I am no angel.”

Phineas sat back down in his chair. A weight had been lifted from him. He had been a lost child of God walking in a wilderness and now, he looked up at the snake on the cross and he was being healed. This sickness was leaving him as his friend spoke.

“And neither am I a demon from Lucifer!” Pullen said quickly and with this, he had to almost laugh out loud. His godliness was not being debated here. He was not on trial. He’d experienced that before too many times but this dear man knew that Pullen’s heart was founded in Heaven and not in Hell.

“I am merely very, very old... and I do not know why except be it to worship my saviour in an unending song. I have not aged in many, many years. I am rarely sick and I have every reason to be deceased many times over by the years I have seen pass on this sinful orb.”

He looked at Phineas as he spoke, “I have considered many things: am I continuation of Satan’s prodding of God to test those on the earth that may love God for no reason other than what the Saviour has blessed us with? Am I a descendent of Job? And now, after all these years, have I not survived, or at least, passed, this consuming test?

When I see the sun rise each day, I feel both the joy and the sadness of the new beginning. The joy of the mercies of our God’s faithfulness and the sadness as the world sinks deeper into its flesh.

I have seen the faithfulness of God like no other man I have known. You may consider it a blessing or you may consider it the most horrible of all curses. I, dear friend, have known both convictions.“

I could speak with you, your dear wife, with even Elizabeth but it causes more fear than fostering the growth of faith. At least, this is what the past has taught me in terms too dear to count”

He hesitated to let his words sink into Phineas’ heart. His friend was listening and he was embracing Pullen’s words. This was more than most would ever come near.

“Oh, blessed irony!” Pullen speeded up his speech. He didn’t know how long his friend could continue to stay open enough to listen to his truth. “To be given a life of seeing God’s reality in so many ways, and yet not being able to share with the brothers and sisters in Christ of our blessed Father and His ways!”

“You are a true child of Methuselah, friend,” Phineas said. “I do not know to envy you or pity you! Whatever the case, Pullen, I do believe you. Yes, I do. As little sense as it makes to the intelligence, I feel you are not lying to me. Yes, yes, I believe you, dear friend.”

This brought the greatest joy to Pullen. Before he could speak further, tears started to fill his eyes. He could not contain his joy. His loneliness was his best friend and his worst enemy. It was the sin that prevented him and the empowerment that enabled him. But he was not alone now. That is all that mattered.