

Becoming Like a Child

Our story opens in a beautiful Pentecostal Church with classic laminate wood Pews and multi-color stain glass windows. Front row center of the service is Randolph, a long faced, proud, and well-suited religious man in his late forties more in love with religious protocol than God. Many other laymen in the pews behind him look very similar to Randolph if not looking exactly like him. They all stand in perfect military posture and frowns ready to perform their ceremonial duties, awaiting the command from the pulpit. Randolph smiles with such self-righteous confidence and assurance. Behind him are clones of himself whispering words like “the new pastor is preaching today”, and “hope he doesn’t go too long”, “he’s way too young to preaching from the pulpit”, “wait here he is”.

Pastor Daryl, a handsome, youthful, and loving preacher makes his way sheepishly to the pulpit at the front of the church, head down in humility as if someone is about to throw something at him. He nervously clears his throat and opens his bible. This insignificant break in conformity very quickly casts a suspicion on Randolph’s continence. Someone in the audience whispers “look at those tight pants”, “man should be ashamed of himself; this isn’t a coffee house.” Emerging cloaked behind Pastor Daryl’s feet is Jenna, a young rumbustious little girl with a pure love for God, licking a large lollipop. Pastor Daryl directs his daughter to sit amongst the laymen. She makes her way next to Randolph; she looks up to the tall drink of water and smiles. Randolph just looks down at her with a dominant disgust. He quickly returns his composure and focuses on the young preacher before him. Pastor Daryl quietly asks them to be seated and before he can even finish the sentence, a boot strength unison slam down of the bodies into sitting position jolts him with a loud clomp. The laymen behind Randolph examine Jenna and Randolph with critical eyes, almost like angry crows peering over the pews. Pastor Daryl nervously opens the service up with a Word: “Before I open service, the Lord laid it on my heart to read from Matthew eighteen. And he called a child to himself and set him before them, and said “truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And whoever then humbles himself as this child in my name receives me.” While the word is spoken Jenna places her sticky lollipop down next to Randolph, he looks over and scoffs at Jenna who gets comfortable, splaying her legs in joyful relaxation. Randolph, with his legs folded very stealth fully scoots his butt over while maintaining his upper body posture of folded hands. One of Randolph’s clones pokes his head next to him from the pew behind and whispers “who does he think he is changing things up like this”. Randolph grunts in agreement. Jenna burps pulling Randolph’s condescending attention downward and to his left. She is now picking her nose. Pastor Daryl looks around and the mumblings and then decides to begin worship. After some time of silence, he quietly pronounces “please stand for worship”. Once again in cloned stormtrooper unison the congregation stands with another thunderous echoed thwomp bringing everyone up with astute posture, heads pointing towards their hymnal books in hand. Again, Pastor Daryl’s eyes are wide in shock. Jenna looks around and joyfully climbs off the pew and looks to her loving father on the pulpit. She smiles at him in an odd confidence. Despite the Pastor’s insecurity, he smiles back at his daughter. The singing of the hymnal “Be thou vision” begins. All the voices of the laymen including Randolph are of one low lifeless bass unison, no heart, no soul, no love. The clones of religiosity never once look up.

Jenna sees the cross behind her father. She smiles and closes her eyes, she looks up and raises her hands in worship to God, fighting and somehow over-powering the droning voices. Randolph looks over annoyed by the mumbled soprano voice overwhelming the room in an echo of sincere admiration. Suddenly the congregation (one by one) goes silent, yet Jenna is swept up in the moment, she continues

to worship by herself, eyes remaining closed. The sunrise through the front window shines down and spotlights her in the darkness. She stops and slowly comes out of worship only to turn around and look behind her. The drones are not happy, completely still and eyes on her in anger. She looks up at Randolph, in a beautiful moment his hard shell begins to break, first confusion and anger, then a slight hint of humility. Randolph looks forward, aligning in posture to the rest of the grouch's scene behind him. One of them whispers "outrageous". Up at the pulpit is a heart plucked father, he confidently breaks the silence asking them to sit again. The repetitive echoed thump of everyone slamming to their seats is heard only in the background, yet it does not phase the happy pastor.

Later outside the church the drones of the congregation leave with angry faces leaving a still Randolph by himself on a curb. A slight wind of solitude hits his scarf around his neck. A gust of wind pushing a bit of trash on the ground past his feet. His look is one of longing for God's love. Suddenly Jenna is below him, pulling on his pants. Randolph kneels to her slowly, but it is not low enough. She seems to be reaching out with her hands. Finally, Randolph decides to get even lower, this time on both knees. Jenna examines him, then presses and smudges his face to smile with her hands. She then presses his brows up. Like a potter forming clay while biting her tongue she is finally happy with what she sees and acknowledges it. She points the heavens and blurts out something incoherent. She runs over to her father (Pastor Daryl), waving a brief goodbye, they walk away smiling together. Randolph, still on his knees, looks to heaven and looks back to the Pastor and his daughter with a translated smile coming this time from Randolph himself. He has finally become like a child.