

A TALE OF TWO TENTS

This story came by way of Jennifer Cole, one of St John's family now attending a major university out of state. Her roommate wrote it for an assignment in a creative writing class. She didn't say what grade she received.

Pastor Arnie

Deep within the concrete jungle, there lies an oasis of lush verdant grass. How this area came to escape the rigid construction surrounding it, nobody could remember. Eventually the city came into ownership and turned it into a park. On one particular day, two tents sat next to each other on that lush green grass. All appeared to be quiet within the tents during the afternoon. As the orange sun finally disappeared below the purple clouds, the muted streetlights cast no light into the two tents. Soon, though, flickering candles added a luminous power to the shadows and silhouettes coming from within. If you stood close and if there

wasn't any traffic going by, you could hear faint little voices.

“Hello, next door,” said the occupant of the tent on the left. “My name is Johnny. What’s yours?”

“My name is Pauline,” replied the occupant of the tent on the right.

“What are you going to do tonight?” asked Johnny.

“How do you know it’s night and not day?” asked Pauline. “It always seems dark to me.”

“I guess from the candlelight,” answered Johnny. “Not that I’ve had a lot of time to think about it, but why would you need the candle if it is daytime?”

“I guess I get confused with the candlelight and the glow that faintly fills the tent sometimes,” said Pauline. “I must confess, Johnny, there are many things I don’t understand.”

“Yeah, me too,” replied Johnny. “But I figure it’s only a matter of time. I think we will learn a lot more when we get out tomorrow.”

“You are so wise, Johnny,” said Pauline. “Tonight, I think I will do a little exercising. Maybe some deep knee bends, kicking, and leg stretching.”

“That’s good, Pauline. I did a lot of kicking yesterday.”

“What do you want to do when they let us out tomorrow morning, Johnny?”

“I want to go out and buy a dog ... a big dog.”

“Why a dog, Johnny?”

“I’ve heard they were a good thing to have. I think I heard one sniffing around the tent the other day.”

“Oh ... I want a cat,” declared Pauline.

“A cat?” questioned Johnny. “Why a cat?”

“I felt one lying next to the tent a couple of days ago,” said Pauline. “I’ve heard dogs can be loud with their barking and all. This cat just seemed to make a low rumble. It sounded very relaxing.”

“Maybe it just had indigestion,” said Johnny.

“No ... no, there was a certain, how do you say ... dignity to it. Not like a noisy, unruly dog.”

“After I get my dog, I want a baseball glove for Christmas,” stated Johnny.

“A baseball glove?” asked Pauline. “Only one glove? A proper lady always wears two gloves, each one with some lace.”

“Baseball gloves have lacing,” countered Johnny.

“I don’t know for sure, but I don’t think it’s the same,” said Pauline.

“How about a swing in the backyard?” asked Johnny.

“Yeah, one that would go really high.”

“What’s your favorite ice cream, Pauline?”

“I like chocolate mint. There has always seemed to be plenty of it around. How about you?”

“Strawberry Pecan with olives.”

“When I get out of here, tomorrow,” said Pauline. “I want wherever I stay to have lots of dolls around. Maybe a doll from every country in the world.”

“I want there to be lots of cars and tough looking trucks.”

“Dolls.”

“Cars and trucks.”

“Dolls.”

“Cars and trucks.”

“Do you hear that, Johnny?”

“Hear what?”

“That pounding.”

“Pounding?” asked Johnny. “Oh, that’s probably just your heart.”

“My heart?”

“Yeah, everybody has a heart ... yeah, I’m sure it’s your heart.”

“Oh ... do you think the people that put up these tents know we’re here?”

“Definitely,” said Johnny. “Especially after they hear your heart. When I did my kicking exercise yesterday, I could sense a lot of movement outside the tent.”

“So, you think they love that we’re here?”

“Of course, how could they not love someone as handsome as I am and someone as beautiful as you?”

“Do you think I’m beautiful, Johnny?”

“Well, I’ve never actually seen you, but if I’m this handsome, then a girl such as you has to be beautiful.”

“That’s wonderful.”

As the night wore on, Johnny and Pauline continued talking about all the things they were going to do when they left the tent. The candlelight continued to show lively shadows in the night. When the full moon reached the top of the sky, the candle in the right tent flickered strangely. Johnny saw what looked like hideous monsters coming from the tent as Pauline appeared to be doing her leg exercises. And then the shadows stopped, for the candle went out.

“Pauline ... Pauline, are you okay?”

The tent on the right sat eerily quiet. Johnny became confused. Was it now day or night? Pauline never talked to Johnny again. And Johnny didn’t know why. They had so many plans and so

many things to enjoy. Perhaps he would see her on the path outside the tent. Johnny's tent hadn't seemed to change. The candle still shone its light, but somehow, he felt different. He couldn't explain why, but he knew that Pauline's tent seemed to be filled with ... nothing. Maybe he would see her one day when he was walking his big dog in the park.

When Johnny got out of the tent the next day, he continued his journey through life just like he had planned. He eventually got married and had three children of his own. One day, while walking through the lush green grass of the local park with his kids, he noticed an empty swing. Johnny walked over to the swing and gave it a push ... a push real high.