

True Faith – Paul Blake

I shift my arse on the uncomfortable chair, my elbows resting on the cool metal table. I wait for them to start. The policeman opposite lays some papers on the table in a manila folder. I'm curious about their contents but hold my tongue. Beside me, the duty solicitor whispers into my ear. I can't hear him. I'm waiting for His voice.

The policeman presses a button on the antique tape recorder sitting on the table. An image flashes in my mind of a child wearing an A-team t-shirt in front a small television, I hear the screech of data being transferred between the tape recorder and the Spectrum 48K computer, with its rubbery keys, besides the television. Flashing lines of colour show on the screen surrounding a partially completed digitised image of a man carrying an impossibly enormous gun. The policeman's voice snaps me back to the present.

“This interview under caution is being taped, recorded and may be given in evidence if your case is brought to trial. We are in an interview room at Bow Road Police Station. The date is...” the policeman said, reading from a pre-printed sheet. I tune him out, waiting, listening.

“I asked you to state your full name and date of birth,” the man repeated.

“Sorry, my name is Abraham ben Terah, my date of birth is...” I pause and cock an ear to the side. Is that His voice? No, nothing. I realise the room is waiting for me to continue, “Um... 2nd May 1983.”

“Also present is Mr Vernier, Duty Solicitor. Do you agree that there are no other persons present?”

I verbalise my assent. The policeman continues, "Before the start of this interview, I must remind you that you are entitled to..." Did I hear Him? Was that His whisper? I strain my ears trying to hear. I slump in my chair in resignation. Where is He?

"... court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. Do you understand?"

I nod. I understand. I'm not concerned. I was carrying out God's will. Only He can judge me, I just wish He would talk to me again. All I hear is silence.

"You have to say you understand. For the tape."

"I understand." My voice is clear, free from doubt. I look at the policeman for the first time. I see the disgust in his face, the hate in his bloodshot eyes. The vein in his temple throbbing with anger. I inhale and can smell the stale aroma of a dozen whisky and ginger ales coming from him.

"Shall we begin then?... Can you confirm your whereabouts on Friday, the ninth of February, this year?"

"I was at the Jesuit Centre on Mount Street, London."

"And who were you with?"

"I was with my son, Isaac."

"And why were you there?" The policeman leaned forward in his chair, waiting for the answer. His red eyes filled with interest.

"I was carrying out His word."

"Whose word?"

"His. Who do you think? His word. The word of Our Lord."

The policeman rolled his eyes and shook his head. I could see he didn't believe me.

"Did God tell you to go there? Did he speak to you directly?"

"No, He didn't tell me to go there and, yes, He spoke to me directly."

He barely concealed the sneer in his voice, “Ok, we’ll come back to the hearing God part in a moment and continue with the facts. Why were you at the Jesuit Centre? What were you doing there? What was the purpose of going there with your son?”

“I was proving to God how much I loved Him. Our God told me to offer Issac as a burnt offering to Him. He said I had to take him to a mountain, but there aren’t any in London and I couldn’t wait to travel anywhere. I decided that Mount Street was the closest place that fit with what He told me.”

“God told you to do this? Where were you when he did this?”

“I was at work—”

“—You work in a primary school, don’t you?” The policeman read through his notes. “A teacher?”

“Yes, I herd the children through their early lives, guiding their way, keeping them safe.”

“You didn’t do the same for your own child, though, did you?”

A whisper in my ear from the solicitor, “You do not have to answer that.”

“I did not doubt that God would find a way and there would be no harm to Isaac, and I was right.”

The policeman looked at me, “I’m not sure a judge would see it that way, return back to what happened when God told you to do this.”

“I was in my classroom at school, it was lunchtime, the children were in the dining hall, I was checking my emails. Then I heard His voice, it was clear, and He called me by name, he said, ‘Abraham!’ and I replied, ‘Here I am,’ then he said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac. Sacrifice him as a burnt offering on a mountain.’ Then the voice went away.”

“And how do you know it was God? He didn’t say his name, has he spoken to you before?”

“No, this was the first time. I knew it was God because...” How do I put this into words? Make them understand. His voice was love. Pure and powerful. It made me feel peaceful and calm like I had never felt before. “I just knew. It was how He made me feel.”

“Ok, what happened next?”

“The voice went away, and the children returned to the classroom. I taught them for the rest of the day and then they left and I went to pick up Isaac from the nursery.”

I turn my head to the side, then the other, like I’m adjusting a tv aerial, trying to pick up on the signal. Nothing. He is not there. Why is He not there?

“Then what happened? Did you go home? Did you tell your wife about your chat with *God*?”

“When we got home, my wife was still at work, that’s not unusual. She works later than me, she’s a nurse at St Thomas’. I fed and changed Isaac and played with him until he fell asleep. I put him in his cot and sat in the chair next to him, watching him. I fell asleep when I woke up Sarah had returned home and was asleep herself. This happens from time to time. Different shifts mean different lives, at least for a while.”

“Did you wake her? Did you tell her?”

“I was going to, then Isaac woke up. I changed him and fed him and rocked him, but he wouldn’t go back to sleep. I—” I closed my eyes. Waiting. Wanting. Praying.

After a moment or four, the Policeman banged his fist on the table, “Wake up! What happened on the roof?”

My eyes startled open at the sound. “I laid Issac on the bags of charcoal I picked up from the petrol station. I kissed his little forehead and knelt and prayed to Him. I took the

knife from my jacket and held it to his throat, I removed a lighter from my pocket and held it to the bag. I was about to... to... when God stopped me.”

“That wasn’t God. That was a police officer.”

“It was God. I knew he’d find a way to stop me. He worked through the officer. He knew my faith was strong.”

"How do you think your wife will cope? The looks from your neighbours, the gossip from strangers, the whispers and the stares. What do you think they'll say? There goes that woman whose husband said he talked to God. Is she a nutter too? They'll ask, they'll talk. Did she know? Was she a part of it? How will she go on knowing her husband tried to kill her baby? How will—"

I heard something. What was that? Are you there? I'm listening. Please tell me I passed your test. I kept my faith. Nothing.

The policeman asked me more questions, but I had nothing more to say. They returned me to my cell. I lay there on the thin plastic mattress. Looking at the ceiling. Waiting. It started as a whisper, deep inside my head. I strained to hear. My heart filled as it got louder.

END

Author’s note.

I hope you enjoyed this story, thank you for taking the time to read it.

Twenty-seven of my other short stories can be found in my short story collection A Few Hours After This on Amazon - [mybook.to/FewHoursEbook](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08K9K9K9K)

A FEW HOURS AFTER THIS



PAUL BLAKE

