

SERMON SONG

BOXING MATCH

Written by

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Character Wound

- Levi's wound involves the death of his wife, plus the emotional separation from his daughter, Tess. There is also fear of losing his church.

- Tess wound also involves the death of her mom. Additionally, her father's lacking acceptance for who she is (secular singer).

Character Flaw

- Levi's character flaw involves being egocentric. He thinks he knows what's best for Tess. Also, trying to control Tess.

- Tess character flaw involves anger, which she flashes as a defense mechanism.

Plot Problem - Levi (Dad) wants his daughter, Tess to go to church. She does not want to go to church. She wants to follow her own path and spread her own message.

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FADE IN:

INT. HOME OF LEVI & TESS JOHNSON UPSTAIRS STUDY - AFTERNOON

PREACHER LEVI JOHNSON, 50 something large white man, holds a paper in one hand and a bible in the other, as he rehearses his sermon. The room is dark and untidy, with a large oak desk and several crosses hanging on the walls.

LEVI

Quoting Hebrews 13:5 - "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'"

Levi sets the bible on his desk, turns with paper in hand and walks across the study.

LEVI (CONT'D)

You see brothers and sisters, God is always with us. We need not be afraid.

Moving to the desk, he scratches out words on his paper.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE DOWNSTAIRS TESS'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TESS JOHNSON, 20 year old white female wears torn denim jeans and a white t-shirt. She sits on her bed with her guitar and a notebook. Sunshine passes through her window. Women singer posters adorn the walls of her room.

TESS

(Strumming her guitar
lightly and singing)
You are not alone.

She stops and writes in her notebook. She begins strumming and singing softly again.

TESS (CONT'D)

Your not right, I'm not right, who knows what's right.

She stops and writes in the notebook. Her phone alarm goes off. She closes her notebook, grabs her guitar and walks out of her room.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE KITCHEN - LATER

Tess grabs a drink from the fridge as her dad, Levi, enters.

LEVI
Headed out?

Tess fumbles her drink, but Levi catches it before it falls.

TESS
Yeah.

LEVI
(Hands over the drink)
Which club?

TESS
Little Darlin's.

Tess picks up her guitar, heads for the door. Levi steps forward to the door, lingering on the handle. She flashes anger. He opens the door. She softens her face.

TESS (CONT'D)
Don't wait up Daddy.

Levi stands at the open door, watching until she leaves. Hanging his head, he walks back in the house.

INT. LITTLE DARLIN'S BAR - NIGHT

Tess sits on a stool, centerstage. Smoke filters the spotlight beaming down over her. The club has cleared out. Only a dozen patrons remain.

TESS
Thanks for hanging out late tonight.

CLUB PATRONS
Yahoo. You rock Tess!

TESS
Thanks groupies.
(Laughing along with the group)
For my finale, I'd like to try out a new song. Strangely inspired by my father. It's called, You are not Alone.

The crowd quiets as she begins strumming her guitar.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Dressed in a blue suit, Levi sits drinking coffee and looking over notes. Disheveled, Tess shuffles into the kitchen.

LEVI
Coffee's ready.

TESS
(Yawning)
Uh.

She pours a cup, adds creamer and shuffles toward her room.

LEVI
You going to church?

Tess stops, slowly turns.

TESS
Again?

Levi stares back at her.

TESS (CONT'D)
Dad, I'll decide if and when I come back.

LEVI
How about coming just to sing?

Tess walks back, leaning over the kitchen table.

TESS
You just want me for that? What to help you bring in the Gen X?

Levi, reaches to grab her hand, Tess pulls away.

LEVI
...God gave you a beautiful voice -

TESS
- Yes, to me. I get to decide where and how to use it!

LEVI
I thought we raised you better.

Tess immediately moves away from the table.

TESS
That's rich Dad! Mom's been gone a long time.
(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

You raised me to think for
myself...and God will let me know
what to do...you be damned!

LEVI

(Standing up, fists
clenched)

How about this little lady- you
come back to church or move out!

They face each other, staring. Levi breaks the silence -
grabbing his notes and bible, storming out of the house.

INT. BETHEL METHODIST CHURCH - LATER

A country church, white paint chipping. Inside, the church
is half-full. Levi preaches.

LEVI

People don't you see that you are
never alone. God brought us into
this world and he brings us out of
this world.

CONGREGATION

Amen.

Tess enters the back of the church with her guitar and
suitcase. Levi momentarily freezes.

LEVI

Church, we are all God's children.
Made in his likeness, but all
different. However, he has a
message for all of us. It's up to
us to listen, discern and act.

Tess walks forward, down the main aisle.

LEVI (CONT'D)

I believe Tess, has a song she'd
like to sing for us.

Levi nervously moves to his seat. The congregation leans
forward as Tess sits down on the steps in front.

Montage - Tess singing (muted). Congregation focused on Tess.
Levi watching with tears. Song reaching the end.

TESS

(Singing)

...Am I being raised right, or am I
simply a blight?

(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

It's finding your way, it's making
mistakes and drifting astray.
It's sermons in your life, and joy
in times of strife.
So, Crush your heart of stone and
know that you are not alone.
You are not alone!

Tess finishes her song. The congregation claps. Levi stands up. Tess strides out, head up, grabs her suitcase and leaves the church.

Levi stands facing his congregation, listening as the clapping subsides with tears in his eyes.

FADE OUT.