

Act One

Scene One – A Church

As the show begins, we are in the sanctuary of a church. It is Friday night, the church is empty, save for one girl who is up near the altar. She wears black jeans, a corset, and a thick leather choker. To put it bluntly, she is not the church-going type. At the beginning of the show, The overture plays, and at its end, we hear the back door of the church open. Ben, a man her same age who wears a blazer and is polished, enters and stops.

Ben:

Hi.

Esther grabs her things and goes to leave.

Esther:

Oh my gosh, I am so sorry, I will get out of your way...

Ben:

Oh no! No worries at all! I'm just setting up for Sunday's service. Are you involved here?

Esther:

No, I'm just looking around.

Ben:

How'd you get in?

Esther:

The door was unlocked.

Ben:

That's not good.

Esther:

Oh my gosh, I am so sorry, I didn't know I wasn't allowed to be here.

Ben:

It's really no problem ma'am.

Esther:

Slightly laughing.

"Ma'am"? Do I look like a "ma'am"?

Ben:

A lot more than a "sir".

Esther:

No, I mean how old do you think I am?

Ben:

Well, I didn't think about that, I just never got your name. I figured ma'am was polite enough to use.

Esther:

Esther. You can call me Esther.

Ben:

Esther? That's a really pretty name.

Esther:

Thanks.

Ben:

It really is. I've never met anyone since A.D. with that name.

Esther:

It was my dad's favorite book of the Bible, and my mom liked the sound of it.

Ben:

I'm glad she did.

Esther:

She figured it was a good yelling name, you know? Has a nice ring to it when you shout it out: Esther! Esther Marie get over here! Esther!

Ben laughs.

Ben:

I mean I can't argue there.

Esther:

Yeah. You never gave me yours.

Ben:

Oh, Ben.

Esther:

Ben.

They share a moment, then he continues to set up.

What are you doing?

Ben:

Just setting up.

Esther:

Right, you said that earlier.

Ben:

It's no problem.

Esther:

Are you sure you don't want me to leave?

Ben:

Absolutely. It's nice to have company.

Esther:

Thank you.

Ben:

May I ask you a question?

Esther:

Shoot.

Ben:

What led you here?

Esther giggles.

What?

Esther:

You had to ask me if you could ask that?

Ben:

I didn't want to be rude.

Esther:

You're really nice.

Ben:

I try to be.

Esther:

It works.

Ben:

So?

Esther:

Oh. Well, I don't know.

Ben:

You don't know?

Esther:

No, not really. I mean, I'm not here for some great calling. Nothing led me here at all. I just came.

Ben:

But why here?

Esther:

Just memories.

Ben:

Oh?

Esther:

Yeah. But that was a different time. If you couldn't tell I haven't been to church for a while.

Ben stifles a laugh.

You know, you are allowed to laugh at a joke.

Ben:

I know.

Ben has a question, but doesn't ask it.

Esther:

What?

Ben:

Nothing.

Esther:

No, not nothing.

Ben:

Yes, nothing.

Esther:

Ben, I am a girl. We know that nothing really means something. You can ask me anything.

Ben:

Promise?

Esther:

Pinky promise.

Ben:

Okay. I was just going to ask why you dressed like that.

Esther:

It's kintsugi.

Ben:

Kintsugi?

Esther:

In Japan they have a thing called "kintsugi". It's where they fix broken pottery with gold lacquer. That's a lot like being goth. Like me. I know that the world is broken. But I believe that in the dark, in the broken parts, there is a strange beauty. I like that.

Ben sits next to Esther.

Ben:

Me too.

Esther gets up and begins to walk.

Esther:

There's actually a legend that says that when kintsugi began, people would take bowls – fine-china-that-was-fit-for-the-emperor-type bowls – and willingly, willingly smash them to pieces just so they could ornament the cracks with the gold glue. I don't know why, but that always made me happy. Well, I mean I do know why but it's kinda...

Ben:

Why?

Esther:

No, It's dumb.

Ben:

You're in a sanctuary, you don't need to worry about being dumb, Esther

Esther:

Really?

Ben:

Yeah. The God I serve doesn't care if you're wearing a nice dress or a leather corset...

If in a Methodist church:

John Wesley might...

If not in a Methodist church:

Pastor might...

Continuing from the previous option with no pause:

... But they aren't God so who cares? It's your heart that matters anyways.

Esther:

I like it so much because I like to think that somewhere, someone, there is someone who doesn't see me as broken, but someone who sees me as fixed, you know? So many people I've met hear my story and look at me like a cracked bowl. They see me and wonder how I could hold any water, how I manage to keep going. They look at me and they think "how can I fix that?" rather than just listening. Like they have to be the saviors.

Ben:

I've met a lot of them.

Esther:

Really?

Ben:

Yeah. They were the ones that made me hate God for a while.

Esther:

You?!

Ben:

Yes, me.

Pause.

You seem surprised.

Esther:

Just that they'd let the sinner set up the service.

Ben:

Of course they would! What do you think this is, a hotel for saints? Any church that denies love to the sinners is no church at all.

Esther:

Then again the church isn't the building it's the people, right?

Ben:

You seem to know a lot.

Esther:

I didn't always dress like this.

Ben:

I mean, it would be odd to see a baby in a corset.

Esther:

That's not what I meant.

Ben:

I know. What happened?

Esther:

You don't want to hear that.

Ben:

I do!

Esther:

It's a long story.

Ben:

I have time.

Esther:

It's pathetic.

Ben:

No worse than mine.

Esther:

It's sad.

Ben:

You're wearing enough black for a whole funeral; I wasn't expecting a rainbow.

Pause.

Esther:

Touché.

Pause. Ben gives her a look and she starts to talk.

Well, for starters I wasn't supposed to be here tonight; I actually was supposed to be on a date. A really good date with a really good guy. I'm not anymore, obviously. I'm here. I got dumped. Sean, the boy I was supposed to be going on a date with, Sean is currently at the movies with

Esther:

Jayce. Jayce! She's awful. Really, she is. This girl has flaming pink hair, and she constantly complains about everything. I went to a party she threw last year, and let me tell you, I've never seen someone so unhappy about everything. She had this whole bar set up but kept whining about how it wasn't level or how it looked like garbage just because it wasn't lit right. She was moping around for the whole party, but, I mean, come on, when you throw a party no one cares what the bar looks like, they only care what it has.

Ben:

Okay...

Esther:

Realizing she was ranting.

Sorry!

Ben:

So your heart got broken and you decided to go goth?

Esther:

No! That's really a dumb reason to do all this.

Ben:

What happened then?

Esther:

I was raised in the church. I remember waking up at eight every single Sunday to go to church.

If not performed in a church that is not Methodist, omit the following:

We were Methodists... You know, the fun ones?

Ben:

Oh yeah.

Esther:

Dad took me to church and Mom would tag along sometimes. We rode in the magic van. It was this gold minivan that was falling apart. Dad always made-up stories about why the doors were creaking or why the engine made a noise. When I was seven there was a very loud hiss followed by some smoke from the engine bay. He told me not to worry; he had gone hiking earlier and found a dragon who was cold, so he put it in the engine compartment to keep warm. He told me the hissing and smoke was just him waking up. I believed him; I really did. Every single Sunday we went to church. I sat in on the big people church too. I loved Sunday school; I really did. Sunday was my favorite day of the week. I got to see friends and play and sing and dance and Dad would take me to lunch. I got to wear dresses and smile and laugh...

Ben:

That sounds like a great time.

Esther:

It was. It was my favorite day of the week. We'd get food after and then go home and watch a movie or run around and it was the best.

Ben:

I'm missing something.

Esther:

Yeah, you are.

Ben:

What happened, Esther?

Esther pauses. Thinking. She decides to continue with her story.

Esther:

When I was fourteen, I got sick. I was really sick. Like I couldn't move and could barely breathe sick. I was scared. I couldn't dance, I couldn't run, I couldn't sing, I was sick. I remember laying in a hospital bed and crying. Mom was there, Dad was working. I was so scared. When you're ten they don't tell you what's going on they just tell you to relax. She didn't stay with me. Mom went home every night. I mean, she didn't have a choice; the nurses made her leave. So, I sat. I sat every night awake and I cried. I cried to God and He was quiet. He did nothing. I was broken, I was broken and alone and I wanted so badly to believe that God was there. But I was alone. I wondered why, if God is a father, was I alone? I was supposed to be fearfully and wonderfully made but I was breaking.

Ben:

But that doesn't mean that you weren't made well.

Esther:

Things that are made well don't break, Ben. My grandfather gave me this chess set. He bought it somewhere important but for the life of me I can't remember where. It's ivory. The board is made of this dark wood, and the pieces look like the Chinese versus the Huns. Every piece has its own expression. He said that they were each carved by hand and painted with a single horsehair. I truly believe that. You can see the knife marks. It's stunning. I wasn't even allowed near it until I was sixteen! It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen- everything about it is perfect. Someone sat down and for years whittled away at a tusk of an elephant and eventually they had made one game. One single, solitary game and it has lasted for over a century and still does its job and looks just as beautiful as the day it was finished. That was fearfully and beautifully made. It is

Esther:

still complete. That hospital is when I became a goth. It's all about the beauty in the broken bits... Kintsugi.

Ben:

Do you ever think that God had a plan in that?

Esther:

Don't give me that garbage, Ben.

Ben:

I'm just saying that maybe there was a reason.

Esther:

Maybe there was! Sure, maybe there was a reason that all this happened but that doesn't make it right.

Ben:

Esther...

Esther:

And there you are doing what everyone else does, you do the little side-tilt with your head and you sigh and look at me like I am a little dog with a broken leg. You look at me like I am helpless and alone and like I don't know what to do but I am not, I fight. I have to fight every single day. I wake up in the morning and until I get back to my bed at night I am fighting. Fighting tooth and nail until I can finally breathe. I can't just blindly obey in something I can't see, Ben.

Ben:

I know. You don't have to.

Esther searches for the words to say but is silent.

What do you think faith is, believing in the invisible? Do you think that faith is simply sitting in a pew and singing songs with friends trying to

Ben:

conjure up a shared vision of some man who lived 2,000 years ago? It's not, Esther. None of that.

Esther:

Then what is it?

Ben:

Someone once said that faith is "a big word for only five letters" yet "strong enough to keep us steady in even the biggest storms."

Esther:

Who said that?

Ben:

I don't really remember, but it's not important. Faith is holding to the truth you know even when it seems like it is impossible.

Esther:

How do you know that God is real?

Ben:

The Drake Equation.

Esther:

What on earth is that?

Ben:

It's an equation scientists use to determine how capable any given planet is of supporting life. In the Drake Equation there is a value " P_a " which is the probability of all the necessary components assembling into life. I read this article and the author said that it's a murky thing, you'd need a trillion test tubes of the same chemicals for it to all fall into place and make life. And then there's the time needed and the number of building blocks needed and it's just so unlikely for life to exist by random chance. Yet there are millions alive today who believe in the same creator who made it all,

Ben:

millions more who no longer live who knew Him too. That they all would see the same thing when it was never there... that's just as unlikely. So you ask me how I know? Well, I know because I don't know how else we could be here.

Esther gets up and walks around.

Esther:

It's hot in here.

Ben:

They keep the A/C on 78 during the week.

Esther:

Why?

Ben:

No one's ever in here other than me... usually.

Esther:

You should really lock the doors then.

Ben:

I could've sworn I did.

Esther:

Huh.

Ben:

What?

Esther:

I wonder how they got unlocked.

Ben:

Maybe God knew you needed to be here.

To himself.



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