

SAMPLE 10 PAGE FROM "IN JESUS' NAME" (Nancy Temple)

LUKE

You hear that, Roy? It's not choir practice, is it, on a Monday?

*(He glances back.)*

Church is dark.

*(They listen for a moment.)*

ROY

Can't be Milo's church, Warren's too far.

LUKE

*(dark)*

Don't say that name, Roy. He stole half my congregation.

*(The singing fades. Roy pushes the wheelchair to the bench, goes to the door of the house. He knocks, waits, no answer.)*

ROY

I don't think they're home. We can wait.

*(He sits on the bench and begins to rub Luke's leg.)*

LUKE

Where's Johnny been hiding? I haven't seen him in days. You think he's avoiding me?

ROY

Wouldn't surprise me.

LUKE

Crafty little devil.

ROY

Takes after you, then.

LUKE

Not in the pulpit, though. I thought he'd shape up, but every sermon's crazier than the last. You know what Fay said about last week's? The whole congregation went camping!

ROY

We went down to the creek for an hour, that's all... communed with nature. I know Angie had a good time. So did I.

LUKE

You think going to church is about having a good time? You're as crazy as he is. Angie, well, she doesn't know any better.

ROY

Anyway, he knows how you feel. Word gets around.

*(Tammy comes from the interior into the yard.)*

LUKE

Well, hello.

TAMMY

Hey, Luke. Hi, Roy.

LUKE

We thought you weren't home. Is Johnny here?

TAMMY

He went for a walk. He should be back soon—it's been a couple of hours. Hey Luke, guess what. I met this couple in town last week—they have three kids. I told them about the Sunday School, and they're really interested! They invited me to stop by. I'm just going.

LUKE

So five more members, if we're lucky.

TAMMY

I hope so. I'll talk to you later.

*(She exits.)*

LUKE

You hear that, Roy? She was meant for this. She's a woman with a mission.

*(mini beat)*

Remember when she talked about that place in, where was it—Franklin? That's it. A little church they wanted to fix up, so John could preach there.

ROY

He said he was fooling around. I don't think that was *his* dream.

LUKE

Well, he's stubborn.

ROY

Go easy on him. He did you a favor.

LUKE

I know that, Roy. And I'm grateful. But he got turned around somehow, out there in Africa, got some strange new ideas. He needs to get back to his roots. Maybe Tammy can talk some sense into him.

*(Roy's massaging.)*

ROY

Does this hurt?

LUKE

I still can't feel it.

*(He watches Roy.)*

Bless you, Roy. I can't ever repay you for what you've done for me.

*(mini beat)*

And for Johnny.

ROY

You don't need to say that—we're family.

LUKE

You've seen the worst and stuck by me. I don't know why you put up with me all these years.

ROY

I know what it's like to live with heartache. When you lose someone. They're gone, but then you see something, or someone tells you something funny, and you want to share it. And you can't.

LUKE

That heartache never goes away, does it.

ROY

You have to live with the guilt, too. That's a heavy burden.

LUKE

Guilt! I don't feel guilty! Why should I? What about you? When Susie died—was that your fault?

ROY

Susie had cancer. It's different. You know that.

LUKE

Well, anyway, you got married again. I envy you, Roy. You found someone to love you. The Lord sent you a gift wrapped up in Angie. You know why? Because you've been good to me, that's why. He's gonna have a special place for you in heaven, I'll make sure of that. He'll listen to me.

*(waxes rhapsodic)*

You're gonna have your own place up there, a palace made of clouds. You'll have a bed covered with angels' wings. What color bedspread you want—what's your favorite color?

ROY

Blue, like Angie's eyes.

LUKE

The Lord will make sure you're always happy. There's no misery up there.

ROY

I won't be happy if Angie's not there.

LUKE

She'll be there. Hey, you could stop now. I need to roll around for a while.

*(Luke rolls the wheelchair, using both hands.)*

Look at this.

*(Luke stops wheeling, flexes both arms.)*

I feel good, Roy. You know what I want to do? I want to wrap these arms around a good woman.

*(voice becomes dreamy)*

I can see her. She's not too big, I don't like big women. Never did. And she's got red hair. I think every woman I ever really loved had red hair.

ROY

That's not true.

LUKE

Quiet. I tell you she's got red hair and freckles.

ROY

Weren't we talking about my place in the hereafter? Let's talk about that place you're furnishing for me up there.

LUKE

You've forgotten what it's like to lie in bed alone. Can't stop me from dreaming.

*(John enters from stage left, sees them, stops. His feet are bare, pants rolled up; he's carrying his boots; his pants are soaking wet.)*

ROY

John. What happened to you?

LUKE

Just the man I've been waiting for.

JOHN

I was at the creek with Angie. She dared me to walk on water, and she said if I didn't try, she'd jump in and take a swim...so I—well...I guess we got a little carried away...*(gestures to his pants)*...look at me. I'm soaked. So is she.

LUKE

I want to talk to you.

ROY

Where's Angie now?

JOHN

Headed home, I guess. I left her at the big maple top of the hill. Hey Dad, the wild rhodies are in bud—you always liked them.

ROY

Luke, I'm going to see if she's home. John'll take you back.

LUKE

No. I want you to stay.

ROY

This is between you and John. I should go.

LUKE

Just sit down, okay? Please.

*(Roy sits.)*

Well, Johnny, people are talking about you.

JOHN

I know. Listen, I'd like to get out of these clothes.

*(Roy gets up again.)*

ROY

He's soaking wet. And I want to get home.

LUKE

A few more minutes won't hurt you. Either of you.

*(Roy sits again, defeated. John remains standing.)*

JOHN

All right. Let's get this over this.

LUKE

Get it over with. That's the way you talk to me—get it over with. You hear that, Roy? I don't even know where to start. You been preaching a month and you're talking about—what? Climate change? Listen to me, Johnny—my church is at stake! You know what Fay says about your sermons? What she calls them?

JOHN

I know. I get it.

LUKE

No, you *don't* get it. The gospel is the word of God. Don't mess with it.

ROY

Luke. There's lots of ways of spreading the word.

LUKE

Two years in Africa—wasted! I'd like to know what the hell you were preaching out there.

JOHN

It wasn't Africa—it was Nepal, and I was building houses.

LUKE

All that stuff, hinges, doors, that's over. You want to fix something in your spare time, fine. But you're a preacher now. You need to understand—you have an obligation to the church. My church. You have a mission.

JOHN

What's that—convincing the congregation they're all a bunch of sinners?

LUKE

We're all sinners. Don't kid yourself.

JOHN

Doesn't loving God mean loving his creation—stars—birds? It's in Genesis, if you think the Bible is the word of God.

LUKE

*If the Bible's the word of God? If?* Do I understand you?

*(Agitated, he wheels.)*

Now listen. You preach about—earth worship or whatever it is—my people aren't pagans! You're looking in the wrong direction! Up, not down. Up! You think you're in that pulpit to teach made up science instead of the gospel?

JOHN

You think it's made up science?

ROY

Just let him talk, John.

JOHN

I'm not stopping him.

*(Luke rolls downstage and gazes at the audience)*

LUKE

When you stand up there looking at your flock, you see all those familiar faces, friends and neighbors...your faces shining with hope, and I *know* you want to be good. But sin is easy. It's the snake. The devil waits everywhere.

You ask me: pastor, how will I recognize the devil?

*(beat)*

Well, friends, the devil could be a woman, trying to convince you there's more in her soft embrace than all the love that waits for you in heaven. Don't be fooled. The moment you give in to temptation, you become a sinner. And you know where you'll end up—deep, deep in hell. Imagine an eternity of the worst pain you can imagine. The mere movement of the air, whipped by fire, will make you wish for death, but it's too late. This is your everlasting life. God help you.

*(beat)*

Keep Jesus close to you at every moment. Amen.

*(Luke turns his wheelchair to look at John.)*

Now that's how you do it, son. I don't know what your problem is. You listened all your life to me.

*(Luke studies John, pulls a paper out of his pocket.)*

Here, I wrote you a sermon. It'll sound a little...emphatic. I realize I have that way of preaching. You read it next Sunday—you can put your stamp on it—change it—not too much. Take it...take it.

ROY

You get out of those wet pants, John.

JOHN

I will.

LUKE

Roy, if you don't mind...

*(Luke indicates the wheelchair. Roy pushes the wheelchair towards the exit stage left. Just before they exit, Luke calls back without turning around.)*

LUKE

My birthday's coming, Johnny—give me a good sermon!

*(He exits.)*

JOHN

*(looking in Luke's direction but quiet)*

Happy birthday, Dad.