

THE STRUGGLE

Written by

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Based on the screenplay "Love is the Drug"

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FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

It is Sunday morning. Service is underway at Ebenezer Baptist Church. An instrumental version of "Down By the Riverside" plays and the PARISHONERS, all mainly in their 20s and 30s, all stand and clap along enthusiastically.

MIDDLE ROW

This row of churchgoers seems to be filled with well-dressed, beautiful women. In the middle of these beauties stands RON THIBODEAUX, early 30s. Ron is clean cut and handsome, but the forlorn look on his face hides his level of attractiveness. He is wearing a dark suit, a skinny tie, and is not clapping with the rest of the crowd. He is shaking his head and staring at the ceiling.

He shifts his attention to us and sighs deeply.

RON

You know, there are times when I hate being a man. Now don't get me wrong, its not like I'd rather be a woman, or a moose or anything. I love being a man. I'm just saying that sometimes manliness tends to override logic, or common sense. Or morality.

Ron turns his head sharply to the right, focusing on the profile of the beautiful WOMAN standing next to him. She is smiling and clapping along with the music, completely oblivious to him.

He scans her body from top to bottom: the flower print of her snug dress, her stockings, her heels.

Ron looks back at us, his face saying "Can you believe this?"

He snaps his head to the left and down, this time scanning the body of a SECOND WOMAN. He takes in the sight of her stiletto heels, her stockings, her tight green dress and her beautiful face. She is also clapping along to the music. She turns and catches Ron staring at her.

They lock eyes for a moment before Ron turns his attention back to the hymn. He begins clapping and singing loud.

RON (CONT'D)

(to us)

This ain't right! I'm at church! I mean, it's bad enough that I have to go the extra mile so I don't get lumped in to the huge stereotype that "all men are dogs," so I proudly discuss my fiance, as loud and often as possible, so there is no mistake that I'm not only taken, but I'm not looking for anyone else. Then, testosterone chimes in, telling me "hey - look at these," or "check those out." Then I'm battling internally. Good vs. Evil, if you will. And now I can't even come to church to find solace?

He continues clapping, rolling his eyes.

RON (CONT'D)

Not fair. It's not fair.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

Ron exits the church. He politely speaks to the ladies standing outside and heads toward the parking lot. He speaks to us as he walks.

RON

See, I appreciate women. And I don't mean that in an every-night-at-the-strip-club way. That's not even my thing. In fact, I have only been to two strip clubs in my life, and they were both for bachelor parties. And I came home with all my money both times. Maybe I'm too cynical to enjoy that stuff anymore...

A beat.

He shakes his head in slight disgust.

RON (CONT'D)

Nah, its more than that. When I say I appreciate women, I mean it in a deeply respectful way.

(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)

I was very close to my mom, God rest her soul, and she would've beat the brakes off of me if I ever disrespected any woman. I have two sisters, tons of aunts - adopted and real - so yeah... I appreciate women.

He has reached his car, a black Honda Accord. His phone rings. He reads the screen and ignores the call.

RON (CONT'D)

That was Tina, my fiance. See? Committed. I am Mr. Commitment. I'm strong, I'm faithful, I'm not a stereotype...

One of the women from Ron's pew runs up to him and whispers in his ear. She slips a note into his hand and walks away. Ron reads the note and then looks in the direction she walked towards.

He smiles, crumples up the note, prepares to throw it away, but stops short and puts it in his pocket.

RON (CONT'D)

(to us)

I didn't want to litter. I'm committed to the environment too.

He winks and gets in his car. The engine revs and he drives away.