

**IN PROXIMITY**  
**Episode 2: Tessa Thompson and Kalia King**  
**Final Transcript**

[Music/Old Radio Sounds by Ken Nana]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** You're listening to P-R-O-X.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

[MUSIC STOPS]

**Tessa Thompson:** What I wish that I realized then was when people say it's who you know, it's that the people that you meet that you really get to know and that you make a connection with and that you are after the same thing in ways big and small are the people that are going to be the most impactful in your career.

**Kalia King:** Absolutely.

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

Paola Mardo: You're listening to In Proximity.

Tessa Thompson has starred in television shows, independent films, and blockbuster Hollywood movies like Dear White People, Selma, Westworld, Thor: Ragnarok (and Love and Thunder), and of course the Creed saga.

A couple years ago, she met Kalia King, then an exec at HBO working on shows like True Detective, The Outsider, and Lovecraft Country. They met at what's called a general meeting, which they'll get into in their conversation.

On this episode, Tessa and Kalia talk about career transitions from acting to producing with a pitstop in reality TV, the ins and outs of the entertainment business, and how thriving in it is all about finding your people.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

[MUSIC STOPS]

**Tessa Thompson:** My name is Tessa Thompson, and I am an actor, a producer, and I suppose, more newly, I feel like an entrepreneur because I started this production company called Viva Maude that houses most all of the work that I'm interested in doing.

**Kalia King:** I'm Kalia King. I'm the Executive Vice President, which just means I run television for our wonderful company, Proximity Media. We are in our beautiful Proximity offices. And I'm really excited to be talking with you. I have been lucky enough to find so many commonalities, both professionally and personally where we have just found overlap. And a lot of, I think, what

we want to talk about today or will come up, at least, is those spaces where you're able to traverse professional and go into personal, where you can really find your people in this business, which is such a challenge to do.

**Tessa Thompson:** It is.

**Kalia King:** I will start with how we met. At the time, I was working at HBO, and obviously you have a long history with HBO, and I knew that you were getting into producing. And so our first meeting was a Zoom to discuss probably the best book I've ever read, *Vanishing Half*.

**Tessa Thompson:** Just the best book. Also, I remember when you all got that book, it was such a big deal, *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett, just the best book.

**Kalia King:** I mean that book moved me in a way where I got to the last page, and I was like, "And we're going back to the first page, and we're going to read it again." Brit was meant to do exactly what she's doing, and that's how she's been able to write books like *The Vanishing Half*—works that make you just feel, feel, feel, feel, feel and then want to feel it again.

**Tessa Thompson:** I couldn't agree more.

**Kalia King:** And I remember, at some point in our discussion, where you just have a moment where you're like so lost in the conversation that you forget that you're in a general or in an interview or in an audition or in a, you know, a meeting that is going to determine some sort of pivotal outcome.

And I just liked you. And I was also very—like, transparently, I was very surprised by your instincts creatively. I think as we were talking, I was like, oh, she really gets how to produce, how to take something, an idea, a book, a script and really deconstruct it in a way that you then put it back together and build it up into the thing that we all see. And then, beyond that, we were able to unfortunately not work together on *Vanishing Half*, but we were able to instead do something even better, which is put your company into an exclusive deal with HBO where you produced specifically for us and for HBO Max, which --

**Tessa Thompson:** Yes, which, by the way, was really fundamental in helping me build the company. So I thank you greatly. And, even beyond that, being able to see that you can do something requires that other people see it in you, acknowledge it in you. And that's something that was really helpful because as an actor I had this idea, I really like storytelling, and I feel like I want to do it outside of always being inside of the story. I'm interested in frames that I'm not in, too, and I think getting to see and have proximity to folks that are storytellers and producers, especially, would see my instincts as an actor and go, like, "I think you might be a producer." I had been told that so many times before I thought, "Oh, maybe there's a there there."

So I'm really grateful to the folks along the way and also so curious because you and I have never spoken about this, about what it was like for you to transition from acting to want to think about other parts of the industry, which feels like there's a lot of similarity between us in terms of the ways in which we're interested around storytelling. But I was so grateful to that early conversation around *Vanishing Half*, not because it led me to the path to HBO, which was my dream place to land at the time, and start to build roots for the company, but because it was one of the early conversations that I had thinking around how you ideate around something. And for folks that are listening out there that don't know, a general, for example, is something that you

get set up where you're having a general conversation around how you maybe could work together in some ways. My favorite kind of general is when it feels a bit more specific.

So, in that case, we got to really talk about a piece of work that I felt passionately about that you did, too, and talk about what's possible inside of it. And I think, particularly when you're starting out and trying to build a business, you have one meeting, a general, and it doesn't get you the thing that you think you want at the time, but it's always helping you, in my estimation, see what is possible. And you helped me see that something even bigger than that immediate idea was possible.

**Kalia King:** I appreciate you saying that. I will receive it and take it. It's, it's very hard, I think, in our business to find your people, to find the spaces of which you can really experience trust. I would say even more so on the business side, the, the networks and the studios.

**Tessa Thompson:** I bet.

**Kalia King:** Most of your relationships are transactional. Everything is based on what you can give me and what I can give you. And can those things happen at the same time, and can we go make a lot of money together? That's literally what our business is based on.

**Tessa Thompson:** Well, I often feel like that as an actor. Sometimes I feel like I'm a walking um dollar sign to people, and I—you know, you're like, how do you be a shinier, bigger dollar sign to them so that people care about what you have to say? So I—yeah.

**Kalia King:** It's all commerce. It's all currency. You're commerce, and you're currency. Like, that's what it is. And so you have these general meetings, and, on our side, we have them constantly.

**Tessa Thompson:** You have them all the time, right?

**Kalia King:** Constantly. Every single meeting you have, it's either a pitch or a general especially on the buyer side, which is where I was at that time. And you have these meetings that are fulfilling a lot of different directives. You have the ones where people are—their agents are trying to show that they're working for them. "I've got all these meetings lined up for you. You're going to go in, and you're going to sit with—you know, you're going to sit with the head of Ryan Coogler's company. You're going to sit with the head of HBO." And, and then the client can say, "Great. I'll keep giving you the 15%."

And then you have the meetings that actually yield something. And the great thing is that you never know which one it's going to be. Sometimes you can go into a general, and you're like, "All right, we know that we're probably not going to work with this person, but we're trying to, like, do the thing. And then you find some bizarre overlap, and you're surprised. And then you're able to say, okay, where can we plug that person into our actual business?"

So you have them so often that you can get a little robotic with them.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah.

**Kalia King:** You can get very used to having the same kinds of conversations. And then, yes, you have those moments where all of the inflection points feel really organic and clear and synergized. So you're not having the conversation in your head of, "Hmm, where can we put

them?" but rather, "I can't wait to find places to put them into whatever." And you have very specific, "Oh, we just got this book," or we just...

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah.

**Kalia King:** All of that.

**Tessa Thompson:** But I think that's a really important lesson in really showing up authentically on those generals, in those conversations with the things that really spark and interest you, not the things that you think the other person is going to respond to because only in that do you really find your people. When I first started as an actor, you're just trying to pay the rent, and I was, like, definitely trying to pay the rent, you know? So you sort of throw things at the wall and see what sticks. And at a certain point, things were sticking in the sense that I was a working actor, which is not something to take lightly.

There's no one in the industry in my family. I grew up in Los Angeles, so I at least didn't have to move from somewhere to make the pilgrimage to be here. But I had, like, no connections. And, you know, you're told so often it's, like, who you know. And I was like, I know zero people.

So it really had to do with: do I have the fortitude? And I remember someone saying to me, "If there's anything else you could imagine yourself doing, do it. Don't do this. And the truth is, at a certain point, I looked up and was like, "There's really nothing else I could imagine myself doing. So I think this is the thing." And what I wish that I realized then was when people say it's who you know, it's that the people that you meet that you really get to know and that you make a connection with and that you are after the same thing in ways big and small are the people that are going to be the most impactful in your career.

**Kalia King:** Absolutely.

**Tessa Thompson:** And those are the people you want to keep close and continue to build with. And I think that's something that I didn't really realize. I remember, early on as an actor, people would talk about networking, and I had no idea what that meant. For someone on the outside, you might think, "I'm going to go to the highest level person." But the truth is, when you're trying to build and grow inside of an industry it's so important --

**Kalia King:** It's your peers.

**Tessa Thompson:** -- to build and grow with the people that are right next to you, right? Because those are the folks that you're, like, hacking into the jungle together with. And I find it a really exciting time in the industry because so many folks that we were, like, those, you know, baby folks together whether it's Ryan or Michael who just directed the next Creed, it's really exciting to see all those folks that I have continued to be in relationship with now doing the things that they're doing.

[Interstitial Music - "KN 9 to 5" by Ludwig Göransson]

**Tessa Thompson:** So I'm so interested. You know, I don't know that I've ever heard this story directly from you, but I'd love to hear, as I am now making this sort of transition, in some ways, into producing in a more robust way, I'm so curious what the transition was for you out of acting into other spaces in the industry. Like, I want your full -- if we were on our first date, on our first business date.

**Kalia King:** You know, I grew up as an actor. I spent most of my childhood in and around theater. I did a little bit of television. I was almost Rudy on The Cosby Show. It was me and two other actors, one of which is Keisha, who I ended up going to college with. But --

**Tessa Thompson:** Wow.

**Kalia King:**—I was really in it, and I had an agent. You know, I was in New York a lot. My identity was to perform. I was a performer. I was an actor, and I went to college, and then I graduated. And I moved to New York after I graduated, and I started working, and it was a time in my life where a lot of things were happening. I never thought I was going to leave New York, and I started thinking about leaving New York. I was doing Hairspray at Walnut Street Theater, which is a really big theater in Philadelphia. And I was supremely, like, depressed. I was not enjoying myself. It was a moment where my brain started to step away from, "I can't do anything else. I don't want to do anything else. I'm not anybody else," to, "That's pretty limiting. What if I am somebody else? What if there's somebody else over here that I have no idea who it is because I'm being so tunnel visioned at this goal" --

**Tessa Thompson:** "About this thing," yeah.

**Kalia King:**—"this thing, this thing I got to have?" And so a lot of dominoes started to fall beyond that. My mother got really sick. I had a relationship blow up. I had all of these things sort of happening there. I was like, I got to get out of New York. The last thing that happened was I was up for a very huge role in a Broadway show that has been running for a very long time. It would've been the role of a lifetime. They had never hired a Black girl to play this "colored" character. And I knew I was going to get it. It is a very hard score to sing. It sat perfectly in my voice. I had multiple auditions all the way down to the final one. And the final one happened when my mom was in not a great place in her health. And I remember leaving the hospital and saying, "When I come back, I'm going to be on Broadway." It was like the gift I was going to give my mom, and it was going to, like, bring her out of where she was. And I had the most incredible final callback. They were sending me to see the show. There's measurements for costumes.

**Tessa Thompson:** Oh, wow. Yeah, yeah, you're far along.

**Kalia King:** You're really, like, there. And I remember the day my agent called, and he was like, "They're going in a different direction."

There was something really specific in that moment that I was like, I'm done. This isn't fun anymore. That moment of living and being in a really beautiful present moment of art, I hadn't had it in a long time. And it was because of that, because it was so affected by making it, by getting it, by getting there that it wasn't fun, and so for me, the transition oddly was a very easy one because I was ready to move on.

On the other side of that, I knew that I wanted to tell stories, and I wanted to be the author of those stories. I wanted to be the person making the decisions instead of someone deciding for me --

**Tessa Thompson:** For you.

**Kalia King:**—if the answer was yes or no. And so when I got to LA, I met a producer at a bar one night, and I ended up on Big Brother, which is not how it happens.

**Tessa Thompson:** Casting for Big Brother.

**Kalia King:** No. I ended up on the show Big Brother.

**Tessa Thompson:** I'm sorry.

**Kalia King:** Is this not something that you know about me? It's very buried in my past. So no one really knows.

**Tessa Thompson:** I'm—I'm so sorry. No.

**Kalia King:** Season 13 of Big Brother, I was on Big Brother. I had always been a huge fan of Big Brother and Survivor. And I met this producer at a bar—the bar I was working at. We should be clear. And the next day I got a phone call from the casting company, and they were like, "One of our—one of our" --

**Tessa Thompson:** You were on the whole season of Big Brother Season 13?

**Kalia King:** I made it to the end. I made it to the last week.

**Tessa Thompson:** And then from there?

**Kalia King:** And then from there, so the senior casting producer of the show and I went to dinner. I asked her to go to dinner, and I was like, "You're now the only person I know. So can you help me get a job?" And she was like, "No, I, I don't hire people who have been on my shows," and at the time I was like 31, 32. And I was like, "I'll do anything. I'll go get coffee. I will sit in the back and hold up the like, you got 10 seconds left. I will do whatever if you'll just, like, please give me an opportunity or point me in the right direction."

A couple days later, she called me and she said, "I just got a contract for this show that we just set up with NBC, and I need to put together the casting team. And I'm going to go against my Golden Rule because I think you would really be good at this." And she actually made me a casting producer on the TV show. I was not running and getting people's coffee and doing whatever else. She gave me an opportunity where there really wasn't one and took a chance on me and validated that the shift that I had made was a right one.

And I worked in casting, unscripted casting for the next several years before I then got my first network job, which was at ABC, and on the low-low, like, kind of got fired from ABC. So, like, it was a personnel thing, it was a headcount thing, and there was nowhere else for me to go. And it was like, just hold tight, hold tight. And I was like, "I got school loans. I can't hold tight." And so I had to go get another job. But I've made so many transitions in my life, and I think that my fear of trying something crazy new and different is gone.

And I think a lot of that came from, every six months to a year, I was on a new contract, and I was playing somebody else, and I was doing something else, and I was moving to Anchorage to do blah, blah, blah. And really being able to be, like, nimble allowed me to kind of say, okay, I always know how to, like, turn left and be like, all right, how do I go right? And I don't think I would change anything. And it was really hard. I mean, I was, you know, 34, 35 actually getting

coffee for people because after I came out of casting, and I wanted to switch to scripted, I had to start over again because we're in a business that's not like, linear move.

**Tessa Thompson:** But that—but see, that's so cool. I think sometimes people think of the trajectory as always an upward --

**Kalia King:** It's not.

**Tessa Thompson:**—an upward slope, and that's not always the case. And also, in your story, I see so many opportunities to remember this idea of humility, that, like, you can get to the top of whatever it is, and when you're trying to do something new, you're in a different position. And also symmetry, I mean the first—like, one of my first professional productions, I think the first came as a direct result of me doing a similar thing that you did, which is wanting to apprentice for a company, "Let me just get your coffee," because I think what it sounds like in both of our cases, we were hungry to learn.

**Kalia King:** Yup.

**Tessa Thompson:** And just for an opportunity to have proximity to a space where we wanted to be. Right?

**Kalia King:** Absolutely.

**Tessa Thompson:** And so to be like, I'll do whatever it takes to get there at this present moment. And then that ended up resulting in me, just by circumstance, someone missing a rehearsal, I read her part. And then, I didn't get that role, but another role in a production, which then led to really my first big professional play, which then led to my agent. I think sometimes we don't see all the invisible ways that, actually, the moment when you might think you're doing something like, "Oh, man, I'm getting coffee," is like the thing actually that sets you on the course to be doing the thing that you actually want to do.

**Kalia King:** When I got my job at ABC, I was like, like, "I did it. I'm here. I made it. I'm in proximity to Shonda!" Like, I was in it. And the day that I walked out of ABC for the last time, it was crushing. It was horrible. And I didn't know how I was going to rebound from that thing. I have a corner office looking literally at the building that I had my first job in, that I was running around getting someone's coffee and picking up their dry cleaning and walked out of crying because I thought that I was donezo. You just keep going.

**Tessa Thompson:** You just...

**Kalia King:** You just keep going.

**Tessa Thompson:** ...keep going. You just keep going.

**Kalia King:** And then, when someone tells you to stop, you run around them, and you keep going.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah.

[LAUGHTER]

[Interstitial Music - "Good Times" by Ludwig Göransson]

**Kalia King:** I do want to, like, slightly segue—you spoke a little bit earlier about always kind of having the producorial knack, but what made you go from the space of, "Oh, this might be something I'm just, like, good at," to actually saying, "No, I'm going to go forward and start putting my name on projects and starting this company and hiring personnel and seeking out deals and things like that."

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah, that's such a good question and one that I ask myself all the time, particularly in the days where I'm like, "Why did—what—what am I—producing, they said it would be fun." And most days it is.

**Kalia King:** Who said that?

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah. Did you ever say that to me?

**Kalia King:** I lied.

**Tessa Thompson:** I think one of the reasons that I was actually reflecting on the other day because I'm still very much acting, and there's all these things in our slate, meaning, like, the list of projects that you're actively developing. So, across our slate, currently at my company we have about 20 projects, right? There are only maybe three or four things in that lot that I would actually be in as an actor. Most things that we're producing are not for me to star in. They're for other people to star in. And there are a handful of things across that collection of stories that we're trying to tell both in television and film, there's a number of things where the protagonist is a woman or a person of color, and there are a handful of those that are parts that I would have just done anything to get early on in my career. They are the kind of parts that, frankly, did not exist when I was coming up.

And I think the idea now, as a producer, that I could be involved in helping make the kind of stories that talent are excited to tell because they reflect their humanity or they expand their humanity, even better, that is so exciting to me. So that was one of the guiding principles. So, at first, it was an itch that I wanted to scratch. And now I think as an actor, my dreams felt kind of centered around what I wanted to do. I was always in the picture. And now having dreams that are peopled by a lot of other folks seems like at this point is going to be the thing that's going to keep me engaged. I am not enough anymore.

**Kalia King:** That's actually a really good point because so much, as we mentioned earlier, is about advocacy and people advocating for you and you being able to turn around and advocate for others, a lot of that that happens in our business. There could always be so much more, and a lot of that comes from somebody walking into a room and saying, "Hey, I want to do a show about this, and I want this person to be at the helm of it," and people listening and actually giving it the opportunity. You can't make a Creed, you can't make a Wakanda Forever, you can't do any of those things unless someone walks in a room and says, "I want to do this thing." And then the people behind that table say, "Yes, I would like to do that thing with you."

Can you talk a little bit about how, in a time period where we are much more able to tell our stories, how hard do you find it to be able to still advocate for those stories especially in a space where people are like, "Yeah, I want to tell them, I want to tell them"?



**Tessa Thompson:** You know, I'm really curious to ask you the same question, particularly because I feel like you've had so much experience being on so many varied sides and also on the side of the buyer, which actually, you explain what the buyer side means because I think you'll do a much better job.

**Kalia King:** So there are multiple sides of a process of making any piece of content. The first level is usually the ground level, which is the writer or an idea, and whoever comes up with that idea. So it can be the writer, it can be a production company, it can be an individual producer. That person is considered a seller because I am going to walk into a room and sell my idea to the people on the other side of that table. It would seem that the people on the other side of that table would be a buyer and therefore the platform of which you watch that idea become a show or become a movie. However, there are a lot of, like, in-between spaces. There's the studio, which is the next sort of level, and the studio is both a buyer and a seller because they buy from producers but then they also sell them to the network.

I spent a large part, especially the early days of my career, at a studio. So I was able to learn both what was needed to take something out and go into a room and say, "Please give us your dollars. Please believe in this idea. Please let us do it." I worked as a buyer at one of, if not the best, place, still telling stories on that side of things, which is HBO. And you have this really wonderful opportunity to work with such incredibly talented people and to give opportunity and receive opportunity in a way that is just—I don't think that you're able to do it anywhere else.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah.

**Kalia King:** And so, to be on the buyer side, I think that there are so many different pieces of the puzzle that you have to juggle that I don't think you have to juggle as much when you're on the kind of strictly seller side

**Tessa Thompson:** When you're just a seller --

**Kalia King:** When you're just a seller.

**Tessa Thompson:**—which is what I am, but you know the truth is I really wanted—for my company, one of the aims is to make new comps, to be actively making new comps. And, we know that comps, comparisons, end up being such a big thing in our industry. You get allowed to make something if you can say, "This thing is kind of like this thing." And if that thing did well, people go, "Oh, we want some of that thing," you know? And I think so many of the projects that have been very impactful to me have been the things that were the hardest to say, "It's like this." They were really the hardest. And, in making them, you get to create a new idea of what is possible, right?

What I needed to hire and what I found in Kishori Rajan, who's the brilliant person that I work most closely with at the company, is what I was able to find is someone, A, that believes in storytelling and is great at it, someone that can sit down, and, in the same way that you and I can talk around *The Vanishing Half* and the possibilities of story, she's someone that can do that endlessly.

And also, speaking of HBO, a place where you can do things that are singular, she had made the show called *Random Acts of Flyness*, and I remember the first time I saw that show. It is a show that you cannot explain. It is a show that if you tried to figure out what the pitch is, you'd have a really hard time. And so I knew, for her working as a producer to help get that show

made, she was able to articulate to a buyer, to someone that's thinking, "Who is the audience?" that this thing that is really interesting and really different than anything else out on television has a right and a reason to be on a platform like HBO.

What we're trying to do is to carve a new space. We really want to be a soft place to land for artists and something that feels soft to me is that, regardless of thinking around what the marketplace—meaning the folks out there watching—might want or what we suspect that they might want, this idea that real human storytelling is the thing that, across the board, people are always going to want, are always going to not know that they want or need, but they're always going to want.

**Kalia King:** At Proximity, we're not thinking, we're not having those diversity conversations that, goodness gracious, I had to have so many times working at conglomerates.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Kalia King:** You don't have to have a conversation when you're in a room full of people that truly looks like the world around you. You can just talk about storytelling because storytelling is synonymous with that to us. And, when we started talking about what the brand of Proximity Television was going to be, it was that. It was I can't wait to come into a place where I can leave that dialogue behind, and we can just tell fucking great stories. And if you're telling the truth, it's going to look like the world around us.

**Tessa Thompson:** The world in which we live.

**Kalia King:** Absolutely.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah.

**Kalia King:** Absolutely.

**Tessa Thompson:** That's exactly right.

[“Prox Recs Theme” with "Caution to the Wind" Music by Ludwig Göransson]

**Kalia King:** So I think we have reached the fun point in our lovely podcast --

**Tessa Thompson:** Hey, this has all been fun for me.

**Kalia King:**—where we talk about something that we call Proximity Recs, or Prox Recs. And it's basically just a space where we talk about the ways in which we can evolve our careers, the mantras we live by, the things that kind of keep us going or the thing that taught us the most that we use every day as we're moving forward in this crazy business. And it can be anything—a book or a quote or a practice, anything that you do that—especially, as I always say, on those Tuesday nights where your writer just quit, when you really kind of gather yourself into a space where you're able to kind of keep going and keep chasing.

**Tessa Thompson:** Well, we were talking around something earlier, which is this idea of authenticity, particularly regarding what you have to say and who you are related to storytelling. And I recently—because I've been working on screenwriting, which is another transition for me

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**Kalia King:** Exciting.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yes, it is. It's exciting in the way, you know, climbing a mountain face—occasionally, it feels like leaping off of one as opposed to climbing it. But I've been engaging with some of my favorite screenwriters and trying to listen to what they have to say about screenwriting. I love Charlie Kaufman. I'm really obsessed with Charlie Kaufman. He's one of my favorite makers and doers, and his films—both the ones that he has directed, but certainly as a screenwriter—have really changed my idea around what's possible. And he talks a lot about writing really from a place of sincerely who you are.

And then it reminded me of this quote that I engaged with when I was really, really young, and I was like, "Oh, my god, I've always loved this quote. This is the quote." It's a Doctor Seuss quote.

**Kalia King:** Which are always so perfect no matter what age you are.

**Tessa Thompson:** Yes, and this is what it says: "Be who you are, and say how you feel because those who mind don't matter, and those who matter don't mind. You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose." And that quote, I was like, "Oh, my goodness, it's that." And I have come back around that because I think, as an actor, certainly, when I'm at my best is when I'm accessing that place that feels like being a kid, when you're playing. And so now that I'm in these kind of more adult positions, as it were, trying to run a business, hopefully, at some point, wanting to direct a movie, I redirect myself into, still, a space where many things are possible and where you can be who you are and say how you feel, and that's what kids do in spades. You know because you got them. So that's something that I remind myself of often.

**Kalia King:** There is a quote that always pops into my head that I think I have carried with me since I was very young, very young, which is, "If you don't have faith, you fall," which is a really basic quote that Jim Morrison said at some point in his, unfortunately, short-lived career. And I don't mean faith as in religion or spiritual—whatever it is that you—it's believing in something. You have to have a root at the base of all of it, something that makes it all worth something.

If you don't believe in anything, what are you doing here? What are you chasing? What can you possibly have passion for if you don't believe in something, if you don't believe in something greater than you? And if you would've told me that I would be where I am right now, today, I would've always believed it because I believe deeply in myself and my abilities, but I also believe in something greater than me, and I believe in purpose. And so, if there is anything that I guess I sort of live by that helps me continue to climb up this very steep hill on a regular basis, it's probably that.

**Tessa Thompson:** And by doing that, you help others. Kalia, while you are marching up that hill, I will grab you coffee any day. I will carry you—I will carry your coffee.

**Kalia King:** I'll take that. I'll take that. No, I—listen, someone gave me some bizarre opportunity off of a reality show, and I always think, like, what if she didn't do that? If I can present that opportunity for somebody, that actually makes me feel joy. It makes me feel really, really good. I wish for everyone to have the opportunity to be able to do that. And you now get to do it, and so you'll have all those same moments. You're probably having them already. It's so glorious. So I just turn it back to you and say thank you.

[MUSIC FADES IN]

**Tessa Thompson:** Hey, thank you.

**Kalia King:** Thank you.

**Tessa Thompson:** And thanks, everybody out there, for listening.

[In Proximity Theme Music by Ludwig Göransson]

[VOICEOVER]

**Paola Mardo:** In Proximity is a production of Proximity Media. If you like the show, be sure to follow, rate, and review it on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast app. And tell your friends and loved ones to do the same. If there's someone in your life who you think might like this show, send them a link.

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The show is produced by me, Paola Mardo. Executive Producers are Ryan Coogler, Zinzi Coogler, Sev Ohanian, and me. Our theme song and additional music is composed by Ludwig Göransson. Ken Nana is our Sound Designer and Mix Engineer. Polina Cherezova is our Production Assistant. Audio editing for this episode is by Shana Dalaria.

Special thanks to the whole Proximity Media team and to you for listening to In Proximity. Meet you back here next week.

[VOICEOVER ENDS]

[MUSIC STOPS]

**Tessa Thompson:** Do you have a podcast voice? You're new to this, so you haven't had a chance to cultivate it.

**Kalia King:** I need to. I need to. I do not.

**Tessa Thompson:** I'm doing a slight podcast voice right now.

**Kalia King:** Oh, okay, a new podcast voice.

**Tessa Thompson:** But I have noticed in some of my favorite podcasters that there's a slight voice.

**Kalia King:** There is a voice. because it's like, hours of listening to that person --

**Tessa Thompson:** Yeah, yeah.

**Kalia King:**—that you want to be like, "I also want you to come back," and soothing and inviting and, you know, so...

**Tessa Thompson:** Exactly, exactly, which doesn't work if you're over caffeinated, which I usually am. So that's why I put on the voice because I remind myself, like --

**Kalia King:** "Come back."

**Tessa Thompson:** "Take it slow and easy. People are going to be listening."