

# An Interview with Tembi Locke



**SSI: For those who haven't read your book, what can they expect from the series? You know the Soaring Spirits Community pretty well, any trigger warnings you want to share?**

- **Tembi:** The series is about big love and big loss, but ultimately it is a love letter to love. It is very much a companion piece to my memoir, but there are also new things for readers who know the book so well. And, if you haven't read it, the series may lead you to want to know more and pick up the book. There is food, Italian travel, hope, forgiveness, motherhood, and family. And I suspect many widowed people will see their story in *From Scratch*, especially if long-term illness was

part of their journey. That may be triggering. So I recommend pacing yourself, watching and discussing with friends. But, ultimately, I hope it invites you to know that you are not alone and that love never dies.

**SSI: Take us behind the scenes, what was it like to make a series about your love story and widowed experience?**

- **Tembi:** Adapting my memoir from page to screen has been one of the greatest honors of my life. And, it has been an emotional journey at every turn, an experience truly unlike any other. In the process of writing and producing, I was inviting others into the story to hold it with me while also adapting it into something new. That was a little strange at first. But because I had excellent producing partners, including my brilliant sister, I felt witnessed and very supported in the emotional labor of revisiting, reliving and re-enacting the arc of my life. That was a blessing! Along the way, I did find myself educating others on the experiences of caregiving, widowhood, and solo parenting. Because, as we all know, until you live those experiences you can't quite imagine how unmooring and dislocating they all are. How they change you. There were days when I was the only

person on set who had that triangular set of lived experiences. But everyone listened and together, as a team, we created something beautiful, real, authentic, and, I hope, inspiring.

**SSI: What did you learn about yourself and your grief through the process of filming the show?**

- **Tembi:** I learned that I am stronger than I ever imagined. That every experience of my life, the joy and pain of it all, has made me who I am. And that my strength is, in fact, in my vulnerability. And that my grief, while it changes, grows and transmutes with time, will always be a companion in my life. And that love never dies.



**SSI: Watching the finished product must have been incredibly emotional, what was it like for you to watch a dramatized version of your life on screen?**

- **Tembi:** I think I will spend the rest of my life trying to process this big beautiful, expansive experience. I was on set every day, as a producer and the author. So I got to see the cinematic retelling come to life bit by bit. And then once we edited the show together, I saw the sweeping totality of it all. Watching Zoe Saldaña bring "Amy" to life was deeply emotional. Witnessing my life through her artful and beautiful performance made me grieve parts of my life all over again. But it also made me proud of the young woman I was, the wife I was, and the mother I have tried to be. It made me joyous and proud and humbled.

**SSI: We all know family can sometimes be lifelines and other times not be helpful at all. How was it to work with your sister? What advice would the two of you have about navigating loss as a family?**

- **Tembi:** My sister has been one of my biggest supporters, in life and my professional pursuits. Her belief in me and her willingness to be a witness to the good and bad of it all has been both a bedrock of our relationship and one of the greatest gifts of my life. Working together on *From Scratch* was great! We have a short hand and we have a similar storytelling sensibility. Plus, we absolutely crack each other up. But making the show made us revisit both our individual and shared grief. It



made us look at how they were similar, but also very different. We tried to put that contradiction and conflict on screen as a way to show other families that everyone's grief is not the same. It may look different. And that is okay.



**SSI: Caregiving and parenting post-loss are big parts of your experience, what do you want the world to know about what it's like?**

- **Tembi:** Caregiving is one of, if not the hardest job, I ever had. And, for me, it went hand-in-hand with parenting because I was caring for an ill spouse and mothering a school-aged young child at the same time. It was important that we portray that as accurately as we could in the series.

We wanted to show the fear, fatigue, resentment, denial and invisibility that can happen - for the caregiver and the patient. And we wanted to show that parenting a grieving child takes a village and it takes a willingness to be honest with the child.

**SSI: Are there any particular things you want the Soaring Spirits Community to take away from the show? How can we all support you?**

- **Tembi:** I hope this beautiful, supportive community will be a soft landing spot for new members and for people who will see *From Scratch* and, perhaps for the first time, feel permission to honor their grief. And I hope the community will see the show as a conversation starter - in their own families, but also within their communities. For me personally, *Soaring Spirits* was a light of hope in the darkness when I needed it the most. Seeing everyone in the community always reminds me of this unexpected me love and light. It always matters.

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*Thank You, Tembi!*