

WHAT LIFE IS LIKE

by
Writer #7

Development Executive #8

FADE IN:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - PRESENT DAY

CHRISTIE MORGAN, 30, sits patiently waiting.

CHRISTIE (V.O.)

You know that famous line: Life is
like a box of chocolates...?

A waiter brings her a cup of steaming tea.

CHRISTIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I prefer to think of life like tea.
Some goes down sweet and smooth,
and some stops you in your tracks,
leaving a bitter aftertaste.

She pours in some cream, stirs it, and takes a sip.

Outside the window a group of cyclists speed passed.

INT. STAGE CLASSROOM - DAY - SEVEN YEARS EARLIER

JOE HINES, 32, stands before a group of students.

JOE

And now to announce next spring's
musical. Drum roll please!

JASON DOUGLAS, 16, a junior, leads the students in hands
drumming all around.

JOE (CONT'D)

Lions, tigers, and bears, oh my!
It's 'The Wizard of Oz'!

CHEERS AND APPLAUSE ERUPT.

JOE (CONT'D)

I promise you guys this is gonna be
the best musical yet! Have a great
summer break, everyone.

As the students depart...

JASON

(with pride)

It'll be the best when I'm cast as
The Wizard.

MATT

Ha! That's more likely if you only had a brain.

PAUL

But your head is sure big enough.

Jason chases his friends toward the door. He stops short.

JASON

Thanks for everything, Mr. H.

JOE

Great job this year, Jason. I'm real proud of you.

JASON

I couldn't have done it without your help, sir.

JOE

Be sure to brush up on your Wizard skills this summer, okay?

JASON

Yes, sir. Anything to stay out of trouble, right?

With a wink, Jason dashes out the door.

Joe chuckles as he picks up his bike helmet and heads out.

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

Dressed in full cycling gear, Joe bikes down a long stretch of a country road. The sun shines. Life couldn't be better.

A beat up truck rambles up the road just behind Joe. The driver, AN OLD MAN, loses control of the truck as the front tires veer onto the shoulder.

Hearing the kick-back of the old engine, Joe glances back. His eyes widen with fear.

TIRES SCREECH INTO A LOUD CRASH as everything fades to black.

INT. STAGE CLASSROOM - DAY - THREE MONTHS LATER

Christie, 23, enters the room carrying a file box. PRINCIPAL BOWER follows her. They both freeze as they see --

On the make shift stage burnt out memorial candles are gathering dust among sprinkled dead rose pedals. Above them is a picture of Joe with the message: "A life cut too short. Goodbye, Mr. Hines."

PRINCIPAL BOWER

I'm sorry, Miss Morgan. I'll have a janitor come and clean this up.

Christie turns to him. She smiles.

CHRISTIE

That won't be necessary. I'm fine cleaning up in here. It might be too painful for someone else.

PRINCIPAL BOWER

Yes. Everyone here loved Mr. Hines.
(a beat)
I'll leave you to it then.

He hands her the classroom keys and exits.

Christie sets down her box and looks around. She closes her eyes to pray.

CHRISTIE

Lord, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change. Courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

She grabs a broom nearby and sweeps.

INT. STAGE CLASSROOM - DAY

THE MORNING BELL RINGS.

Christie sits at her desk in the clean and reorganized classroom.

Sudden commotion out in the auditorium draws her attention.

INT. AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Christie walks out from the classroom space onto the stage. A group of students have gathered. She musters her courage and walks out to greet her class.

The students freeze. The tension can be cut with a knife.

CHRISTIE
Hello. I'm Miss Morgan. Welcome to
Theatre Production class--

One student bursts into tears. A friend comforts her. Others also tear up. Zombie-like, the rest just stare at Christie.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
I realize this may a difficult
transition for all of you, but I
think we can learn a lot from each
other this year.

Christie looks back at the stage classroom.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
I know you're used to being in the
classroom space, but I think we'll
just use the auditorium for now.

Christie looks down at her notes. Nothing seems appropriate. She puts the notes aside.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
Please take out a piece of paper
and write down what you would like
to learn in production class this
semester. When you're done you can
pass your paper forward.

The students pull out their supplies and get to work.

INT. AUDITORIUM - A WHILE LATER

The room is quiet except for the sound of pencils on paper.

Christie sits on the edge of the stage, waiting.

THE BELL RINGS, breaking the silence.

The students pass their papers forward and quickly file out.

Jason weaves through the group and approaches Christie.

JASON
I'm Jason Douglas.

CHRISTIE
Oh, yes! Mr. Bower mentioned you--

JASON

You should know that most of these guys are only still in this class because they know they can get a sympathy A this semester.

CHRISTIE

I don't give A's based on sympathy.

JASON

You will because you want them to like you.

Struck dumb by his words, Christie can only watch as Jason walks out.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Several months later, the musical auditions are in progress.

Christie is conversing with the choir director, RACHEL, when Jason walks onto the stage to audition last.

CHRISTIE

Hello, Mr. Douglas.

JASON

I'm auditioning for *The Wizard*.

Jason delivers a strong *Henry V* monologue and sings sixteen bars of "Luck Be a Lady" from *Guys and Dolls*. He exits.

Rachel turns to Christie.

RACHEL

He's got a really good voice.

CHRISTIE

With an icy attitude. He hasn't been involved in drama at all this year, but suddenly shows up to musical auditions.

RACHEL

I know Joe helped him through some personal problems. He was also understudy to the lead in last year's production. Just something for you to consider.

As Rachel leaves, Christie picks up Jason's audition sheet to take a closer look.

INT. STAGE CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Jason storms into the classroom.

JASON

You cast me as The Scarecrow!

Christie looks up from her work.

CHRISTIE

The role better suits your voice.

JASON

I auditioned for The Wizard.

CHRISTIE

You've been cast as The Scarecrow.
You can chose to accept it or you
may decline. The choice is yours.

JASON

But I'm supposed to be The Wizard!

CHRISTIE

On what grounds, Jason?

JASON

Mr. Hines promised me that role!

CHRISTIE

I understand that you may have had
an agreement with Mr. Hines. But I
am not Mr. Hines--

JASON

He should be here. Not you!

CHRISTIE

I'd like you to leave now, Mr.
Douglas.

Jason walks out and SLAMS the door.

EXT. AUDITORIUM - HALLWAY - DAY

Christie walks up to the posted cast list and takes it down.
She glances over it and stops in her tracks.

CHRISTIE

You've got to be kidding me.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Musical rehearsals are in full swing.

A small group of singers rehearse with Rachel in one corner of the stage. Others are busy building and painting.

Christie stands in front of the stage.

Jason is center stage with ALICE, who plays Dorothy, as they attempt to dance together.

AS THE MUSIC PLAYS, Jason steps on Alice's foot. She cries out in pain. THE MUSIC STOPS.

JASON
(to Alice)
Sorry. Did I hurt you?

Alice plays off her pain.

ALICE
That's okay. I'm fine.

CHRISTIE
(calling out)
Jason, it's right then left. Let's try it again.

THE MUSIC PLAYS. Jason starts well, but messes up the next step again. He and Alice stumble, almost falling down.

Christie stops the music.

CHRISTIE (CONT'D)
Okay you two. Alice, take five.
Jason, can I see you a moment?

Jason frowns as a relieved Alice moves off.

He joins Christie at the back of the auditorium.

JASON
(flippant)
I know. Right, then left.

CHRISTIE
Then what's the problem?

JASON
I'm supposed to be The Wizard.

CHRISTIE

No. You're not. You're done here.
Go home, Jason.

Christie walks a few steps away from him.

JASON

(in defiant disbelief)
Are you cutting me from the show?

CHRISTIE

Jason, take a look around. You're
the only one not having any fun.

JASON

I told you I wanted to be The
Wizard!

Christie throws up her hands.

CHRISTIE

So, you just thought I would change
my mind? That if you were miserable
enough I would just recast the
whole show for you, is that it?

Jason begins to pace.

JASON

It's not supposed to be this way!

CHRISTIE

Yes! In a perfect world Joe Hines
would still be alive.

Christie grimaces at her sudden outburst. A mistake.

JASON

Don't you talk about him that way!
You have no right!

Everyone in the auditorium stops to listen.

CHRISTIE

(in a calmer tone)
I know you believe that's true,
Jason. But I am here now. Not Joe.

Jason throws his script to the floor. The pages scatter.

JASON

I hate you.

He stares her down, cold, unwavering.

CHRISTIE

Hate is a strong word, Jason.

JASON

Why should I lie about what's true?

His words hit their target.

CHRISTIE

You can go now. You're no longer a part of this cast.

Jason SLAMS through the auditorium doors as he storms off.

After taking a moment to compose herself, Christie wipes a tear from her eye as she turns back to the stage.

INT. AUDITORIUM - OPENING NIGHT

AUDIENCE APPLAUSE AND CHEERS as the musical cast takes a bow.

Alice steps forward with a microphone in hand.

ALICE

Tonight, we ask that you join us
in honoring our teacher and
director, Miss Christie Morgan.

To THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE Christie emerges from back stage.

Alice hands her a bouquet of flowers and a wrapped package.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Miss Morgan, we would like to
present you with this gift to
remind you of the incredible
journey we have taken with you this
year. Like Dorothy, you brought our
Oz back to life. We hope that you
have found a place to call home.

Christie unwraps an album. Inside it are pictures of the cast and memorable moments, along with personal gratitude messages written throughout.

At a loss for words, Christie hugs Alice and mouths 'Thank You' to the cast. Through tears, she waves to the audience.

Among the crowd, Principal Bower applauds her with pride.

At the back of the auditorium, Jason looks on.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - PRESENT DAY

As Christie sips the last of her tea she looks up to see...

Jason, now 23, dressed in cycling gear, walking toward her.

JASON
Sorry I'm late. Traffic.

CHRISTIE
This is the city.

The waiter comes by for Jason's order.

JASON
(to the waiter)
A caramel macchiato please.

He sees Christie's empty cup.

JASON (CONT'D)
Let me guess. English Breakfast?

CHRISTIE
How did you know that?

JASON
Aspiring actors work a lot in
coffee shops.

They share a knowing laugh.

CHRISTIE
I must admit I was surprised when I
got your request to meet.

JASON
Well, when I heard you had moved to
the city, I couldn't pass up the
chance to thank you in person.

CHRISTIE
Thank me for what?

JASON
For kicking me out of the musical
my senior year.

CHRISTIE
But I thought that--

JASON

I hated you? I did. You were my daily reminder that Joe Hines wasn't coming back.

CHRISTIE

I'm sorry, Jason.

JASON

Don't ever be sorry. You taught me a great life lesson.

CHRISTIE

Which is?

JASON

We aren't promised the things we want, but we are always offered what we need. God knew I needed someone to say no to my anger. He chose you. Your *no* changed my life.

CHRISTIE

You know, Jason, a teacher can wait a lifetime to hear that from a student. You just made my first year teaching worth all the pain.

The waiter returns with their drinks.

JASON

A toast then...

They both raise their glasses.

JASON (CONT'D)

To starting over. Out with the old, on with the new.

CHRISTIE

To friendship.

THEIR GLASSES CLINK TOGETHER and they drink as the rest of the world rushes by outside.

FADE OUT.