

# LIFE SUPPORT

by Alan Haehnel

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# LIFE SUPPORT

*A One Act Dramatic Dark Comedy*

**by Alan Haehnel**

**SYNOPSIS:** June has been Clarissa’s best friend for twelve years. But in a time when the rich can afford to hire every element of their lives, including their friends, June takes her relationship with Clarissa for granted and ends up getting fired. Her world crumbles as she is reminded that her “life” was not her own; her sole function was to support Clarissa. After painfully facing this new reality, June must go out and find another world that will take her in.

**DURATION:** 35 minutes.

**TIME:** The near future.

**SETTINGS:** Auditorium/classroom; small office; hallway.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(7 females, 4 males, 3-6 either, 0-15 extras)*

MRS. CHRISTOFF (f)..... The drama teacher. *(61 lines)*  
 CLARISSA (f) ..... A wealthy high school student whose family has hired all the elements of her life. *(81 lines)*  
 JUNE/ARIEL (f)..... Clarissa’s hired best friend. *(128 lines)*  
 MONICA/JUNE 2 (f)..... Newly hired Clarissa’s best friend *(29 lines)*  
 LILLY (f)..... Fellow drama student. *(17 lines)*  
 MATT (m)..... Fellow drama student. *(13 lines)*  
 ROB (m)..... Fellow drama student. *(2 lines)*  
 TOM (m)..... Fellow drama student. *(4 lines)*  
 DANA (f)..... Fellow drama student. *(4 lines)*  
 MANDY (f)..... Fellow drama student. *(5 lines)*  
 JASON (m)..... The director of Clarissa’s life. *(47 lines)*  
 MANAGER (m/f)..... The producer of Clarissa’s life. *(36 lines)*  
 SECURITY 1 (m/f)..... Security guards for Clarissa’s life. *(1 line)*  
 SECURITY 2 (m/f)..... Security guards for Clarissa’s life. *(1 line)*  
 VOICE 1 (m/f)..... The voice of a producer looking to hire actors for another life. *(12 lines)*

VOICE 2 (m/f) ..... The voice of a producer looking to hire actors for another life. (9 lines)

VOICE 3 (m/f) ..... The voice of a producer looking to hire actors for another life. (8 lines)

STUDENT EXTRAS (m/f) ..... 0-15 students

**CHARACTER NOTE:** The same actress plays JUNE and ARIEL, but the names change because these are actors playing actors playing characters. To keep it simple, in stage directions, the characters' names are always JUNE/ARIEL. MONICA/JUNE 2 are the same person, but is played by a separate actress (than JUNE/ARIEL, as a new best friend is hired.) This will not be confusing once you read the script.

### OPTIONAL DOUBLING

MANAGER, SECURITY 1, and SECURITY 2 can double as VOICE 1, VOICE 2, and VOICE 3.

### SETS

Minimal. For the opening and closing scenes, you'll need a bare stage since it's a rehearsal space for a play. The office scene can be depicted very easily with two chairs and a desk; interactions with the computer monitors could be pantomimed. The scene with June and Mrs. Christoff would occur in a hallway or some other unspecified place and would need nothing other than a pool of light.

### COSTUMES

Since this is a play set in a high school in the near future, costumes need only reflect that reality.

**DIRECTOR'S NOTES**

“Life Support” focuses on strong acting, so you should avoid getting caught up in any technical aspects that would detract from time spent with the actors exploring characters, relationships and pacing. Transitions between scenes should be quick. I would definitely recommend spending time talking about the implications of a society structured as “Life Support” suggests. Actors should contemplate if this play has actual connections to things happening today, or does it posit an implausible future? Feel free to make any small dialogue changes that better reflect current student language trends.

**PROPS**

- office paraphernalia
- clipboard
- purse

DO NOT COPY

**SCENE 1**

**AT START:** *Play practice. JUNE/ARIEL, LILLY, MATT, ROB, TOM, and EXTRA STUDENTS, chatty, are lounging on the floor. MRS. CHRISTOFF enters.*

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** All right, everybody, attention this way, please! Attention, attention, little kittens of mine. Atten-she-on! All right, as the schedule outlines, we are going to be working on Scene 7 today (*Responding to the classroom inattention.*) ...oh, no, no, no, little kittens, respect is...

*Claps the beginning of the "shave and a haircut" rhythm. ALL STUDENTS on stage clap the last two beats and speak in unison.*

**ALL STUDENTS:** Respect is our top priority.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** There's my little litter. No more mewing now. Listen to Mama Cat. We're doing Scene 7, which has a lot of group dynamics to it. It's got to seem natural to the audience, but we know the truth. Highly choreographed. Highly planned out. Art that hides itself, am I making sense, kittens? Good. Let's all warm up a bit. Up, up, up and stretch for the sky!

*CLARISSA enters and runs to the back of the group... purposely bumps into her best friend, JUNE/ARIEL.*

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Ouch.

**CLARISSA:** Oh, poor baby.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** How nice of you to join us, Kitty Clarissa!

**CLARISSA:** Sorry I'm late, Mama Cat!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Stretch, stretch, stretch those spines. Elongate! And get ready to bring it all... down! (*ALL STUDENTS collapse at the waist and hang.*) Now, before we work our way back up, let's see if Clarissa can earn our forgiveness for her tardiness by telling us she is ready to rehearse which scene, that was on the schedule, so surely she knows?

**CLARISSA:** Uh...

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Working our way up, one vertebra at a time. Still waiting for our answer, Clarissa kit.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** (*Whispering.*): Seven.

**CLARISSA:** Scene 7, Mama!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** With prompting, yes, getting by with a little help from her friends. All right. Nice, erect posture. Let's take three deep breaths. In, hold... oh, Clarissa, you are half forgiven and will be totally forgiven only if you do an extra-special job of paying attention today... and out. And in...

**CLARISSA:** Oh, Momma, I will be your A-number-one-top-of-the-litter kitten today, I promise, promise, promise!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Yeah, right.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** And out. One more, one more, three is the magic number. In... hold... and out. Warm up, stretch on your own while Mama visits the little litter box.

**TOM:** TMI!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** So sorry to offend your delicate sensibilities, Tom Cat. When I return, we will be a hyper-focused, hyper-productive troupe of thespians, led today by our not-so-on-time Clarissa!

**CLARISSA:** Count on me!

*MRS. CHRISTOFF exits. VARIOUS STUDENTS go back to lounging, some stretching a bit.*

**JUNE/ARIEL:** (*Mocking.*) Count on me!

**CLARISSA:** Oh, shut up.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** The good little doobie, count on me!

**CLARISSA:** You can count on me to give you a fat lip, you know.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Violence is never the answer.

**CLARISSA:** In your case, it's sometimes the answer.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** So what took you so long?

**CLARISSA:** Oh, stuff.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Stuff, huh?

**CLARISSA:** I think we're supposed to be warming right now.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Uh-huh. You mean to tell me you weren't warming up before you got here?

**CLARISSA:** I don't know what you're talking about.

**MATT:** Hey, Rissa, where's your phone?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What's it to you? And her name is...

**CLARISSA:** June, it's fine, remember?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Oh, right—go ahead.

**CLARISSA:** My phone happened to be confiscated by my parents, Matthew.

**MATT:** Don't call me that.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** How 'bout you don't...

**CLARISSA:** Hey!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Sorry.

**CLARISSA:** (*To MATT.*): You let me be Clarissa, not Rissa; I let you be Matt, not Matthew. Respect is our...

*LILLY, MATT, ROB, TOM mockingly repeat the end of the motto.*

**LILLY, MATT, ROB, and TOM:** Top priority.

**CLARISSA:** That way we all feel respected, yeah?

**MATT:** Whatever.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** That was good.

**CLARISSA:** I don't need you telling me that.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm just saying.

**MATT:** (*Overrenunciating the "Cla".*): Cla-rissa, whatever you want to be called, whoever you are, here's the deal: I ain't your secretary.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Who asked you...

**CLARISSA:** (*Sharply.*): June!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Okay.

**CLARISSA:** Did you read the notes?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Yes. Of course, I did. I always do, Rissy. Clarissa. My bad.

**MATT:** Tucker says to meet him in the parking lot after rehearsal.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Ooh, Tucker!

**MATT:** Do me a favor and get your phone back, Cla-rissa.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** So that's where you were.

**CLARISSA:** Maybe.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** You're all warmed up, then.

**CLARISSA:** You are so annoying.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** You are so in love.

**CLARISSA:** Violence is getting closer and closer to being exactly the right answer, you know.

*LILLY, a fellow student at rehearsal, moves to CLARISSA and hands her a phone.*

**LILLY:** Here.

**CLARISSA:** What's this?

**LILLY:** It's an octopus. What do you think it is?

**CLARISSA:** I can't take your phone.

**LILLY:** It's an extra. Nothing fancy, but it'll work until you get yours back.

**CLARISSA:** Why would you do that?

**LILLY:** Hey, who hasn't been there, right? *(Turning to the group.)*  
Raise your hand if your parents have taken your phone away.

*ALL STUDENTS' hands go up, along with ad libs: "Right here." "Mine's still gone." "Just last week." "Oh, yeah."*

**MANDY:** I don't even have a phone, if that counts.

**LILLY:** Yeah, well, you're being raised in a cult—you don't count.

*Laughter from VARIOUS STUDENTS.*

**MANDY:** Come over, sometime, Lilly—we'll have you for dinner. With an apple in your mouth.

**LILLY:** I'll pass. See what I mean, Clarissa? We're all in this together.  
Fight the man.

**CLARISSA:** Thanks.

**LILLY:** I want it back, though. It's part of my collection.

*LILLY goes back to where she was previously stretching.*

**CLARISSA:** Wow. It's even got a lot of my same contacts.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Is Tucker in there?

**CLARISSA:** Maybe.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I wouldn't trust her, though. Lilly.

**CLARISSA:** Somebody can't be nice just to be nice?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Some people can. I can. But remember what she did at Marla's sleepover that time?



**CLARISSA:** Whose?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Marla's, remember? After the 8th grade dance?

**CLARISSA:** That wasn't Marla's sleepover. I was sick for that.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm pretty sure it was.

**CLARISSA:** It definitely was not.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Anyway, the point is, Lilly can be an evil little witch, if you're not careful. I'm just saying.

**CLARISSA:** You're just saying. You're just saying. Maybe you need to be thinking a little more and just saying a little less.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Clarissa?

*MRS. CHRISTOFF enters.*

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** All right, my chickens, time to get to work.

**ROB:** Chickens? We're chickens now?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Kitties in a box, chickens in a coop—all cute little creatures end up in a soup!

*General groans and reactions from VARIOUS STUDENTS: "That's disgusting!" "Who eats cats?" "Mrs. C.!"*

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** That was good! I just made it up, my little ferrets!

**DANA:** Ferrets smell terrible!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Well, I must say some of your dressing rooms exude a certain pungency at times.

**DANA:** What are you saying?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Ferrets and teenagers bear a certain odiferous resemblance, is what I am saying. Now let's get down to business, people!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Oh, so now we're people.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Don't take it personally, June.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** (To CLARISSA.): I think I was just dissed. Did Mrs. C just diss me? Clarissa?

**CLARISSA:** I can't do this. This is too wrong. Nope. Nope, this is just way off.

*ALL STUDENTS on stage turn, focused on CLARISSA with deep concern.*

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Hey, what's the matter?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Clarissa? How can I help?

**CLARISSA:** Who's on, today? They better be around. Is it Jason?  
Jason!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** We can adjust, Clarissa. We... we... we don't  
need Jason on this.

**JASON:** *(Offstage.)* I'm here.

**CLARISSA:** *(Exiting.)* Jason, you're going to have to reschedule this.  
It's not right. It's not right!

*After CLARISSA storms off, everyone looks around, stunned and afraid.*

**LILLY:** What happened?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I don't know.

**JASON:** *(Offstage.)* Oh, I can't afford this.

*Lights go down.*

## SCENE 2

**AT START:** *Lights up on the MANAGER at his cluttered desk. MANAGER wears a headset and constantly stares at a variety of screens arrayed in front of him.*

**MANAGER:** *(Speaking into headset.)* Yes, I am totally aware of budgetary restraints, but that's not my major concern. Give me an estimate on the full build. I need it yesterday! *(Knock on the door.)* Come. *(Still into headset as JUNE/ARIEL enters.)* No, we can't push that back at all. We have to... wait a second. I said hang on! Let me check one thing here.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** You wanted to...

*MANAGER holds up a hand to stop JUNE/ARIEL from speaking.*

**MANAGER:** Yes, go ahead and push that back. Three days max. Skyler, did you hear me on that? Three days max! Get back to me when you find a spot. Yeah, yeah, 'bye.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Hello, I heard from...

**MANAGER:** Not yet. Sit. You're making me nervous. This is hard, all of this. Do you believe that? (*JUNE/ARIEL says nothing.*) I said, do you believe that?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Were you... was that to me?

**MANAGER:** Who else would it be to?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm so sorry. You were looking at the screen and you have the headset on, I thought...

**MANAGER:** Are you going to answer the question or not? Or are you demanding that I make eye contact so you can be 100% certain I'm talking to you? Isn't that just a tad old fashioned? A tad frigging rude?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Again, I didn't...

**MANAGER:** Answer the question!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Yes, yes! I mean, no! I mean, which question was it, actually? I mean, of course you don't have to make eye...

**MANAGER:** Sh! (*Speaking into headphone.*) What?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What what?

**MANAGER:** I'm not talking to you. (*Into headphone.*) Of course I'm talking to you. You called me! So, talk! Communicate! Use your words! What? No, she did not. She did not cancel. No, no, no... you have her read her contract. It stipulates, clearly, that.... Call legal. Get legal on this right now. Yeah, and you can tell her that... you know what? Hang on. I got something here that's making me crazy. No, I said hang on, not hang up! Give me three seconds. You!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Me?

**MANAGER:** No, the other you in here. I don't have time for you.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I can come back later, if you...

**MANAGER:** Jason!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Jason was the one who...

**MANAGER:** Jason, get in here! (*Back to headphones.*) You still there?

Good. Stay there. She cannot cancel. That's all you need to know. Stay on the line.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Do you want me to go get...

**MANAGER:** Jason, get your butt...

*JASON enters.*

**JASON:** My butt's here. My whole body's here, boss. What do you need?

**MANAGER:** This, this one.

**JASON:** June. Hi, June.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Hi.

**JASON:** This is June. You sent for her.

**MANAGER:** You need to do the thing. With her.

**JASON:** I need to?

**MANAGER:** Just do the thing.

**JASON:** You sent for her.

**MANAGER:** I know I sent for her! I wish I hadn't sent for her! But now she's here, and she's staring at me and making all kinds of noise...

**JASON:** You shouldn't be making noise.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I didn't...

**MANAGER:** And all kinds of excuses.

**JASON:** The Manager hates excuses.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I didn't think I was...

**MANAGER:** With her eyes! With her eyes! With all the noise, from her eyes! Staring at me, so loud like that!

**JASON:** You need to quiet your eyes.

**MANAGER:** How am I supposed to concentrate? I can't concentrate. Did you know that Celine is trying to cancel on us?

**JASON:** Celine can't cancel on us.

**MANAGER:** That's what I'm telling you. Too much to think about. She's low on the list.

**JASON:** Celine?

**MANAGER:** No, she's top on the list!

**JASON:** June?

**MANAGER:** Who's June?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm June!

**MANAGER:** Shut it!

**JASON:** Best to stay quiet.

**MANAGER:** Do the thing and get her out of here.

**JASON:** Yes, boss. I'll take her out.

**MANAGER:** No, do the thing first. Then get her out.

**JASON:** Okay.

**MANAGER:** I like to watch the moment. Sue me. Do it. (*Back to headphones.*) Talk to me! What kind of progress have you made? You showed her the contract, right? She's back on, right?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Jason, what is this about? Please, I didn't mean to offend...

**JASON:** Hold on.

**MANAGER:** What do you mean, you haven't had time? How much more time do you need? No negotiations on this—just fix it! (*To JASON.*) Why is this still not done?

**JASON:** Sorry boss, but you always want me to double-check on these things. As soon as you give me the 100% sure, I will do it.

**MANAGER:** 100% on what?

**JASON:** On June, this person, you want me, not you, to do the thing, here and now, with her?

**MANAGER:** Yes, yes, 100%!

**JASON:** Perfect. Whoo. Okay. June, you're fired.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm...what?

**JASON:** Fired. As of now. It's been a great run. Twelve years. It's over.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I...but...I...?

**MANAGER:** Is that what you're gonna do? "I...I...I"? That's not entertaining. Get out.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Wait, I...

**JASON:** It's time to go, June.

**MANAGER:** (*Back on headset.*) Who is this? Still you? I need legal! I told you to get legal! Get me legal! (*To JUNE/ARIEL.*) Wait!

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Me?

**MANAGER:** You never answered my question.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Which...?

**MANAGER:** Do you see how hard this is? Trying to hold it all together, keep it all afloat? And get this, I do this for five clients! Not just... who's she with?

**JASON:** Clarissa. She's with, was with, Clarissa.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I still don't...

**MANAGER:** You see Clarissa. Narrow band. Clarissa. Who were you to her?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm her best friend!

**JASON:** Were. Get used to it.

**MANAGER:** I manage her whole life! The whole shebang! Times five!  
Five shebangs! Do you see how hard this is?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Of course.

**MANAGER:** Good. Good. That's good. Now get out. (*MANAGER shifts focus back to the headphones as JUNE/ARIEL and JASON exit.*) Who's this? Legal? Have you got this sorted out yet? What do you mean, she's going to cancel? Well, then, we need to re-write the contract, that's all there is to it. I don't want to hear excuses; I want it done! Ow! No, I just stubbed my toe on something under the desk.

*Lights down on MANAGER.*

### SCENE 3

*AT START: Lights up on JUNE/ARIEL and JASON.*

**JASON:** So, yeah, like I said, it's been a great run and all. Um, you'll want to clear out your locker and pretty much...

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I don't understand. What did I do wrong?

**JASON:** You don't want to think of it that way, June.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** How else can I think of it? I must have done something!  
And what about Clarissa? She needs me!

**JASON:** Oh, there's no question she needs you. She's not going to go without her best friend, June. Impossible.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** But you just fired me.

**JASON:** How do I put this? I think what happens is that sometimes people lose sight of the big picture. I mean folks like you, sort of downstream of the organizational level. You have to remember, Clarissa is the client. She's the center. The sun in the galaxy. And you, and everyone else who has been hired... revolves around her. The sun is the point. Clarissa is the point, right? And as long as Clarissa—and her parents; we can't forget the ones who actually write the checks—are happy, then... all is well.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** You mean I'm just a meaningless piece of space dust?

**JASON:** No, no! I would definitely put you on the planetary level. A big planet. But as a big planet, maybe you lost track of the overall aim, your essential function. Boy, I've got to get going here. Look, forget the galaxy thing. June is not going away for Clarissa. You are going away.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** But I am June!

**JASON:** Well...

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Are you telling me I'm not June? Who else could I be?

*JASON takes out his phone.*

**JASON:** Actually, though I'm sure you've forgotten by now... Ariel.

*From this point on, the character is Ariel.*

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What?

**JASON:** When you were five and first hired on, you were Ariel. We gave you the name June. And the person replacing you is named Monica...

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Replacing?

**JASON:** And, I'm sure, if she stays on as long as you have, she'll probably forget that, too. I mean, she'll pretty much need to, if she's going to do the job. She needs to be June—hook, line and sinker. Listen, June, Ariel... I know this is a lot. And frankly, the Manager said they would do this, but anyway, the Clarissa galaxy is calling. And calling and calling and calling. I have to go. But you... you take care. You're going to be fine. Okay?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What did I do wrong?

**JASON:** No, see, that sort of thinking... it's not so much right or wrong as it is... workable or unworkable, right?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What did I do that was unworkable?

**JASON:** Ariel, it's been a pleasure. Please clean out your locker. Take care.

**SCENE 4**

**AT START:** *Lights up on MRS. CHRISTOFF, searching through her purse. JUNE/ARIEL enters.*

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Hey, Mrs. C.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Oh, goodness, June, you startled me! You're busting out all over, aren't you? What's the matter, kitten? You look a little down. Whiskers drooping.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I... I think I just got fired.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Oh, thank goodness.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** My apologies, June. It's just... I was sure, after today's fiasco, that it was going to be me. But that was very rude. Unprofessional. I'm sorry, both for my rudeness and, moreso, for you not being with us anymore. I actually probably shouldn't be talking to you.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Why not?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** You haven't been through this before, have you?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** No.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Well, I wish I could say the same, but unfortunately, I have, more than once. I'm sure that everyone on the Clarissa team will be getting a memo shortly... *(Her phone dings... checks it.)* And there it is. I officially should not be talking to you.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** What does it say?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** *(Putting away her phone.)* Honey, if you didn't get it, it's not for you.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** But it's about me.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** I suppose. Sort of. It's more about how we, on the team, need to make a quick adjustment.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I'm her best friend!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** All right, we need to look around for cameras. Probably none here in this hallway, but you never know. Against my better judgment, I am going to take the risk of talking to you. For about three minutes. And then, per contract, you need to go away. The quicker the better. What's your real name?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I... I guess it's Ariel?



**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** I'm Nancy. Poor kid. How long have you had this gig?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Gig? I can't remember *not* living this life.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Full immersion. That's lucrative. But it can be dangerous. You can start thinking it's real.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** It is real! I'm June, Clarissa's best friend!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** You're Ariel, hired to play June, Clarissa's best friend. Paid very well to help create the reality that Clarissa wants. That her parents and a whole team of professionals think is best for her, though why they insist on me keeping that kitten thing going, I have no idea.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** But...

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** I don't have to know, though. I don't get paid to know. Why do you think you get notes every day about how to interact with the client?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** The client?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** In your case, Clarissa. In mine, well, Clarissa is one, but I don't have the privilege of being an immersive. I work three gigs to keep food on the table. On the Clarissa team, I'm Mrs. Christoff. On the Mr. Buckley team, I'm Diane, the masseuse. On the Jordan team, I'm Helga, the fill-in nanny. Though they haven't been using me much lately.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** But that's just it—I hardly ever get notes! I don't need to!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** But have you lately?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** A couple. One about making sure to say her full name. And then, um... not speaking for her too much.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** If you don't mind me saying so, Ariel, you need to worry about the "um." You can't afford "ums" in this business. Even though you forgot it, you were playing a role, honey, one that a heck of a lot of people would love to take over. And now you're going to have to get out there and pound the pavement to find a new gig if you hope to maintain the life you're accustomed to. Does anyone else work in your family?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** My father's a nurse. My mother doesn't live with us.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** And where is that?

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Michelin Terrace.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Wow. Pretty swanky. Listen, I have to go, but you're old enough now to go home and have a serious conversation with your father about your financials. Make sure you're getting your due.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I don't... I don't understand any of this.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Oh, Sweetheart, come here. (*Hugs JUNE/ARIEL.*)

There was a time, before you were born, when things weren't set up like this. When even if you weren't one of the haves, you had enough to lead your own life.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** I have a life!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Had, Ariel. Had. You need to go get hired on to a new one. This is good-bye.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** And good luck, right?

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** No. These days, it's always break a leg. Break a leg, Ariel.

**JUNE/ARIEL:** Break a leg, Mrs. Christoff.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Nancy. Nancy. 'Bye, bye.

*MRS. CHRISTOFF exits, leaving JUNE/ARIEL to stare off.*

## SCENE 5

**AT START:** *Play practice. This is a re-make of Scene 1, except the part of JUNE/ARIEL is now played by the new actor, MONICA/JUNE 2. MONICA/JUNE 2, LILLY, MATT, ROB, TOM, and EXTRA STUDENTS, chatty, are lounging on the floor. MRS. CHRISTOFF enters.*

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** All right, kittens, attention this way, please! Attention! As the schedule says, we are going to be working on Scene 7 today. Oh, my goodness, but we are a noisy bunch, aren't we?

*Claps the beginning of the "shave and a haircut" rhythm. ALL STUDENTS on stage clap the last two beats and speak in unison.*

**ALL STUDENTS:** Respect is our top priority.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** There's my little litter. My well-behaved little litter, yes, who are all going to listen to Mama Cat, hm? Say "Yes, Mama Cat."

**ALL STUDENTS:** Yes, Mama Cat.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** All right, now, Scene 7 has a lot of group interaction to it. It's got to come off to the audience as natural, but we know it is actually highly choreographed. Art that hides itself, am I making sense, kittens? Say "You're making sense, Mama Cat."

**ALL STUDENTS:** You're making sense, Mama Cat.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Excellent, my little mix of meows. Warm up time! Up, up, up and stretch for the sky!

*CLARISSA enters and runs to the back of the group. She purposely bumps into her best friend, MONICA/JUNE 2.*

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** Now that was unwanted touching.

**CLARISSA:** You loved it.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Kitty Clarissa has deigned to join us. How special.

**CLARISSA:** Sorry I'm late, Mama Cat!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Stretch, stretch, stretch those spines. Elongate! And get ready to bring it all... down!

*ALL STUDENTS collapse at the waist and hang.*

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Now, before we work our way back up, Clarissa is going to try to earn our forgiveness for her tardiness by telling us she is ready to rehearse which scene?

**CLARISSA:** Uh...

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** It was on the schedule, which of course everybody reads before coming to one of my rehearsals, yes? Now slowly work your way up, one vertebra at a time. Don't get dizzy. No fainting allowed. Still waiting for our answer, Clarissa kit.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** (*Whispering.*): Seven.

**CLARISSA:** Scene 7, Mama!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** And she gets by with a little help from her friends. We all need somebody to love. All right. Nice, erect posture. Let's take three deep breaths. In, hold.... Clarissa, consider yourself partially forgiven. Total forgiveness will be granted if and only if you pay extra-close attention today... and out. And in...

**CLARISSA:** Momma, I promise to be your softest, most focused, most purrrfect kitty today.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** I think I'm gonna puke.

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** Both puking and fainting are forbidden. And out. One more, one more, three is the magic number. In... hold... and out. You all heard it from kitten Clarissa. We look to her to be our exemplar of focus today. Now, stretch on your own for a bit whilst I, Supreme Momma Cat, pay a visit to the royal litter box.

**TOM:** TMI!

**MRS. CHRISTOFF:** So sorry to offend your delicate sensibilities, Tom Cat. When I return, we will be a hyper-focused, hyper-flexible feline troupe of performers, led by our never-tardy-again Clarissa!

**CLARISSA:** Count on me!

*MRS. CHRISTOFF exits. VARIOUS STUDENTS go back to lounging, some stretching a bit.*

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** (*Mocking.*) Count on me!

**CLARISSA:** Oh, shut up.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** I'm just ever-so-purrrfect Clarissa, count on me!

**CLARISSA:** You can count on me to give you a fat lip, you know.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** Violence is never the answer.

**CLARISSA:** In your case, violence is sometimes exactly the answer.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** So where have you been?

**CLARISSA:** Here and there.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** Here and there with a certain someone, I bet.

**CLARISSA:** We're supposed to be warming up.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** Girl, I'm guessing you are all warmed up already.

**CLARISSA:** I don't know what you're talking about.

**MATT:** Hey, Rissa, where's your phone?

**CLARISSA:** I don't know who "Rissa" is, Matthew, but I, *Clarissa*, had my phone taken away by my parents.

**MATT:** Don't call me Matthew.

**CLARISSA:** You let me be Clarissa, not Rissa; I let you be Matt, not Matthew. Respect is our...

*LILLY, MATT, ROB, TOM mockingly repeat the end of the motto.*

**LILLY, MATT, ROB, and TOM:** Top priority.

**CLARISSA:** Does that work for you, Matt?

**MATT:** Whatever.

*MONICA/JUNE 2 holds up her hand for a high five. CLARISSA slaps it.*

**MATT:** (*Overenunciating the "Cla".*) Cla-rissa, here's the deal: I ain't your secretary.

**CLARISSA:** What's that supposed to mean?

**MATT:** Tucker texted me to tell you to meet him in the parking lot.

**CLARISSA:** When?

**MATT:** After rehearsal.

**MONICA/JUNE 2:** Ooh, Tucker!

**MATT:** Do me a favor and get your phone back, Cla-rissa.

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