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The Life of Chuck (2024)

Director: Mike Flanagan

Writers: Mike Flanagan, Stephen King

Stars: Tom Hiddleston, Jacob Tremblay, Benjamin Pajak

Plot: Adapted from Stephen King’s novella of the same name, in three parts, each revealing a different chapter in the life of Charles Krantz—an ordinary man whose existence turns out to be anything but.

[people chattering]

[solemn music playing]

[school bell ringing]

ACT 3 THANKS, CHUCK

Student: “It is not chaos or death.

“It is form and union and plan.

“It is eternal life.

“It is happiness.

“The past and present wilt.

“I have filled them, emptied them, and proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

“Listener up there! What have you to confide to me?

“Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening.

“Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.”

[sirens wailing]

“Do I contradict myself?

“Very well then, I contradict myself.

I am large, I contain multitudes.”

[whispers] My God.

What is it?

Clearly something more interesting than Whitman.

California. There was another earthquake.

A huge chunk’s gone from Santa Barbara to Fresno.

Student 2: It’s fucking crazy.

Into the ocean.

Just like that.

Teacher: Alright, alright.

Settle down.

Got no connection.

Anybody else have one?

[students muttering]

student: No.

Teacher: Oh, eh, sorry. Network’s still down.

I’ve got his file here, though.

Uh, Dylan's been diving lately.
I mean, this semester, he's gone from As and Bs to Ds.
You keep hard copies?
When the network started acting up, a lot of us started keeping hard copies.
What do you think? I mean, you think it's coming back?

Well, I don't, I don't know.

Dylan's mom: I remember the world before the internet.

Why is it so hard to imagine carrying on without it?

It is, though, isn't it?

How do we go back? How... Can we go back?

What if it's down for good this time?

Internet's still down.

Teacher: Yeah, but lucky for us, I've got hard copies for each student.

Parent: I think this might be it.

I don't think it's coming back this time.

You might be right.

But I do think we should talk about Emily.

Her attendance has really fallen off.

Her attendance?

Absenteeism's at an alltime high all over the world.

We got doctors and pilots and cops and everyone's just pissing the fuck off, right?

But you, you want to talk to us about Emily?

Parent 2: How are they supposed to study, anyway?

Web's been on the fritz for eight months.

Half those sites are just garbled.

I mean, I get it, sites go dark.

But what about all that other stuff?

Like, sites are there, but all the punctuation's wrong.

Words spelled wrong. How do you explain that?

Well, I can't, but Brian can still prepare for class.

I mean, the library's still here. Internet or not.

Pornhub's down.

Did you know that, Mr. Anderson?

Yeah, I, uh,

I, I, I had noticed that. Yeah.

Sorry if Bri's been any trouble.

It's just me now. His mom... she left, I don't know where.

That's been happening a lot more I hear, people just ghosting.

Hers was some starcrossed boyfriend from high school.

They dated a month.

Goddamn month. She's gonna throw 20 years in the trash to chase down a month.

I guess she never stopped thinking about him.

I guess we've all got someone like that.

I mean, I get it, if it really is the end, like those kooks in the purple robes say, then who do you want to be with for it?

But to leave her son?

Uh, she says she'll be back.

I don't know. Um...

Fuckin' Pornhub.

What if that never comes back?

Fuckin' tragedy.

I mean, even if it is the end of all things... that's just fuckin' mean.

[both laughing]

Sorry.

Yeah.

Reporter: It's a scene of devastation and heartbreak in California, as rescue workers sift through what remains of the northern portion of the state.

Reporter 2: 350 dead in North Yorkshire as water levels continue to...

[reporter speaking French]

[reporter speaking Spanish]

[reporter speaking German]

[reporter speaking Japanese]

[reporter speaking Italian]

Narrator: The day Marty Anderson first saw the billboard was just before the internet finally went down for good.

[horns honking]

It had been wobbling for eight months, but other problems, like fires, earthquakes, and whole species of birds and fish dying off had taken priority.

Newscaster [on radio]: ...till today, thought to be the largest wildfire in United States history.

["Gimme Some Lovin'" by Steve Winwood playing]

♪ Well, I feel so good

♪ Everything is getting high

narrator: Ordinarily, Marty would've driven home by way of the Turnpike bypass, but that wasn't possible due to the collapse of the bridge over Otter Creek.

♪ So glad we made it

♪ You gotta

[horn honks]

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin'

♪ Gimme some alovin'

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin'

♪ Gimme some alovin' every day ♪

♪

NPR host [on radio]: Well, with what happened in California, that officially makes Nevada one of the most populous states in the Union now.

NPR host 2: The thing that must be said here is...

narrator: Felicia Gordon is a nurse at City General.

Though for the last few weeks, she's felt more like an undertaker.

The staff, whose numbers have been dwindling since late summer, have begun referring to themselves as the Suicide Squad.

NPR host [on radio]: We'll be back to talk more about this and, uh, also about the fires in the Midwest, speaking of water scarcity, back after this break.

[upbeat jingle playing]

Announcer [on radio]: We'd like to say thank you to Charles Krantz for 39 great years.

Thanks, Chuck.

[jingle continues]

Man: Hey.

Heard you got another one.

Yeah. One more.

Nurse: Mine wasn't so lucky. Slit wrists, so... what were we supposed to do really?

Hear about Marilou?

No. What about Marilou?

She left!

Her ex. Remember Pedro?

Mmhm.

He showed up, and I don't know what he said to her, but she walked out holding his hand.

And I remember how bad that divorce was.

Do you remember?

Yeah, I remember.

Well, I guess that's all bridge water 'cause off she went.

Reporter [on radio]: ...sinkholes that have been opening up.

Nurse: I wonder what the stats are.

You think more people are splitting up or getting back together?

I mean, do you think marriage rates are up or divorce rates...

Marriages.

You're an optimist.

No. [laughs]

Divorce takes way longer, and I don't think anyone's filing.

Why bother? Six months of paperwork at least.

Probably more.

Marriage license is one page and it takes an hour or so.

I'm gonna guess marriages.

Man [on TV]: Missed you for lunch, missed you for dinner.

What's the matter? Don't you eat anymore?

Woman [on TV]: Well, I wasn't hungry tonight.

Man: Weren't you hungry this morning either?

Woman: Who stole my nylons?

[phone ringing]

Egads! The very... Not very.

Man: Too much rehearsal last night, huh?

Woman: It was kind of a workout.

Man: That why you slept late?

Woman: Oh, I didn't sleep late.

I went uptown.

[phone ringing]

man: Shopping?

woman: No.

Hey.

Felicia Gordon [on phone]: Hi.

You hung up?

Felicia: Yeah.

But then I figured you probably saw it. So...

How are you?

Marty Anderson [on phone]: I'm okay, I guess.

How are you?

I was, um, thinking about you today.

We were at work talking about marriages and divorces.

Like, which are happening more now...

Marriages, I bet.

Ain't nobody waiting on a divorce.

Felicia: What about remarriages?

You want to buy a guy a drink first or...

Felicia: I bet those are happening.

I mean, it makes sense.

People wanting something comforting and... familiar.

So... how was your day?

You're just going right for it, aren't you?

Humor me.

Marty: It was, um...

It was a day, I guess. [clears throat]

You know? Weird.

Parentteacher sessions, felt like pissing in the wind.

You know about California, right?

Marty: Yeah.

I know they're saying most of it was already evacuated, but I heard today there are hundreds of thousands of refugees trekking east.

Did you know Nevada is one of the most populous states in the Union now?

I heard a, a scientist on NPR say California is peeling away like old wallpaper.

And another Japanese reactor got inundated this afternoon.

And they're saying, you know, it was shut down and all's well, but I just, I, I don't think I believe that.

Marty: Cynic.

Well, we're living in cynical times, Marty.

I mean, some people think we're living in the last times.

Not just the religious crazies either. Not anymore.

And you are hearing that from a member in good standing of the City General Suicide Squad.

That's what we call ourselves now.

No lie.

We lost six today, but there's 18 more we dragged back, mostly with naloxone.

But supplies of that are getting very thin.

And I heard the head pharmacist say we might be completely out by the end of the month.

That sucks.

Felicia: Yeah. Yeah.[laughs]

Yeah, that sucks. It, it really sucks.

The internet's down, and California's hanging by a thread.

There's fires and famines and plagues and all the rest.

I mean, it just the center doesn't hold.

It just won't let up.

How long is this gonna go on?

How much can we take before the whole thing... before the whole thing goes apart, I mean.

[sighs]

I'm teaching the kids Carl Sagan right now.

You ever hear what he said about the cosmic calendar?

Uh... I don't know. I don't think so.

Well, the universe is 15 billion years old.

And if you took all of that, all, all 15 billion years and compress them into a single calendar year, then the Big Bang happens in the first second, January 1st.

And, and today, oh, right now, we're in the final millisecond of the last minute of the last day,

December 31st.

But if you go back to the start, if the, if the Big Bang happens at midnight, January 1st, then each month of this calendar is one and a quarter billion years long.

Hey, nobody told me there was math on this exam.

Marty: The universe starts January 1st, but the, uh, the Milky Way didn't form until May.

Our sun and our earth, they don't show up until midSeptember.

Life appears soon after. But not us.

No. No, no, we don't appear for guess how long?

Again, I was told there'd be no math.

Marty: December 31st.

Last day on the calendar, and the very first human beings on Earth made their debut around 10:30 p.m.

10:30 p.m. on the last day.

And, um, every minute since then is 30,000 years.

So, 11:46 p.m., only 14 minutes ago, humanity tamed fire and now we're out of minutes, we're into seconds.

11:59 and 20 seconds, the domestication of plants and animals begin, an application for the human talent for making tools.

11:59 and 35 seconds, agricultural communities evolved into the first cities.

Our recorded history, everyone we've ever heard of, every single thing in any one of our history books... happens in the last 10 seconds.

The last 10 seconds of the last minute of the last day on the calendar.

December 31st.

So how long is it gonna go on?

I don't know, Fel.

If you're right, and you might be,
that this really is the, the last times
and the universe is dying,
and let's just say it's a fast death,
even if all of this is happening in the,
the last split second,
microsecond,
who knows how long that'll last.
Maybe seconds, maybe eons.

Maybe all this is happening as the cosmos burps out
its last breath.

Maybe it's all happening in the last
single solitary heartbeat.

Jesus, Marty.

Yeah.

[sighs]

Listen, Fel, I should go. I've, um...

I've got tests to grade.

Felicia: Marty...

the world is going down the drain,
and all we can say is, "That sucks."

So, maybe we're going down the drain too.

Marty: Maybe.

But, you know, Chuck Krantz is retiring.

So...

[Felicia laughing]

...I guess there's a gleam of light in the darkness.

Yes. Thirtynine great years.

Marty: Oh, you saw that weird billboard?

No, it was an ad on the radio that, um,

[clears throat] that NPR show I was telling you about.

Marty: If they're running ads on NPR,

it really is the end of the world.

[Felicia laughs]

Tell me, how does Chuck Krantz

rate this kind of coverage?

I mean... looks like an accountant.

I've never heard of him.

Used an old photo too, I guess.

I mean, the guy barely looks 40 at all,

let alone 40 years on the job.

The world is full of mysteries.

And, hey, no hard stuff, Marty.

Okay? Have a beer instead.

You got it.

Newsreader [on TV]: The Ohio EPA has now issued

a code red air quality alert

for Cleveland and its surrounding...

[switch clicks]

[upbeat music playing on TV]

[continuous beep]

[beeping]

Oh, shit on a stick.

[upbeat jingle playing]

Announcer [on TV]: We'd like to say thank you

to Charles Krantz

for 39 great years.

Thanks, Chuck.

[jingle stops]

[crackling]

[continuous beep]

[birds chirping]

[keys jingle]

[groans]

Marty: Gus!

Oh. Hey, Marty.

Where's your car?

[Gus chuckles] It's... it's on,

it's on the sidewalk halfway down

Main Street Hill with a hundred others.

I finally just had to turn around.

Fuck it, I walked...

What do you think it is, like, three miles?

I just walked three miles.

Oh, you're going to school. Hold on a sec.

Uh, real quick, you gotta, you gotta go,

listen to me, you gotta go out Route 11

and then hook back on, on, on 19.

Yeah. There's gonna be plenty of traffic.

You gotta go out at least 20 miles.

You might make it before lunch.

I wouldn't count on it.

What happened?

Giant sinkhole opened up on Market and Main.

Man, thethe thing, it, uh, it's huge.

All the rain probably had something to do with it,

lack of maintenance maybe more so.

But it's not my department, thank God.

But, yeah, there's, there's gotta be

20 cars at the bottom.

[Marty scoffs]

And some of the people in some of those cars,

they ain't comin' back.

Jesus, I was, I was just there last night,

backed up in traffic.

Thank God you weren't there this morning.

I assume you know about California.

I didn't turn on the TV this morning.

Oh!

Is there something new?

The, the rest of it went.

II mean, ththey're saying that 20% of Northern California

is hanging in there, which probably means, what, 10%?

But the foodproducing regions are... they're gone.

And with the Midwest turning to charcoal
and Florida flooding, that's like
all the foodproducing regions
in the country just gone.

And the same thing with Europe.

I mean, it's famine time in Asia.

There's a million people dead.

They're saying it's the bubblonic,
bubonic plague.

Bubonic.

BuBubonic plague. Yeah.

And the bees, I mean, they were in trouble a decade ago,
but they're completely gone now.

I mean, there's a couple of hives or whatever
down in South America,
but there ain't no honey, honey.

And without those little guys, like, what's gonna pollinate
all the crops we have left?

I mean, I can't do...

Excuse me. One sec.

Yeah, yeah. That'sthat's cool.

AAndrea? Are you,

are you Andrea from Midwest Trust?

I'm Felicia Anderson's husband.

Ex, actually.

I think you and Fel know each other.

We met at a, a, a game night at David's.

A few game nights.

Yeah, sure.

What do you want?

I just had a long walk, and my car is stuck,

and the bank is,

it's leaning.

Leaning?

Yeah.

It's on the edge of the sinkhole.

Guess that's the end of my job.

Marty: Hey, I'm curious about the billboard

on the bank building.

Have you seen it?

How could I miss it?

And I saw the ads too, on TV.

No more ads for cars or discount furniture.

Just, "Charles Krantz,

39 great years. Thanks, Chuck."

Marty: So, he doesn't work at the bank?

He's not retiring from the bank?

I don't know Charles Krantz.

I think it's just a prank. Performance art.

Take care.

Gus: They look like refugees.

Marty: Yeah.

No one looks that concerned.

[groans] What good would that do?

All was concerned at the start.

Remember the protests? You remember...

they knocked over the fence at the White House,
and all those students got shot?

Yeah.

And the overthrow of the Russian government.

You got the Four Day War between Pakistan and India
and the fucking... the volcano in Germany.

There was a volcano in Germany. That's, that's crazy.

And we just kept saying, "Oh, it's gonna blow over."

That doesn't look to be happening, though, does it?

No.

I think that suicides will slow down.

I think people will just... wait.

For what?

The end.

This is the end of everything.

I mean, we're, we're going through
the five stages of grief.

Don't you get it? I mean, we just,
we just landed on the final stage.

Acceptance.

The waiting...

I think that's the hardest part.

And the whole thing, it just, itit came out of nowhere, right?

I mean, everyone knew there was trouble with the environment.

I mean, I think even the rightwing nutjobs

were secretly, they got it.

But this...

[voice breaking] this...

this is just 60 different varieties of shit.

It's just so much shit that happened fast.

It's like a year, man. Fourteen months.

[sighs] Sucks.

[sniffles]

Yeah. Sucks. [laughs]

[airplane droning]

Huh.

Skywriting.

I haven't seen one of those since I was a kid.

Oh.

What the fuck?

My sentiments... exactly.

[helicopter whirring]

[sirens wailing]

[horns honking]

[curious music playing]

[lights buzzing]

[panting]

Whoa, whoa, whoa, where have you been?

Are you kidding?

[panting] I had to run here.

The traffic's insane, and half the cars are empty.

Dr. Winston's MIA.

What?

Yeah.

He walked in this morning, and he looked around
and he walked out again.

And now I can't find him.

He dropped his pager when he walked out.

[panting] Okay. I'll scrub in.

The beds are empty.

Most of them walked out. III transferred
the last of the stable ones.

But, Felicia, there's something weird.

[monitor beeping steadily]

What is that?

[beeping continues]

What's wrong with the monitor?

That's the thing, itit's, it's not just that one.

[monitor beeping]

[sighs]

[monitor beeping]

[multiple monitors beeping]

I don't know, Fel. I don't know.

I mean... I might want to get out of here.

I might wanna go home.

I don't think I need to be here anymore.

[beeping continues]

[continuous beeping]

[changing channels, all beeping]

[static glitches]

[TV switches off]

[sighs]

[line ringing]

[call failure beeps]

[sighs]

[phone beeps]

[phone beeps]

[phone beeps]

[sighs]

[phone clatters]

[solemn music playing]

[birds cawing, tweeting]

[airplane droning]

[coughs]

You okay, sir?

Yeah. Just taking a rest.

[distant sirens wailing]

I walked downtown to look at the sinkhole

and take a few pictures with my phone.

Thought one of the local TV stations might be interested,

but they all seem to be off the air.

Except for pictures of Krantz.

All Krantz all the time.

[chuckles]

Any idea who he is?

None.

I've asked two dozen people, at least. Nobody knows.

Our man, Krantz, is the Oz of the apocalypse. [chuckles]

Our last meme.

[chuckles]

Where are you heading?

Harvest Acres.

Nice little enclave off the beaten track.

I'm heading there myself.

My ex lives there.

Huh.

Well...

I can walk with you if you like.

What do you do, Sam?

If you still do anything, I mean.

Owner and chief undertaker for Yarborough Funeral Home.

Oh, man! [chuckles]

Yeah.

We had a boom.

It's hard to feel good about it,

but business was never better

than it was a few weeks ago.

But my real interest's meteorology.

Dreamed of being a television weatherman

in my salad days, maybe even one of the networks.

But nno.

I keep up, though.

Read the journals.

[helicopter whirring nearby]

And I can tell you

something amazing if you want to hear.

[Marty chuckles]

You know how people say there are 24 hours in a day?

Well, they're wrong.

There were 23 hours and 56 minutes

in a stellar day.

Plus a few odd seconds.

Marty: There "were"?

Based on my calculations, which I assure you

I can back up, my math is good,

there are now 24 hours and two minutes in a day.

Do you know what that means?

Well, you're saying the Earth's rotation is slowing down?

Exactly.

Lot of folks think all of these disasters

are 'cause of what we've done to the environment.

Not so.

I'm the first to admit, we treated our mother,

yes, she's our mother, all of us, very badly.

Certainly molested her, if not outright raped her.

But... we're puny
compared to the great clock of the universe.

No.

Whatever's happening
is much larger than environmental degradation.

The math says so.

And, and math can do a lot of things.

I mean, math can be art...

but it can't lie.

You know what?

I think I'll sit

and enjoy the sunset

while I wait for the arthritis

to settle a bit.

You care to join me?

[distant siren wails]

[sighs]

I think I'll go on.

The ex. I understand.

Well, it was nice speaking with you, Mr. Anderson.

[ominous music playing]

♪

Hey.

Hey.

Don't worry. I'm going to see my exwife,

Felicia Anderson.

I think she's back to Gordon now.

She lives on Fern Lane, number 19.

Yeah, I know Miss Gordon.

What are you doing out?

I wanted to go skating.

I used to love skating.

Then you should go skating.

[chuckles]

Maybe I should.

Why do you see Miss Gordon if she's your ex?

I still like her.

Girl: Do you fight?

We used to.

We get along better now that we're exes.

Miss Gordon gives us gingersnap cookies sometimes.

I like Oreos better, but...

That's just the way the cookie crumbles, right?

Gingersnaps don't crumble.

At least not until you crunch them...

[loud boom]

[booming echoes]

[ominous music playing]

You better go home, I guess.

It's too dark for skating without streetlights.

Is everything gonna be okay?

Sure it is.

[ominous music intensifies]

Go home.

Go home to your Mom and Dad.

Do it now.

[music softens]

[melancholic music playing]

Huh?

[panting]

[Felicia sighs]

Oh, thank God. Oh, thank God.

Thank God.

Marty: They, they just...

[both panting]

They just, they just started showing up.

No, I know, I know, I saw.

Is it just here?

I think it's everywhere.

I think it's almost...

Yeah...

Yeah, I think it's almost...

[exhales deeply]

[melancholic music continues]

[monitor beeping]

[music fades out]

[beeping continues]

[sniffles]

[sniffles]

[somber music playing]

[monitor continues beeping]

[melancholic music playing]

Marty: It's the brightest I've ever seen the stars.

Just look at that.

There's Aquila the eagle.

Mmhm.

There's, uh...

Cygnus the swan.

♪

You see it?

And there's the North Sta...

Did you just see that?

Yeah.

[loud echoing boom]

There goes Mars.

[multiple loud booms]

I'm scared.

[shaky breaths]

[loud booms]

I am too.

Chuck's wife: It's okay, honey.

[monitor beeping]

You go on.

You go on ahead, okay?

[exhales weakly]

[monitor beeping steadily]

[crying] Just thirtynine years.

Thirtynine great years.

[monitor continues beeping]

Thanks, Chuck.

[loud rumbling]

[“Gimme Some Lovin’” by Steve Winwood playing]

♪ Gimme some alovin’

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin’

♪ Gimme some alovin’

[music distorting] ♪ Gimme some alovin’

[trembling breath]

I love y...

[voices speaking indistinctly]

ACT 2 BUSKERS

Narrator: With the help of her friend, Mac,

who has an old van,

Taylor Franck sets up her drum kit

in her favored spot

on the Eighth Street Promenade.

[people chattering]

It’s Thursday afternoon.

The weather is fucking gorgeous,

and the streets are thronged with people

looking forward to the weekend,

which is always better than the weekend itself.

All good. Taylor?

Yeah, thanks.

Ten percent is all the thanks I want, dude.

Narrator: Taylor, and Mac too,

work parttime

at Doctor Records on Castle Street.

But on a good day...

[van door closes]

...Taylor can make almost as much busking.

[van engine starts]

Buskdrumming isn't what her parents saw for her

when she enrolled at Juilliard,

and they don't know yet that she dropped out.

Juilliard wanted you to think about what you were doing,

but as far as Taylor is concerned,

the beat is your friend and thinking is the enemy.

[slowtempo drumming]

She starts warming up, going easy at first.

Slow tempo, no cowbell,

not minding that the magic hat stays empty

except for her two crumpled dollars

and a quarter flipped contemptuously

by a dude on a skateboard.

[coin clinks]

There is time. There is a way in.

Finding the in is half the fun.

Maybe even most of it.

[drumming stops]

Janice Halliday is on her way home
from seven hours at Paper and Page,
and may walk all the way to the ocean.

Her boyfriend of 16 months just broke up with her,
and he did it the modern way.

Motherfucker!

Narrator: It was totally unexpected,
like having a door slammed in your face
just as you were getting ready to walk through it.

It was...

Fucking bullshit!

Narrator: ...fucking bullshit.

She isn't in love with him.

Never even kidded herself that she was.

But still it...

Fucking sucks.

Narrator: ...is a dismaying shock just the same.

She supposes she'll have some wine

when she gets home and cry.

Maybe queue up one of her big band playlists

and dance drunk around the room.

She loved to dance in high school.

Maybe she can recapture a little of that happiness.

Fucking really?!

passerby: Excuse me.

Sorry, sorry, sorry. Not you, not you.

[sighs] Fuck!

Barista: Got an oat milk latte for Chuck.

Narrator: Charles Krantz,

Chuck to his friends,

is dressed in the armor of accountancy.

Gray suit, blue shirt, blue tie.

His Samuel Windsor shoes are inexpensive but sturdy.

He's here for a weeklong conference

titled "Banking in the 21st Century."

He's been sent by his bank, Midwest Trust,

all expenses paid.

Chuck has enjoyed the speakers and the panels.

He was on one panel

and is scheduled to be on another

before the conference ends at noon tomorrow,

but has no wish to spend his off-duty hours

in the company of 70 other accountants.

He speaks their language,

but likes to think he speaks others as well.

At least he did,

although some of the vocabulary is now lost.

Now, his sensible Samuel Windsor Oxfords

are taking him for an afternoon walk.

His life is narrower

than the one he once hoped for,

but he's made peace with that.

He understands that narrowing

is the natural order of things.

He has a wife, Ginny,

to whom he is scrupulously faithful,

and an intelligent, goodhumored son

in middle school.

He also has only nine months to live,

though he doesn't know that yet.

[drum music playing]

Taylor has been on the job for 10 minutes now

and has nothing to show for it.

She sees a Mr. Businessman type

coming toward her

and something about him, God knows what,

makes Taylor want to announce his approach.

She slips first into a reggae beat,

then something slinkier.

And for the first time today, Taylor feels a spark

and begins to whack the cowbell on the downbeat.

It's pretty cool.

The groove has arrived,

and the groove is like a road you want to follow.

She could speed the beat up, get some tom in there,

but she's watching Mr. Businessman

and that seems wrong for this dude.

She believes Mr. Businessman will just go on past

on his way to the business hotel,

and when he's gone,

Taylor will switch to something else.

But instead of floating on by...

[upbeat drum music playing]

♪

♪

[drumming stops]

[drumming resumes]

♪

♪

Onlooker 1: Woo!

♪

Onlooker 2: Yeah!

♪

♪

[people exclaiming]

♪

onlooker: Woo!

[crowd cheering]

Come on.

Come on, little sister.

Let's dance.

Dance.

[people exclaiming]

Yeah!

[crowd cheering]

I'll lead you. I got you.

♪

♪

[crowd cheering]

[crowd cheering]

Uh.

It's okay. It's my glasses. It's my glasses.

[crowd cheering]

♪

[crowd cheering]

[fastpaced beat playing]

[crowd cheering]

♪

[crowd clapping rhythmically]

[drumming intensifies]

[drumming stops]

[crowd cheering]

[cheering intensifies]

What are we doing?

I don't know.

[cheering continues]

Taylor Franck: No more today, folks.

No more today.

No more today. We gotta quit while we're ahead.

[crowd groans]

Chuck Krantz: Do you need any help at all or...

Mac: Here, can you, uh, take this?

Sure.

Just, just spin the thingy here.

But watch out for your fingers.

It'll, it'll, it'll get 'em good, you know what I mean?

Yeah, yeah.

[indistinct chatter]

Janice Halliday: What just happened?

That was incredible.

Mac: You dance for a living?

Chuck: No. [laughs] Oh, no. I...

No, I do not, sir.

What do you do for a living?

Chuck: Oh, no, I think I... Did I... I didn't break it, did I?

I think he broke, I think he broke it.

Taylor: Let's hit the pond.

Mac: We'll never find parking by the Common.

We will today.

Today...

is magic.

Where did you learn to dance like that?

[indistinct chatter]

Oh, no, no, no, that's yours.

Nope, we split it even.

By myself, I wouldn't have made half as much

if I drummed till midnight.

[chuckles]

You okay?

Yeah.

Yeah. Just one of my headaches.

Oh, no, no, no. Come on. I don't need it. You keep it.

Come on, man, you earned it.

Buy yourself dinner.

Give it away. But I'm handing it to you.

You could do this for a living, you know?

[Janice laughs]

Chuck: I don't know about that.

I really think we could busk our way to fame and fortune.

[both chuckle]

What made you stop in front of me?

[Chuck sighs]

Why did you start moving?

Narrator: He could say it was because he was thinking

about his old halfassed band, The Retros,

and how he liked to dance across the stage

during instrumental breaks.

But that's not it.

I don't know.

Mac: Taylor, we gotta roll,

or you're gonna end up spending your take

on my parking ticket.

So, you guys don't want a career change?

Chuck: Career change? How... I mean...

Taylor: We'll make a name for ourselves.

[Chuck laughs]

You got to get in here before you go.

Group hug.

Oh, oh, okay.

Taylor: Group hug.

Chuck: Okay.

[Taylor laughs]

Chuck: Go.

Taylor: Come on.

[Janice chuckles]

[gentle music playing]

Buskers forever.

Mac: Yeah. Buskers forever.

We gotta roll before the meter maid shows up.

♪

Chuck: I'm so sorry.

That sucks.

Janice: It does suck. [sighs]

I thought he was a nice guy.

He was a pretty good lover, and we had fun and all that.

If I can find a video of us dancing,

which I'm gonna look because I bet we go viral,

I'm gonna send it to him with a text,

a text that says, "This is what you're missing."

[Chuck laughs]

You're gonna be fine.

I don't know a lot, but I know that much.

You got a bright sunbeam in front of you,
and you're gonna step right into it, I can tell.

But yeah.

It sucks. Not much else to say.

Everything goes down the drain,
and all we can say is, "That sucks."

Mm. Yeah.

Maybe we're going down the drain too.

Maybe.

I'm this way.

Uh, I'm that way.

Thank you for the dance.

[gentle music playing]

[Janice chuckles]

[music fades out]

[people chattering]

[curious music playing]

Narrator: As he passes the place

where Taylor set up her drums,

those two questions recur.

Why did he stop to listen?

And why did he start to dance?

He doesn't know.

And would answers make a good
thing better?

Later, he'll lose the ability to walk,

55.

NARRATOR

*As he passes the place where Taylor
set up her drums, those two
questions recur: why did he stop to
listen, and why did he start to
dance?*

Chuck frowns. Looks around the promenade.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*He doesn't know. And would answers
make a good thing better?*

Chuck starts to walk. We watch him as he heads away from us,
starting to fall into the sea of people, all going about
their lives.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Later he'll lose the ability to
walk, never mind dancing with
little sister on the promenade.
Later he'll lose the ability to
chew food. Later he'll forget his
wife's name. Later he'll lose his
grip on the difference between
waking and sleeping and enter a
land of pain so great he will
wonder why God made the world.*

Chuck is almost gone now as the street lights come on.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*What he will remember -
occasionally - is how he stopped,
and dropped his briefcase, and
began to move his hips to the beat
of the drums, and he will think
that is why God made the world.*

(beat)

Just that.

We watch until he is out of sight.

CUT TO BLACK.

never mind dancing with little sister

on the promenade.

Later, he'll lose the ability to chew food.

Later, he'll forget his wife's name.

Later, he'll lose his grip on the difference

between waking and sleeping

and enter a land of pain so great

he will wonder why God made the world.

♪

What he will remember, occasionally,

is how he stopped and dropped his briefcase

and began to move his hips to the beat of the drums.

And he will think

that is why God made the world.

Just that.

[music fades out]

ACT 1

I CONTAIN MULTITUDES

[voices speaking indistinctly]

[distant toy train horn blows]

[children playing]

Narrator: Chuck was looking forward

to having a baby sister.

Of course, he was also looking forward

to having parents,

but none of that worked out thanks to a patch

of wellhidden ice on an I95 overpass.

[train whistle hooting]

[exclaims]

Chuck wasn't in the car when it happened
because his parents were having a dinner date
and he was being babysat by his grandparents,
who, at the time, he was still calling Zaydee and Bubbie.
He was seven years old.

Excellent job.

Narrator: For a year and a half, it was a house
of unadulterated sadness.

Albie and Sarah Krantz had not only lost
their son and daughter-in-law...

Why're you not eating?

Narrator: ...they had lost the granddaughter
who would've been born just three months later.

Young Chuck: What's going on?

Narrator: The name had already been picked out...
Her name is Alyssa.

narrator: ...Alyssa.

When Chuck said that sounded to him like rain,
his mother had laughed and cried at the same time.
He never forgot that.

Albie processed his grief
by turning to his two absolutes,
numbers and alcohol.

Sarah, though, could find no joy

in her usual pleasures.

She loved the flavors of life,

music, art, and food,

but now, found the world quiet

and gray and flavorless.

Some of the good feelings came back

into the house with time.

There were a lot of takeout meals

after the accident,

but around the time Chuck turned 10,

his grandma started cooking again.

She liked rockandroll while she was cooking.

[music plays on radio]

Music Chuck would've thought much too young for her,

but which she clearly enjoyed.

["Dance Hall Days" by Wang Chung playing]

♪ Take your baby by the hand ♪

[tapping rhythmically]

♪ And make her do a high handstand ♪

♪ And take your baby by the heel ♪

♪ And do the next thing that you feel ♪

[chuckles]

Come on, little brother, let's dance. [chuckles]

♪ We were so in phase

♪ In our dance hall days

♪ We were cool on craze

♪ When I, you

♪ And everyone we knew could believe ♪

♪ Do and share in what was true ♪

♪ Oh, I said

♪ Dance hall days, love

♪ Take your baby by the hair ♪

♪ And pull her close and there, there, there ♪

♪ And take your baby by the ears ♪

♪ And play upon her darkest fears ♪

♪ We were so in...

[upbeat music playing on TV]

Sarah Krantz: You could learn those moves, kiddo.

You're a natural.

WhWhere did you learn?

Sarah: High school.

Chuck: What were you like in high school?

I was a kusit.

[both laugh]

But don't you tell your Zaydee I said that.

He's old school, that one.

[snorts]

[both chuckle]

Narrator: Chuck never told.

His grandparents' house became

every inch his home

with one exception.

The cupola on the roof.

[switch clicks]

Chuck was forbidden to go into the cupola.

That was his grandfather's rule,

and it was absolute, emphatic.

Albie wasn't a stern man in other matters.

He was downright gentle in most respects.

But on this point, he was rigid.

Chuck asked about it, of course,

and more than once.

What was up there?

What could you see from the high window?

And the big question, why was the room locked?

Grandma said...

Because the floor isn't safe

and you might go right through it.

Narrator: Grandpa said...

There's nothing up there

because of that rotten floor.

And the only thing you can see through the windows

is the shopping center.

Narrator: He said that until, one night,

just before Chuck's 11th birthday,

when he told at least part of the truth.

Carl Sagan [on TV]: The cosmic calendar

compresses the local history of the universe

into a single year.

If the universe began on January 1st,

it was not until May that the Milky Way formed.

Narrator: Drinking is not good for secrets.

And after the death of his son,
daughterinlaw, and granddaughtertobe,
Alyssa, who sounds like rain,
Albie Krantz drank a great deal.

Sagan: Everything humans have ever done
occurred in that bright speck
at the lower right of the cosmic calendar.

Chuck: I'll bet you could see
way past the Westford Mall
from the cupola.

You gotta be able to see the whole town from up there,
I bet.

Albie Krantz: If you went up there,
you might see a lot more than you wanted.

That's why it's locked, Chucko.

Every month is one and a quarter billion years long.

Each day represents 40 million years.

Narrator: He wanted to ask what Grandpa meant.

But the adult part of him, not there in person,
no, not at 10, but something that had begun to speak
on rare occasions, told him
to be quiet.

Sagan: At this scale...

narrator: Be quiet and wait.

But all of human history would occupy an area
the size of my hand.

We're just beginning to trace the long and tortuous path
which began with the primeval...

You know what style of house this is?

Victorian.

That's right.

And not pretend Victorian either.

It was built in 1885.

It's been remodeled half a dozen times since.

But that cupola was there from the start.

Been here since '71.

And in all those years, I haven't been up

to that damn cupola half a dozen times.

'Cause the floor is rotted?

'Cause it's full of ghosts.

Sagan: ...around 10:30 p.m. on December 31st.

YYou remember Scrooge?

Chuck: Yeah.

That Scrooge movie we watched?

I remember.

Do you think of that as a ghost story?

III guess so.

Heard someone say it was a ghost story.

Christmas Yet to Come.

Sagan: 11:59:20,

evening, last day of the...

Jefferies boy was a month later.

Henry Peterson,

that took longer.

Four... maybe five years on.

And by then...

I almost forgot what I saw up there.

Almost.

Said I'd never go back up there after that.

And I wish I hadn't because of Sarah.

Because of your Bubbie, Chucky.

Your sweet Bubbie.

And the bread.

Sagan: Every person we've ever heard of,
somewhere in there...

It's the waiting, Chucko.

That's the hard part.

Sagan: Everything in the history books
happened here
in the last 10 seconds of the cosmic calendar.

[door slams]

Sarah: Ooh!

It's getting cold out there.

Vera says hi. She says thanks for the soup.

She laid the gossip on me, laid it good.

Of course... [laughs]

That's why we have a Vera, isn't it?

So, what's the latest?

Well, I don't know if you've heard,
but Trish is saying Karen and Matty are in therapy.

Again.

Who's Henry Peterson, Zaydee?

Sagan: ...the universe that made us
or we can squander our 15 billionyear heritage.

Sarah: And get some pancake mix.

Yellow box, not the orange box.

You got all that?

Albie: I got it.

Do you need me to write it down?

I got it.

Don't you think about driving.

The walk will sober you up.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[insects chirping]

[door closes]

He'll be back with some groceries.

Then, how about tonight,
we do some s'mores in the fireplace?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Was he blabbing to you about his ghosts?

The ones that live in the cupola?

Yeah.

Well, are there?

What do you think?

I wouldn't pay too much attention to Zaydee.

He's a good man. But, sometimes,
well, sometimes, he drinks too much.

Then he rides his hobby horses.

I'm sure you know what I'm talking about.

Who was the Jefferies boy?

Well...

that was a very sad thing, kiddo.

He lived on the next block over,
and he got hit by a car
when he chased a ball into the street.

It happened a long time ago.

And if your grandpa says he saw it before it happened,
he's mistaken.

[weak laugh] He just drinks too much.

You know, I could take those to Mrs. Stanley if you want.

Oh, that's very thoughtful of you.

I bet Vera'd love that.

Mm.

Just wonderful.

Your, your grandmother is an artist.

Thank you for bringing them over.

Was that your idea?

Be honest.

It was.

Well, can I make you a cup of tea?

Um, I don't drink tea, but, um,

I wouldn't mind a glass of milk.

Well, your grandmother's a saint.

And what about your granddad?

Did he have that thing on his back looked at?

Yeah, the, the doctor took it off and had it tested.

[whispers] Tell me everything.

It wasn't one of the bad ones.

Thank God for that.

Yeah.

He, um, he was talking to Grandma

about someone named Henry Peterson.

So awful.

You know, Henry was a bookkeeper,

just like your granddad.

He did a lot of the other businesses in town.

The ones that your Zaydee didn't do...

How did it happen?

I don't think you want to hear about that stuff.

Um, wwwwell, Granddad said it was, uh, peaceful.

[mouth full] Peaceful?

He killed himself. Hung himself.

His wife, you see, she ran off

with this younger man, barely old enough to vote.

And she was in her 40s. What do you think of that?

Wow.

Damn right, wow.

And then, I heard that...

What's happening at school?

Who's smooching who?

[chuckles]

teacher: "Talk honestly, for no one else hears you
and I stay only a minute longer."

[students chattering]

"Do I contradict myself?"

"Very well then,"

"I contradict myself,"

"I am large.

I contain multitudes."

Narrator: On the last day of sixth grade,

Miss Richards,

a sweet, hippiedippyish young woman

who had no command of discipline

and would probably not last long

in the public education system,

tried to recite for Chuck's class

some verse of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself."

"Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged.

Missing me one place, search another."

[bell ringing]

[students chattering]

That went well, don't you think?

Yeah, I'm, I'm sorry about that.

What does he mean when he says, "I am large,
I contain multitudes"?

What do you think he means?

All the people he knows.

Yes.

But maybe he means even more.

Here. Come here.

What's in there? Between my hands?

My brain.

[chuckles]

No, um, that's not exactly what I mean.

What's in there?

Right between my hands right now.

I don't know.

All the people you know?

I guess.

Just the people you know?

Everything you see.

Everything you know.

The world, Chuck.

Planes in the sky. Manhole covers in the street.

Every year that you live, that world inside your head
will get bigger and brighter and more detailed and complex.

You will build cities and countries and continents,

and you will fill them with people and faces,

real and imagined.

Do you understand?

Don't stop there.

You fill the whole thing

with everyone you ever meet,

everyone you ever know,

everyone you ever just imagine.

It'll be a universe.

A whole universe right between my hands.

You contain multitudes.

So...

what happens to that universe if someone...

I don't know,

hits a patch of ice and goes off an overpass or...

Don't worry too much about those things.

Just remember that you contain multitudes, Chuck.

Isn't that wonderful?

Now, go on. You were such a good boy.

I've really enjoyed having you in class.

[melancholic music playing]

[students chattering]

Narrator: Chuck did enjoy his summer

until August,

when Bubbie died.

[indistinct praying]

It happened at the grocery store

down the street, in public,

which was a little undignified,

but at least it was the kind of death

where people can safely say...

Thank God she didn't suffer.

Narrator: The other standby...

She had a long, full life.

Narrator: ...was more of a gray area.

Sarah Krantz had yet to reach her mid60s.

Once more, the house on Pilchard Street

was one of unadulterated sadness.

Albie wore his mourning band, and lost weight,

and stopped telling his jokes

and began to look older than his 70 years.

[peppy music plays in store]

That's it?

Yeah.

Buck 75.

Um, that lady who was in here a few weeks ago,

the one who died.

Where was she when it happened?

That's a little creepy, kid.

She was my grandma.

Clerk: She was getting a loaf of bread.

Pulled down almost everything

on the shelf when she collapsed.

I'm sorry if that's too much information.

Nah.

I already knew that.

[snoring]

[snoring continues]

[keys jingling]

[lock clicks]

[sighs]

[door creaks]

Albie: No!

What?!

Get away from there! You get away from there.

What? Hey, hey!

[dramatic music playing]

[gasping]

Give me that.

Give it to me. Give it to me.

Give me it.

[sobs]

Oh.

Oh, I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

Are you okay?

What did you see?

What did you see?

I'm sorry. It's just, you can't.

You can't do that, Chucky.

You just can't.

Oh, I'm so sorry.

Oh, I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry.

[Chuck sobbing]

I'm sorry.

[students chattering]

[melancholic music playing]

Sarah: Come on, little brother.

[echoing] Let's dance.

[indistinct chatter]

Teacher: Hello, twirlers, and hello, spinners.

What do you know? Three boys this year.

It's a new record.

You gentlemen might find yourselves

being teased for your new hobby.

I assure you, you are the smartest young men

in the whole school.

You'll soon see what I mean.

For those who don't know me, I am Miss Rohrbacher.

And when I'm not teaching the girls physed,

I am what a few students have called,

"The Dance Monster."

Nothing? Alright.

You have chosen what might be

the best club this school has ever had.

'Cause if we didn't have girls volleyball,

we wouldn't have nothing.

No, no, no.

Back, Mr. Mulford, you are mine now.

[waltz music playing]

Waltz.

Narrator: Chuck knew it.

[energetic music playing]

Chacha.

Narrator: Chuck knew it.

[upbeat music playing]

Swing.

Triple step. Rock step.

Triple step. Rock step.

narrator: Chuck knew it.

Rohrbacher: Triple step. Rock step.

[upbeat samba music playing]

Samba.

Don't know that one.

Narrator: He was, by far,

the best dancer in the little club.

So, Miss Rohrbacher mostly put him

with the girls who were clumsy.

He understood she did it to make them better,

and he was a good sport about it.

Near the end of their two hours, however,

The Dance Monster would show mercy

and pair him with Cat McCoy,

who was an eighth grader

and the best dancer of the girls.

Chuck didn't expect romance.

Cat was not only gorgeous,

she was a full foot taller than he was.

But he loved to dance with her,

and the feeling was mutual.

Rohrbacher: ...three. Out, two, three. Switch.

And stop.

In, two, three. Out, two, three.

Turn. Now box.

One, two, three. One, two, three.

I don't know what that is.

Oh, my God.

Okay, 10 minutes freestyle.

["My Sharona" by The Knack playing]

♪ Ooh, my little pretty one, my pretty one ♪

♪ When you gonna give me some time, Sharona? ♪

Hey. Watch this.

♪ Ooh, you make my motor run, my motor run ♪

[Cat chuckles]

Show me how you did that.

Chuck: Ready?

Slide, slide, slide.

[Cat chuckles]

Here, ready?

Try it with me.

♪ Mmmmy Sharona

Um...

Uh, kick off your shoes
and do it in your socks.

Ayeaye.

Now, slide.

Slide.

Yeah. There you go.

Hey! Show me.

Pop. Slide. Slide. Slide.

Yeah, again.

Chuck: Pop. Slide. Pop.

♪ Woo!

♪ Mmmmy Sharona

narrator: Twirlers and Spinners let out
half an hour late that day.

♪ My Sharona

Cat McCoy: That's so rad.

You figured that out by yourself?

Chuck: Well, I just kept rewinding and rewinding
til I figured it out.

We should do that at the Fling.

Uh, not as a date or anything.

I'm going out with Dougie Wentworth.

You know that, right?

Yeah.

But that doesn't mean we couldn't show them

some cool moves.

[chuckles]

I really want to. Do you?

II don't know.

I'm a lot shorter.

[sighs] I think people will laugh.

That totally works.

It totally does.

Chuck: Are you sure?

Oh, yeah, I'm sure.

Chuck: Well, they feel great!

Uh, just a little big.

Cat: That should be enough.

Rohrbacher: Little more.

Cat: Maybe one more.

Rohrbacher: How's that?

Floor feels like ice. [laughs]

You put scratches on that floor,

the janitor is gonna beat y...

Timmy.

There won't be no scratches.

He's too light on his feet to leave any.

Albie: Almost perfect.

Take another run at these two.

[sighs]

You don't need to sigh.

You're good at this, you know?

You're really good at it.

Yeah, but it's boring.

Boring? What, you mean math?

Yeah.

I wonder if maybe next semester
you might want to try Math League after school.

I did it all high school, in fact,
and it was so great.

I'm doing Twirlers and Spinners.

Yeah.

Hey, hey, put that down for a second, will you?

Just a little about math.

Because people start out thinking
it might be boring,
and that's their first mistake.

It's used in every career, in every job,
in every facet of life on this planet.

That's a fact. Hell, the planet.

How do you think we figure out how long a day is?

Everybody knows how long a day is.

How long?

Twentyfour hours.

People say it's 24 hours, but they're wrong.

There are 23 hours and 56 minutes
in a stellar day.

Plus a few odd seconds. Math proves it.

How do we know how old the Earth is?
How old the universe is, how long people have been here?
Or how to build a bridge or a skyscraper
or how far apart the stars are?
How did we land on the moon?
The stars themselves.
Why they burn, why atoms split and fuse,
and all the rest is just math.
Hey, stars are just math.
When you look at the night sky,
you're seeing the greatest equation
in the universe.
Heck, your dancing, that's math too.
I mean, what's the language of dance?
How do you learn your steps? It's even in the name.
I mean, they call it "the count."
One and two and three and four.
What's a waltz? One, two, three, one, two, three.
Just numbers, just math.
And more than that,
there's an art to it.
What I do, all these files here,
all these folders,
these are all people's lives.
Every choice they made.
Last year, last 10 years.
Everything that's important to them.

Every weakness they have, every vice, every dream,

it's all here in numbers.

Some schmuck comes in, takes those numbers, does the math without artistry, someone loses their house.

I take those numbers, do a little art, I save someone's life.

That's what I do.

That's what accounting is.

Chuck: Well, maybe they should teach that, the cool stuff, and not just all the boring stuff.

Hmm.

[gulps]

Math is something else too.

Some math, math that's called statistics

or probability,

it can tell you stuff about your future.

It could tell you, for example,

you're more likely to be drafted

by a major league sports team

than to make a real living as a dancer.

The world loves dancers, it truly does.

But it needs accountants, so there's much more demand,

so there's much more opportunity.

I know that might hurt, but it's the truth.

Math is truth. It won't lie to you.

It doesn't factor in your preferences.

It's pure that way.

Math can do a lot of things.

Math can be art.

But it can't lie.

So...

take another run at those two

because, Chucko,

you are good.

You... have art in you.

["All Been Said Before" by Matt Nathanson playing]

♪ Hugging me like skin

♪ And I'll sweat it clean

♪ Until I can taste

♪ The oxygen

♪ Oh

♪

Hey! You look great!

Thanks. Uh, you too.

[both chuckle]

Wanna show 'em how it's done?

Uh, I don't know. I kinda, um...

I kinda hurt my leg.

You hurt your leg?

Maybe, maybe let's, let's wait for a better song.

["All the Time" by We're About 9 playing]

♪ Today I changed the picture ♪

♪ In our old oak frame ♪

♪ To a painting I made of a photo inside... ♪

Hey, kiddo.

Hey.

Thought you were gonna tear it up tonight.

I don't, I don't know.

My shoes feel all funny,

and... I hurt my leg.

Oh, you hurt your leg?

Yeah.

I'm sorry to hear that.

So, you came stag, huh?

Hmm?

No date.

Nah, I...

That'll change. Believe me, it'll change.

Just give it some time.

None of this, none of...

None of that out there really means anything.

It's all just, just a scrimmage.

Just a practice.

[upbeat music playing]

Hey, this is perfect. Come on.

Nah, I'm still, uh...

My leg's still wonky.

Chuck, come on.

We're gonna blow the roof off.

I'm sorry.

It really hurts.

["Rock n Roll Boogie" by The Math Club playing]

You know, I've been dancing since I was eight, and I teach PE, and I've seen when my kids get hurt.

I see how their walk changes.

I see how their posture changes.

And don't mind me saying, but you look...

Well, you look fine to me, Chuck.

I'm not saying that you have to dance with the girl.

It's up to you. I'm just saying dance or no dance, you don't have to lie.

Tell her the truth.

She can take it.

[music continues faintly]

[insects chirping]

[chuckles]

["Gimme Some Lovin'" by Steve Winwood playing]

♪ Well, my temperature's rising ♪

♪ And my feet on the floor ♪

♪ Crazy people knocking 'cause they're wanting some more ♪

♪ Let me in, baby, I don't know what you got ♪

You ready?

Yeah. Let's do it.

♪ And I'm so glad we made it ♪

♪ So glad we made it

♪ You gotta

♪ Gimme some alovin' ♪

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin'

♪ Gimme some alovin'

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin'

♪ Gimme some alovin' every day ♪

[all cheering]

[all cheering]

♪ Well, I feel so good

♪ Everything is getting higher ♪

♪ You better take it easy

♪ 'Cause the place is on fire ♪

♪ Been a hard day and I have so much to do ♪

♪ We made it, baby, and it happened to you ♪

♪ And I'm so glad we made it ♪

♪ So glad we made it

♪ You gotta

♪ Gimme some alovín'

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin'

♪ Gimme some alovín'

♪ Gimme, gimme some lovin'

♪ Gimme some alovín'

♪ Every day

[all cheering]

♪

♪ Well, I feel so good

♪ Everything is getting higher ♪

♪ You better take it easy 'cause the place is on fire ♪

♪ Been a hard day and nothing went too good ♪

♪ Now I'm gonna relax likea everybody should ♪

♪ And I'm so glad we made it ♪

♪ Heyhey

♪ So glad we made it

♪ You got to

♪ Gimme some a loving

[cheering gets louder]

♪ Gimme, gimme some loving

♪ Gimme some loving

♪ Gimme, gimme some loving

♪ Gimme, gimme some loving

♪ Gimme, gimme some loving

♪ Gimme, gimme some loving

[all cheering]

[cheering gets louder]

All [chanting]: One more time! One more time!

One more time!

Narrator: They may have been young,

but they were smart enough to know when to quit.

[all cheering]

Thank you, guys.

Narrator: Six months before he died

of a brain tumor at the unfair age of 39,

and while his mind was still working, mostly,

Chuck told his wife the truth about the scar

on the back of his hand.

When they'd first started dating,

he told her he'd gotten it from a boy

named Doug Wentworth,

who was pissed about him dancing with his girlfriend

at a middle school formal
and pushed him into a chain link fence
outside the gym.

I lied about that, though.

Oh, my.

A man of secrets,
even still.

Ginny Krantz: What happened, love?

Chuck: When our fabulous dance was over, I...

I was sweaty and I was so hot.

It felt like my cheeks were gonna catch fire.

You were great.

Thank you.

What a star.

Chuck: All I wanted in that moment

was just darkness,

cool air,

and to be by myself.

There were millions of stars that night.

Millions of them.

And millions more behind them.

And sure, maybe... Yeah, maybe they were just math.

But they also danced.

I know 'cause I saw one of them.

And I remember thinking, the universe is large and, and it contains multitudes, but it also contains me.

And in this moment...

I am wonderful.

And I have a right to be wonderful.

[fence rattles]

Oh!

[groans]

Ginny: Why lie about that, silly?

You're a strange wonder, my dear.

Narrator: He doesn't offer more because the scar was important for another reason.

It was part of a story he couldn't tell, even though there was now an apartment building on the site of the Victorian house where he had done most of his growing up.

The haunted Victorian house.

Mm.

No reason.

Funny thinking, I guess.

Narrator: The scar meant more,

so he had made it more.

He just couldn't make it as much more as it really was.

That made little sense.

But as the glioblastoma continued its blitzkrieg, it was the best his disintegrating mind could manage.

[upbeat music playing on TV]

[switch clicks]

[switch clicks]

[switch clicks]

[groaning, gasping]

[groans]

Narrator: Chuck's grandpa, his Zaydee, died of a heart attack five years after the Fall Fling dance.

Chuck was a junior in high school singing in a band and dancing like Jagger during the instrumental breaks.

Funeral director: He made all the arrangements himself.

Came in a few weeks ago just to make sure everything was to the letter, which I thought was strange.

Not many people bother to do that.

Most people, they come here once to set it all up.

They aren't anxious to come back again.

Next time I see 'em, they're in their Sunday best, if you get me.

He was a great man and a good friend.

He's been doing our books for 23 years and saved our skin more than once when the tax man was coming.

So, do I owe you any money?

Not a penny.

He took care of that too. Settled his tab that same visit.

You know... the strangest thing.

And this will sound strange, so bear with me.

See, I, uh, dreamed of being a television weatherman in my salad days with maybe one of the networks.

Wasn't in the cards for me.

But I did spend a summer at WKNB.

Well, there was a guy at KNB who they said could feel a storm coming two solid weeks away without the radar.

Had a sixth sense.

Damnedest thing I ever saw.

Uh, used to make this face, this face when people talked about their travel plans, if he knew something they didn't.

Not... not a smile, per se.

No joy in it.

Just a... knowing.

"Weatherman Stare," I called it.

And I didn't have it, not me.

So, I'm here, not there.

Your granddad had that same face when he was in here.

Like... he knew it was gonna rain.

And I was just a guy selling him an umbrella.

Weatherman Stare.

[chuckles] I'm sure of it.

The strangest thing.

Narrator: Albie left him everything.

More than enough to pay for his college education.

And later on, the sale of the Victorian paid for the house he and Ginny moved into after their honeymoon in the Catskills.

He flatly refused to move to Omaha to live with his mother's parents.

Look, I love you guys...

narrator: He said.

...but this is where I grew up and want to stay till college.

I'm 17. I'm not a baby.

Narrator: So, they, both long retired,

came to him and stayed in the Victorian for the 20odd months before Chuck went off to the University of Illinois.

They weren't able to be there for the funeral, however.

It happened fast, as Albie had wanted, and his mom's folks had loose ends to tie up in Omaha.

Chuck didn't really miss them, if he was honest.

His Zaydee hated a fuss almost as much as he hated a crowd.

A day before they were scheduled to arrive,

Chuck finally opened the envelope

that had been sitting on the table

in the front hall.

It was from Sam Yarborough,

owner and chief undertaker at Yarborough Funeral Home,

and inside were Albie Krantz's personal effects.

[inhales deeply]

[sighs]

[switch clicks]

[lock clicks]

[door creaks]

[birds tweeting]

[dog barking in distance]

[monitor beeping]

Narrator: In this room, Chuck's grandpa had seen the Jefferies boy, body broken by the car.

He'd seen Henry Peterson hanging from the ceiling.

He'd seen his own wife lying dead.

And likely, Chuck supposed,

perhaps the night Chuck had stolen his keys,

Albie had even seen himself crumpled to the floor,

still clutching his upper arm.

"It's the waiting," he'd said.

"That's the hard part."

[monitor beeping]

Now Chuck's own waiting would begin.

How long would that wait be?

Exactly how old was the man in the hospital bed?

[beeping continues]

There was a final bip...

[beeping stops]

...from the unseen monitor and then that was gone too.

The man did not fade, as ghostly apparitions did in the movies.

He was just gone.

Insisting he had never been there in the first place.

He wasn't...

narrator: Chuck thinks.

...and I will insist he wasn't.

And I will live my life until my life runs out.

I am wonderful.

I deserve to be wonderful.

And I contain multitudes.

[footsteps fading]

[melancholic music playing]

["The Parting Glass" by Gregory Alan Isakov playing]

♪ Of all the money I ever had ♪

♪ I spent it in good company ♪

♪ And all the harm I've ever done ♪

♪ It was to none but me

♪ And all I've done

♪ For want of wit

♪ To memory now I can't recall ♪

♪ So fill to me the parting glass ♪

♪ Good night and joy be to you all ♪

♪ Fill to me the parting glass ♪

♪ And drink a health whate'er befalls ♪

♪ Then gently rise and softly call ♪

♪ Good night and joy be to you all ♪

♪ Of all the friends I ever had ♪

♪ They're sorry for my going away ♪
♪ And all the sweethearts I ever had ♪
♪ They would wish me one more day to stay ♪
♪ Since it fell
♪ Into my lot
♪ That I should rise and you should not ♪
♪ I'll gently rise and softly call ♪
♪ Good night and joy be to you all ♪
♪ Fill to me the parting glass ♪
♪ Drink a health whate'er befalls ♪
♪ Then gently rise and softly call ♪
♪ Good night and joy be to you all ♪
♪ Good night and joy be to you all ♪

[song fades out]

[melancholic music playing]

[melancholic music continues]

[music fades out]

More: Mike Flanagan, Movie Transcripts, The Life of Chuck (2024)