

Henry Gordon Academy, Cartwright

presents

"That's Life!"

Written by the HGA Drama Group, with Jeanne MacDonald

Cast

Charlene Dyson	Lori (teenage daughter)
Dale Hamel	Shawn (teenage son)
John MacDonald	Bruce (father)
Cheryl Elson	Carol (mother)
Marlene Hamel	Jessie (young child - 5)
Pam Lewis	Doctor
Amy Lethbridge	Nurse, Ice Cream Clerk
Jodi Greenleaves	Student Director

Supervisor

Tom Mugford

Teacher Advisers

Jeanne MacDonald

Sue Jensen

Patty Way

This play explores the difficulties of sudden death encountered by a typical family.

THAT'S LIFE!

Scene 1

Family playing a game. Mother is reading a magazine. Bruce reaches to take a turn and Jessica stops him.

JESSIE: Hey Dad, silly, it's my turn!

BRUCE: Sorry, Jessie. Daddy wasn't paying attention.

LORI: Well, Jessie, hurry up if it's your turn. (Pauses and says in a frustrated tone of voice.) We're Waiting.

SHAWN: Geez, Lori, lay off. She's just a kid.

CAROL: (warningly) SHAWN!

(Shawn rolls his eyes, Lori licks out her tongue)

JESSIE: I am not a kid. I'm five years old and I can almost ride a bike. (Pauses and everyone looks at her) And....my teacher said that (Pauses, says quickly) I'm a good drawer too! And.... and

CAROL: Okay, Jessie. Take your turn.

(Jessie pouts, sighs and then brightens up and takes her turn)

JESSIE: You gotta go back to home now, Daddy. (Laughs and claps her hands.)

BRUCE: You're getting pretty good at this, Jess.

SHAWN: I'd say! She's almost as good as me.

(Jessie blushes)

LORI: (Laughing) And she's growing like a weed.

JESSIE: Yeah, and.....um.....I'm almost big enough to ride a bike and.....if I had one Shawn could learn me how to ride it. (Nudges Shawn)

CAROL: Bruce, I think our little girl needs a bike. Or at least would certainly like to have

one anyway. (Turns and looks at Jessie) Wouldn't you, Jess?

JESSIE: (Gets up and jumps into her mother's arms) You mean it! You really mean it! You're gonna get me a bike! Oh goodie! (Kisses her mom on the cheek)

BRUCE: Calm down now, Jessie. Nobody actually said that you were getting a bike for sure.

(Jessie sulks and crosses her arms, then looks up at her father with an angelic smile)

JESSIE: Yeah - but- but you will if you love me. Cause I'm special.

LORI: Special! You'd try anything just to get that bike, wouldn't you?

JESSIE: I know I'll only get it if I'm good. But I'm always good, (Turns to her father) Right, Daddy?!

BRUCE: Yes, Jessie. Now let's get back to the game.

LORI: Okay Shawn.....it's your turn.

SHAWN: No, it's not. Oh, just wait.....yes it is! (Laughs)

CAROL: I If you finish the game soon, I'll take you all out for a treat.

LORI: Great! Come on, Dad....your turn.

LIGHTS OFF

Scene 2

Carol and her children at stage right. Jessie is kneeling, trying to tie up her shoe laces.

CAROL: So, kids - what would you like to eat?

LORI: Can we go to A & W ? We haven't eaten there in awhile.

JESSIE: Mommy, can't we go to Yogi's today? I love their ice cream! (Tugging on her mother's skirt). Could we, please? Please? Please?

CAROL: What do you want to do, Shawn?

SHAWN: (shrugs) I dunno - whatever.

CAROL: Okay, we'll go get some ice cream today. Next time we'll go to A & W.

LORI: Mom, that's not fair. (Turns to Jessie) You always get your own way. We never do anything I want to do. And it's just cause you're the youngest!

JESSIE: Don't be such a sook, Lori. We don't always do what I want to do. That's lies.

SHAWN: Lori, leave her alone. All you ever do is pick on Jessie. I'm sick of it.

CAROL: And I'm sick of you two arguing. (Annoyed) Give it up!

LORI: (Mumbling) Stupid kid, always gets what she wants. (Impatiently) Here, let me help you with those or we'll be here all day. (Kneels and ties Jessie's sneakers for her.)

CAROL: C'mon kids. We'll never get there if you keep up like this. (Points forward) Move it!

LORI: (Mocking Carol) We'll never get there if you keep up like this!.

Carol turns, catches Lori mocking her and stares at her hard.

SHAWN: Laughs.

A bike is on display in the window. Jessie goes back and stares at it.

JESSIE: Mom! (Pauses with mouth wide open) That bike is a real pretty color. I really like that!

CAROL: (Laughing) You like it, do you? Well, maybe, if you're good, you might get it for your birthday.

Enter the ice cream shop.

CAROL: Lori, what kind do you want?

LORI: Umm, I want chocolate swirl with chocolate chips.

JESSIE: Eww, yuck, that's gross. That looks like...

Carol covers Jessie's mouth.

CAROL: We don't need to know what it looks like.

LORI: Yeah, you don't have to eat it, so mind your own business.

SHAWN: I don't want any, thanks. I'm really not that hungry anymore.

CAROL: Jessie?

JESSIE: I want some blueberry Gubble Bum!

LORI: It's Bubble Gum, you brat! And you said my ice cream was gross.

CAROL: That's enough! Stop fighting, or we're going home.

SHAWN: (singing) I wanna go home, I wanna go home, or Lord I wanna...

GIRL BEHIND COUNTER: Is that everything, ma'am?

CAROL: Yes, how much is that?

GIRL: That'll be \$4.17, please.

CAROL: Okay, I...Oh where's my wallet?

SHAWN: I guess you must have left it home.

CAROL: (to Lori and Shawn) Would one of you run over and get it, please?

JESSIE: I will, mommy. You said I hafta be a good girl! (Runs out the door.)

CAROL: No, Jessie, wait! (To counter girl) Just a minute! (She takes off after Jessie.)

SHAWN: Just imagine the look on Jessie's face when Mom and Dad get her that bike.

LORI: Yeah, we'll never be able to shut her up then.

Offstage: car horn, squeal of brakes)

CAROL: (Screaming) Jessie!!!!

Lights fading. VOICES.

DRIVER: Oh my God, lady, I didn't see her. I'm sorry. She just ran right out in front of me. I'm sorry.

SHAWN: Somebody call an ambulance, quick!

LIGHTS OUT

Scene 3

SETTING: Hospital waiting room. Carol, Shawn, and Lori are waiting in the room. Lori is leaning on her mother, Shawn is staring off into space. Father rushes in.

BRUCE: Where's Jessie? I want to see her, right now.

NURSE: I'm sorry, sir. You can't see her just yet, she's in the emergency treatment room.

BRUCE: She's my daughter, damn it! I have a right to see her! Get out of my way!

CAROL: Bruce, this isn't going to do any good. Just sit down and wait.

BRUCE: Wait! You want me to wait! Where were you? What happened?

CAROL: I left my wallet at home. Jessie went over to get it, and I guess she wasn't looking...(breaks down).

BRUCE: What do you mean, she went to get your wallet? You let a five year old run across the street to get your purse! Why couldn't you let Shawn or Lori go get it?

Carol, in shock, sinks into a chair.

NURSE: Sir, you are going to have to calm down. If you want to talk to your wife, lower your voice. I know you're upset, but this is a hospital and there are other patients here. Is that clear?

LORI: Yeah, Dad. It wasn't Mom's fault.

BRUCE: I know it's not your mother's fault, Lori, and I'm sorry. It's just that I can't believe this is happening.

Bruce sits beside Carol and quietly talks to her. Nurse goes out.

LORI: Shawn, are you okay? Shawn? (Raises voice) SHAWN?

SHAWN: (Slowly looks at Lori.) Just leave me alone.

LORI: I was only trying to help. I didn't mean to upset you. You don't need to get like that.

Shawn gets up and leaves. After a pause, Lori gets up and follows him.

LORI: Shawn! Shawn, wait! I'm sorry.

DOCTOR: Are you Mr. & Mrs. Parker?

Carol and Bruce get up.

CAROL: Yes, we are.

BRUCE: How is she, doctor? Can we speak to her?

DOCTOR: I'm afraid not. When the vehicle hit her, she developed a blood clot on the left side of her brain. She is unconscious at the moment and there is no telling when she will regain consciousness. I may be able to tell you more after the surgery.

Bruce starts to cry softly. Carol pulls him over and holds him.

DOCTOR: There are some papers you'll need to sign. I'll have the nurse bring them to you. Don't worry, we'll do our best.

Lori enters.

LORI: (Out of breath) I couldn't catch up with Shawn. He took off running. I don't know where he went. (Pauses for a moment.) I hope he's okay.

CAROL: He's upset. Give him some time - he's taking this really hard.

LORI: (Quietly) Mom, are we going home soon? I'm really tired.

CAROL: (To Bruce) Maybe you should stay home with the kids tonight. Someone should stay here, in case Jessie wakes up.

BRUCE: If it's okay with you, I'd rather stay here tonight.

CAROL: Okay, if you want to. I should go home tonight for the kids, especially for Shawn. He will need someone to talk to.

BRUCE: Fine, Carol, I'll see you in the morning. (Kisses her on the forehead.) I'll call if anything changes.

CAROL: I'll see you in the morning then.

Carol and Lori leave, Nurse walks in.

NURSE: (To Bruce) Are you staying here for the night?

BRUCE: Yes, I thought it was the best thing to do.

NURSE: I agree. I think if I had kids I would want to be here for them. (Pauses) Would you like me to find a room for you? I'm sure you would be more comfortable.

BRUCE: Thanks. I really appreciate that very much.

NURSE: I'll just go check at the front desk.

Bruce sits down, picks up a magazine, tosses it aside. Leans forward with head in hands. Lights go down.

Scene 4

SETTING: Jessie's hospital room. Bruce is holding Jessie's hand and Carol enters.

CAROL: Hi, honey. How are you feeling? Has there been any change?

BRUCE: Well...once last night I thought she said "Daddy", but I guess it was just wishful thinking. Maybe I was dreaming. (Gets up and puts his arm around Carol.) I don't know if I can take it anymore. The waiting and not knowing is the worse part of this whole mess. And I've been here every night this week and if I fall asleep at work once more, I'm not going to have a job to go to.

CAROL: It's all right. From now on I'll stay here nights - as long as I can, anyway. You have to start getting some sleep.

BRUCE: If only I didn't feel like I was abandoning her.

CAROL: (Sharply) Bruce, we have to start being realistic about this. It's been almost two months - and the doctor still doesn't know when...or if...she's going to wake up.

Doctor enters, carrying a clipboard, looking it over.

DOCTOR: Good morning. Have you had breakfast yet? The cafeteria will be opening soon.

BRUCE: No thanks, I don't really feel like eating right now.

CAROL: Bruce, I think we both really should get something to eat. You're just about running on empty. Let's go to the cafeteria.

DOCTOR: I think that's a good idea.

BRUCE: Yeah, I guess I should eat something. (Smiles) Buy you a coffee, lady?

CAROL: That sounds good. Doctor, let us know if there's any change.

DOCTOR: I will.

BRUCE: Thank you, Doctor.

Bruce and Carol leave. Doctor looks at clipboard. Enter Lori & Shawn.

DOCTOR: Hello, how are you kids doing today?

SHAWN: Okay, I guess, considering how things have been going lately.

LORI: Doctor Lewis, we waited 'til Mom and Dad left because we wanted to talk to you alone. Is Jessie going to wake up?

DOCTOR: This is not something I can discuss with you right now.

LORI: Why? Just 'cause we're kids? We can't even know if our own sister is alright!

SHAWN: Yeah, because that's what she is...our sister, and we have the right to know about this.

DOCTOR: This is something you will have to discuss with your parents. It is their place to tell you, not mine.

Doctor leaves.

LORI: Oh, my God. This means it's bad news. What are we going to do?

SHAWN: Maybe it's not bad news. Maybe it's just procedure to not tell kids. Don't think the worst.

Lori covers her face.

SHAWN: Don't worry about it, Lori. She'll be fine. She's gonna wake up. We just have to...we just have...Ahhh.

LORI: We have to stay positive. But we have to try and at least be a little realistic about this. I mean, she is really sick, and....

SHAWN: This is Jessie we are talking about here. Can't you be the least bit hopeful? Are you willing to let her go, just like that?

LORI: NO, I'm not just going to let her go, but I'm not going to be stupid about this either.

SHAWN: Yeah, well you're sure acting it. I care about my sister. You're the one who was always picking on her, and calling her names. You were never nice to her!

Lori pushes Shawn backwards.

LORI: Shawn, you're blaming all of this on me. It's not my fault. (Pause) Do you think I wanted this to happen.

Shawn sits down.

Carol and Bruce standing in the doorway, silence for a few seconds.

SHAWN: (Looks up at Lori.) I'm sorry, I didn't mean all that stuff. I know it's not your fault.

Carol and Bruce enter.

BRUCE: Shawn, are you okay? What happened?

SHAWN: Nothing, Dad. It was just a stupid argument. It doesn't matter.

CAROL: Bruce, I think that you and Shawn should have a talk. I'll stay her and talk with Lori.

BRUCE: Okay, c'mon Shawn.

Bruce and Shawn leave. Half of the stage is dark. In the other half Carol and Lori are talking. Lori walks over to Jessie's bed.)

LORI: Mom, do you think that Jessie is going to be okay?

CAROL: (Pauses for a second.) Honey, I...I really don't know. Nobody knows. I do hope she's going to be alright, but nothing's for sure.

LORI: I think Shawn is taking this really hard. Not that the rest of us aren't, but, it's like he doesn't want to admit that anything is wrong...

Lights switch over to Bruce and Shawn.

SHAWN: I'm really worried about Lori. It seems like none of this is bothering her, almost like doesn't care.

BRUCE: It's not that she doesn't care. You know Lori, she always looks at the bright side of things. She doesn't like letting people know when something is bothering her.

Silence for awhile.

SHAWN: Dad, what if Jessie doesn't wake up? What are we going to do?

BRUCE: Well, your mother and I were talking. We mentioned a couple of things. I really don't know how to say this so I'll just come right out and say it...we talked about organ donation.

Lights back on Lori and Carol.

CAROL: We talked about organ donation, but we're not really sure yet.

LORI: (Thinks it over, then says slowly.) I don't see anything wrong with that. I mean, if she does die (pause) at least it will help some other kid.

CAROL: That's exactly what your father and I were thinking.

LORI: What do you think Shawn will say?

Lights on Shawn and Bruce.

SHAWN: Organ donation! You mean you'd let them cut her up, and give her body parts to total strangers? I hope I'm not the only person who sees something wrong with that!

BRUCE: Think about it for a second, Shawn. If we are able to help someone else...

SHAWN: There it is again. Everyone's talking about Jessie like she's already dead.

BRUCE: But, son...

SHAWN: No! Don't you understand! She's still alive, and that's the way she's gonna stay.

Lights on Lori and Carol.

CAROL: It's not hopeless yet. She's still alive, and from what the doctors told us there is at least a slight chance she'll come out of it.

LORI: Mom, can I tell you something?

CAROL: Yes. What's wrong?

LORI: Shawn said something earlier that really made me think. He did say he didn't mean it after, but...

CAROL: What was it?

LORI: He said that I was always picking on Jess and that I was mean to her. (Starts to cry.)

CAROL: Oh, Lori, I hope you don't feel guilty. I'm sure Shawn only said that because he was upset. It isn't anyone's fault if that's what you're thinking. Come here. (Carol holds out her arms and gives Lori a hug.)

Enter Bruce and Shawn.

BRUCE: Have you guys got everything sorted out?

LORI: Yeah, everything is a bit better, Dad. (She walks over and gives him a hug.)

CAROL: And what about you two? Things okay now?

Shawn shrugs, Bruce shakes his head.

BRUCE: Carol, do you want to stay here tonight with Jessie? I'd like to spend one more night here if it's all right with you. But if you want to stay, I'm okay with that too.

SHAWN: What do you mean, one more night?

BRUCE: I won't be spending any more nights at the hospital...I have to get back on the job while I still have one.

SHAWN: (To his mother) Are you going to stay here instead?

CAROL: For a night a week maybe. I -

SHAWN: That's it? You're both giving up on her? Just like that? Am I the only one who cares?

CAROL: That's enough, Shawn! Ever since the accident, you've been on this selfish trip...you're not the only one who dares about Jessie, and it's time you remembered it! How many nights have your father and I gone without sleep to be here? Haven't you heard Lori crying herself to sleep almost every night? You're not making things easier for anyone, and it's going to stop right now! Is that quite clear?

Silence. Carol grabs husband and daughter by arm; starts off stage.

SHAWN: (Voice cracking) Mom - Dad, I'm sorry.

BRUCE: It's all right, son - this has been hard on everyone. Come on. (As Shawn joins them, Bruce puts an arm around his shoulders.)

Lights dim; family exits; lights out.

Scene 5

Scene: Hospital room. Bed at centre stage. Parents at side of bed facing audience. Shawn and Lori at foot of bed.

LORI: Mom...if Jessie doesn't get better, are you going to go through with organ donation?

SHAWN: Lori, I wish you wouldn't talk about that. It's not something I want to hear about right now. Can't we not think about that 'til - later?

LORI: (Starting to get angry.) Listen, Shawn...(stops and takes a deep breath). Okay, Shawn. You have your feelings and I have mine. Fighting about them isn't helping

CAROL: (Absently, not really listening to them.) Lori - Shawn - could you please leave that alone for now? It's not as if we've made any final decision on the matter. We haven't lost her yet.

BRUCE: Yes, we'll deal with that when, and if, that time comes. Right now, let's just be here for Jess as a family.

(Jessie moves and murmurs something.)

CAROL: Oh my God, Oh my God! She's awake. Somebody get in here!

BRUCE: Nurse! Doctor! She's awake! Jessie's awake!

Doctor and nurse rush in. Family is excited. Doctor checks Jessie over.

DOCTOR: (Turning to family.) I think you folks had better wait outside for now.

NURSE: This may take awhile, so you may as well go to the waiting room. You can come back after the Doctor is finished.

SHAWN: Why do we have to leave?

NURSE: Because the doctor needs to take a closer look at your sister, and it's better if she isn't distracted. Now please, you have to leave.

Nurse shoos family out.

LORI: Listen! I have a great idea. Let's go get the bike and bring it back here. It will be a really cool surprise for her!

SHAWN: Wicked! Sometimes you do come up with a great idea, Squirt.

CAROL: It is a great idea. I'll just wait here, though, in case she wakes up before you get back.

Doctor and nurse check Jessie's machinery. They talk in low tones, too softly for audience to hear. Obviously something is wrong.

DOCTOR: Nurse, would you call the parents back in here please?

Nurse goes out and comes back with Carol.

CAROL: (Going quickly to bedside.) Jessie? Jessie honey? Can you hear me?

DOCTOR: Mrs. Parker...

CAROL: What? She's okay - right? She's just not quite awake yet, right doctor?

DOCTOR: Mrs. Parker, maybe you'd better sit down.

CAROL: No, no, I don't want to hear this. She was awake...I heard her say "Mom"...she's getting better.

DOCTOR: Mrs. Parker, I'm sorry. But Jessie wasn't awake. And she is not going to be. Her life signs are deteriorating, and there is nothing we can do to stop it. The scan shows that her brain activity is simply shutting down. I'm sorry, Mrs. Parker...truly sorry. She's running out of time.

CAROL: (Faintly, and tiredly.) How much time?

DOCTOR: Not long, I'm afraid. Will your family be back soon?

CAROL: (Turns slowly back to bed, begins to cry softly. She leans over Jessie, stroking her hair and speaking to her softly. Family comes bursting in with bike, and stop abruptly just inside door. They come forward, all speaking together.)

FAMILY: Mom, what's wrong? Carol, what's happening? Doctor, what's going on? (Ad lib.)

Doctor takes family to side of room; conversation is too low to be heard by audience; family reacts appropriately.-----

CAROL: (Pulling herself together and turns to the family.) I'm glad you got back. We need to say good-bye to Jessie together.

Family gathers around bed. Lights begin to fade. As lights go out, there is the sound of a "Flat-line". Single light on bike as Dale sings.