



Changing Courses

Characters: Dr Perkins, Dr Lo, Daisy, Ted, Bax, Alysha

Synopsis: Dr Lo is very impressed by the students' HIV/AIDS story for Cyber News. But it turns out that Daisy has written the best story. Daisy is awarded a double A plus, a real break though for her. Alysha is very disappointed though, her father has phoned Dr Lo telling him that he will not allow his daughter to visit an HIV clinic. As a result Alysha does not get as high a mark as the others. Finally Dr Perkins calls Daisy in her office and announces that Daisy is about to receive what she has always wanted, a transfer to the Beauty Engineering course. But why doesn't Daisy appear to be more enthusiastic? Could it be that Daisy has become converted to journalism? Will Daisy sign the transfer form?

Scene 1

Ted: (He's just finished reading Daisy's HIV AIDS story) I don't believe it Bax!

Bax: What Ted?

Ted: This stuff Daisy's written... on our HIV AIDS story.

Bax: Is it rubbish?

Ted: No... no it's not... it's really fantastic.

Bax: You're kidding.

Ted: I know it's hard to believe... but listen to this.... (reading from Daisy's text)

People with HIV AIDS in Hong are people like you and me...

(Ted's voice fades into Daisy's)

Daisy: (SFX: Echo)... they are students and housewives... the young and the not so young... men., women and children.... and as fellow human beings they deserve our respect.... Jesus said...

Bax: (Interrupting) Daisy's quoting Jesus?!

Ted: Yes.

Bax: I don't believe it! That's amazing!

Ted: You wait till you hear HOW she quotes him... it's really good.

Bax: Okay... go on.

Ted: Okay.... 'Jesus said...'

(The reading is again picked up by Daisy)

Daisy: (SFX: Echo) 'He who is without sin... cast the first stone'... and Jesus was right... Who has the right to condemn people with HIV AIDS?... Who in our city... in any city in the world... is not free of greed, self interest and pride?... The residents of Wealthy Gardens have been demonstrating against the presence of an HIV Clinic on their estate... to find out why this reporter went to the estate to find out for herself.

Bax: (Interrupting) Daisy went to the Estate?!

Ted: Yes.

Bax: How come? She said she didn't want to go.

Ted: I know.

Bax: And when we went she stayed behind.

Ted: I know. But she must have changed her mind.

Bax: But why? She was adamant she didn't want to go... I remember... she said, 'I don't want to meet those people... I might get AIDS.'

Ted: Yeah right, I know... that's what she did say.

Bax: So what made her change her mid and go?!

Ted: I dunno... you know what Daisy's like... you never really know what she's gonna do next.

Bax: And she said she wasn't gonna write anything... she said she'd put the story on the web site if we wrote it.

Ted: I Know... but she HAS written the story and it's really good.

Bax: So what does she say about her visit to the estate?

Ted: Okay... listen to how she goes on.... I took a mini bus to Wealthy estate but when I got off I couldn't see the clinic.

Bax: That's what happened to us.

Ted: I know.

Bax: Go on.

Ted: (Reading) So I asked a passer by if he could direct me to it....

(Story picked up by Daisy's voice)

Daisy: (SFX: Echo) No sooner had I asked for directions when the kind expression on the man's turned to hatred... he had immediately assumed that I was a patient at the clinic, that I had HIV AIDS, that I was the enemy... He quickly called over some others... adult men and woman ... he told them I was going to the clinic and their faces too changed into masks of hatred.... They started screaming abuse at me... calling me filth... telling me I didn't belong there... and for those terrible minutes when I was being treated as an outcast I knew what it felt like to be someone with HIV AIDS... I felt lonely... scared... humiliated and rejected.... But then I felt my anger rising up insider me... We are taught that anger is bad and must be controlled.... but sometimes... like this time.... it can be a god send...my anger gave me the courage to answer those people back... to tell them what inhuman bigots I thought they were... for a moment they were silent... but then their faces set into even nastier expressions than before and they hounded me all the way to the clinic... it was like being chased by a pack of savage guard dogs... When I finally made it to the sanctuary of the clinic and shut the door on their ugly faces I was terrified.... where was their anger coming from? I was soon to find out... Nurse Yang explained it to me.... 'It' s because the local residents think that the presence of the clinic on their estate will bring down the price of their property.'... so that' s what it was all about.... all that hatred out there was about their fear of losing a few bucks... As Jesus said... 'He who is without sin, cast the first stone.'

(Pause)

Bax: Wow! That's fantastic!
Ted: I know.
Aly: Hi guys.
Ted: Hi Aly.
Bax: Hi.
Aly: Hey... have one of you been trying to play a trick on me?
Bax: A trick?
Aly: Well I opened my email this morning and got a fantastic piece about the HIV AIDS story and it was signed off as Daisy Chiu.

Ted: I know... amazing isn't it.
Aly: (Laughing) But she didn't write it! You wrote it Ted!
Ted: I wish I had.
Aly: (Laughing) Oh come on Ted, you can't fool me.
Ted: No, I didn't write it honestly Aly, I didn't.
Aly: Then you must have written it Bax.
Bax: No I didn't... Ted just read it to me... it's fantastic and Daisy did write it.
Aly: (Confused) But... how could she... she said she didn't want to go to the AIDS clinic... she said stupid things like she thought she might catch something if she went.
Ted: I know, but she did go.
Aly: So she DID write the story.
Ted: Yes.
Aly: Goodness... I... I didn't think she was capable of writing something like that.
Bax: Maybe someone helped her.
Ted: Like who? She hasn't got any brainy friends... she just hangs out with Iris and Anita and they're dim wits doing Beauty Engineering.
Aly: Wow... well if Daisy did write that story... she's good... and she's going to make a really good journalist some day.

Scene 2

Dr Lo: Oh Alysha.
Aly: Yes Dr Lo?
Dr Lo: Um, it's about that last assignment.
Aly: On HIV AIDS Sir?
Dr Lo: Yes.
Aly: What about it Sir?
Dr Lo: I feel I have to let you know that.... your Father phoned me.
Aly: Did he Sir?
DrLo: Yes... he was... well... how shall I put it... rather concerned that his daughter was being 'sent' to an HIV clinic.
Aly: (Pause. Sighs) I know Sir... I'm really sorry... my Father is... a bit old fashioned about these things.
Dr Lo: Yes... yes I got that impression myself.
Aly: I'm sorry Sir.

Dr Lo: It's not your fault Alysha.

Aly: I wanted to go.

Dr Lo: I'm sure you did.

Aly: But.... but if he'd found out....

Dr Lo: Yes, quite... I do understand.

Aly: Was my Father?... I mean I hope he wasn't.... (trails off)

Dr Lo: He was a little agitated... if that's what you are asking Alysha.

Aly: I'm sorry Sir.

Dr Lo: I explained that as a future journalist you would be expected to interview people in all kinds of situations... disasters... wars... after acts of terrorism.

Aly: And, um... what did he say to that Sir.

Dr Lo: (Sighs. Pause) I think you need to talk to your Father Alysha.... I don't wish to interfere with family affairs but... if your Father has a large say in what you can or cannot do that might make it very difficult for you as a journalist and as... a student of journalism.

Aly: (Worried) Oh dear... talk with my Father.... he's not an easy man to talk to Sir... he expects us to listen to what HE has to say... he's not very good at listening to what WE have to say to HIM... particularly me... a girl.

DrLo: I can understand that Alysha... think about it.... in the meantime... how am I going to assess you on this project?

Aly: I'm going to help with the technical side of things this time Sir... you know... putting the story on the Cyber News web site.

Dr Lo: You had nothing to do with the writing up of the story?

Aly: I offered to but then... then someone else did it first.

Dr Lo: I see. Hmmm.... it's tricky Alysha.... I want to be fair but... you can see the dilemma I'm in... the technical aspect is important but the main marks go on the writing up of the story.

Aly: Please Sir.... don't give me a low mark... it will only be this story... next story I'll work double double hard to make up for this time.

Dr Lo: How do you know your Father isn't going to object to your being involved in the next story.

Aly: Um... what's it about Sir?

Dr Lo: What if I said... teenage prostitution.

Aly: Oh.

Dr Lo: Or the use of recreational drugs at rave parties.

Aly: Oh.

Dr Lo: (Pause) Alysha... you have to have that talk with your Father... and quite honestly... if he is going to continue to stop you interviewing certain people then...

Aly: What Sir?

Dr Lo: You may have to think about transferring to another course.

Aly: But Dr LO... I love journalism... I'm really enjoying your classes... and and I really loved doing the stories about literature in Hong Kong... interviewing those Hong Kong writers and poets it was great!

Dr Lo: I know Alysha... it would be a great shame if you had to change courses it really would, you're a good student but.... if your Father is going to keep stopping you from interviewing people he doesn't approve of... then I'm afraid I don't see how you can finish the course successfully. (Pause) Okay... I'll see you in a minute at the tutorial. I just wanted to let you know about your Father's phone call to me.

Aly: (Sad) Okay Sir. I'll see you at the tutorial.

Interval

Scene 3

Bax: I wonder what grade we're gonna get.

Ted: I hope he's marked it.

Aly: He should have done... I put it up on the web three days ago.

Ted: Yeah, you did a good job Alysha... it looks good.

Aly: (Sad) Thanks Ted.

Ted: Hey Alysha, what's up? Why so glum?

Aly: (Sighs) My Father phoned him up.

Bax: Phoned who.

Aly: Dr Lo.

Bax: Your Father phoned Dr Lo? What for?

Aly: He told him I wasn't to go to the AIDS clinic.... so now Dr Lo knows I didn't go to the AIDS clinic OR to Aids Concern.

Ted: Hey, don't worry about it Alysha... So what if he phoned?!

Aly: Dr Lo talked to me about it... It's going to affect my grade and he even said....

Ted: Said what?

Aly: Shhhh... he's coming... I'll tell you later.

(Pause)

Dr Lo: Hi everyone.

Ted: Hi Patrick.

Dr Lo: All here? Um... where's Daisy?

Bax: (Sighs) Where she always is.... in bed.

Daisy: (Bursting in) Hello. Sorry I'm late.

Dr Lo: Ah Daisy... we were just talking about you.... (Clears throat) Okay... now I want to talk to you about your last assignment.

Bax: Have you marked it Sir?

Dr Lo: Yes Bax I have.... Now this was quite a tough assignment... a local story about HIV AIDS... to tell you the truth I wasn't sure how you'd cope with it.

Ted: (Laughing) Neither were we Patrick.

Dr Lo: It was a tough assignment... I know those residents out at Wealthy Gardens are an angry lot.... but I felt sure you'd be able to cope with them... and reading your story... I see that you did.

Bax: Really?

Dr Lo: Oh yes... and the interview with Aids Concern.... a lot to take in..... Now I don't want to make your heads too big too early in the course but.... I have to say... this group's story on the HIV AIDS clinic and the state of HIV AIDS in Hong Kong was,... excellent.

Bax: Really?!

Dr Lo: Yes Bax... I gave it an A plus.

Bax: A plus! Wow! That's fantastic!

Ted: Hey, not bad! Are we star journalists or what?! Pan China Morning Post move over!

Aly: (Pause) Is that mark... for all of us Sir?

Dr Lo: There are two marks for the assignment Alysha... one is a group mark so you all get an A plus... and the other is an individual mark.... now I haven't awarded that yet because I haven't yet received your report on who wrote what, (clears throat) I know that YOU Alysha.... concentrated on the technical side of things rather than writing the story.

Aly: (Sad) Yea Sir.

Dr Lo: So I just need to know which parts of the other stories were written by whom. (Pause) You don't have to tell me now... you can send me an email but make it clear who wrote what.

Ted: Well Patrick..... um..... it's kind of easy..... um.... Bax and I wrote up the interview with AIDS Concern and... um... Daisy wrote the story about the AIDS clinic at Wealthy Gardens.

Dr Lo: Really?! Daisy.... YOU wrote the story about Wealthy Gardens.

Daisy: Yeah.

Dr Lo: By yourself?

Daisy: No, there were three of us.

Dr Lo: Three of you Daisy? And um... who were the others?

Daisy: There was me.... my head... and my hands.

Dr Lo: (Perplexed) Oh... oh I see.... you're making... a little joke... yes, very funny... a journalist should have a sense of humour.

Daisy: Right.

Dr Lo: Well Daisy... what can I say... I'm impressed.... very impressed... it was a very powerful piece.... excellent journalism.

Bax: And how about our interview with Loretta?

Dr Lo: Very good Bax... and Ted... very very good.... clear... concise and informative in a way that would appeal to a youth readership... which is what we aim for on Cyber News.

Bax: Cool.

Dr Lo: But I have to say that.... good as your piece was Bax and Ted.... Daisy's was... well.... excellent.

Bax: So what grades do we get Sir?

Dr Lo: Well... I think Bax, that you and Ted are looking at an A.

Bax: Cool.

Ted: Alright!

Dr Lo: And Daisy... in your case I think I can duplicate the group mark and give you an A plus.

Ted: Wow Daisy... a double A plus!

Daisy: Hey, no big deal, as long as the story helps to shut up those bigots down at the estate.

Dr Lo: I'm sure your story.... both your stories, will help to dispel prejudice not only on the estate but all over the world Daisy.

Daisy: Huh, they won't read my story.... they probably can't even read!

Aly: Um... excuse me Sir.... what about my grade.

Dr Lo: Well Alysha... you did do a good job in setting the story up on the web site so... I'll probably give you a.... B.

Ted: Hey Alysha, that's not bad... an A plus and a B.... what's wrong with that?!

Aly: (Sad) Nothing.... thank you Sir.

Scene 4

Dr Perkins: Daisy! Just the person I wanted to see.

Daisy: Oh hi Doctor Perkins.

Dr Perkins: Have you got a minute Daisy.

Daisy: Sure.

Dr Perkins: Good.... let's pop into my office... I've got something really exciting to tell you.

(Brief music)

Dr Perkins: Now then Daisy... take a seat.

Daisy: Thanks.

Dr Perkins: How are you? Everything fine?

Daisy: Yeah. Sure.

Dr Perkins: Good, good... well when you hear what I'm going to tell you... things will be even finer!

Daisy: What is it?

Dr Perkins: Oh Daisy... you are going to be SO pleased.

Daisy: (Irritated) About what?

Dr Perkins: (Pause) Well... you know what you've always wanted.

Daisy: Money?

Dr Perkins: No no no.... silly girl.... not money.... no I mean what you've wanted ever since you came to UUC.

Daisy: Um.... a decent meal at the student canteen?

Dr Perkins: Daisy! I know you're having a little joke with me... you always like to crack jokes.

Daisy: Did I?

Dr Perkins: Daisy... what I'm talking about is.... your course.

Daisy: My course?

Dr Perkins: Yes.... You're studying journalism right?

Daisy: Right.

Dr Perkins: Right. But... your heart isn't really in journalism is it Daisy.

Daisy: (Hesitant) Um.... what you getting at Dr Perkins?

Dr Perkins: Oh Daisy... can't you guess?!

Daisy: No, what?

Dr Perkins: Daisy.... a space has come up!
Daisy: A space?
Dr Perkins: Daisy.... I can't believe you don't know what I'm talking about! Daisy... you've been accepted in Beauty Engineering!!
Daisy: (Not too excited) I've... I've been accepted in.... in....
Dr Perkins: Yes Daisy... in Beauty Engineering... what you've always wanted.... a student dropped out and you were number one on the waiting list..... You can start tomorrow!
Daisy: (Unimpressed) Oh.
Dr Perkins: What's wrong Daisy? I thought you'd be over the moon! It's what you've always wanted isn't it.
Daisy: (Unenthusiastic) Yeah... that's right.
Dr Perkins: I um... hope you haven't changed your mind Daisy... I went to a lot of bother getting you at the top of the wait list.
Daisy: (Vague) No.... no.
Dr Perkins: Okay... good.... now all you have to do is sign this form.
Daisy: Sign? What for?
Dr Perkins: It's just a simple form to show you agree to the change..... Sign just there. (Pause) Daisy... what's wrong?! Why aren't you signing?
Daisy: Um.... where do I sign did you say?
Dr Perkins: Just there.

(SFX: Pen signing a form)

Dr Perkins: Good girl. Oh Daisy, I'm so happy for you.... now you can study a subject you've always wanted to study! There's nothing worse than studying a subject you don't like and journalism was never your subject of choice... you'll be much much happier in Beauty Engineering.
Daisy: (Unenthusiastic) Right.
Dr Perkins: Now run along and tell Ms and Anita... they'll be so thrilled that you're joining them on the Beauty Engineering course.
Daisy: Can I go now?
Dr Perkins: Yes, yes of course Daisy.... and Daisy....
Daisy: Yes?
Dr Perkins: Congratulations.

(SFX: Door closes)

Dr Perkins: Hmm... she didn't seem as excited as I thought she'd be.

(SFX: Echo)

Daisy: They had immediately assumed that I was a patient at the clinic, that I had HFV Aids, that I was the enemy... I felt lonely... scared... humiliated and rejected... and for those terrible minutes when I was being treated as an outcast I knew what it felt like to be someone with HIV AIDS... And I thought of what Jesus said.... 'He who is without sin, cast the first stone.'

Dr Lo: (SFX: Echo) Daisy, this assignment was excellent... I'm giving you an A plus.... you know Daisy.... I think you're going to make a fine journalist... a very fine journalist indeed.

The End