

“The Upside”

By Helen Lutz

From day to day life throws many challenges at us. Some are workable while others, not so much. My daughter has a friend who is a young, smart, successful, engineer who took a trip to Cancun for spring break with his buddies. Once in his swimming suit he dove right into the resort’s pool, a shallow pool. With his neck broken he is now a quadriplegic only able to move his head and neck. His life as well as his family’s lives changed forever that day.



Christopher Reeve was Superman to the world. An equestrian competition turned badly for him as he was thrown from his horse leaving him a quadriplegic requiring a ventilator to breathe. Life can change dramatically in just a split second.

In the movie “The Upside,” currently in theaters, we meet quadriplegic Phillip Lacasse (Bryan Cranston) living in his luxurious Manhattan penthouse. An extraordinary and wealthy author, Phillip chose poorly when he decided to paraglide in the wrong weather. All the money in the world can’t repair his condition. As one can imagine, he’s depressed and ready to call it quits. Yvonne (Nicole Kidman), his executive aide, assists in handling his many business holdings and also interviews for his ‘life auxiliary’ position to assist with Phillip’s daily needs. Phillip is a handful and good help is hard to keep, let alone find.

Turn the page and the story also introduces Dell Scott played by Kevin Hart. Quite the opposite of Phillip, Dell has a criminal record and is out on parole. Not wanting to return to his life of selling drugs, he half-heartedly looks for jobs – his parole officer requires several signatures each week proving that he’s interviewing. Dell is also very disheartened, there isn’t a whole lot that he’s qualified to do, he’s homeless, he owes back child support, and has a family who wants nothing to do with him.

Quite accidentally Dell happens upon a job interview at Phillip’s apartment ... he’s thinking a janitorial position. Instead he rides to the penthouse with other applicants and is interviewed for the ‘life auxiliary’ position. Not really interested in the job, all Dell asks for is a signature, what he receives is an offer. Phillip finds the totally ill-equipped Dell to be a breath of fresh air. Not sure he wants the job but the money and fact that it’s a live-in position help sway him. Yvonne’s not so sure about the match up – game on.

The old saying that opposites attract plays out in “The Upside.” Dell and Phillip, two men from entirely different worlds and backgrounds start out rather adversarial and end up good friends, giving new meaning to one another’s lives. The film is totally predictable, but offers so much comedy between Hart and Cranston that it keeps us laughing and interested in the telling of a true story. Hart actually plays a pretty good straight man for many of the set-ups.

“The Upside” tries to show that even in the worst of situations there can be a bright side – an upside. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “The Upside” ♡♡1/2 HARTS. Once you’ve seen this, catheters will take on a whole new meaning.