

## The Film Connection: Chapter One

My name is Christine Tsuzaki, and when I first applied for The Film Connection on January 5<sup>th</sup>, my first hope was to finally fulfill my 4-year-long dream of obtaining a career in the film industry. Therefore when I received a phone call almost immediately after I applied, I was taken by surprise how quickly I was contacted, and undeniably thrilled. However, I was also undeniably doubtful of myself, being that I did not have a film degree, instead I have an English degree, and most of my skills in film were self-taught. *Who would want to mentor someone like me?* I wondered. *Maybe I'd seem like a waste of time or a lost cause to the professionals out there.* January passed, and then February, with no response. I was just about ready to say, "Ugh, forget it." February 27<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon, my phone vibrated angrily. "Hello, Christine! We've found a mentor for you at Sight & Sound!" *Oh, really? I thought you forgot or nobody wanted me!* With the interview date set for March 6<sup>th</sup>, I stepped into Bill Maheras' office and was ready to argue my case to convince this seemingly prestigious man that I was not going to be a major waste of his time. But he put my highly detailed resume to the side, welcomed me with a smile, and started talking to me as if I was already hired. Still I persisted: "Bill, I'd like to thank you for being so welcoming me and accepting me into your... world. But sir, I promise you, if I get this job, I will work really hard, I will be very driven, I will be very tenacious, and I guarantee you, you will not waste your time on me." Bill gave me a look that said, "Okay. Your words are moving, but let's see if you'll follow through with them first." Since that day, I was able to dial back a little bit and really think about what I wanted out of The Film Connection. I've talked about it to myself, my parents, and myself again. Now that I know that there is actually a way for my inexperienced self to get my name out there, I think I know now.

### 1.) Meet some professional filmmakers and work with them.

I've worked with filmmakers before, but only with those who produce their films independently. They usually find their actors through Facebook and the Hawaii Actors Network, which is exactly how I was found. Before I started filming myself, I paraded myself as an actor who had no other acting experience besides occasional school projects. This risky venture landed me in the attention of one independent filmmaker who got me an acting role in a stage play, but I wouldn't say that our friendship was entirely platonic—he pushed it a little too far. Finally I backed away and agreed to have a cameo role in another independent filmmaker's short film; *we filmed it at his parents' house.* The role involved me having to do something graphic, so I did the shot and split immediately. Two nutty, overly casual filmmakers was enough for me. No more. I was yearning to work with more professional people who weren't doing film "just for fun". Hence when The Film Connection paired me with Sight & Sound, and I met some of the filmmakers there on my first day of on-the-job training, I knew that film wasn't just a playful venture for them—this was their job. They understood that I was there to learn, not to be their friend. I even had the opportunity to meet a filmmaker from off-island, who gave me some sage advice on how I should start my learning process. *Start slowly, and then you'll learn to respect what you're handling,* he said. I learned that if I wanted to take some names, I had to be open-

mindful and seize every opportunity to work with other people, and that's exactly what I intend to do. As long as every invitation fits into my schedule, I'll be there—commercial, interview, documentary, music video—it doesn't matter. Every new film opportunity will offer me a chance to meet good people and put in some work for them, whether it be carrying equipment or setting up a camera for them. I'm readily prepared to work with anybody, do any task, and perhaps in time, one of them will lead me to a big-name producer or director.

## 2.) Introduce people to my own distinct voice and style.

Over the course of my 4 years of filmmaking and writing, I have discovered that my voice and style is a blend of dark, humorous, profane, crude, and surreal. My dark style of writing might have stemmed from my upbringing, which involved many encounters with less fortunate, sometimes drug addicted or mentally unwell people. Therefore I don't find myself writing about so-called "happy" people, but unhappy people. And with unhappy people, you'll find lewdness and at times comical moments. The surreal part of my writing is inspired by my love of films such as *Pulp Fiction* and Adult Swim cartoons. Not very many people know about my writing style, and when they read it, they are visibly surprised. *Really? You wrote this? ...Is everything okay? I think I'll stop talking to you now.* Since I don't want people to think I'm a mentally disturbed person, I usually keep my ideas to myself. But now that I'm opening myself up to the film industry through The Film Connection, and unconventional ideas might be more accepted here than in the real world, I see that it's time to set my ideas free. Hence when I saw that I would be expected to write a screenplay, instead of dreading the amount of work it would be, I was excited. Finally there would be some people out there who would be able to see some of my content and help me to flesh it out (hopefully without questioning my sanity). At the moment I am still nervous about presenting my ideas to the public, but in time I hope that my style will become known by others and will help me to develop a following for myself. Therefore, I want The Film Connection to assist me in getting over the fear of showing people who I am. And once I get over this fear, I can finally be proud of my own style and voice enough to create more content with it.

## 3.) Land a career in the film industry.

My third goal pretty much takes me back to the very first hope I had when I typed my name into the "Sign me up!" section of The Film Connection homepage. Two months later, I'm now telling myself, "Whoa, whoa, slow down, you're not there yet." It's ironic that the first thought I had would probably be the last thing that would happen to me once I finished the program. At least, I know that now. In order to land a career in the film industry, I'd have to build my portfolio with all my experience and personal work, and that's what The Film Connection is there for—to help me gain some more experience and create that personal work with the help of some great mentors. Now that I know what I have to do to get that coveted spot in the film world, I am more than ready to do everything I can. I will fill that portfolio with names, dates, places, types of projects I've worked on, and include photos and video footage of whatever new things I've done and learned. It will be my own personal diary of my growth from clueless but eager mentee to confident and still eager filmmaker. Throughout the course of the program, I

know that I will be expected to write a screenplay, which I approach with great enthusiasm. I am readily prepared to flesh out my best idea and write it in my style and in a way that expresses myself as an auteur. As an aspiring filmmaker, I feel that it's important that people understand that I am an auteur, and I hope that my screenplay will be an effective representation of that. My ultimate goal is to acquire a career in film direction or production, where I can direct or produce films based on my own voice and style—dark, surreal, and funny. However, I understand that in order to get there, I'll have to start from the bottom first. Throughout the entire process of working my way to the top, I will build my portfolio with film experience and connections, which will hopefully allow me to expand my personal work into actual films. I am willing to make lifestyle changes and relocate myself to make this happen, since I do not want to restrict myself to only local exposure. I know that I will meet some amazing people and learn valuable bits of information along the way. By the time I finish the program, I expect to have collected so many business cards that I'll have to find a special binder to keep them. My days of being shy and passive are over. It's time to be assertive, shake everyone's hands, and be everywhere I can be. I now realize that the reason why my mentors are so open to teaching me is because they used to be like me. And to get to where they are now, I have to do what they did. Becoming a prestigious director or producer takes one thing—time. I know that I'll have to be patient and just enjoy the process. 10 years, 20 years, 25 years—however long it takes, I know I'll have the time of my life and none of my time will be wasted as long as I work hard.

Enrolling in The Film Connection was a huge step for me. I felt that it was the solid stamp of my life that told me that I was serious about my filmmaking career, and I wasn't going to settle for what people might have expected me to do. Film is my niche, and I intend to show other people that film is not just a hobby for me. Why would I invest so much of my time (and money) into something if it's just a hobby? For me however, investing my time into film is worth every second for me, because it's what I love to do. No matter if I'm carrying heavy equipment or filming myself in a 90 degree room—I'm happy. And for me happiness is far more important than material success. So I guess you can say that I'm pursuing film education through The Film Connection because I wanted to nurture my happiness and passion for film into something much bigger than me. I just needed a leg up and the resources to do it, and here I am. I haven't felt this driven to work for something in a long time. I feel energized, inspired, and on my way to do what I didn't think was possible before. My name is Christine Tsuzaki, English major, and I'm an aspiring Japanese-American filmmaker. Who would have thought? I can't wait to see what this new life has in store for me.

*Pacific Motel* – Two troubled, unruly young people— a runaway rebel boy and a violent tempered prostitute girl— end up living in the same run-down apartment. Their stubborn, self-centered minds however, are too obtuse to notice that they are dealing with a psychotic landlady.

*Monogatareality* – A 21-year-old misanthropic girl wants nothing to do with the world except to live peacefully in her run-down shack and hang out with her mute male best friend. But one day a 10-year-old boy is left in her home by his prostitute mother, who she realizes abandoned him.

*Stars Hide Your Fires* – Three stories tell of different entertainers—a successful 4 member rock band whose friendship has turned to hate, a talented actress who gets beaten out by her untalented counterpart, and a pretentiously avant-garde film producer. All of these stories reveal the realities of how ugly and bizarre the entertainment industry can be.