

New EconJourney Story Outline

Life is hard and family has a difficult time making a living.

1. Your character gets a job at a local pizza shop to help out. What he/she really wants to do is become a musician – but there seems to be less time for music as the needs of the family comes first and they pick up more and more hours at the pizza shop.
2. Occasionally your character gets a chance to play their music for the pizza customers, but someone still needs to make the pies, work the cash register and clean up the messes left by customers. If the pizza shop had enough business, the roles could be divided up in a way that take advantage of an expanded division of labor – but the business is also struggling so it seems difficult to imagine how it can increase productivity to the point where the business becomes profitable.
3. Things take a turn for the worse as a family member is diagnosed with a serious illness. The medical bills start to pile up and your character is forced to take a second job. No matter how hard they work, they seem to just get further and further behind.
4. Medical costs are not only high for their family – but also for everyone else. In an effort to keep medical care affordable, the government imposes price controls. The only effect this has is to make it more difficult to receive treatment. Long lines develop for medical care and more time is spent waiting for treatment than earning the money needed to pay the bills.

One day, talk of a new treatment becomes the center of discussion across the internet. Your character hears about the new miracle cure, but must travel off to the big city/distant land to learn about the details. How can they leave their comfortable life and how will the family survive without their income? Your character is reluctant to leave, but if they don't, someone will die. To save a life, they must travel to a distant place. With guitar in tow, your character travels off to learn about the cure.

5. Your character travels to the big city/distant land and discovers that just to talk to a doctor about this new miracle cure will require the payment of a substantial fee. How will your character earn the money needed to learn about the cure? Your character learns about a whole music scene where artists are paid money to play in places called nightclubs. Some are more popular than others depending on the type of music that is played, the quality of the artist and whether or not the venue is trendy/cool. The best clubs have the best talent and are able to charge more for an evening of live music than other clubs.
6. On their nights off, your character starts to play at smaller clubs that have open mic nights. One night while playing, they meet a girl/guy and develop a love interest. Your character starts to get some paying gigs and they start to dream about the day when they can play at the best venues thereby making enough money to pay for the medical treatment that will cure their family member. At the same time, they are tempted by a new life of music and a girl/guy that they never thought would have anything to do with someone like them. Your character begins to make some real money for the first time in your life and begin to spend it on a new lifestyle. Gifts for the new girl/boyfriend, new clothes, a fancy car and a great place to live or all competing for a still limited amount of dollars. At the same time they have this lingering thought

that what you should really be doing is saving the money before their family member dies. There is not enough money to go around and they need to be selective in terms of how it is spent.

7. Your character begins to learn about how the music industry works. It is a great example of the power of the division of labor. There are songwriters, musicians, singers, producers, engineers, labels and others. However, each will take a piece of the revenue generated from an artist's music. Your character begins to worry that at the end of the day, after everyone else has taken their cut, there will be hardly any money left to purchase the miracle cure.
8. The dream is confronted by the harsh reality that the number of other artists who dream of making it big in the music industry is huge. Your character, while talented, tries to get gigs, but the competition is fierce and because barriers to entry are low, the pay is really low. That being said, hard work enables your character to begin to develop a small following and get multiple gigs.
9. As your character's star begins to rise, they discover that it is nearly impossible to get to play in the largest venues where there is a very real possibility of making serious money. All of the best venues are controlled by a single entity. Only artists managed by this company are allowed to play in their venues. It is the only opportunity to earn some serious money, but it looks impossible to attain.
10. To avoid the monopoly, a bunch of underground clubs have opened. Your character sees that the most popular clubs are ones that are playing new and innovative music. Being a country singer, your character is unsure how they will ever be successful because there are only a few clubs that showcase country music. One night your character is playing around with different musical genres and for the fun of it, writes a song that combines country and hip hop. After playing the song on a few open night mics and getting a very positive reaction. Your character writes a few more songs and as if it happens overnight, becomes the new star of the underground music scene. In fact they become so popular, even the monopoly is forced to book them in their largest venue.
11. The money starts flowing in and just as it looks like the problems created by scarcity are about to become a thing of the past and your character can have both a lavish lifestyle and enough money to afford to buy a cure for their sick family member, something else happens to disrupt their life. Just as your character begins to ascend the charts and sell lots of songs, the market mysteriously dries up. Streaming services have sprung up out of nowhere and allow listeners to hear all of the music they want for a small fee. All of a sudden no one is interested in buying music and the streaming companies pay pennies for an artist's music. It all threatens to come tumbling down.
12. Cooperation and Competition.