

Guide 2 Parents

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

We hover over San Francisco, the city aglow as the sun sets.

A bassoonist plays an incredibly fast version of "FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE", pulling us in to Davies Symphony Hall.

INT. DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL, ON STAGE - DAY

Slender fingers rapidly manipulate the keys on a reddish wood bassoon as "FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE" continues.

A music score is open on a stand. A tall tri-fold screen on stage blocks the musician's view of audience.

IN ORCHESTRA SEATS

Four middle-aged adults sit near the stage, clipboards in their hands. "FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE" finishes.

CONDUCTOR CABRERA, a man of 40 with an air of European artiness, looks to the other adults. All nod and smile.

CONDUCTOR CABRERA
Scarlett! You can come out now.

SCARLETT, a tall, slender Asian-American of 16 with hair tied in a pony-tail, nervously sticks her head around the side of the screen. Nerdy glasses and acne diminish her pretty face.

SCARLETT
How did you know it was me?

Conductor Cabrera LAUGHS.

CONDUCTOR CABRERA
Who else would play "Flight of the Bumblebee" on bassoon?

Scarlett looks nervous, but hopeful.

EXT. DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL - NIGHT

Scarlett walks out carrying her hard-sided bassoon case. She looks around to make sure no one is watching, then excitedly jumps up and down pumping her hands.

A minivan pulls to the curb and HONKS its horn.

Scarlett runs to the minivan. She passes a man in his 30s in shabby clothes, playing violin, case open for donations.

Scarlett stops, runs back, and puts all the coins from her pocket in the violin case. The violinist nods his thanks. Scarlett runs on to the minivan.

INT. MINIVAN - NIGHT

Scarlett hops in. The driver is her mother MRS. ZHANG, early 50s, a slender Chinese woman with a perma-frown.

Mrs. Zhang could be a beauty, but she puts no effort into her appearance. Practicality has won out over vanity.

SCARLETT

I made first chair! Conductor Cabrera told me to make sure any college music departments and conservatories I apply to call him.

Mrs. Zhang pulls away and drives past the street musician.

MRS. ZHANG

Unless you go to Julliard, studying music is a waste of time. You want to play for handouts on the street like that guy?

SCARLETT

Then what's the point of my working so hard at it?

MRS. ZHANG

Playing bassoon will help get you into Harvard.

SCARLETT

There are lots of colleges that are better for music than Harvard.

MRS. ZHANG

Harvard isn't for music. You go there for the name and the connections. And you might meet a smart boy.

Scarlett slumps, deflated, into her seat.

EXT. PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL, FRONT YARD - DAY

The morning bell RINGS.

Scarlett walks rapidly through a crowd of STUDENTS. Her backpack is stuffed to bursting. She carries more books under one arm, and a bassoon case in her other.

Three hot, stylish teen girls walk towards Scarlett. They are led by DAPHNE, a 16 year old blonde with a body that belongs in the Victoria's Secret catalog.

Daphne smiles and waves. Scarlett is surprised by Daphne's greeting. She starts to smile back.

DAPHNE

Sandrine, you Be-atch! When did you get back from the South of France?

Scarlett turns to see SANDRINE, another hot teen girl, smiling and waving. Daphne and her friends rush past Scarlett to air-kiss with Sandrine.

Walking as she looks back at the girls, Scarlett rams her bassoon case into MICHAEL, a tall, slightly nerdy-looking teen of 17. He appears lost as he reads his class schedule.

Michael bends over in apparent pain, holding his groin.

MICHAEL

(in a high pitched, pained voice)

Oooh... I think you just ended my chances to reproduce.

Scarlett face goes pale with shock and mortification.

SCARLETT

Oh my God, I'm so sorry. Are you O.K.? Let me help you.

Scarlett drops her books and bassoon case and instinctively reaches out to touch Michael's groin. She realizes where she is touching, and pulls her hands back as if scalded.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)

Oh... ah... I didn't mean to... Should I help you get to the nurse?

Michael stands up straight and smiles.

MICHAEL

I was just teasing. But if you want to see if you have the power of healing hands, go right ahead.

Scarlett grabs her stuff and then scurries away. Michael watches with interest as she goes into school.

INT. PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Daphne, Sandrine and other STUDENTS sit and chat before class.

Scarlett enters and is ignored. She takes a seat in the back.

Michael walks in and takes a seat next to her.

MICHAEL

We have to stop bumping in to one another like this.

Scarlett tries not to laugh at his lame joke.

SCARLETT

So, do you have a name? Or are you, like, going to be my anonymous stalker this year?

Michael LAUGHS.

MICHAEL

Michael.

SCARLETT

Scarlett. You're new this year.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Just moved from Chicago.

SCARLETT

Do your parents work in Silicon Valley?

Michael swallows hard.

MICHAEL

No. But my grandmother was an early employee of Intel. Back in the seventies.

SCARLETT

Wow, she must be rich.

MICHAEL

She did alright, I guess.

The school bell RINGS and class starts.

INT. PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL, GYM - DAY

A sign hangs on the wall: COLLEGE DAY 2012.

Tables with school banners line the wall. Bored College admissions officials at each table. Anxious students run from one table to the next.

Total chaos -- fueled by over-achiever anxiety.

Long lines form for "big name" schools. A table for San Jose State has none.

LATER

Scarlett sits at a table with a PRINCETON banner. A mid-40's white male COLLEGE COUNSELOR reviews her file.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR
Scarlett? That's an unusual name.

SCARLETT
"Gone With The Wind" was the only American book my parents knew when they were growing up in China.

The college counselor looks at Scarlett with interest.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR
Are you originally from China?

SCARLETT
No, I was born in San Jose.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR
Oh. That's too bad.

Scarlett looks confused. The college counselor goes back to her file.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
Excellent GPA -- not quite top of the class, but close. 2290 on your SAT -- quite solid.

The Counselor closes the file and takes off his reading glasses. A well-practiced move.

COLLEGE COUNSELOR (CONT'D)
So Scarlett, what makes you unique?

SCARLETT
Well, uh, I'm in the school symphonic band.
(MORE)

SCARLETT (CONT'D)

And I'll be first chair bassoon in the San Francisco Youth Symphony this year.

COUNSELOR

We already have four bassoons in our orchestra. I don't think we need any more. Anything else that makes you stand out?

SCARLETT

You mean I'm not good enough?

COUNSELOR

We could fill our entire class with valedictorians who score over 2300 on the SAT. But we want students who are interesting.

SCARLETT

Interesting?

COUNSELOR

Anything you can do to stand out will help. Think outside the box. Good luck.

The Counselor stands to indicate the meeting is over. Scarlett shakes his hand, hiding her disappointment.

EXT. PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL, SIDE YARD - DAY

STUDENTS pour out of the school at the end of the day like rats fleeing a sinking ship.

Scarlett comes out, overloaded with backpack, books and bassoon case. Michael waves at Scarlett. She walks to him.

Michael nods to her case as they walk.

MICHAEL

Watch where you swing that bassoon case -- it's a deadly weapon.

SCARLETT

How'd you know it's a bassoon?

MICHAEL

I tried to play oboe for one year in middle school. Total fail. You know how you get two oboes to play in tune?

SCARLETT

Of course. Shoot one of them.

MICHAEL

You'd have to shoot me even if I was playing all by myself. I could never get the same tone twice.

Scarlett is amused by Michael's self-deprecating comments, and tries to hold back from laughing.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Need a ride?

SCARLETT

Sure, if it's not too much trouble.

They walk into a parking lot designated STUDENT PARKING. It is filled with expensive cars: BMW 3-Series are dime a dozen.

MICHAEL

Everybody around here filthy rich?

SCARLETT

Not everybody. But a lot are. Last year, my little brother's best friend took him to the World Series with his family.

MICHAEL

That's pretty cool.

SCARLETT

Yeah, on their private jet.

MICHAEL

No way!

They continue to walk through the lot.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I still can't believe how focused everybody is on college here.

SCARLETT

Yeah, it's hyper-competitive. Lots of parents completely stress if their kids don't get into the right pre-school.

Michael shakes his head in disbelief.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)

I saw you in the UCLA line today --
what are you thinking about
studying?

MICHAEL

I'd like to go to film school.
I've been playing around making
short videos for the web. You going
to study music?

SCARLETT

I'd like really like to do a dual
major, or go to a joint
conservatory-university program.
But my parents are convinced I have
to go to an Ivy, and none of them
are really any good for music.

MICHAEL

Life is short. You should study
what you like.

SCARLETT

You don't know my parents. You've
heard about Tiger Moms?... Mine's a
freaking Sabertooth.

Michael and Scarlett arrive at Michael's car -- an island of
dull and old in a sea of shiny and new.

Daphne drives up in her arrest-me-red convertible.

DAPHNE

Scarlett!

Scarlett looks startled by Daphne's greeting.

SCARLETT

Uh... Hi, Daphne. How are you?
This is Michael -- he just
transferred in from Chicago.

Michael nods in greeting to Daphne, who finds him
uninteresting.

DAPHNE

Hey, can we work together on the AP
Euro project this afternoon?
You're so good at writing...

Scarlett's face lights up at the invitation, but looks at
Michael, conflicted.

MICHAEL

Hey, Scarlett, no biggie. I'll see you in class tomorrow.

Scarlett hurriedly jumps into Daphne's car. Michael watches, disappointed, as Daphne and Scarlett drive away.

EXT. DAPHNE'S HOUSE - DAY

Daphne and Scarlett drive up a long drive in Los Altos Hills. They arrive at a huge pseudo-Tuscan spec mansion.

INT. DAPHNE'S HOUSE, DEN ADJACENT TO KITCHEN - DAY

Daphne and Scarlett walk into the den through a kitchen filled with commercial-grade appliances that appear unused.

Daphne's mother MRS. WILSON -- a 40-something Botoxed version of Daphne -- sits at a table consuming crack for rich, bored housewives: a glass of over-oaked, overly-buttery Chardonnay.

MRS. WILSON

Hi Scarlett. It's been ages.

SCARLETT

It's nice to see you, Mrs. Wilson.

Scarlett and Daphne sit at the table with their backs to the wall between the den and the kitchen pass-through.

MRS. WILSON

How was College Day? Daphne's already decided on USC -- where are you thinking about going?

SCARLETT

I'm trying to convince my parents to let me go someplace with a good music performance program.

MRS. WILSON

Go to USC with Daphne! Our marching band is great.

SCARLETT

Uh, I'm kind of focused on classical. Bassoons don't march.

DAPHNE

Maybe you could become a flag girl. Then you might get into a sorority.

MRS. WILSON
Daphne's a Tri-Delt legacy. I
could put in a good word for you.

SCARLETT
Uh, I don't think I'm cut out for
sorority life.

Mrs. Wilson is shocked.

MRS. WILSON
How would you meet any cute guys?

MR. WILSON, a handsome man in his mid 50s, walks rapidly into
the kitchen and jerks open the fridge.

On his heels is XI SHI, a hot Chinese woman in her mid-20s.
Xi Shi is not happy.

XI SHI
(in Chinese)
You promised you would divorce.

MRS. WILSON
Can you believe it?

Scarlett is shocked and doesn't know what to say.

SCARLETT
Uh, what?

MRS. WILSON
Thomas studying Chinese! That's
where all the business is going in
Silicon Valley these days.

MR. WILSON
(in Chinese)
Not now. We'll talk later.

DAPHNE
Daddy brought one of his assistants
from Shanghai to help out with the
business, and be his Chinese tutor
until she goes to do her MBA.

XI SHI
(in Chinese)
That's what you've said all year.

MRS. WILSON
He's really serious -- studies with
her every day for hours.

SCARLETT
Chinese can be difficult.

MRS. WILSON
I hope she's good. I heard the
accent is really important. Can
you understand what he's saying?

Scarlett tries to hide her embarrassment.

SCARLETT
Uh -- her accent is good. And he
speaks quite clearly.

MRS. WILSON
I can't pronounce her name though --
can you Daphne?

MR. WILSON
(in Chinese)
I told you not now.

DAPHNE
"Sushi?" Or something like that.

XI SHI
(in Chinese)
Fine. I'm done.

MRS. WILSON
You should get to know her. She
doesn't have anyone here -- I think
she's a bit lonely.
(to Mr. Wilson)
Thomas, come introduce your
assistant.

Mr. Wilson and Xi Shi walk into the den and are shocked to
see Scarlett. They look like kids caught with their hands in
the cookie jar.

Scarlett gets up and acts as if she didn't hear anything.

SCARLETT
Hi, Mr. Wilson. Nice to see you
again.

Scarlett extends her hand to Xi Shi.

SCARLETT (CONT'D)
(to Xi Shi)
Hi, I'm Scarlett.

Xi Shi takes Scarlett's hand to shake.

XI SHI

I'm Xi Shi.

(switching to Chinese)

Wow, so tall and pretty. How tall are you? Are you from China?

SCARLETT

(in Chinese)

Thank you. Five foot nine -- 175 centimeters. My parents are from China, but I was born in America.

Xi Shi puts her other hand on Scarlett's hand.

XI SHI

(in Chinese)

You have a kind face.

Daphne stands up and grabs her books.

DAPHNE

Come on Scarlett, we need to work on our paper.

SCARLETT

(to Xi Shi)

Nice to have met you.

Mr. Wilson gives Scarlett a pleading look. Scarlett looks away, embarrassed.

INT. DAPHNE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - DAY

Daphne and Scarlett walk into a bedroom larger than most Manhattan apartments. A giant portrait of Daphne, overtly sexy to a degree inappropriate for a teen, hangs on one wall.

DAPHNE

"Sushi" is nice, don't you think? Daddy says she's really smart. I bet she gets into a great B-school.

SCARLETT

Uh, yeah. She seems motivated.

Daphne's phone DINGS with a text. Daphne reads it excitedly.

DAPHNE

JP's coming over with couple of guys he plays tennis with who go to Stanford.

SCARLETT

JP?

DAPHNE

Jason? Perkins? Captain of our tennis team? Hotness defined?

SCARLETT

Oh, right. Of course.

DAPHNE

He just broke up with his girlfriend. She went to Amherst -- can you believe it?

SCARLETT

Wow. Amherst is a pretty good college. She must be smart.

Daphne looks at Scarlett as if she is clueless.

DAPHNE

Smart? Who would leave a guy like Jason to go to some stupid college? I'm gonna make sure he forgets all about her.

Daphne walks into her closet.

Scarlett picks up a framed photo of a blonde little girl of 10 on a pony. An Asian girl of similar age holds the reins. Scarlett excitedly shows Daphne the picture.

SCARLETT

Look, it's us!

Daphne looks with disinterest, then goes back to choosing a swimsuit from her collection.

DAPHNE

Yeah, during my horsey phase.

SCARLETT

That was a fun party.

DAPHNE

Especially when the pony took that big dump on my Mom's Jimmy Choos. Oh my God, I thought she was going to totally lose it.

Daphne pulls out a black one-piece swimsuit and holds it in front of her as she looks in the mirror.

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