

# STARS

## By Lauren D. Yee

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### ***Cast: one female***

When I was nine, my parents got divorced... no, not divorced, really, more like separated. One day my mother just ran away. They'd been fighting earlier before dinner. I was sent up to my room for the night, no dessert, but this time it wasn't me who'd been bad. Then I remember my mother in her room, packing, packing in dresses I'd never seen before: pretty ones with sequined sleeves and full skirts with shoes to match, with rhinestones I could've sworn were diamonds. She put them all in her suitcase without even bothering to separate the dresses from the shoes.

She kissed me goodbye and then she left. I remember watching her from my window as she waited for her taxi, sitting on top of her patent leather suitcase. She was wearing her white tennis dress and heels to match - and on a winter night, too, but that's the way my mother was. She'd put on her tennis dress and forget that she hadn't brought a coat, or that heels weren't any good for running away, or that the weatherman had predicted rain and rain would soak right through her dress. When it would happen, she would just laugh and shake the water out of her eyes, and that's what made her wonderful.

Daddy later told me he never remembered any tennis dress and that I was only nine, too young to remember. But Daddy? Daddy never remembered much of anything. The morning after my mother left, he offered me a bowl of oatmeal and sent me off to school with five dollars for lunch. Instead of the heartfelt father-daughter chat I'd seen so many times in the Shirley Temple movies, all I got out of my mother's running away was cold oatmeal and the cafeteria's tomato-Spam surprise. I stopped watching Shirley Temple after that and started making my own meals.

Every day after school I'd pull out our copy of Betty Crocker and start dinner. Every day at around 4:17 p.m. my mother would call, mostly because she knew Daddy would be at work. When she called, she'd tell me how much she missed me and how everything she saw reminded her of me, of her little girl. Sometimes she would cry and I would cry along with her. When I was that age, I used to cry about everything. Somehow it made me feel better, not so alone. Mostly she'd tell me about what she was going to do, where she would go, the things we'd do together...

when everything cleared up. My mother liked talking about the future, the future that always seemed so much better than what was happening right now.

Even before she ran away, she'd tell me her dream, her dream of a life in front of the camera. I'd heard the same story before, from girls in my class or in the movies, but with my mother these dreams seemed so much more real, so much more sure. These weren't dreams, they were plans, plans to map out our whole future together. "No more of this stuffy little ghost town," she'd tell me. "It's Hollywood for me and you."

Hollywood, that's where she wanted to go to be an actress. "There aren't many Asian women in the pictures," she'd tell me. "That'll make me special, my gimmick." Hollywood, where she'd be a star and make more money in a day than Daddy could make in a year, and she'd live in a big house with lots of servants... for the two of us. I once asked her why Daddy couldn't come, why couldn't he see these wonderful things, too, but she got mad at me and I never mentioned it again.

Maybe this is what made her... made her stop calling me. At first I thought it was Daddy, that it was him disconnecting the phone when I wasn't looking, that he was jealous. Then I thought it was me. Had I said something to make her mad again? Was I taking too much of her time or had someone told her about how I'd skated in the house and cut 7<sup>th</sup> period gym last Friday? Had I gotten her mad the same way Daddy had the night she ran away?

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