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Rock the Field

Laura Long
San Jose State University

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ROCK THE FIELD

A Creative Project

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English and Comparative Literature

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

by

Laura Long

May 2011

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, The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Creative Project Titled

ROCK THE FIELD

by

Laura Long

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2011

Dr. David Kahn

Department of TV-Radio-Film-Theatre

Dr. Kimb Massey

Department of TV-Radio-Film-Theatre

Barnaby Dallas

Department of TV-Radio-Film-Theatre

ABSTRACT

ROCK THE FIELD

by Laura Long

The title of this screenplay, *Rock the Field*, is a color guard slang term for performing with power. This script is a narrative feature length film that looks at marching band competition from the point of view of a 16-year-old high school color guard girl, Chloe Johnson. Underneath the dynamics of the intensity of the competition, this is actually a story about Chloe and her mother Sarah rediscovering their strength to carry on in life while mourning the sudden loss of Chloe's father to cancer. The script is structured with Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, except in this case the heroes are women who conquer their situation on their own. Chloe becomes the leader of a group of underdogs on her color guard team, and she finds the courage to guide them through the competitions to an increased level of self-esteem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rock the Field was a screenplay first conceived during my tenure as a Color Guard Mom to my daughter's team at Homestead High School. First, thanks are to my daughter Emily Long Patterson, who inspired the story, and to Michael and Penny Long, who have been key supporters and proofreaders in this effort. Second, I thank Dr. David Kahn and Barnaby Dallas, who were my invaluable guides on this journey into screenwriting, and to Dr. Kimb Massey for her help in finishing this project and degree.

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Rock the Field:

An Introduction to the Writer's Journey

The title of this screenplay, *Rock the Field*, is a color guard slang term for performing with power. This script is a narrative feature length film that looks at marching band competition from the point of view of a 16-year-old high school color guard girl, Chloe Johnson. Underneath the dynamics of the intensity of the competition, this is actually a story about Chloe finding her self-esteem and a sense of belonging while mourning loss. This story takes a serious look at high school life; this is not Disney's *High School Musical*. The core of this story is the journey through grief to letting go and reclaiming one's sense of power in the world.

Rock the Field tells the story of Chloe Johnson, who, after the tragic loss of her father from cancer, is forced to move from rural Upper Peninsula of Michigan to Sunnyvale, California. She and her mother share a room in her uncle's house while her mother tries to recover financially from the hospital bills that caused the foreclosure on their Michigan home. In an attempt to find a place to belong in this foreign environment, Chloe joins her new high school's champion color guard squad. This is difficult for her because her father was the band director at her old school, and marching band was the cornerstone of their life together. However, Chloe knows that for her own sake and the sake of her mother, she needs to find a way to carry on. This is also difficult because the

other members of the guard are tightly controlled by one guard member, Katherine Collins, who operates by fear and intimidation backed by her overbearing mother.

The story follows the team's season from the summer training and band camp through the fall competition and football season and culminates at the National Bands of America Championship. Chloe becomes an unlikely leader of the underdogs on the guard: Ahn Nuygen, a Vietnamese American girl with determination, Sean Reagan, the token gay male on the squad, Leanna Jordan, a klutzy girl who wants only to be accepted, Taylor Smith, a tiny, fearless girl who rarely loses her sense of pep although her home life is less than ideal, and Nkiru Anyim, a Nigerian girl with a racially biased attitude. Although their shared journey is rocky at times, this unlikely group comes together to survive not only the antagonism of guard member Katherine Collins, but also the dynamics of high school life.

Paralleling Chloe's journey is her mother Sara's attempt to survive in the face of a crippling financial situation and the need to find a job no matter how menial. She is challenged by a group of domineering suburban color guard moms, who ostracize her because of their differences. Sarah is close to her daughter, but she does not live through her daughter, and the other mothers resent her for this. She is an artist, another quality that is not understood or appreciated, although she had put away this side of herself while she cared for her dying husband. Sara's journey to healing is based in her allowing herself to paint again, which releases her from being lost in grief.

This screenplay lives in the strange world of color guard, perhaps the more overlooked aspect of the marching band. The marching band is most commonly

associated with the half time show at football games, but it also has its own competition season with parade formations and field shows. However, historically, the marching band and color guard are rooted in military tradition. The color guard flags represent the national colors of the military unit and are carried into battle. The flags not only signify the national identity of the military, but they were also used in battle to keep the warring troupes in formation and to signal strategic maneuvers. The loss of a military unit's flag was not only dishonorable but could also endanger the troops. Thus soldiers armed with rifles were assigned to protect the flags. Most modern militaries still use the color guard for parades and to render honors when the national anthem is played in ceremonies.

The high school color guard has taken the historical meaning and translated it into honoring the school and its colors. Largely a core of female participants, color guards still carry flags and school name shields, as well as rifles and sabers. However, they have changed from formation guides on the field to an independent artistic expression of the music the marching band plays. They are choreographed to move through the band, spinning flags and throwing rifles and sabers in patterns that are sometimes integrated with the band's formations and sometimes moving as a counter-point to the field show. Dropping a flag or rifle in competition is still as shameful as it was historically for military guards, but in the case of competition it loses points off a total score.

Unlike the band in their uniforms that conform to military tradition, the color guard is costumed theatrically as characters defined by the message of the music. Color guard is known as the sport of the arts and even has its own competition after marching band season. However high school athletic departments rarely credit the work the guard

performs as truly athletic. Although the guard is a powerful unit of both art and physical power, they remain on the fringe of the high school experience.

THE GENRE OF TEEN FILM

Being on the fringe of society is the core element of the teen film. The teen film dates back to the 1940's with the popular Judy Garland/Mickey Rooney films. These were followed by the beach subgenre of teen films in the 1950's and 1960's from *Beach Blanket Bingo* to the *Gidget* movies. In the 1980's John Hughes dominated the genre with a series of films *Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, and *Pretty in Pink*, to name a scant few. The common denominator in Hughes' films was the acceptance of the high school outsider. Hughes opened the door to an explosion of teen-centered films as well as television shows, which continue to occupy a significant portion of the film and television market.

Although the classic teen film has been categorized as a romantic comedy, teen films are now categorized into five hybrid genres: teen science fiction, teen horror, teen drama, teen comedy, and teen musicals. Interestingly, the teen drama is most often found on the N, Disney, or ABC Family channels. *Degrassi*, *The O.C.* and *Dawson's Creek* are representative of this category. However, the teen drama has also found a place outside of television and in forms other than the teen soap opera. Notably, the sports film genre, which exists as a subgenre of dramatic films, also flourishes with teens as the central

focus. The goal of *Rock the Field* is to merge the sports drama teen film with a feminist perspective, which is rare in the category of teen film.

The majority of sports films deal with the male athlete or the male sports team. Football, baseball, basketball are probably the most popular sports in film in the United States. *Friday Night Lights*, *Remember the Titans*, and *Hoosiers* are prime examples of the sports teen film, and female characters in these films (if they exist at all) are subjugated to the role of supporting love interests. We hardly ever find a female sports film, and perhaps even more rare is the female sports film that can be defined as a drama. There have been plenty of cheerleader films: *Bring It On* and *Bring It On Again* come to mind; and almost all are bawdy comedies that focus more on camp and the female as a sexualized being. *Bend It Like Beckham* is the exception to this rule, but even one strong film that combines sports with gender and culture issues is too few. In fact, in this film genre as well as others, there is a deficit in the number of female writers and directors as compared to males, and the numbers get worse when you look at the ratio of female producers to male producers. There simply are not enough films that deal with the serious nature of the young woman's experience. *Rock the Field* was written to expand the way young women are represented in teen films. In this script the young woman does not find her solace in being saved by the male hero, and she is not completed by a romantic love relationship. Chloe Johnson, through her sport of color guard, regains her power in her life and becomes a leader. She is a reluctant hero warrior who conquers grief and loss so that she can redefine her life on her own terms.

The characters in teen films have also been somewhat standardized into sub categories. Teens are often stereotyped into eight groups: the nerd, the jock or cheerleader, the misfit, the loner, the boy or girl next door, the princess, the rebel, and the new boy or girl. This screenplay does employ the journey of the new girl, who could also be seen as the loner, but hopes to humanize the main character more thoroughly than the stereotypes generally allow. Chloe Johnson has been thrust into a new school by the death of her father and her mother's subsequent financial troubles. She is the loner because she is trying to recover from the grief of her loss, which also makes her somewhat of a misfit: the other students have not experienced such a loss and cannot relate to her. But she is also a jock with her gift for color guard (she is an expert with both flag and rifle) and she even becomes the rebel defying the conditions of high school life and the dominance of clique compliance. In short, she is closer to the real experience of a teen who may become any of these categories depending on what the day presents. The goal here is to treat the teenager as a complete human being, not a single stereotype.

The sports genre lends its narrative construction easily to Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. In writing this script, the twelve steps of the Hero's Journey were used in the place of the usual step outline. My primary influence guiding the structure of this screenplay is Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Applying Campbell's interpretation of Carl G. Jung's work on the universal story archetypes, the outline of the script follows the twelve phases of the Hero's Journey. Campbell described the journey of the Hero as "a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage:

separation - initiation - return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (Campbell, 23).

Chris Volger in his book *The Writer's Journey* applies Campbell's work more specifically to screenplay structure. Volger uses *Star Wars* and *the Wizard of Oz* as his prime examples of the use of this structure, but also demonstrates that the Hero's Journey applies to many screenplay genres. The marching band/color guard world of this screenplay lends itself beautifully to this structure: it is both a competitive arena where one must rise to the demands of the competition, and also a world whose equipment (flag, rifles, sabers) emulate the weapons of battle.

The female in the Hero's Journey is usually relegated to a support for the male hero, either as the damsel in distress who must be saved, or as the nurturer of the male. Classically she has rarely been the warrior and central figure of the story. In blending the journey of the reluctant heroine in a classical structure with the contemporary setting of high school, the script gives strength to a young woman's coming into her own power without the influence of men, or perhaps in this case because the most influential male character is only a memory. The men in this script do not have the power to change Chloe's journey, in fact one character, Nick Parker, serves as an evil element that she must fight against. The other male characters are either feminized males or marginalized by their acceptance by the culture of the marching band. This is perhaps the largest departure from the confines of the teen genre script.

The twelve phases found in Volger's description of the Hero's Journey define the sequence of scenes in *Rock the Field*. The Ordinary World in the first act is where we see

Chloe in her new school, where she is continually haunted by images of her dead father, which isolate her from the environment. The Call to Adventure comes when the Captain of the Guard, Anastasia, comes to Chloe's aid while she mourns in the privacy of the girl's bathroom, and then Anastasia, through a deep sense of understanding both her isolation and potential, invites her to join the guard. The Reluctant Hero addresses Chloe joining the guard even though she is inexplicably challenged by her antagonist Katherine Collins, which causes the rest of the guard to "arm her for battle" in the dressing room of a discount store. However, her reluctance to move forward is actually rooted in her need to protect her mother from any more pain. The Wise Old Man is represented by Chloe's introduction to her new marching band director, Mr. Barnes. Although he understands her plight, she is uncomfortable with his help and avoids him to protect herself from facing the loss of her father (who was once her band director). Into the Special World is the journey to band camp, where the guard learns their drill and allegiances begin to form, The Tests come into play on and off the field, where Chloe pushes the boundaries of accepted behavior which earn her respect from the core underdogs on the guard. Allies and Enemies are formed at band camp and continue as the group returns to school. Who is an ally and who is an enemy changes as Chloe faces the test of a lie spread to denigrate her. The Inmost Cave is explored through the first major competition where Chloe fails on the field. The result of this traumatic event is her confession to Anastasia, which temporarily releases to take up her rifle again. The Supreme Ordeal is found in the Bands of America competition, the culminating event of the marching band season. Although Chloe is still shaken by her memories, she finds the

strength to compete in this daunting challenge. Seizing the Sword, in this case literally seizing her rifle, Chloe survives this last challenge only to be cornered and threaten by Katherine's mother. In this last act of the script, it is Sara who also takes a stand, reclaiming her own power in a verbal battle with Katherine's mother. The Road Back and the Resurrection are combined in the post- season scenes, where Chloe must once and for all make her stand against her antagonist Katherine and change the dynamic of the guard for the future. The final phase of the Return With the Elixir is in the script's denouement, where Chloe has finally embraced her past, her strength and her purpose for the future.

The goal of this script is a fusion of genres: teen, sports, and a feminist's perspective of the Heroine's Journey. Aligned with this direction, the script also employs haunting visual imagery, where images of Chloe's difficult memories cross-fade through the frame. This bit of poetry in image was actually inspired by Walter Salle's 2001 film *Behind the Sun*. Salles employed repetitive imagery that is not clarified in meaning until the final moments of the film, as well as images of movement that represent the freedom of will that his main character desires. In *Rock the Field* the visual imagery is tied to painful loss as well as an eventual release of the main character's emotional state, which is not a common type of camera work in mainstream teen films. In conclusion, this script is an amalgam of genres and filmic style, which aims to re-dignify the depiction of the teen in a high school world.

Works Cited

Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Third Edition, New World Library, Novato, California, 2008, page 23.

Volger, Christopher, *The Writer's Journey, Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters*, Michael Wiese Productions, Studio City, California, 1992.

FADE IN ON:

Closeup on a MAN, 45, joyously laughing. The sun is behind him, illuminating and then shading his face with rays of light. There is a warmth in his laugh, and a delight that is radiant in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag, shimmering in the same sunlight.

DISSOLVE TO:

CHLOE JOHNSON'S eyes, staring blankly. Slowly her eyes begin to tear.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Chloe, 16, lying on her back on a small unmade cot, staring at the ceiling. She wears faded overalls, an over-sized T-shirt, and worn sneakers.

The room is filled with moving boxes. Some of them are open with their contents spilling over the sides; some are still sealed.

SARA (OS)

Chloe, come on, get moving! We're going to be late!

Chloe doesn't move. She continues to stare at the ceiling.

After a minute, she walks over to one of the boxes and digs through it, dumping some of its contents on the floor. She retrieves a backpack out of the upturned box.

She takes some school supplies out of a shopping bag on her dresser and stuffs them into the backpack. She turns to look at the clutter on the floor from the box, but doesn't move to pick anything up.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Chloe's mother, SARA JOHNSON, a pretty woman who doesn't look her 43 years of age, leans against the kitchen sink, downing the last of a mug of coffee.

She pours another cup of coffee and adds sugar from the counter. She goes to the fridge and takes out a small carton of milk, tries to pour it in her mug but it is empty.

SARA

Damn.

Sara tosses the carton in the trash and takes a sip of the coffee. She grimaces at the strong taste, hesitates, and then pours it in the sink and shoves the mug in the over-crowded dishwasher.

SARA

Chloe!

Chloe meanders into the kitchen slowly, with her backpack slung over her shoulder, and heads toward the door.

MIKE JOHNSON, 45, a large man with bear-like hands dressed in a T-shirt stretched over his protruding belly and jeans cinched below it, enters the kitchen door, nearly bumping into Chloe.

MIKE

Whoa, there, Chlo. Sorry, kid.

(to Sara)

Hey, let's get going. You're blocking me in.

SARA

Oh, sorry. Chloe, got everything?

CHLOE

Yeah.

Sara sees the sack lunch on the kitchen counter.

SARA

Chloe, your lunch.

Sara grabs the sack lunch and her purse and a portfolio case from the table, and heads toward the door.

She slips the sack lunch into Chloe's backpack, zips it shut, and brushes a loose strand of hair from her daughter's face.

SARA (CONT'D)

Let's go, sweetheart.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY

Sara pulls their beat up Ford truck into the school parking lot amid a sea of minivans and SUVs and parks at the curb.

A flood of students emerges from vehicles, and Chloe stares blankly at them through the closed window of the pickup truck.

It is nearly the end of the school year and the exuberance of the coming summer break shows in the attitude of these students. The students are noisy and energetic as friends meet up with friends and the mass of students moves toward their respective classroom buildings.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

Chloe is slumped down in her seat, observing the migration of the students. Her listless energy is completely the opposite of the activity outside her window.

Sara observes her daughter for a moment. When most of the students have moved away from view, she shuts off the engine of the truck.

SARA

You okay?

Chloe doesn't respond but intently fidgets with the strap on her backpack as though it were some new discovery.

SARA (CONT'D)

Chloe, talk to me.

Chloe shifts in her seat but says nothing.

SARA (CONT'D)

Look, I know this is hard, but you've got to try.

CHLOE

(in an almost inaudible voice)
I want to go home.

SARA

Honey, this is our home now.

CHLOE

I hate this place.

Sara is near tears but tries to hold it in.

SARA

You have to try to make the best of this. I had no other choice. Staying with Uncle Mike was the only option right now.

CHLOE
I know, Mom. I'm sorry.

SARA
Maybe it won't be so bad. Okay?

Chloe hugs her mom.

CHLOE
I love you, Mom.

SARA
I love you too, sweetie.

Sara pulls away from Chloe and brushes a stray hair from Chloe's face.

SARA (CONT'D)
Okay, now. You better get to class.
You don't want to be late.

CHLOE
Okay.

Chloe gets out of the truck and walks to one of the classroom buildings along the quad.

Sara watches her go, and then puts her head back against the seat. Tears stream down her face.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Chloe sits in the back corner of the classroom. Other students are involved in side conversations, but no one is talking to Chloe.

Chloe slumps down in her chair and tries to look like she is occupied by reading a book.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

Chloe stands at the edge of the high school quad, backpack hanging from one shoulder and a stack of books in her hands.

It is lunch time and the quad is filled with students. Virtually every available space is filled with a different group.

Chloe makes her way past the jock table. The jocks occupy the upper corner of the quad which is partially shaded by a large tree.

These are FOOTBALL PLAYERS accompanied by their female counter parts, the CHEERLEADERS.

The conversation from this group is exuberant, the word "DUDE" ubiquitously wafts over the din.

Two of the cheerleaders are putting lotion on their very tanned limbs, and roll up their tank tops to catch more rays, and lay out on the table top.

A group of the football players toss a sub sandwich as though it were a football, howling as each mock point is scored.

Chloe walks to a far corner of the quad.

She finds a small empty space and sits to eat her lunch in peace.

A group of NERDY BOYS walk over and sit near her, arguing loudly about a video game.

FAT NERDY BOY

We raided Naxx last night and
you'll never believe what dropped
off of Thaddeus. The trinket
repelling charge!

PASTY NERDY BOY

Oh, sick, dude. That's like an
extra last stand!

Feeling invaded, Chloe quickly finishes her lunch and leaves.

INT. GIRLS' BATHROOM - DAY

TWO PREPPY GIRLS, 17, nearly identical in clothing style, are by the sink in the bathroom, while one brushes her hair and the other applies lip gloss.

Chloe emerges from one of the stalls and walks to the sink to wash her hands. She looks over to the two girls. The girl with the hairbrush gives Chloe the once over and then dismisses her.

CHLOE

Um... hi.

HAUGHTY PREPPY GIRL

Hi...

CHLOE

Um... I think we have Chem Honors together.

The preppy girl first looks at her friend and then condescendingly at Chloe.

HAUGHTY PREPPY GIRL

Right.

CHLOE

I'm Chloe.

HAUGHTY PREPPY GIRL

Yeah, well.

Both girls exit the bathroom abruptly, leaving Chloe alone. The sound of laughter is heard through the door.

HAUGHTY PREPPY GIRL (OS)

Who was that?

SECOND PREPPY GIRL

Who cares.

Chloe turns and leans against the wall. She is lost.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

JOHN WILCOX, 50, a short stocky teacher stands at the front of the classroom. A lecture's worth of notes fills the chalk board behind him. The students are starting to shuffle things into their backpacks.

MR. WILCOX

Okay, hold on. I still have two minutes of your lives. The exam is on Friday. Be prepared. Short answer as well as essay, covering chapters 20 through 25. Twenty-five percent of your semester's grade. Study, people.

The bell rings. Students start filtering out of the classroom into the hallway.

Chloe sits in the back of the classroom making a few notes in her notebook. She gathers her things and walks toward the door.

MR. WILCOX (CONT'D)
Ah, Miss Johnson?

CHLOE
Yeah?

MR. WILCOX
You've only been here a little over a week. I don't expect you to be ready to take the exam.

CHLOE
It's okay.

MR. WILCOX
We can make other arrangements to catch you up. It is kind of unusual that a student transfers this late in the semester, but we can find a way to make something work.

CHLOE
I can take the test.

Chloe edges her way toward the door.

MR. WILCOX
Are you sure you'll be ready?

Chloe stops in the doorway, and turns around.

CHLOE
Yes. We actually already covered this material at my old school, so I'm good.

MR. WILCOX
Yes, I've seen your transcripts. An A student, 4.0. But I just wanted you to know that you can see me during tutorials if you need any help.

CHLOE
Thanks, but I'm okay.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

A week later and it is lunch time again. Chloe, dressed in her uniform baggy overalls and a t-shirt, walks toward a bank of picnic tables along the wall of the quad. These are dominated by the ASIAN STUDENTS, and there is not one empty place.

The preppy girls from the bathroom are sitting at another table. Chloe sees them and then starts to walk over to them.

She almost reaches an empty spot at their table but she abruptly stops. She looks at the preppy girls in their stylish Abercrombie clothes and then looks down at her own baggy overalls. Chloe then turns abruptly and walks away in the opposite direction.

She tries to move invisibly through the middle of the quad hoping to sight an empty place to eat.

TWO THEATRE TECHIE STUDENTS, 16, a boy and a girl both dressed rather identically in all black with various keys and tools hanging from the belts, make a show of making out with each other in the middle of the quad.

Chloe stops, partially because she can't believe what she is seeing and partially because she has no way to get around them without stepping too close to this groping couple.

Chloe looks around and notices that everyone else is watching this and becomes embarrassed.

She finally sights an empty table at the far end of the quad. She moves gingerly to it, sits and opens up her lunch to eat.

TEENAGE GIRL (OS)

You can't sit there.

(Beat)

Hey, you! You can't sit there!

Chloe looks up.

A tall blond girl, KATHERINE COLLINS, 16, dressed in dancer's workout gear, stands behind her.

She is accompanied by three other girls: MARINA RODRIQUEZ, 16, a cute brunette with a knockout body, ANH NGUYEN, 16, a petite Vietnamese girl with a tan, and DEVON NELSON, 16, who, although she is dressed much like Katherine, moves in her shadow.

CHLOE

I'm sorry...um...what?

KATHERINE

This is our table.

CHLOE

Oh, sorry.

KATHERINE

So get moving! You can't sit here.
(smiling sweetly)
No losers allowed.

The girls sit and spread out their things: backpacks, lunches, waters and sodas, taking over the table.

NICK PARKER, 17, a good looking guy with skater hair and a tan, saunters over to the table and straddles the bench next to Katherine.

NICK

She's not a loser,
Katherine. She's just a little
lost.
(to Chloe)
Right, new girl?

He reaches over and grabs the strap on her overalls.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey, what are you hiding in there?

Chloe looks at Nick, surprised by his aggression, and shoves his hand away. She grabs her things and leaves the table.

Nick laughs and helps himself to Katherine's lunch, taking her soda and a bag of chips, and then abruptly rises from the table.

NICK

Later.

Nick migrates towards another table across the quad.

DEVON

Who was that girl?

KATHERINE

I don't know. Just some freak.

DEVON

Pathetic.

KATHERINE

No kidding.

DEVON

The overalls?

KATHERINE

Yeah. Looks like she's an extra
from *The Simple Life*.

The girls laugh at Chloe, except Anh, who watches Chloe's retreat.

Even though she is a bit of a distance away from the table, Chloe hears them. Tears well up in her eyes.

She tries to wipe her eyes inconspicuously, hiding her face to avoid everyone in the quad.

She runs across the quad, tosses her lunch in a garbage can, and ducks into a classroom building at the other end of the quad.

INT. GIRL'S' BATHROOM - DAY

Chloe slips into the bathroom and leans back against the shut door. Tears are streaming down her face. This time she has no control over her crying.

She crosses to the sink and splashes water on her face. The coolness seems to calm her down.

Chloe sees herself in the mirror and it is as though she doesn't recognize her image.

She stares at her face, rinses it again as though to wash away what she sees, and then looks in the mirror again.

DISSOLVE TO:

The same image of the man's radiant face, eyes twinkling through rays of light, so that this image and Chloe's face are visible through each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag in rays of light.

CUT TO:

ANASTASIA KAZAKOVA, 17, who looks like Nordic Goddess Barbie, is standing behind Chloe. It takes Chloe a moment to realize she is not alone, then she is jolted back to reality.

ANASTASIA

Are you okay?

CHLOE

Ah...

ANASTASIA

Do you...need some help?

CHLOE

Um...no...

ANASTASIA

Hey, it's okay.

Anastasia retrieves some paper towels from a wall dispenser and hands them to Chloe.

ANASTASIA (CONT'D)

Bad day?

Chloe doesn't answer but dries her face. Anastasia smiles warmly and pats her shoulder.

ANASTASIA (CONT'D)

Happens to us all. No worries.

Anastasia moves toward the door to make a discreet exit.

CHLOE

Thanks.

ANASTASIA

Hey, no problem. Take it easy, okay?

CHLOE

Yeah.

Anastasia exits the bathroom.

Chloe slumps against the wall of the bathroom and slides down until she is practically sitting on the floor.

INT. CHLOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chloe lies on her cot tucked into an alcove in the bedroom.

The room is dark but light filters in from the lit hallway. It illuminates stacks of moving boxes lining the wall and another twin-sized bed on the far wall.

Sara appears in the doorway.

SARA
You okay, Chloe?

CHLOE
Yeah.

SARA
It's a little early for going to
bed. You feel okay?

CHLOE
I'm just tired.

Sara sits down on Chloe's bed.

SARA
School okay today?

CHLOE
Yeah.

SARA
Chloe?

Chloe doesn't respond.

SARA (CONT'D)
Come on, talk to me.

Sara and Chloe sit for a while, saying nothing. Then Sara
lies down on the cot next to Chloe and holds her closely.

CHLOE
(very quietly)
I miss him.

SARA
So do I, honey. So do I.

CHLOE
I don't know what to do anymore.

SARA
I don't either. But we have to find
a way to carry on. Your dad would
want that.

CHLOE
(quietly)
Sometimes I'm afraid I'll forget
what he looked like.

SARA

That won't happen. You have your
dad's spirit in you; you just can't
see it right now.

Sara and Chloe are quiet for awhile. Then Sara moves to get
up.

SARA

Get some rest. You have school in
the morning.

CHLOE

Okay.

(Beat)

I love you, Mom.

SARA

I love you, too.

Sara leaves the bedroom. Chloe turns over and buries her
face in her pillow.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

Another week has passed and it's lunch time. The quad is
full of students as usual.

Chloe crosses the quad and finds a corner to sit in by the
gym. She sits and eats her lunch while watching the activity
that fills the quad.

Anastasia approaches Chloe with a POSTER and TAPE in her
hands. She adheres the poster to the wall and looks down to
see Chloe watching her.

Anastasia takes a flier out of her bag, hands it to Chloe,
winks and then walks away.

The Flier has the following announcement on it: COLOR GUARD
TRYOUTS, FRIDAY AT 3:00 ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD.

Chloe stares at the flier. Her fingers trace the magic
marker writing. She hesitates and then looks back out over
the quad.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chloe, Sara, and Mike sit at the kitchen table eating pizza.

MIKE

How did the job search go today?

SARA

My art degree doesn't mean much in this economy.

MIKE

Did you try the school district?

SARA

Yeah, but there's a hiring freeze because of the budget cuts.

Sara absentmindedly dismantles her slice of pizza and eats the toppings without the crust.

MIKE

Construction is taking a hit, too. I can get some side work, handyman stuff, but I'm going to need you to kick in some soon.

SARA

I know. I'll find something. Don't worry.

Sara pours some soda into her glass and takes a sip. She continues to pick apart her pizza.

Chloe shifts in her seat, wondering whether to say something.

CHLOE

Mom?

SARA

Yeah?

CHLOE

I was eating lunch by the gym today, and I saw this notice get posted on the board.

MIKE

What notice, Chlo?

CHLOE

Well, they were announcing color guard tryouts. I thought I might go.

MIKE

Color guard, huh?

CHLOE

Yeah... Mom, what do you think?

Sara hesitates and then gets up from the table and exits into the garage.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Mom?

MIKE

Hey, Sara, you okay?

SARA (OS)

Mike. Come give me a hand.

MIKE

Coming.

Mike smiles at Chloe. He gets up from the table and goes into the garage.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Sara is rummaging through stacks of moving boxes. Mike comes into the garage.

SARA

It's here somewhere. Help me move this stuff.

MIKE

Got it.

Mike lifts some boxes out of Sara's way.

SARA

I see it. Grab that bag for me, I can't reach it.

MIKE

You got it, sis.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chloe is still sitting at the kitchen table, hearing the commotion coming from the garage.

Sara and Mike enter the kitchen. Sara has a tall 6 foot black bag in her hands.

SARA

I knew I had seen it out there.
Here you go, Chlo, your flag bag.
You're going to need this.

CHLOE

Really, Mom? Are you sure?

SARA

Yeah.

Chloe opens the bag and pulls out her guard rifle.

CUT TO:

The same image of the man's radiant face, eyes twinkling through rays of light.

DISSOLVE TO:

The rifle turning end over end in the air and crashing to the ground.

CUT TO:

Chloe adjusts in her chair so that her face is away from her mother. She runs her hand down the length of the rifle and then notices that it has a long crack down its side.

CHLOE

It's broken.

MIKE

No problem, Chlo. I can fix that for you.

CHLOE

Thanks.

Mike starts to exit to the garage with Chloe's rifle. Chloe gets up to follow. She turns back to Sara.

CHLOE

You sure?

SARA

We have to keep going. It'll be okay.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Mike has the rifle on his work bench and he is rummaging through his tool box. Chloe sits on a stool by the work bench, fixing the tape on her crimson colored flag. Mike opens some glue and starts to fix the rifle.

MIKE

Just a bit of glue and this will be good as new.

Chloe slowly unfurls the flag so it is fully extended and touches the silk to her face.

CUT TO:

The rifle crashing to the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag.

CUT TO:

Mike clamps the rifle to set the glue.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You know, Chlo, your dad would be proud of you. That marching band was everything to him.

CHLOE

I know.

Mike puts the glue back in the tool box and tightens the clamp.

He looks over at Chloe. He struggles with what to say.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You're going to be great. Just show Hancock High what you got.

CHLOE

Yeah.

MIKE

Well, here you go, good as new. Let it dry a bit before you go spinning it or whatever you do with the thing.

Mike hands the rifle to Chloe. She studies it for a minute.

CHLOE

Do you think Mom's going to be okay with this?

MIKE

She'll be okay.

CHLOE

Thanks, Uncle Mike.

MIKE

You bet, kiddo.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Chloe walks onto the football field, her flag bag slung over her shoulder. She sets her bag down in the side lines and unzips a pocket on the bag to retrieve her workout gloves.

She starts to put on her gloves and a DOG TAG ON A CHAIN falls out of one of her gloves. She picks it up off the ground and looks at it.

"ROCK THE FIELD, CHLOE" is engraved on one side of the dog tag. Chloe reads it and then turns the dog tag over. "LOVE, DAD" is engraved on the other side. Tears well up in her eyes.

Chloe wipes her face with her hand, takes a breath and then puts the dog tag chain around her neck, tucking it into her tee shirt.

Chloe takes her rifle out of her bag and walks onto the field. She looks at the rifle in her hands for awhile before deciding to spin it.

She throws a double and catches it, another but drops it. Chloe takes a breath, shakes off the drop, picks the rifle up and continues to work her tosses.

She starts getting more and more agile with her rifle: it is as though it were an extension of her body. She starts throwing quads, catching the rifle easily after each toss.

EXT. FOOTBALL BLEACHERS - DAY

The color guard enters the field through a vom entrance in the stadium seats.

Anastasia is in the lead carrying a boom box. Anh and Marina follow carrying flags and other equipment for the tryout. Katherine and Devon bring up the rear, carrying only their own flag bags.

Anastasia puts down the boom box and watches Chloe toss quads.

ANASTASIA

Would you look at that.

ANH

Wow. She's good. This might be a good season after all.

ANASTASIA

No kidding. She'll give Lincoln a run for their money.

Katherine stops abruptly and watches Chloe toss her rifle. After a second, she throws her flag bag down rather violently and stomps over to the bleachers and sits with her arms crossed.

Devon rolls her eyes and then follows Katherine to the bleachers.

EXT. FOOTBALL BLEACHERS - DAY

Devon sits down next to Katherine on the bleachers.

KATHERINE

Who the hell does she thinks she is?

DEVON

Isn't that farm girl from last week?

KATHERINE

Oh, god, you're right. What the hell is she doing here?

DEVON

She's spinning a rifle like a champion, that's what. God, she's good.

KATHERINE

Oh, shut up, Devon! I'm captain of the rifle line and don't forget it.

DEVON

Okay, Katherine. Sorry.

Devon fiddles with the laces on her shoes as a diversion, and successfully sneaks another look at Chloe's rifle work.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Other girls start to arrive for the tryout, 20 in all.

The rest of the guard arrive as well, a team twenty members strong.

Among them is SEAN REAGEN, 16, who is a walking advertisement for Abercrombie and Fitch, and NKIRU ANYIM, 16, a beautiful Nigerian girl with long corn-rowed braids twisted into a flowing mane of hair.

ETHAN CHASE, 25, a tall, lanky yet good-looking man saunters across the field. Everyone stops practicing and gathers around him.

ETHAN

Hello, everyone. Great turnout. I'm Ethan Chase, the color guard coach. As you might know, we are expanding the guard this year. We had twenty members last year, but Lincoln had 35, so we are looking to add 15 people to the guard, even out that playing field. So do your best, follow Anastasia, the guard captain, and we'll see what you've got.

Anastasia crosses over to the boom box and cues up the music.

ANASTASIA

Okay. We're going to teach you a little routine that we use at football games. We'll do it first for you, then teach you the choreography, and then you will do it for the guard one by one.

The guard gets into formation, and Anastasia starts the music and then gets into her place in the guard.

ALL RIGHT NOW by FREE plays on the boom box and the guard does the routine to it.

ANASTASIA

Okay. Partner with a guard member and learn the routine.

Everyone pairs up and works on the routine, move by move. Anastasia and Ethan move through the pairs marking the skill level of each one.

Katherine sizes up Chloe. She walks over to her.

KATHERINE

Okay. Watch me. This is how it's done.

Katherine goes through the routine very fast, hardly pausing to show Chloe any part of it. She does it as though it is beneath her.

KATHERINE

Okay. Now you do it.

CHLOE

Okay.

Chloe does the routine correctly. Katherine interrupts her before she finishes.

KATHERINE

No. That's wrong. It's like this. Pay attention.

CHLOE

Okay.

Katherine does the routine again, purposely doing a section of it wrong.

CHLOE

But that's not it...

KATHERINE

Shut up. Just watch and learn it.

CHLOE

Okay.

Chloe repeats Katherine's choreography, even though she knows it isn't correct.

Chloe is confused and Katherine stares her down. The tension between them becomes awkward, so Chloe starts going over Katherine's version of the drill again.

Katherine smiles and then turns her back on Chloe in some sense of triumph.

ETHAN

Okay. Let's get into a line and the guard will watch you one at a time.

The girls get into a line on the side of the field, and one by one they take the field for the routine.

The first to perform is LEANNA JORDAN, 15, a lanky awkward girl with over-sized glasses. She attempts the routine, but continually drops her flag.

LEANNA

Ah, sorry. Sorry. Can I try again?

ETHAN

Sure. Get focused now and try it again.

LEANNA

Okay. Sorry. I'll try again.

Leanna attempts the routine again dismally, dropping the flag more than she spins it.

LEANNA (CONT'D)

Sorry! Can I do it again?

ETHAN

Take a break, Leanna. We need to give everyone a chance.

LEANNA

Okay. Sorry.

TAYLOR SMITH, 14, a tiny freshman with bouncy cheerleader energy, takes the field next.

She does the routine with exuberant energy, and although she bobbles a few moves, she ends with a flourish and a vibrant smile.

ETHAN

All right! Good going. You're...

Ethan consults a roster on his clip board.

TAYLOR
Taylor Smith!

ETHAN
Well, good work, Taylor.

TAYLOR
Thanks!

Taylor nearly skips to the back of the line.

The NEXT GIRL IN LINE comes forward do the routine.

CUT TO:

A SHORT GIRL struggles to spin the flag which seems twice her size.

CUT TO:

A PRETTY GIRL spins the flag correctly but not in sync with the music.

CUT TO:

A MUSCULAR GIRL spins the flag too forcefully and it flies out of her hands and sails past Ethan's head.

CUT TO:

Chloe takes the field to perform the routine.

ETHAN
Okay. Let's see what you've got.

Chloe does the routine perfectly, even though Katherine had taught her the wrong moves. Katherine throws her flag down on the ground.

ANASTASIA
Katherine, get a grip.

KATHERINE
(under her breath)
Pretentious Russian bitch.

Katherine glares at Anastasia and then walks brusquely over to the bleachers and sits.

Ethan notices her behavior but returns to making notes on his clip board.

ETHAN

Okay. Good work everybody. I'll have Anastasia post the guard list Monday by lunch time. Thank you everyone for giving it your best.

Ethan and Anastasia leave the field, discussing who should make the cut.

Everyone starts to depart. Chloe gathers up her gear and starts to leave the field.

She looks back at the guard, who are gathering their things on the side lines by the bleachers.

She starts to walk over to them, but changes her mind and walks off the field toward the parking lot.

EXT. FOOTBALL BLEACHERS - DAY

Devon, Sean, Anh, Nkiru, and Marina gather their gear and head to the bleachers where Katherine is sitting. They sit and store their flags in their bags, take off practice gloves, etc.

Katherine watches Chloe leave.

DEVON

Katherine, what's wrong?

Katherine doesn't answer.

NKIRU

What happened?

SEAN

Oh, you know. Our Katty is sensing a little competition.

KATHERINE

Don't call me Katty!

SEAN

Oh, sorry, Katty. But girlfriend, get a grip.

KATHERINE

It's *Katherine*!

SEAN

Right.

ANH

You know there's room for more talent on the guard. I mean, what's the big deal?

Katherine grabs her gear and stomps off the field. She stops and turns.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Devon! Marina! I'm waiting.

MARINA

Sorry, Katherine. Coming!

Devon and Marina run to catch up with Katherine and follow her off the field.

NKIRU

Dude.

ANH

Yeah.

Sean shoulders his gear.

SEAN

Burrito Barn?

NKIRU

Absolutely.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUAD - DAY

It's Monday at lunch time and the usual sea of students is all over the quad.

The color guard hopefuls wait impatiently outside the gym for the list to be posted. Chloe is off to the side of the group, keeping distance between herself and the others.

Anastasia comes out of the gym and posts the list.

ANASTASIA

Okay. There it is. If you made the cut, I'll see you on Wednesday after school for practice. Five o'clock on the field.

Anastasia leaves and the girls crowd the list.

TAYLOR

I made it!!! Oh god, I made it!!!

Leanna steps out of the crowd with a puzzled look on her face.

LEANNA

I made the team? I don't understand. I made the team. I'm on the guard. Wow.

Leanna and Taylor leave the gym. The other girls depart as well: some happy; some disappointed.

Chloe walks over to the list. Her name is on it.

She takes in a long breath and lets it out. She closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag through rays of sunlight.

INT. CHLOE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sara is hunched over boxes, trying to find room in the closet to store away some clothes.

Chloe quietly enters through the bedroom door.

CHLOE

Mom? I made it. I'm on the guard.

Sara smiles for what seems the first time in a long time.

SARA

I knew you would.

Sara gets up and gives her daughter a long hug. She pulls back and looks at her daughter's face. Sara moves a stray hair from Chloe's forehead.

SARA (CONT'D)

Way to go.

Chloe hesitates and then sits on the cot.

CHLOE

There's a parent meeting during guard practice on Wednesday.

SARA
I'll put it on the calendar.

Sara tries to look hopeful.

SARA (CONT'D)
Don't worry. Everything's going to
be all right.

INT. BAND ROOM - NIGHT

The color guard parents sit on the choir risers. They are busy in conversation with each other, catching up after many months away from the guard season. Many are dressed in Hancock's MIGHTY MUSTANGS T-shirts from various seasons.

Sara sits off to the side of the group, looking through a stack of papers.

KATHY COLLINS, 47, a heavy woman with a nondescript "Mom" hairdo, dressed in khaki pants and a green MIGHTY MUSTANGS MARCHING BAND polo shirt, enters the room.

KATHY
Welcome, Mighty Mustang Marching
Band Color Guard parents! We are
looking forward to a very exciting
season! As you know, last season we
were champions at every competition
except the BOA, where we took a
strong 2nd to Lincoln. Well, we
can't let Lincoln win again, can
we?

The parents in the room yell a loud NO! Sara remains silent but watches the other parents.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Right! It will be another busy
season, but I know, with all of
your help, our girls, plus Sean,
will be winners! I have taken over
as guard liaison parent for Johanna
Smith, whose oldest daughter is
graduating this year.

JOHANNA SMITH, 50, a Kathy Collins lookalike, waves from the side of the room.

KATHY (CONT'D)
You all have your packets. So, I'll
give you a minute to fill in the

SARA

Wow.

KATHY

Well, you have to remember we are doing this for our girls, *plus* Sean. You have no idea how good this is for their self esteem. My own Katherine used to be so shy. She struggled in school until she joined the guard and her confidence has grown so much!

Sandy nods as Kathy speaks.

SANDY

That is so true.

KATHY

I think we will all agree that this is a small price to pay for our children's happiness and self esteem!

SARA

Okay...

The other parents notice Sara's reluctance and some whisper to each other. Sara focuses her attention on the packet of forms to avoid the others.

KATHY

Oh, and don't forget to order your own Mustang T-shirts or sweat shirts, whichever you prefer. I do recommend getting your own guard jacket: they are so warm at those night competitions, and you can have them monogrammed as well. Mine says "color guard mom."

Kathy does a Vanna White gesture pointing out the monogram on her guard jacket.

KATHY

We need to show our Hancock pride in the stands, so I expect you all to wear those shirts! And we have many positions to fill so we need you *all* to volunteer for at least four shifts per family. That means you too, Dads!

Sara shifts in her seat and avoids eye contact with the other parents.

The other families fill in forms, hand in checks to Kathy, etc.

Sara sits looking through the packet. She is overwhelmed by its contents. Finally, she picks up her purse and walks over to Kathy.

SARA

Um, excuse me?

KATHY

Yes?

SARA

I'm sorry, I forgot your name.

KATHY

(with a condescending smile)

It's Kathy.

SARA

Yes. Kathy. I'm Sara Johnson, my daughter Chloe just joined the guard.

KATHY

Oh, yes, my daughter told me.

SARA

I didn't know you needed to pay tonight, so I don't have my check book.

KATHY

Oh, that's okay. You're new. You can drop it off tomorrow.

SARA

Tomorrow?

KATHY

Yes, just get it to Sandy in the band office.

SARA

Okay.

(Sara takes a deep breath)

Thanks.

Kathy smiles broadly at Sara. Sara fakes a smile back and leaves the room.

EXT. FOOTBALL BLEACHERS - NIGHT

It's the end of practice and the guard gathers up and stows their equipment in flag bags.

LUIS VELASQUEZ, 26, the assistant guard coach who walks like a drag queen, approaches Chloe.

LUIS

Okay, spill! Give Luis all the new news. I didn't see tryouts but I do see talent here! Girlfriend, where did you come from?

CHLOE

Me? I moved here from the U.P in Michigan.

LUIS

The what?

CHLOE

The Upper Peninsula. Outside of Marquette. Small town.

LUIS

Sooo, what brought you here?

CHLOE

We... moved.

Nkiru, Anh, Sean, and Taylor move over to hear Chloe's story.

LUIS

And what's the dirt?

ANH

Don't mind Luis. He's always nosy.

NKIRU

Yeah, so, why move at the end of the school year?

CHLOE

We just moved.

Chloe turns to stow her gear in her flag bag. Anh crosses over to her and sits on the bleachers. Sean follows Anh.

SEAN

So? Spill.

ANH

Don't be pushy, Sean. Chloe's new.
Leave her alone.

Chloe turns back toward the group.

CHLOE

My dad died.

This news silences everyone. Taylor, Luis and Nkiru cross to the bleachers and sit with the others.

TAYLOR

Your dad's dead?! Oh, my god!!

NKIRU

Taylor, don't be a freak. Leave her alone.

There is an awkward silence. Chloe sits on the bleachers and gathers her knees underneath her. She looks at the others and Anh shifts over and puts her arm around Chloe's shoulders.

CHLOE

It's okay. It's actually kind of a relief to say it out loud.

LUIS

I had no idea. I didn't mean to pry. Well, I did, but you know.

Chloe shifts away from Anh.

CHLOE

It's okay.

Chloe rises uncomfortably, zips up her bag and starts to leave.

LUIS

Oh, one thing. And I'm going to sound like such a bitch for saying it because my timing is very unfortunate, but you need to wear something more form fitting to practice.

Katherine, Marina, and Devon walk past with their bags over their shoulders on their way off the field.

SEAN

Your baggy sweats are gonna trip
you up.

Katherine stops and turns.

KATHERINE

Maybe she has body issues. Her ass
is too large for booty shorts.

Chloe glares in Katherine's direction, and Katherine smiles
back at her in triumph. Chloe returns to packing up her
guard bag.

KATHERINE

Hey, Nkiru, looks like you have
company.

NKIRU

Oh, you did not say that, you bony
ass white girl!

LUIS

Now, now girls. No biting. Put the
claws away!

Katherine, Marina, and Devon leave with superior looks on
their faces. Luis follows them off the field.

NKIRU

(under her breath)
Yeah, you keep moving, bitch.

ANH

(purposely changing the
subject)
Why don't we take you shopping,
Chloe? We can show you around, get
lunch? Saturday?

CHLOE

Um, yeah, okay.

TAYLOR

Oh, I want to go! I love to shop.

INT. CHLOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sara sits on her bed, surrounded by bills divided into
stacks. The room is now unpacked.

Chloe enters.

CHLOE

Can I go shopping on Saturday, Mom?
Some members of the guard invited
me.

SARA

Shopping?

CHLOE

Yeah. I need shorts, a sports bra.
They think my sweats are too baggy.
Luis even said it.

SARA

Luis?

CHLOE

The assistant coach.

SARA

Oh.

Sara looks at the piles of bills surrounding her. She tries
to fight back a tear.

CHLOE

Mom?

Sara wipes the tear away with the back of her hand.

SARA

It's okay.

CHLOE

Mom?

There is an awkward silence. Chloe sits on the edge of the
bed and reaches toward Sara.

Sara pats Chloe's hand.

SARA

I'm okay.

Sara busies herself by sifting through the papers in front
of her. They are silent for a few minutes, and
avoid looking at each other. The weight of the moment is
heavier than the piles of debts alone.

Sara shifts toward the practical issues, laying out the
guard forms on the bed.

SARA (CONT'D)

Chloe, I don't know how I'm gonna pay for all this. Clothes now, too. Chlo, I don't have it.

CHLOE

It's okay. I don't have to join.

SARA

No, we need to move forward. But I just got this cashier job and I won't get paid for two weeks.

CHLOE

I don't need to shop, Mom.

SARA

It's not just that. I don't know how I'm supposed to give them a check for \$1,365 tomorrow. I don't have it.

CHLOE

Oh.

Chloe sits on her cot, turning slightly away from Sara.

SARA

Back home the school paid for the band. Here it's...different.

CHLOE

People are rich here.

SARA

No kidding.

CHLOE

The paper work said there's financial aid. We could apply for it.

SARA

I have never taken a handout in my life.

CHLOE

But if they offer the aid, what's the problem?

Sara stares at the stacks of papers. Chloe turns toward Sara.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Don't be so stubborn, Mom.

SARA
(snapping)
Don't you dare talk to me like
that.

Chloe shifts away again, and crosses over to her own cot and lies on it.

CHLOE
Sorry.

Neither say anything for a long time. The silence is deafening.

INT. BAND OFFICE - DAY

DENNIS BARNES, 57, a trim man with a warm smile, sits at his desk, looking over some papers. Sara and Chloe sit on the opposite side, waiting for his response.

MR. BARNES
Well, this all seems in order. And
don't worry, Mrs. Johnson, you
aren't the only family that needs
some help.

Sara shifts in her seat and fumbles with the strap on her purse, avoiding eye contact with Mr. Barnes.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)
Please don't be embarrassed.

SARA
(quietly)
Thank you.

MR. BARNES
It's part of what the music
boosters do. And the economy is
down now, so more families are
needing help. I'm just sorry that
the school has to charge the
families at all. But band isn't
funded any more.

Chloe shifts uncomfortably in her seat, and then turns subtly toward the office window, twisting a strand of hair nervously.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)

Well, we're all set. We can offer you a scholarship of \$850.

Sara shifts forward in her chair.

SARA

\$850?

MR. BARNES

Yes.

SARA

But they gave me a total of nearly \$1,400 for guard.

MR. BARNES

The guard always has more expenses in costumes and other gear than the marching band, but we can only cover band camp and travel fees.

Mr. Barnes hands Sara the stack of forms, which she puts in her bag. Chloe rises from her chair and escapes toward the door.

MR. BARNES

Chloe? Welcome to the Mighty Mustangs.

Chloe avoids looking in his direction. Mr. Barnes notices this. So does Sara.

SARA

Thank you. Chloe is very excited about joining the guard.

Sara crosses to the doorway and Chloe escapes into the hall. Sara stops at the door and turns to Mr. Barnes.

SARA (CONT'D)

Thank you again.

INT. TARGET DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Anh, Taylor and Nkiru are outside of the dressing room, handing Chloe short and tank top options over the partition.

NKIRU

Try the blue one.

CHLOE (OS)

Okay.

ANH

I like this one.

Anh hands a pink tank top over the partition. Sean comes into the dressing room carrying a few sports bras.

SEAN

Pink? No.

ANH

I like pink.

SEAN

Hand it back, Chloe. You are not wearing pink. Wrong skin tone.

CHLOE (OS)

Okay.

SEAN

I brought sports bras. Trust me, it will get hot out there and you'll be thanking me.

CHLOE (OS)

Okay.

Chloe emerges from the dressing room in a sports bra and short shorts.

SEAN

Perfect. Now burn the overalls.

TAYLOR

Wow. The fashion guru.

SEAN

Yeah. Bow down, bitch.

The girls bow repeatedly in mock adoration.

INT. TARGET CHECKOUT STATION - DAY

Sara, dressed in the red jacket and name tag over her jeans and t-shirt, works the cash register finishing a sale for a OLDER WOMAN, 60, who wears expensive workout clothes, and whose face seems permanently stretched too tight from multiple face lifts.

Next in line is Chloe with the guard members.

SARA

And here's your receipt. Thank you
and come again.

The woman looks down her nose at Sara, grabs her
PLATINUM VISA CARD and leaves without a word.

SARA (CONT'D)

And have a nice day... Hey, Chloe.
That's... a lot of stuff.

SEAN

All completely necessary.

Chloe looks down and avoids Sara. Sara looks through the
clothes.

SARA

What are you thinking? I said this
had to wait.

CHLOE

But, Mom...

SARA

But what, Chlo? We discussed this
already.

Chloe takes the pile of clothes and looks down to avoid eye
contact with the guard members.

TAYLOR

But it all looked so good on you.

ANH

Taylor...

Anh gives Taylor a sideways look that says "Not now."

Katherine and Kathy walk past the checkout line. They see
Sara at the register and the guard members, whisper to each
other, and they walk back to the checkout line.

KATHERINE

Well, *hi guys*.

SEAN

Hey, Katherine.

KATHERINE

Didn't know it was a guard outing
today.

ANH

Just some shopping.

KATHY

Oh, I didn't realize you worked here, Sara.

SARA

Yes, I do.

KATHY

How nice. You look so professional in your little red uniform jacket.

Katherine and Kathy walk away, obviously gossiping about Sara and Chloe. Kathy stops and turns back to Sara.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Oh, I nearly forgot. Sandy Nelson is still waiting to get that check from you. You still owe us a \$515 balance after your financial aid amount.

SARA

Yeah. Well, Kathy, I'm working on it.

KATHY

I bet you are.

Katherine laughs. The rest of the guard are silent and look at their shoes and things on the rack at the check out stand. A strained moment passes.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Well. We must be going. Don't forget your volunteer forms. We need those, too.

Kathy and Katherine walk away. The guard members look to one another, unsure of what to say or do.

Taylor searches through her SHOULDER BAG and pulls out several GIFT CARDS.

TAYLOR

Here. There's something on each of these. Take it, Chloe.

CHLOE

Taylor, I can't take your gift cards.

TAYLOR

I have a ton of them. My mom is always giving them to me.

SARA

That's sweet, hon, but we really can't take them.

TAYLOR

It's no big deal.

Taylor hands the gift cards to Sara.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Really. She'll just give me more. That way she doesn't have to spend time with me.

Sara and Chloe exchange understanding glances. Chloe puts her arm around Taylor.

CHLOE

Thanks, Taylor.

Sara scans to clothes and then the cards, which have enough to cover the amount. She hands an extra card back to Taylor.

SARA

Thank you.

SEAN

Now you are armed for battle.

CHLOE

Battle?

SEAN

Trust me. I don't think you've made a friend of Katherine.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

Mike's front yard is cluttered with odds and ends set out for a garage sale. Sara, dressed in cut-offs and a tank top, sets CHINA DISHES on a table for sale, while Chloe, dressed similarly yet in a baggier version, is arranging knick-knacks on another table.

SEVERAL NEIGHBORHOOD PEOPLE meander around the items for sale, picking them up and turning them over to check their price tags.

A SILVER MINIVAN pulls up to the curb and Kathy and Johanna get out of the car.

Sara sees the women and walks over to them.

SARA

If you see something you like, let me know.

KATHY

Well, aren't you the resourceful one.

SARA

(ignoring this)

Housewares are over there, as well as clothes and sporting equipment. There are some tools by the garage, and artwork and sculptures by the front door.

KATHY

Artwork?

SARA

Yes. I'm an artist.

Sara walks away toward the other buyers. The women turn towards each other in a huddle.

JOHANNA

Oh, did you hear that? *She's an artist.*

KATHY

Oh, this I've got to see.

They walk to the front door. Chloe edges over towards them to get in a better hearing distance.

JOHANNA

What's that?

Kathy picks up a small sculpture of a female and male nude.

KATHY

I don't know but I wouldn't have it in my house.

JOHANNA

Looks X-rated.

The women huddle together to examine the sculpture more closely. They turn it over examining every detail.

Sara walks over to the women.

SARA

It's based on the Isis Protecting
Osiris statue that was found at the
Temple of Karnak in Thebes.

Kathy and Johanna look blankly at Sara.

SARA (CONT'D)

That's \$30.

KATHY

Oh? What a bargain.

The women snicker. Sara looks them over.

SARA

There are paintings, too, if that's
more your taste.

KATHY

Well, aren't you just the
artsy-fartsy one!

SARA

Excuse me?

JOHANNA

She just means that we had no idea
that you did such things.

Sara gives them a quizzical look.

SARA

Such things?

CUT TO:

RICHARD JEFFRIES, 48, in casual yet upscale clothes,
approaches Chloe at the table full of china dishes, carrying
a large UNFRAMED PAINTING.

RICHARD

Excuse me, are you the artist?

CHLOE

No. My mom is.

RICHARD

I was looking through her
paintings. Is this for sale?

CHLOE

Um...I guess. I didn't know she put those out.

RICHARD

It was in a stack of other paintings.

CHLOE

Wow. She has never taken them out of her studio before.

RICHARD

That's a real shame.

Sara walks over to Chloe and Richard.

SARA

Is there a problem?

RICHARD

No problem at all. You're the artist?

SARA

Yeah.

RICHARD

How much for this one?

SARA

That one's... \$30?

Richard takes out his wallet and counts out \$30 and hands it to Sara.

SARA

Ah... thank you. Can I wrap it for you?

RICHARD

Great. That's a steal, by the way.

SARA

I'm just happy that you appreciate it.

Sara wraps the painting in packing paper and hands it to Richard. She then examines the money as though she has never seen any before. Chloe smiles at Sara.

CUT TO:

Kathy turns toward Johanna.

KATHY
(under her breath)
Would you look at that?

JOHANNA
(nodding)
He's just trying to pick her
up. Did you see how short her
cutoffs are?

KATHY
Everything's on display. Or for
sale, I guess.

CUT TO:

Richard shakes Sara's hand and gives her his card.

RICHARD
That's my gallery in Palo Alto. We
should meet sometime and discuss
your work.

SARA
Great... I'll give you a call?

Richard half salutes Sara, and then takes the painting to
his car and drives off.

Sara flips through the money, smiles, and turns toward the
women.

SARA
Let me know if I can wrap up
anything for you.

Sara walks over to Chloe, who opens a CASH BOX on a table
and deposits the money.

KATHY
Well, I never.

Sara and Chloe hear this, but act busy.

SARA
(whispering to Chloe)
Well, now you have.

KATHY (CONT'D)
green travel form and the yellow
volunteer form and write your
checks. The guard fees are on the
pink paper this year. It looks so
cheery, don't you think?

JOHANNA
Nice touch, Kathy.

Kathy and Johanna exchange smiles. Johanna notices Sara preoccupied with the sea of paper work, and nudges Kathy to notice her as well. They exchange a condescending look.

KATHY
Make sure you get all those forms
in to Mr. Barnes as soon as
possible. You can leave them in
Sandy Nelson's box in the band
office.

SANDY NELSON, 43, who is a younger, thinner version of Kathy but dresses the same, waves from the side of the room.

KATHY (CONT'D)
I hope you brought your check books
tonight!

SARA
Excuse me? Check books?

KATHY
Oh yes, we will be collecting those
fees tonight.

SARA
I'm sorry. I'm new here. What fees
are you talking about?

Sara scans page after page of forms and finds the pink form, which details an endless list of guard uniforms and associating fees.

SARA (CONT'D)
Oh. Got it. Excuse me, what is
the total amount?

KATHY
Well, \$1,365 but count on about \$40
more for the hair piece.

INT. CHARTER BUS - DAY

The band is loading onto the charter bus bound for band camp. It is nearly filled to capacity. The guard sits in the back.

Chloe enters the bus and goes toward the guard in the back. All of the other members are already seated, two by two. As the 35th member of the guard, there isn't an empty seat for Chloe to share.

KATHERINE

Oh, look who arrived late.

DEVON

Figures.

MARINA

On time is thirty minutes early, Chloe. Get it together.

CHLOE

We had a little car trouble. But I'm here now.

KATHERINE

Of course you did. In that heap your mother drives. Daisy Duke's *pickup* truck.

Chloe frowns. Katherine smiles at Devon and Marina.

KATHERINE

Too bad there isn't a seat left.

Chloe scans the rest of the bus for an empty spot. There is one toward the front where the tuba section is sitting.

Chloe walks to the empty seat. BJ, 17, a rotund tuba player, takes up a bit more than his share of the seat.

CHLOE

Can I sit here?

BJ

What?

BJ removes his IPOD EAR BUDS.

CHLOE

Can I?

BJ
But you're guard.

CHLOE
So?

BJ
We don't sit with the guard.

CHLOE
There isn't another seat.

BJ
Oh, all right. Just this once.

Chloe stows her back pack under the seat and sits.

CHLOE
Why don't you sit with the guard?

BJ
Too much hairspray, too snooty.

CHLOE
I feel your pain. Thanks for the exception.

BJ
Just don't fumigate the place.

CHLOE
Got it. I'm Chloe.

BJ
BJ. I know, unfortunate name. My folks are Mormon and they didn't think about the connotations involved.

CHLOE
Oh.

BJ
You're new.

CHLOE
Yeah.

BJ
Tubas rule. Don't forget it.

CHLOE
Got it. Cool.

EXT. KATHY'S HOUSE - DAY

Sara stands at Kathy's front door. The front yard of the house is immaculately landscaped. She rings the bell but there is no answer. Sara looks toward the street, where Kathy's minivan is parked. She hesitates and then rings the bell again.

Another moment passes, and then Kathy peeks out of the curtains from the kitchen window. A few more minutes pass, and then Kathy opens the front door just enough to speak through it.

Kathy is dressed in unflattering mom jeans and a baggy T-shirt, her hair is unwashed.

KATHY
What are you doing here?

SARA
Hi, Kathy. Sorry to bother you.

Kathy attempts to straighten her appearance.

KATHY
No bother.

SARA
Okay. Well, I brought you a check
for the color guard fees.

Kathy takes the check from Sara and then looks it over.

KATHY
This is for \$300.

SARA
Yeah, I know. You can put it
toward my balance.

Kathy moves into her kitchen to get her color guard file, and Sara, though uninvited, follows her. The file is in a pile of other papers on her kitchen table.

The kitchen itself looks like a bomb has gone off. The counter is thickly covered in dirty dishes, boxes of processed food and other random garbage. There is hardly a clean space to be found.

The kitchen table is made up of mismatched old furniture. Sara sees into the living room off through an archway, which is in a similar state of havoc.

Kathy makes a notation in her files. She then notices Sara's discreet inspection of the house.

KATHY

You still owe \$215.

SARA

I know. I'm working on it.

KATHY

We need you to pay by the end of the month, or your daughter can't perform with the guard.

SARA

Okay... Like I said, I'm working on it.

There is an awkward pause. Sara shifts her handbag onto another shoulder.

SARA (CON'T)

Well, I'll get that to you as soon as I can.

KATHY

Make sure that you do.

SARA

All right then.

Sara leaves through the front door. Kathy follows her to the door and locks it behind her.

INT. GYM - DAY

The band, 235 members strong, moves into the gym, unfolding sleeping bags on the floor, claiming their spaces, girls on one side, boys on the other.

Chloe and BJ enter the gym.

BJ

I'm on the other side. See ya.

CHLOE

Okay.

BJ walks to the other side. Chloe looks for the guard.

The girls on the guard have claimed their own corner in the gym, near the flutes. Some have already claimed their space. Katherine has put out an air mattress and has established her domain. Chloe walks over to them.

LEANNA

Oh, Chloe! Put your stuff near us!

TAYLOR

Yeah, cuz Katherine has practically made a whole bedroom with her stuff.

CHLOE

Hey, thanks.

Chloe unfolds her sleeping bag and sets her back pack and duffel bag near it.

Anh and Nkiru walk over to them.

ANH

Oh, good, we lost you in the crush.

CHLOE

I'm here now.

ANH

You sat with the tubas?

CHLOE

Yeah.

NKIRU

Those guys are weird.

CHLOE

They're not bad.

NKIRU

The cool guys are the drumline, all very hot.

CHLOE

I'll keep that in mind.

Sean walks over to them from the boys' side of the gym.

SEAN

Right in the middle of the drumline. Prime real estate.

NKIRU

None of them are gay, Sean.

SEAN

I can dream, can't I?

LEANNA

You're gay?

SEAN

Yeah. Don't look shocked, Leanna.

NKIRU

Guys on guard are always gay.

SEAN

Who else would want to dance on a field and spin a flag? It's the high school gay guy's mecca.

LEANNA

Ohhh.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The marching band is in sectionals, all are receiving their drill sheets, which they hang around their necks on lanyards.

The guard is on one side of the field. Ethan hands out the guard drill sheets. Luis, dressed in short shorts and a Brittany Spears belly shirt, wipes his brow with a hanky.

LUIS

Oh, I am melting. It's going to mess up my makeup.

Ethan looks sideways at Luis and then turns back to the guard.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Do not lose this. It is the whole drill. Don't get it mixed up either, wear it around your neck. If you get someone else's sheet you'll be in the wrong place.

ANASTASIA

Listen to Ethan. We don't want to have to keep going over the same stuff because you lost your sheet.

Chloe puts the lanyard around her neck, and her dog tag comes out of her shirt.

TAYLOR

What's that?

Taylor picks up the tag and reads it.

CHLOE

My dad gave me that.

TAYLOR

That's so sweet.

Katherine and Devon see the exchange and move closer to them.

KATHERINE

Oh, the dog has a tag.

DEVON

She's registered. Shots up to date?

CHLOE

What *is* your problem?

KATHERINE

No problem. I don't know what you're talking about.

Taylor moves over to Chloe as though protecting her.

TAYLOR

Come on, Chloe. Let's find our first dot.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The band and the guard, who carry their flags, are set in their places on the field. Although the band doesn't carry instruments, they are moving through the drill, singing the music.

Chloe runs toward a knot of trombones. They don't make way for her.

CHLOE

Move it or lose it, trombone boy.

The TROMBONE PLAYER, 16, doesn't move. BJ yells from his place ten yards away.

BJ
Watch it! She's fierce! She will
take you out.

Chloe charges forward, clipping the trombone player.

CHLOE
I said move it!

The trombone player finally moves out of the way, and Chloe gets to her next dot on the field.

EXT. SNACK STATION - DAY

The guard is on a break getting water at the snack station. There is a long table set up with fruit, cookies and brownies, and tubs of waters and sodas on the ground.

Leanna takes a couple of brownies from the table. Ethan and Luis walk by.

ETHAN
Put it back.

LEANNA
What?

ETHAN
I said put it back.

LEANNA
But I'm hungry.

LUIS
Spandex, girlfriend.

LEANNA
Oh.

Leanna puts the brownies back. The tuba section joins the line at the table and loads up on sweets. Chloe picks up a water bottle.

CHLOE
I know. It looks good. But we're
supposed to eat healthy. Ethan's
rules.

Chloe hands Leanna a bunch of grapes.

LEANNA

But what about them?

CHLOE

The tubas are in a world all of
their own.

Chloe walks back toward the field, passing the drumline. The drumline is in a group, seemingly having a conversation but only speaking in drum beats. Nick Parker is leading the "conversation."

NICK

Dat-dat-dat, da-dat-dat-dat.

The other drummers answer him.

DRUMMERS

Dat-da-dat-dat-dat!

Nick sees Chloe and watches her walk by.

NICK

(as though whistling at her)

Da-dat, da-dat, dat, daaat.

Chloe turns, looks puzzled, and Nick smiles broadly at her. He is a flirt. Chloe registers this but keeps walking.

Katherine walks toward the drumline, seeing this exchange.

KATHERINE

Keep it in your pants, Nick.

NICK

(laughing)

You don't own me, Katherine.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Chloe is alone in the locker room, brushing her teeth in the sink. She bends over to spit the tooth paste into the sink and rinses her mouth with water from the tap.

She straightens up to wipe her mouth with her towel.

DISSOLVE TO:

The same image of the man's radiant face, eyes twinkling through rays of light, so that this image and Chloe's face are visible through each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag in rays of light.

CUT TO:

Chloe is shocked to see Nick in the mirror, standing directly behind her.

CHLOE

What are you doing?

NICK

Nice ass.

Nick slides his hands down her sides and presses his groin into her back. Chloe shoves him away.

CHLOE

Get off of me!

NICK

Hey, it's okay, babe.

Nick grabs Chloe, turns her around and pulls her to him. He forcefully kisses her and gropes her body.

Katherine and Devon enter the locker room, and see this embrace. They stop dead in their tracks.

Devon starts to say something but Katherine checks her.

Katherine shifts slightly, watching Nick grope Chloe, smiles behind Devon's back, and then ushers her quietly out of the locker room.

Chloe manages to pull enough away from Nick and knees him in the groin. He recoils.

CHLOE

I *said* get the hell off of me!

Chloe storms out of the locker room. Nick, although he is still in pain, laughs and calls after her.

NICK

Just wait, Chloe Johnson, you'll be begging me for some of this!

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The band and the guard are standing in position, this time the band plays their instruments. They go over the same section of the music many times, each time returning to their starting positions on the field.

The guard has an octagonal jungle gym that they use as a prop for the show. Taylor is hanging underneath it by her knees, and Devon is on top of it in side splits.

Every time the music begins again, the rest of the flag line lifts it and moves it in circles down the field. When the music stops, they move back to the starting position.

CUT TO:

Katherine, Anastasia, Devon and Anh are on another part of the field, throwing sabers in this part of the show.

CUT TO:

Mr. Barnes, in khaki shorts and a safari hat, stands on the drum major's platform, calling out directions with a megaphone.

MR. BARNES

Okay. Back to one.

SEAN

Not again. I'm dying.

NKIRU

What the hell did you eat today, Marina? You weigh a ton.

MARINA

You know, Taylor's here, too.

NKIRU

Taylor's a stick, you're the lard ass.

Chloe glares at Nkiru.

CHLOE

No one's a lard ass. We just keep doing this over and over.

LEANNA

I'm gonna die. I can't feel my arms anymore.

MR. BARNES

Okay. Take five.

The flag line puts the jungle gym down, and Devon and Taylor dismount.

TAYLOR

All the blood's rushed to my head.

MARINA

Oh, my god, look at the tubas.

CUT TO:

The tubas are in their places on the field, standing with their shorts around their ankles.

CUT TO:

SEAN

That is something we don't need to see. Fat boys in boxers.

CHLOE

At least it's cooler.

SEAN

Old "Blow Job" over there is not an appetizing picture.

CHLOE

I don't know. I think they have the right idea.

Chloe strips down to her sports bra and shorts, and tosses her T-shirt to the side of the field.

LEANNA

Chloe? Can we do that?

NKIRU

Yes, we can. Good move, Chloe.

Nkiru strips off her T-shirt as well. Sean, Leanna and Taylor follow suit. Marina hesitates, looks down the field toward Katherine for reassurance but Katherine is out of range.

Marina slips off her T-shirt and places it folded on the sidelines.

The guys on the drumline whistle. Chloe takes a bow as if to say "screw you."

Marina fixes on Chloe's bravura, and Chloe smiles back.

MR. BARNES

Okay, everybody. One more time.

The flag line waits for Taylor and Marina to get back in place and then heaves the jungle gym over their heads.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

The marching band and color guard are settling in for the night, getting in sleeping bags, listening to Ipods, texting each other, etc.

Katherine holds court with Devon, Marina, Sean, and Anh, brushing out her hair regally.

KATHERINE

That's what I saw.

DEVON

Honest to god.

KATHERINE

In the locker room after lights out yesterday. Somehow they got past the chaperones.

MARINA

No way.

KATHERINE

Chloe and Nick. In the locker room.

MARINA

God.

KATHERINE

Yes.

MARINA

Unbelievable.

Sean and Anh exchange secret glances.

KATHERINE

Yet true. That skank was with my boyfriend.

DEVON

Well, he's not really your boyfriend.

KATHERINE

Yes, he is.

DEVON

But your parents won't let you date.

KATHERINE

Like that stops us.

MARINA

But why?

KATHERINE

You said she stripped on the field and flaunted her ass to the drumline. So why does it surprise you?

MARINA

That's so against the rules.

Chloe enters the gym from the girl's locker room door. The rest of the guard shifts in their sleeping bags and avoids eye contact with her.

Chloe frowns at their attitudes and then quietly gets into her own sleeping bag.

Sean looks disapprovingly at her and then gets up to go to his side of the gym.

The silence is deafening.

Katherine smiles.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

The sleeping bags have been pushed aside to make room for a makeshift stage. The entire marching band and guard are present, sitting on the floor or loitering around the sides of the gym.

HUNG LEE, 17, a skinny, effeminate Asian boy sings PAPARAZZI off key into a microphone attached to a karaoke machine. He dances in a poor imitation of a Lady Gaga video.

Chloe enters the gym and walks toward the color guard, who give her the cold shoulder. She hesitates, looks to Anh who pointedly shifts away from her.

CUT TO:

BJ, who's sitting over to the side with the tubas, sees this.

BJ
Hey, Chlo, over here.

Chloe looks over the guard one more time, but no one looks at her.

CHLOE
Thanks.

Chloe crosses over to the tubas and sits with them. Katherine watches her go and smiles.

CUT TO:

Mr Barnes walks over to the mic, cutting off the end of Hung's embarrassing act.

MR. BARNES
Okay, now. Thank you, Hung, for that... inspiring number.

HUNG
(into the mic that Mr. Barnes is now holding)
Thank you! Thank you, everybody!!!

There is awkward, half-hearted applause. Hung bows repeatedly with exuberance.

MR. BARNES
And now I think we will hear from the guard.

The guard members get up and walk toward the mic. Chloe starts to get up to join them.

KATHERINE
Not you.

Chloe sits back down, and looks at the floor.

KATHERINE
(into the mic)
Instead of the usual performance, we just wanted to sing a very special Happy Birthday to our coach, Ethan, whose birthday is on Monday.

The guard sings a jazzy version of HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Ethan, with a few harmonies at the end. They bow at the end and the band applauds. Katherine strikes a Paris Hilton pose.

KATHERINE
(triumphantly)
Well, thanks, guys!

She hands the mic back to Mr. Barnes and walks cockily back to her seat.

MR. BARNES
Well, nicely done. And happy
birthday, Ethan!

CUT TO:

Chloe shifts uneasily.

BJ
Don't let her get to you,
Chloe. She's a massive bitch.

Chloe says nothing but instead fiddles with her dog tag, which hangs around her neck.

BJ
Come on, Chlo, we're up next.

CHLOE
But I'm not a tuba.

BJ
Well, tonight you're an honorary
one, okay?

Chloe follows the tubas to the stage space. They form a line with Chloe on the end. BJ turns on stripper sounding music and takes the mic from Mr. Barnes.

CUT TO:

The tubas dance to the music, turning and gyrating like the movie *The Full Monty*. Chloe stands off to one side, too embarrassed to move. At the end of the dancing, the tubas pull off their shirts in unison, revealing thick fake hair glued to their chests.

Chloe bursts out laughing. Katherine looks at the other guard members, as though to say "I told you so."

BJ
 (into the mic)
 Join the tubas! It will put hair
 on your chest!

The crowd laughs and hoots. The tubas bow exuberantly and go back to their seats.

MR. BARNES
 Well, for the tubas, this should
 come as no surprise! Bravo, men!
 Okay, folks, we head back tomorrow
 and the real work will begin. All
 day practices back at Hancock until
 the exhibition next weekend. So
 enjoy the rest of your free time
 tonight: it's back on the bus early
 tomorrow morning.

The band starts to get up and shift their sleeping bags,
 etc., back into place for the night.

CUT TO:

Chloe gets her things where they were stored on the side of
 the gym and moves them back to where the guard originally
 had set up camp. This time, there is no space left for her
 things: the other female guard members have taken up the
 space so that she is excluded.

Chloe looks from Anh to Taylor to Nkiru, but no one
 acknowledges her.

CHLOE
 Um... guys?

NKIRU
 Did you hear something, Anh? Anh?

Anh shrugs. Taylor sits with her mouth open and Leanna
 looks helplessly at Chloe.

NKIRU
 No? I didn't think so.

Chloe gathers her sleeping bag in her arms, adjusts her
 backpack over her arm and slowly walks away to find another
 place to sleep.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The bleachers are filled with family members, who are waiting for the band exhibition.

Sara and Mike sit in the stands, waiting for the show to start.

CUT TO:

Mr. Barnes mounts the drum major platform and speaks in a microphone to the parents.

MR. BARNES

Welcome, everyone! We have been hard at work in the hot sun and we are proud to bring you the fruits of our labor. This is going to be a strong season and I want to thank all the parent volunteers for their support. We will start with our football pre-game show and then this year's field show, Metal World. And now, I am pleased to present the Mighty Mustang Marching Band!

CUT TO:

The band runs onto the field from the sidelines and takes their positions on the field. The guard is dressed in their parade costumes, which look like ice skating skirts.

They do a short drill to ALL RIGHT NOW. It is exuberant. They then shift to parade formation.

The senior members of the guard pick up the HANCOCK LETTERS and move to the front of the formation.

Chloe is with the new members marching with flags behind the band.

The guard makes a point of freezing Chloe out. They march their parade formation up and down the football field, but no one acknowledges that Chloe is even in the line. As they exit the field, the guard closes rank, cutting off Chloe's path so that she is forced to walk behind everyone else.

Chloe keeps her chin up, and focuses forward bravely as though nothing were happening.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)

Aren't they wonderful? Give them a hand!

The crowd in the stands cheers.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)

And now we'll take a short break while the guard does a costume change.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The guard changes costumes in silence. They put on their Metal World clothes, which make them look like gangster Trekkies.

SEAN

Who picked this?

DEVON

Well, it's better than last year's highlighter look.

ANH

Just barely.

SEAN

Truly ghetto-licious. Leanna, you're putting that on backwards! Get it together, Helen Keller!

LEANNA

Oh, sorry!

Chloe ignores the others and walks over to Leanna and fixes her costume without saying anything.

ANASTASIA

Okay. Let's go. Get your flags.

The rest of the guard gets their flags and walk past Chloe without acknowledging her. Katherine lags behind.

KATHERINE

We saw you with Nick in the locker room at band camp. Everybody knows. What a skank! Think you're so hot, now?

Chloe is caught off guard by this. Katherine gloats as she ceremoniously leaves.

Leanna looks to Chloe and then follows the others. Chloe is speechless. She takes a deep breath and then walks out behind them.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The band waits impatiently on the field.

MR. BARNES

As soon as the guard gets here, we
will show you this year's field
show, Metal World!

Mr. Barnes leaves the platform and climbs the bleachers to the announcer's box.

CUT TO:

Just the tops of the flags are visible at first as the guard marches over a rise onto the football field. Led by Anastasia, they walk fiercely in formation.

The crowd cheers. Everyone keeps their eyes straight ahead, except Katherine, who smirks in Chloe's direction.

The guard places their equipment along the field and then gets into place.

CUT TO:

The DRUM MAJOR, 18, a strong girl moving formally, mounts the platform. She does her personal salute to the audience with flare. The crowd cheers again.

Mr. Barnes speaks into the microphone from the announcer's box.

MR. BARNES (OS)

And now, the Mighty Mustang
Marching Band and Metal World!

The band performs the field show, underscored by percussion from the pit. The flags and rifles create a dramatic performance, moving with yellow colored flags across the field.

The ballad portion of the music starts, and the flag line moves with the girls on the jungle gym. It is dynamic.

As they turn, Leanna starts to lose her grip, but Chloe recovers the balance for her. .

CUT TO:

Sara grabs Mike's arm.

SARA
Is that safe?

MIKE
I don't know. I'll take a look at
it later.

CUT TO:

The band finishes the third song and the crowd goes wild.

EXT. SHORTAGE SHED - DAY

Mike looks over the joints on the jungle gym. Mr Barnes and
Ethan stand to the side.

MIKE
Needs some reinforcement. But no
problem. I can bring my truck and
fix it in my shop at home.

MR. BARNES
Great. Can you do it before the
football game on Friday?

MIKE
Sure.

Kathy, Sandy and Johanna walk by.

ETHAN
Kathy? A word?

KATHY
Yes?

Kathy and the others approach Steve. Sara and Chloe walk up
to meet Mike. Katherine, Marina, and Devon come up behind
them.

ETHAN
Kathy, the flags are awful. We
agreed on metallics.

KATHY
But the yellow was so pretty.

ETHAN

It's awful. We need to change them
before the first competition.

Katherine glares at her mother, and Kathy puffs herself up
in defense.

KATHY

Well, we won't be on budget
anymore. The metallics were more
expensive.

ETHAN

Since when did you look at the
price of anything?

Sara walks over to Ethan.

SARA

I can paint them.

ETHAN

What?

SARA

I can paint them. Give me a sketch
of what you want, a color palette,
and I can paint them.

Chloe and Mike smile at Sara's daring.

ETHAN

Brilliant. Kathy, get her all of
the flags, and Sara can redesign
them.

KATHY

Ah! Well. I just don't know what
to say!

SARA

Then don't say anything. I can have
it for you by the football game on
Friday.

STEVE

That's 105 flags. Are you sure?

SARA

Absolutely. No problem.

Chloe moves over to stand near her mother. Kathy scoffs.

ETHAN

If you can do that, I will personally pay the balance of the fees you owe.

KATHY

What?

ETHAN

What did you say it was, Kathy? \$215? That's a deal as far as I'm concerned. Consider it paid, Sara.

SARA

Wow. Great.

Ethan, Mike and Mr. Barnes carry the jungle gym off. Katherine approaches her mother.

KATHERINE

Mom, we want to go hang out tonight.

KATHY

But it's already getting to be dinner time.

KATHERINE

(whining)

But Mom, we want to go out! Please? You promised I could hang out when I got back from band camp.

Kathy notices that Sara and Chloe are still standing there.

KATHY

Well, I guess it's okay. Just help me get the flags from the car.

KATHERINE

But we want to go now. The drumline is going for burgers, and we want to join them.

Kathy avoids Sara's gaze.

KATHY

Well, alright.

KATHERINE
I need twenty bucks. No make it
forty.

KATHY
Forty?

KATHERINE
Please, Mom?

Kathy takes money from her jacket and hands it to Katherine.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Thanks, Mom.

Katherine turns to take off with Devon and Marina.

KATHERINE
(to Devon and Marina with a
laugh)
God, she's stupid.

Katherine, Devon, and Marina laugh and leave together, and Kathy walks slowly off to her car, leaving Sara and Chloe, who exchange raised eyebrows.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen has been totally converted into a studio, with paint bottles, palettes, and brushes covering the covered kitchen table. A few finished flags are draped over the kitchen chairs.

Sara, in jeans and one of her husband's old shirts, which has obviously been used for painting before, works intently on painting one of the flags. Her brush moves with brilliant artistry across the silk.

Chloe comes into the kitchen, and quietly watches her mother paint.

CHLOE
That's beautiful.

Sara looks over her work and smiles.

SARA
Thanks.

CHLOE
You haven't painted for a long
time.

SARA

Guess not. Not since your dad started chemo.

CHLOE

Yeah.

Sara continues to work and Chloe follows her brush strokes with her eyes as though hearing music.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

That's gonna look beautiful on the field.

SARA

Yeah. Movement and grace.

CHLOE

But powerful.

SARA

Yeah.

Sara finishes the flag, puts it over the last empty chair and picks up another one from a stack. She considers it as though listening for its voice, and then releases her brush on the silk.

Chloe is mesmerized. She watches her mother create in silence for a few more minutes and then slips out of the kitchen into the garage.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Mike reinforces the joints on the jungle gym. Finished flags are draped on every available surface.

Chloe enters and sits on a stool by the work bench. She picks up a socket wrench and fiddles with its parts.

MIKE

This should do it. I can't believe they put girls on this thing without checking the joints.

CHLOE

They aren't carpenters, they're band people.

MIKE

Just common sense.

CHLOE

Yeah.

Mike adjusts a few joints and then looks Chloe over.

MIKE

So what's up, Chlo? Something's bothering you?

CHLOE

It's nothing.

MIKE

What?

CHLOE

Okay, but don't tell Mom. She's actually painting again. I don't want her to lose that.

MIKE

Okay...

CHLOE

So... at band camp... Katherine started a rumor that I had... sex in the locker room.

MIKE

Whoa, what?

Mike puts down his wrench and stands up from the jungle gym.

CHLOE

I didn't do anything! I swear!

MIKE

Okay, Chlo.

CHLOE

This drumline guy cornered me in the locker room and tried to grope me but I kneed him in the balls and got out of there.

MIKE

What?

CHLOE

I didn't ask for it. But Katherine started a rumor that I am some kind of tramp and no one will talk to me. What's wrong with her?

Mike tries to duck the conversation by rummaging through his tool box.

CHLOE

So what do I do?

Mike returns to tightening the joints.

MIKE

This is really your mom's territory.

Chloe tosses the socket wrench into the tool box.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Just don't let some snotty girl get to you. Be a fighter.

CHLOE

Yeah.

MIKE

You really kneed the guy?

CHLOE

Yeah.

Mike smiles proudly.

MIKE

Way to go, Chlo!

EXT. FOOTBALL BLEACHERS - NIGHT

The football game is in the middle of the second quarter. The band leaves the stands to get into formation for the half-time show.

The guard walks past the cheerleaders on the field. The HEAD CHEERLEADER, 17, a large-breasted girl in a very tiny skirt, yells at them.

HEAD CHEERLEADER

Band geeks!

The rest of the cheerleaders sneer at the guard.

NKIRU

Stupid skanks.

Chloe smiles at Nkiru, who hesitates and then smiles back at her.

NKIRU

They always think they're all that,
but they're nothing but a bunch of
skanks. They've got nothing over
the guard.

CHLOE

Yeah?

Nkiru weighs whether to say anything.

NKIRU

Yeah. Um... Chloe?

CHLOE

Yeah?

NKIRU

Katherine set you up, didn't she?

CHLOE

What do you think?

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The band finishes Metal World with a flourish. The crowd
cheers, but the cheerleaders act like it was no big deal.

The band leaves the field and heads toward the parking lot
to store their gear.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The guard is storing their gear in one corner, while the
band puts away their instruments in another.

Nick walks past the guard. He whistles at Chloe. Chloe
charges over to him.

CHLOE

What the hell is your problem?

NICK

Just appreciating the view.

CHLOE

Well, stop it. Leave me alone!

NICK

Oooo, claws. Meow.

CHLOE

Look, I don't know who you think you are, but stay away from me! I mean it!

NICK

I love a challenge.

CHLOE

You're a bastard.

Nick dramatically grabs his chest.

NICK

Oh, I am so wounded.

CHLOE

Whatever.

Chloe goes back over to her gear. Nkiru, Anh, Sean, Taylor, and Devon hear the argument.

SEAN

Ouch.

CHLOE

What?

SEAN

Castration. I thought you two were a thing. That you got a little Johnson, Johnson.

CHLOE

I don't know who told you that, not that I couldn't guess, but it's not true. I don't even know that guy, and he keeps harassing me.

DEVON

That's not what I saw.

CHLOE

But it's the truth.

ANH

Nick's a jerk. You all know that. Fools around all the time.

SEAN

Just not with me.

Devon practically stomps her feet.

DEVON
He's Katherine's boyfriend!

NKIRU
And he gets it on the side, too.

DEVON
So?

NKIRU
So it's not Chloe's fault if he's a prick.

SEAN
So what happened?

CHLOE
He tried to attack me in the locker room, but I kneed him in the balls and got away. That's what happened, okay?

DEVON
But Katherine said...

Sean rolls his eyes.

SEAN
Katherine, the drama queen?

ANH
She's had it out for Chloe since day one.

Devon weighs this new information.

DEVON
Wow. Sorry, Chloe. I got it wrong.

CHLOE
Okay.

SEAN
Yeah. Apologies all around.

NKIRU
(to Devon)
So watch your back. Could be you next.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Anh, Sean, Devon, and Chloe gather their things. Mr. Wilcox erases the board. He turns to them as they leave.

MR. WILCOX

Don't forget. Outlines for Thursday. Guard practice is no excuse.

SEAN

(in military fashion)
Yes, sir!

MR. WILCOX

Watch it, Mr. Reagan.

SEAN

Of course, Mr. Wilcox.
(under his breath)
Wil-cock-sucker.

MR. WILCOX

Excuse me?

SEAN

Just clearing my throat.

EXT. QUAD - DAY

Sean, Anh, Taylor, Leanna, Devon, and Chloe sit at their lunch table.

SEAN

What a prick.

ANH

Like that helps, Sean.

SEAN

I've already got a C in history. My folks will freak.

DEVON

He has too much work.

Chloe crumples up her lunch bag and shoots it into the trash can near the table.

CHLOE

So, let's get a study group together. Study some, practice some.

SEAN
Says the A student.

CHLOE
Can't help that I'm smart.

SEAN
And so demure.

ANH
No. It's a good idea. I hate
studying at 10 after practice. I
can't focus then.

Everyone gathers up their lunch trash and picks up their
backpacks to go to class.

CHLOE
Okay. Outside the band room before
practice. 3:00?

DEVON
Me, too?

CHLOE
Sure.

EXT. BAND ROOM QUAD - DAY

The guard: Chloe, Sean, Anh, Nkiru and Devon, alternatively
study and spin flags and rifles.

Katherine arrives for practice with her mother. Kathy sees
the other members working together and then goes into the
band room.

KATHERINE
What's going on?

CHLOE
Studying, spinning.

KATHERINE
Devon? What are you doing here?

DEVON
Just...studying. You know.

KATHERINE
No, I don't know.

Katherine stomps away as though brutally wounded and goes
into the band room.

CHLOE
Does she always do that?

DEVON
Yeah.

CHLOE
Why?

DEVON
Oh, I don't know. But it's getting old.

Marina arrives.

MARINA
What's up?

DEVON
We were studying.

MARINA
Why didn't you call me?

DEVON
Thought you'd be with Katherine.

MARINA
We aren't joined at the hip.

DEVON
Well, yeah.

Marina tosses down her flag bag and sits with the others.

MARINA
Anyway, she's getting on my nerves.

SEAN
Do dish.

MARINA
I can't believe this but her mom *facebooked* me. She's like pressuring me to hang with her daughter.

CHLOE
What is wrong with those people?

Devon looks around to make sure the coast is clear.

DEVON

Katherine's the master manipulator.
Her mom buys everything she says,
but she's just working her to get
what she wants.

CHLOE

Katherine and her mom always act so
superior.

MARINA

Well, that's a lie. I just can't
deal with them anymore. I'm
suffocating.

CHLOE

Well, then hang with us.

MARINA

Really?

CHLOE

Yeah.

MARINA

But I was so bitchy to you.

CHLOE

Yeah. So. Forgiven. Let's just move
on.

Chloe picks up her flag and starts to spin it.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

We compete with Lincoln on
Saturday. That's more important.

MARINA

I guess I was wrong about you.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The area is filled with different bands warming up, getting
into position to start. One steps off onto the parade route.

The Mighty Mustangs are starting to get in parade formation
in front of Lincoln's band, which outnumbered them by 75
members.

ANH

Oh, god. There they are. More this
year.

ANASTASIA

Don't think about it. Just focus on our show.

SEAN

New boys on their rifle line. Look at that one's butt: delicious.

CHLOE

Don't drool, Sean.

SEAN

Can't help it. Tasty.

ANASTASIA

Get in line, folks. We're going now. Focus! Make it perfect for the judges!

EXT. PARADE ROUTE - DAY

Families line the parade route. In the middle of the route is the judge's stand, where the announcer calls out the names of each band that passes.

Sara and Mike stand waiting for the Mustangs to march by. Kathy approaches, dressed in a Hancock guard jacket and Hancock T-shirt.

KATHY

Well, hello!

SARA

Hi.

KATHY

Isn't this exciting?

SARA

Yes.

KATHY

It seems your daughter is fitting in very fast.

SARA

Well, yes.

KATHY

I noticed that Devon and Marina are "hanging out" with your daughter, too. Isn't that nice.

SARA

Yeah...

Sara exchanges a look with Mike. He raises his eyebrows ever so slightly.

KATHY

Oh, you're not wearing your Hancock green! Oh that's not good. Got to show our support.

SARA

Yeah.

MIKE

We can show our support without wearing a high school shirt.

SARA

Um, actually Mike reinforced the jungle gym, so we're doing our part.

KATHY

I just hope it holds.

Mike shifts to get in her face, Sara jumps in.

SARA

And then there's the flags.

KATHY

Yes. How could I forget.

Kathy stares at Sara. The moment becomes awkward for both.

KATHY

Well, nice to see you. Next time, wear your green! You did get your shirt, didn't you?

SARA

Well...

KATHY

Oh, that's right. You're the financial aid family.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The stands are full for the field competition. A band has just finished their show and leaves the field. The Mustangs wait off to the side.

ANASTASIA

Okay. Focus. It's got to be perfect! Make Ethan and Luis proud!

SEAN

So no pressure there.

ANASTASIA

Knock it off, Sean. You've got to stick it.

CUT TO:

Chloe centers herself, focusing intently on the field in front of her.

DISSOLVE TO:

The same image of the man's radiant face, eyes twinkling through rays of light.

DISSOLVE TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag in rays of light.

CUT TO:

The band takes the field, getting into their starting spots. The color guard lays out their flags, rifles and sabers for the show. The jungle gym is to one side.

The performance starts without a hitch: Flags move through the band, and then the saber line takes focus.

CUT TO:

The ballad starts and the jungle gym is in place.

Chloe is losing focus but winks at Leanna in encouragement, and Leanna beams back.

Taylor and Devon do their gymnastics on the jungle gym, the crowd goes wild.

CUT TO:

The third song starts and Chloe, Katherine, Devon, Sean and Anh exchange flags for rifles. They move to down center on the field, the focus for this part of the show.

They start to throw the drill, one rifle after another down the line tossed at 6 revolutions, caught one at a time with a snap.

Chloe is the last to go. She struggles to see in front of her. Chloe tosses the rifle.

DISSOLVE TO:

A ripple of a crimson flag in rays of light.

DISSOLVE TO:

Closeup on JACK JOHNSON, Chloe's dad, lying on a hospital bed. He struggles to smile and then his eyes shut. The heart monitor near his bed flatlines.

CUT TO:

Closeup on the rifle rotating six times. As it comes down, it reveals Chloe, frozen in place and unable to move.

The rifle crashes to the ground with a thud.

Katherine glares in her direction. Sean and Anh notice the drop, see Chloe, and look at each other defeated.

A beat.

Tears are running down Chloe's face, but at last she manages to pick up her rifle and continues with the show.

EXT. SIDE FIELD - NIGHT

The marching band puts away the competition gear. The color guard is off to one side, packing up their flags, rifles and sabers.

Chloe is off away from the others packing her gear.

A group of Lincoln color guard members, led by DEREK ISSACS, 18, the captain of their guard who has tousled long hair and a tan, approach them.

DEREK

Maybe next time, Hancock.

ANASTASIA

Whatever, Derek. Your line looked a bit off, you know.

DEREK

But with 300 on the field, judges don't see it.

Sean and Marina move over near Anastasia to hear the argument.

ANASTASIA

Exactly.

DEREK

Jealous?

ANASTASIA

No. We don't have girls with sabers running around doing nothing.

DEREK

But you still can't beat us, can you?

ANASTASIA

Yeah, well, we'll see. There's still the BOA.

DEREK

Keep dreaming. That trophy already has our name on it.

The Lincoln guard moves on.

SEAN

God, he's cute.

ANH

Skank. And traitor.

SEAN

And proud of it. Why do they get all the cute guys?

Marina and Nkiru, toting their flag bags, join Sean and Ahn.

MARINA

Don't cry.

SEAN

Hancock's too damn straight.

NKIRU

Since when did that stop you?

SEAN

Touche.

Katherine approaches them.

KATHERINE

It's all her fault!

ANASTASIA

Whose?

KATHERINE

Chloe's. She just stood there and let her rifle fall. What an idiot! She just stopped the work. What the hell's wrong with her! We could have taken them.

ANASTASIA

Knock it off, Katherine. She made a mistake, big deal. You have too, you know.

KATHERINE

She doesn't belong on this guard!

CUT TO:

Chloe hears their conversation and then grabs her bag and goes to a quiet spot around the corner from the guard. She starts to cry.

Mr. Barnes turns the corner, sees Chloe and approaches her.

MR. BARNES

Hey. You okay?

CHLOE

Leave me alone.

MR. BARNES

What's wrong? Chloe?

Tears run down Chloe's face. She clutches her dog tag.

CHLOE

Just leave me alone!

Chloe runs off.

MR. BARNES
(calling after her)
Chloe! Wait a minute!

EXT. THE BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Chloe sits alone, gripping her legs, leaning against the support beam under the announcers stand in the bleachers. Tears stream down her face.

The crowd has long since left, but the lights from the field filter through the metal beams around Chloe, half illuminating her.

Anastasia quietly enters from the side of the bleachers, but stops some distance away from Chloe.

ANASTASIA
Chloe?

Chloe cries, burying her face on her knees.

Anastasia moves to Chloe and sits beside her. She puts her arm around her.

ANASTASIA
It's okay.

The two sit like that for a few minutes. Then Chloe pulls away and looks out across the field.

CHLOE
I keep seeing it. We were on the field and he just collapsed. It was during the last competition. We were in the ballad and he fell down on the side of the field.

QUICK CUTS IN RAPID SUCCESSION

The band is performing on the field during a competition and Jack Johnson watches their every move on the side of the field.

CUT TO:

Chloe tosses a quad with her rifle and catches it.

CUT TO:

Jack holds his abdomen and starts to crumble, collapsing onto the field.

CUT TO:

Chloe is mid-toss when she sees her father go down, her rifle crashes with a thud on the field and cracks. Chloe runs to him.

CUT TO:

PARAMEDICS lift Jack onto a stretcher, and Sara runs along its side, clinging to Jack's hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

CHLOE

It was pancreatic cancer. He didn't know. He thought he had the flu or something. When they got him to the hospital, it had already metastasized to his other organs. It was too late. They tried chemo, but it didn't help. He was in hospice for four months. My mom never left his side.

DISSOLVE TO:

Sara and Chloe, dressed in black, stand at the grave side. They are surrounded by what seems like the whole town.

CUT TO:

The marching band in full regalia play a requiem.

A somber flag line stands opposite Sara and Chloe, punctuating the music with crimson flags.

CUT TO:

The flag line holds their flags chest high and ripples them over the grave as the coffin begins to lower into the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

CHLOE

I didn't know if I could do this again. I wanted to carry on for my dad because my mom is hurting so much.

Anastasia holds Chloe to her, and Chloe lays her head on Anastasia's shoulder. They remain in this position, as the lights go out on the field, one by one.

INT. CHARTER BUS - DAY

The guard sits in the back of the bus, fixing hair with hairspray, attaching false pony tails and putting on makeup for the show. BJ turns in his seat. Chloe slowly brushes her hair and sprays it with hairspray.

BJ

Oh, no, Chloe, you've gone to the dark side. BOA. You ready?

CHLOE

Yeah.

BJ

You can do this, Chlo. No worries, okay?

CHLOE

Okay.

BJ

Tubas still rule. Just saying.

CHLOE

Got it.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The parent volunteers, all dressed in Hancock polo shirts except Sara, whose dressed in a fashionable fitted green shirt, wait in the parking lot for the buses to arrive.

There is a buffet line set up for dinner, and parents are unwrapping metal pans of Mexican food. A HEAVY SET WOMAN, 48, dressed in a Hancock shirt and elastic waisted khaki pants, moves around the table.

HEAVY SET WOMAN

Oh! They're here! Everybody!
They're here!

She waddles over toward the buses, waving madly.

HEAVY SET WOMAN (CONT'D)

Go, Mustangs! Go, Mustangs!

CUT TO:

Kathy approaches Sara.

KATHY

We need you to help unload the guard bags.

SARA

Well, that's why I'm here. Wearing my green, too.

KATHY

Yes. I see. Well. Get a move on, we have a lot to do.

Sara salutes Kathy.

SARA

Ay, ay, captain.

Kathy glares at Sara.

INT. CHARTER BUS - NIGHT

Leanna looks out the window, sees the heavy set woman waving madly and sinks in her seat.

LEANNA

Oh, god!

CHLOE

What?

LEANNA

That's my mom. How humiliating.

Leanna pulls her guard jacket up over her head.

LEANNA (CONT'D)

God, she still thinks I'm four.

CHLOE

Well, at least she... cares?

Sean looks out the window and laughs.

SEAN

Oh, my, that explains a lot.

CHLOE
Knock it off, Sean.

LEANNA
He's right. My mom's a freak.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The band disembarks from the bus. The parents move over to greet them, hoist gear from the luggage bays, etc.

Chloe sees her mom and goes to her.

CHLOE
Hey, Mom.

SARA
Big night. Ready?

CHLOE
I guess.

Sean, Marina, Anh, Nkiru, and Taylor walk over to them.

SEAN
Parents are freaks. Did you see those dads over there arguing about whether the bus is parked correctly?

MARINA
One of them is your dad, Sean.

SEAN
I know. That's my point. Hey, Mrs. Johnson, why is it that you aren't like that? Chloe, you're so lucky.

Chloe turns to Sean, registering his remark.

MARINA
Yeah. You're the only mom that isn't a freak. Nice shirt.

SARA
Well, thanks, Marina.

Johanna approaches the group. She looks at Sara and then turns on the guard. Chloe exchanges glances with her mother.

JOHANNA

You kids really need to get in line
for dinner or there won't be
anything left! You too,
Taylor. Move it.

Johanna marches back to the dinner line.

CHLOE

What's her deal?

TAYLOR

That's my mom.

CHLOE

Your mom?

TAYLOR

Yeah. She likes my sister better.

Chloe looks to Sara, who puts her arm around Taylor and encourages her.

SARA

It's Mexican.

SEAN

Oh, great. They're feeding the
tubas Mexican. Don't breathe in on
the field.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The previous band is leaving the field. The Mustangs wait on the side lines, focusing their energy. The guard is tense. This is the championship.

Ethan and Luis huddle up the guard.

ETHAN

Okay. So this is it. Just focus.
You're all gonna rock this.

LUIS

Make Momma proud.

Anastasia looks over at Chloe. She smiles encouragingly.

ANASTASIA

You bet. Beat Lincoln.

SEAN

As if.

CHLOE

(looking at Anastasia)

Sean, confidence.

The Mustangs are announced and take the field. The guard looks to each other, nodding "let's do it." Chloe swallows hard and then focuses forward.

CUT TO:

They all scatter to place their various flags and rifles in different positions on the field.

Katherine bumps past Chloe as she places her gear on the sidelines. Chloe looks up at her.

KATHERINE

Don't screw this up again, bitch.

CUT TO:

The performance starts. The flourish of flags is breathtaking. The ballad begins, the jungle gym moves without a hitch and the crowd goes wild.

CUT TO:

The third song starts. The rifle line switches flags for rifles.

Chloe picks hers up, and her dog tag falls out of her uniform. She looks at it.

DISSOLVE TO:

A close up on Jack's face joyously laughing. The sun is behind him, illuminating and then shading his face with rays of light. Then the ripple of the crimson flag, shimmering in the same sunlight obscures his face.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

Chloe is spinning crimson flags with her father in the backyard of their Michigan farm house, and they are both laughing, doing silly, exaggerated flag work.

Behind them, Sara is visible in her barn studio, painting - it is the canvas that Richard Jefferies later buys. She looks over to her family and laughs with them.

CUT TO:

Chloe kisses her dog tag and slips it under her uniform.

CUT TO:

The rifles are in a line, tossing and catching one by one. It's Chloe's turn next. She takes a deep breath and throws a perfect quad and catches it with a fierce snap.

The crowd cheers.

CUT TO:

Sara and Mike jump up in the stands.

SARA
Go, Mustangs!

MIKE
Rock it, Chlo!

CUT TO:

Sean high fives Chloe as they leave the field. Anastasia joins Chloe and puts her arm around her shoulders. Chloe is changed, it is as though she can finally breathe.

CUT TO:

Katherine sees this and stomps off.

The rest of the guard cheers each other, doing high fives, etc. as they leave the field triumphantly.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The ANNOUNCER, 58, a gray-haired man in a wind breaker, is on the field next to a table of trophies.

ANNOUNCER
And in third place with a score of
88 is Washington High School!

The BAND DIRECTOR of Washington, a squat man of 52, walks over to accept his trophy.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
And with a score of 90.6, second
place goes to...

The guard stands on the side lines. They take hands, hold their breath, etc, except for Katherine, who is excluded. Ethan sees this and smiles at the comraderie.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Hancock High School!

Mr. Barnes crosses the field and accepts the second place trophy.

CUT TO:

The guard sinks with the news.

TAYLOR
Oh, no!

NKIRU
Damn it!

CUT TO:

ANNOUNCER
And in first place, with a score of
91, is Lincoln High School!

The LINCOLN BAND DIRECTOR, 48, a cocky man with a smart-assed smirk, crosses the field. He takes the trophy, turns to the audience and gives them a somewhat royal wave.

CUT TO:

NKIRU
.4 points?! They won by .4 damned
points. Unbelievable.

ANASTASIA
So what. We broke our record! We've
never scored into the 90's! That's
great.

SEAN
Yeah. Woo-hoo.

CHLOE
Doesn't matter. We rocked it.
That's all that counts.

ANASTASIA
Yeah.

SEAN

Well, maybe I can still turn Derek gay.

CHLOE

A man's got to have a dream, Sean.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sara gathers up some of the guard bags and stows them in the luggage bay of the bus.

Sandy Nelson approaches with the remaining bags.

SANDY

Quite a show tonight.

SARA

Yeah. The kids really put their all into this one.

SANDY

The flags really looked amazing. You did a fantastic job with them.

SARA

Thanks.

Sandy looks around and sees Kathy coming their way.

SANDY

Just don't tell Kathy I said so.

KATHY

Don't tell me what?

SANDY

I was just commenting that... well, you know, the flags... they really did make the show.

KATHY

What the hell does that mean?

Richard Jeffries approaches the women.

RICHARD

Sara Johnson?

SARA

Yes?

RICHARD
I thought that was you. Remember,
the garage sale?

SARA
Oh, yes. Mr. Jeffries.

RICHARD
Richard. You never called me.

SARA
Well, things got busy. Flags to
paint, competitions to volunteer
for.

Kathy crosses her arms impatiently.

RICHARD
Those were your flags? Truly
beautiful work.

SARA
Oh, well, thanks.

RICHARD
Well, don't tell anyone I said
so. I'm a Lincoln band parent,
after all.

SARA
Your secret's safe with me.

Richard and Sara laugh. Kathy shifts more impatiently.

RICHARD
So, this time we really need to get
together. I am talking about an
art show featuring your work.

SARA
My work?

RICHARD
Yes. I'm not making any promises,
but I think you will be very
successful in the Palo Alto
market. Paintings and sculptures,
bring it all. Call me, okay?

SARA
Okay. Great. Monday?

RICHARD

Make sure you call this time.

Richard walks away and Sara watches him go. Sandy approaches her.

SANDY

That's quite a coup. A real art gallery and all.

SARA

Yeah.

KATHY

Get that gear on the god-damned bus, Sandy!

Kathy storms away and Sandy watches her go in disbelief.

SARA

Pleasant, isn't she?

SANDY

Um... well...

SARA

Yeah.

Sara tosses the bags into the luggage bay and shuts the overhead door.

EXT. STORAGE SHED - NIGHT

Chloe, Sean, Marina, Anh, Devon, and Nkiru carry the jungle gym to the storage shed.

CHLOE

It's locked. I'll go get the key.

She heads off to the band room.

INT. BAND ROOM - NIGHT

Chloe runs in the band room to retrieve the key from its hook outside the band office.

Kathy enters behind her and corners Chloe at the band office, surprising her.

CHLOE

Oh.

KATHY

Chloe. We need to have a little word.

CHLOE

Okay?

KATHY

You know, it just hurts me that you have turned this guard against my daughter! You and your mother have just taken over, haven't you?

CHLOE

What?

KATHY

It breaks a mother's heart to have her daughter treated so cruelly. I don't know who you think you are, but I think you need to leave the guard and take that tramp of a mother with you.

Chloe is stunned.

KATHY (CONT'D)

You hear me? This is my Katherine's guard! I don't know where you came from, but you are not welcome here.

Chloe stares at her in disbelief and then takes a step to move past her. Kathy pushes her up against a wall.

KATHY (CONT'D)

You are one little skank! Like mother like daughter, I guess. Fooling around at band camp with Katherine's boyfriend! Yes, Katherine told me everything!

Chloe runs from the room.

EXT. STORAGE SHED - NIGHT

The guard waits by the shed for Chloe. Chloe runs toward them, out of breath and clearly shaken.

DEVON

About time.

ANH

Chloe, what's wrong?

CHLOE

Oh, my god!

MARINA

What happened?

CHLOE

Kathy Collins cornered me in the band room and threatened me.

SEAN

What?

CHLOE

Yeah. "This is my Katherine's guard and you're not welcome here."

NKIRU

Oh, she did not.

CHLOE

Yeah, I'm serious.

Marina looks at Nkiru and then Devon.

MARINA

Just like last year?

DEVON

Yeah.

CHLOE

Last year?

NKIRU

She tried to bully Anastasia. Didn't fly though. But that's what they do. Beat people up to get their way.

CHLOE

But why?

The others look to each other for an answer.

MARINA
Manipulators.

CHLOE
This is insane.

SEAN
Yeah.

CHLOE
Well, has anyone reported it? Told
Mr. Barnes or Ethan?

DEVON
Who'd believe us? She's the all
powerful "Color Guard Mom."

CHLOE
No. This isn't right. She can't do
this.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sara puts Chloe's bag in the back of her truck.

Chloe runs to her from the storage shed. Sean, Marina,
Devon, Anh, and Nkiru follow her.

CHLOE
Mom!

SARA
Chloe? What's wrong?

Chloe is out of breath.

CHLOE
It's Mrs. Collins! She just
threatened me in the band room.

SARA
What?

CUT TO:

Kathy emerges from the band room and walks confidently over
to her minivan.

Sara storms over to her.

SARA
What the hell is your problem?!

KATHY
I don't know what you're talking about!

SARA
Oh, yes you do! Threatening my daughter! What the hell were you thinking?

KATHY
(through gritted teeth)
Get away from me, you stupid bitch.

Kathy moves to slap Sara in the face, but Sara catches her arm.

CUT TO:

Ethan and Mr. Barnes round the corner of the building, see the confrontation and rush over to the women.

MR. BARNES
What's going on here?

KATHY
This woman is attacking me!

SARA
What?

KATHY
They've been nothing but a problem ever since they came here! And now this woman is attacking me!

MR. BARNES
Wait. Settle down. What happened?

KATHY
I was just minding my own business, loading up all of the guard boxes in my car like I always do, and this bitch comes at me.

MR. BARNES
Your tone is unnecessary, Kathy.

ETHAN

Sara, what happened?

KATHY

Oh, right. Take her side!

MR. BARNES

No one's taking sides!

KATHY

You know I work tirelessly for this guard, and this is the thanks I get!

SARA

Wait a minute! You cornered my daughter in the band room and threatened her! She's trying to force Chloe off the guard.

MR. BARNES

Kathy?

Kathy tries to look wounded.

KATHY

I don't know what she's talking about.

SARA

You are unbelievable! How can you stand there and lie! Have you no shame?

Kathy lunges at Sara again.

KATHY

You stupid bitch!!

Mr. Barnes pulls Kathy back.

MR. BARNES

Stop it. Get some control. There are students here.

KATHY

I don't give a damn! Everything was fine until that slut and her bitch mother got here!

Mr. Barnes steps between Kathy and Sara. Ethan moves to Sara's side.

MR. BARNES

All right! Enough! You're done,
Kathy.

KATHY

What?

MR. BARNES

You heard me. You can't go around
threatening students or
parents. You are completely out of
line here. Give me your keys. I
think you had better go home. Now.

Kathy throws the band room keys at Mr. Barnes, gets in her
car, slams the door and speeds off.

MR. BARNES (CONT'D)

You okay, Chloe? Sara?

Sara nods.

CHLOE

Yeah. Thanks.

Mr. Barnes gently pats Chloe on the back.

Chloe crosses to Sara and puts her arm around her.

ETHAN

(to Mr. Barnes)

Just like last year.

MR. BARNES

But Johanna kept her in check then.
We can't have her around the
students anymore.

INT. BAND ROOM - DAY

Taylor and Leanna fold up flags and store them in boxes for
the next season.

TAYLOR

So, did you see the audition
notice?

LEANNA

Yeah. Winterguard. Are you gonna
do it?

TAYLOR

Yeah. Why not? I mean if you don't try, you won't get in.

LEANNA

Yeah. Wow. Winterguard.

Katherine approaches them.

KATHERINE

What the hell are you losers doing sitting here? Get this folded and put away!

Leanna looks down and fumbles with a flag.

LEANNA

Sorry... We were just talking about Winterguard.

KATHERINE

Well, you can forget about that. It's the elite guard and you freaks don't belong there.

TAYLOR

We can try out if we want. You can't stop us.

Chloe, Sean, Anh, and Nkiru enter the band room.

KATHERINE

Just watch me!

CHLOE

Leave her alone!

Katherine turns and Leanna escapes.

KATHERINE

You gonna make me?

Chloe puts herself between Katherine and Leanna.

CHLOE

I *said* leave her alone!

KATHERINE

Get out of my face, you stupid bitch!

SEAN

Katherine! Stop it!

KATHERINE

Yeah? Make me, faggot!

CHLOE

All right! Enough!

Leanna and Taylor duck behind Chloe. Sean, Anh, and Nkiru flank Chloe.

KATHERINE

Right, like you freaks can do anything!

Nkiru shoves Katherine. She stumbles and falls.

KATHERINE

You god damned black bitch!

Chloe pulls Nkiru back.

CHLOE

Look, I said enough! Nkiru!

Chloe turns on Katherine.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

You can't attack us anymore!

KATHERINE

And you're gonna stop me?

Katherine grabs a rifle from a pile of gear and swings it at Chloe. Chloe is quicker than Katherine and grabs it, fiercely twists it from her hand and tosses it across the room to Sean.

Sean catches it and moves in behind Chloe. Chloe steps into Katherine.

CHLOE

You're done.

KATHERINE

Bitch.

CHLOE

God, what's wrong with you?

Katherine glares at Chloe.

CHLOE (CON'T)

We moved here after my dad died,
and all I wanted was to find a way
to pick up my life again. That's
it. But you were out to get me from
the start, you and your mother.
Why?

Katherine abruptly gathers her things and starts to go.

KATHERINE

You're gonna pay for this!

CHLOE

Yeah? What are you going to
do? Your mom's no longer in
charge.

Katherine storms off.

The guard sits down at the table, stunned. Leanna puts her
arm around Chloe, and Taylor walks over and puts her head on
Chloe's shoulder.

CHLOE

It's all right now. Everything's
going to be all right.

INT. DEVON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It is the end of the season party and guard and band members
are there, in and out of the house.

Hung is dancing alone across the living room to music that
only he hears.

BJ dances across the room to Chloe, who now wears her dog
tag on the outside of her shirt.

BJ

Rockin' party, huh, Chlo?

CHLOE

Absolutely. You go, BJ!

Ethan and Luis walk over to Chloe.

ETHAN

You know, I'm impressed. Leadership
qualities and talent. Good combo.

CHLOE

Thanks.

LUIS

So...tell her. I'm dying!

ETHAN

So, Anastasia graduates this year.
That means we need a new captain.
And we've decided that it should be
you.

CHLOE

Me?

LUIS

Oh sweetie, you'll be fab, ab fab.

Chloe laughs.

CHLOE

Thanks. I'd be proud to do it.

LUIS

Well, don't tell Katherine, the
dragon lady. Ethan will take care
of her.

ETHAN

Yeah. I don't think she'll be on
the guard next year. Kind of lousy
at the team work thing.

LUIS

That girl gives me gray hair, and
you know that will just not do!

The guard: Anastasia, Sean, Anh, Marina, Nkiru, Taylor,
Leanna, and Devon, gather around Chloe.

ANASTASIA

New captain?

Chloe smiles and nods.

ANH

I knew it! Congratulations!

TAYLOR

Oh, Chloe, that's great!

LEANNA
I'll work really hard to get
better.

Chloe gives Leanna a hug.

CHLOE
Just do your best, Leanna. That's
all that matters.

ETHAN
So, you know, Chlo, Winterguard is
next.

CHLOE
Winterguard?

LUIS
Yes, this is the last supper and
then it's back to spandex!

The music cranks up ALL RIGHT NOW and some of the guard
start to dance.

Nkiru gives Chloe a hug, as does Anh, and then they join the
others on the dance floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

The music continues to play.

A ripple of a flag through the sunlight. It snaps around
and then is tossed in the air, spinning in a double
revolution. It comes down in a tight snap: Chloe is
revealed at the snap.

She dances the flag, rippling it past her body. As she
turns, Sara is revealed behind her, at her easel painting in
the garage. Her paint brush and body move to the music.

FADE OUT.