

Haight

Full Synopsis

In present day San Francisco John Clark stands in front of his mother's grave. John's wife Sabrina consoles him. Later that day at the lawyer's office, they go through John's late mother's safe deposit box. They come across a clue to the identity of John's biological parents. They are both intrigued with the photos they find of someone named Aaron Thomas.

We now flashback to 1970 in San Francisco. The Vietnam war is at its height. The anti-war movement is reaching the boiling point. Aaron Thomas has come to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco to hone his musical skills. He is a Berkeley student and lives with his band mates in a small apartment. He is a guitarist, composer, poet, anti-war activist, and lover of the arts. The band is rehearsing their latest high-powered anti-war anthem.

Aaron and his band mates call the local radio station for the lottery numbers for the Vietnam war draft. They are very concerned. Aaron is the only one with a number low enough to be eligible for active duty. Despite being a student, Aaron has slipped below the minimum units allowed for exemption. He is now eligible for active military duty. Aaron begins to panic.

The scene now moves to the present day. John and Sabrina continue looking through the safe deposit box. John is convinced that the photos are clues to the identity of his biological parents. As they examine the three photos of Aaron Thomas and his band, Sabrina notices that the same Chinese girl is in each photo.

Again we flash back to San Francisco's Chinatown in 1970. Jing Po is the youngest of two daughters born to immigrant Chinese parents. She attends UC Berkeley and minds the financially troubled family Chinatown store. We are introduced to Jing's parents and older sister, Ling-si.

The scene moves to present day San Francisco. John has fallen asleep at the computer late at night. His quest is becoming an obsession. Sabrina wakes him. John has found only a few clues concerning Aaron Thomas. He is disappointed and concerned that he may not like what he discovers. John shows Sabrina his latest findings: Aaron Thomas and his band performed regularly at a local San Francisco coffee house.

At a Haight-Ashbury coffee shop in 1970, Aaron and his band are performing. Jing and Ling-si are in attendance. Aaron and Jing meet and there is an instant attraction. Both Jing and Ling-si know their parents would never approve of Jing's interest in an American boy.

The next day Yao, the landlord of the Po apartment and shop, comes to collect the rent at the Chinatown store. He is very interested in Jing. The shop is low on inventory and in financial trouble. While visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Po, Yao suggests that Jing has become too Americanized and needs additional tutoring in her Chinese studies. He volunteers as Jing's teacher. Jing realizes that the leering Yao is only interested in her and not tutoring. Yao leaves the store and Aaron enters a few minutes later. Aaron pretends to be shopping when Mr. and Mrs. Po come down from their apartment to the shop. A comical scene ensues as Mrs. Po waits on Aaron as a legitimate customer. Ling-si tries to usher Aaron out, but before he leaves, he and Jing make plans to meet later that night at Portsmouth Square.

That evening Jing and Aaron meet amid the noise and bright colors of the Portsmouth Square night fair in Chinatown. They wander among the many booths and shops. They speak of the situation in which they find themselves: cultural intolerance, family expectations, Vietnam. Yao comes across Jing and Aaron and reprimands her for fraternizing with an American boy. But before Jing leaves, Aaron invites her to the anti-war rally the next day in Chinatown where Aaron's band will be playing.

A few days later, Aaron's band is playing at UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza in an attempt to recruit students into the campus SDS club (Students for a Democratic Society). Aaron has invited Jing to attend but he has a special surprise. Aaron has set up an elaborate Italian lunch and presents Jing with a beautiful moonstone and diamond ring. In the middle of bustling Sproul Plaza, Aaron and Jing have a romantic lunch and intimate conversation as the band plays.

As we move to the present day, a disheveled John is in his robe sitting in front of the computer working feverishly. It is early morning and Sabrina is dressed and ready for work. John has taken the day off to pursue his latest clue. Sabrina is concerned about John's increasing obsession. John has discovered that Aaron Thomas was a Cal Berkeley student and spent time in prison. Both John and Sabrina are disappointed that Aaron might be a criminal.

We return to the 1970 time line. Jing attends the rally the next day. Aaron addresses the crowd informing them of his recent report for active duty notice. He proclaims his intention of refusing to serve in the military. He publicly credits Jing for helping him come to this revelation. Jing is moved by his beautiful songs and moral stand.

That evening Jing invites Aaron to stop by the shop for Chinese food while her parents are away. Aaron has brought his acoustic guitar along. Jing invites him up to the roof where he sings a few songs. The San Francisco skyline is beautiful as the sun sets. The romantic scene culminates with the consummation of their relationship. Ling-si bursts in on the scene and announces in a panic that Yao is pounding on the front door. Yao has been informed by the neighbors that Jing has been seen with an American boy on the roof of the apartment. Aaron flees via the fire escape. Yao lets himself in using his passkey. Jing is furious that Yao has entered their house uninvited. Yao storms up the stairs to the roof in order to apprehend Aaron. Yao threatens to tell Jing's parents about

her American boyfriend.

The next day Yao visits Mr. and Mrs. Po in the Chinatown shop. He offers them ownership of the shop and apartment if Jing will consent to a more permanent relationship with him. Mrs. Po is convinced that the only way to curb Jing's American tendencies is an arranged marriage, as well as helping them with their financial trouble. Mr. Po is not convinced but reluctantly agrees. Jing is crushed.

The following day Aaron and Jing meet at Portsmouth Square. Jing anxiously relates the news about Yao's marriage offer. Despite Aaron's impending incarceration, they resolve to be together at any cost.

The scene now moves back to the present day in San Francisco. John and Sabrina are seated at their individual computers in the beautiful San Francisco public library. They finally discover the true reason for Aaron's incarceration. John is elated that Aaron is really a hero. While searching the Pacifica Archives and the Berkeley student newspaper, Sabrina has discovered the name of the mysterious Chinese girl in the photos: Jing Po. They quickly look for the Po name in the San Francisco phone listings. There are over one hundred. Undeterred, John is convinced someone in Chinatown must know something about Jing Po.

Again, we moved back to 1970. Jing and Ling-si emerge from the local clinic. Jing is pregnant. Ling-si consoles her distraught sister. A few months later Jing discloses her pregnancy to her parents. In his prison cell, Aaron sadly plays his guitar. A few days later Jing visits Aaron and gently informs him of her pregnancy.

A few months later Yao enters the Po family shop after a lengthy trip to Hong Kong. He has returned with a guzheng (Chinese harp) for Jing and insists on seeing her. A visibly pregnant Jing comes down the stairs. Yao flies into a rage and retracts his offer of marriage and ownership of the building.

A few days later the band members come to visit Aaron in prison. He eagerly discloses his early release date to the ecstatic band. Aaron asks Ramon to stop by the Po family shop and tell Jing of his impending release. That night Jing and Mrs. Po argue fiercely over the fate of the shop. Yao has recanted his previous refusal to marry Jing and is now willing to do so, provided she put her child up for adoption. Jing vehemently rejects the new offer. Mrs. Po threatens to banish her from the family and throw her out in the street if she refuses to cooperate.

The next day Ramon stops by the Po family shop to deliver Aaron's message, but he is prevented from speaking to Jing. One week later Aaron is released and immediately rushes to the Po apartment to see Jing. Jing's parents refuse to let him see her and throw him out of the shop after a heated verbal exchange. Aaron is crushed. After Mr. and Mrs. Po leave the shop, Ling-si informs her sister that Aaron just left the building. Jing is resolved to see Aaron and explain all that has happened.

Meanwhile, a despondent Aaron has arrived at his apartment where the band members

have arranged a welcome home party. Aaron appreciates the gesture, but would rather be alone. Jing arrives at Aaron's apartment to find the door open and all the lights off. She finds him sitting alone in the dark in despair. There is a tearful reunion. A guilt-ridden Jing must inform Aaron of their child's adoption. Despite the loss of their son, they resolve to be together at any cost. Jing will not return home but stay with Aaron. Aaron's band is scheduled to play at the huge anti-war rally on April 24th in Golden Gate Park. The band will perform at the rally and both Jing and Aaron will leave town shortly thereafter. Meanwhile, Yao and Mr. and Mrs. Po have returned home to find that Jing has left the apartment. Ling-si refuses to tell them anything.

The storyline moves forward to the present day. Both John and Sabrina have spent the day searching Chinatown for clues to the identity of John's biological parents. They enter the Po shop. An aging Ling-si tells them of her sister. They are confused when Ling-si talks of Jing in the past tense.

We now move back to April 24, 1971. In Golden Gate Park there are 150,000 people in attendance at the anti-war rally. Aaron's band plays. The famous orator Reverend Marshall Logan delivers a stirring speech. While on stage, Aaron asks Jing to join him. The crowd cheers and the band is ecstatic. Yao, who has been working his way through the crowd, sees this and is infuriated. As he approaches the stage, he whips out a gun and gets off three shots before he is subdued by security. Pandemonium ensues. Aaron falls to the stage, slightly wounded. Everyone gathers around Aaron. Behind Aaron, Jing has fallen down, mortally wounded. There is renewed pandemonium as everyone realizes Jing is truly injured. Aaron struggles to his feet and goes over to Jing. He holds her in his arms as she dies. He screams in fury and anguish.

We again move forward to the present day. John knocks on the door of Aaron's home. An aging Aaron Thomas answers. Aaron finally stands face to face with John, his only son.