

Vincent Gahan looked at the postings on the walls of Crellin Hall at Caltech after a long day of working in the organic synthesis lab. There was a scholarship opportunity that he had not seen before. As he mulled over it, he mumbled, "Dan Balan scholarship for aspiring musicians? Sounds right up my alley and right in line with the Geeksters!" Without a second thought, he pulled the notice off the wall and drove off in his black 2000 Honda Accord to Cal State LA, where his friends waited at his house.

Tara Luo, his best friend and fellow Geekster, was running around excitedly with several pieces of paper. "I got into Caltech! And I got into Cornell and Yale and Stanford and Syracuse... so everywhere except for University of Wisconsin!" she called out, waving the acceptance letters for graduate school.

The tall, lightly muscled, dark-haired boy with trendy sunglasses and even trendier black clothing hugged his tiny friend. Despite the fact that she was eighteen and a year older than he was, she could easily pass for a twelve or thirteen year old with her delicate build and wide-eyed innocence. "Congratulations! I still have to check my mail to see who took me in," he said, still hugging her.

"And look at what I found!" said Vincent, holding out the scholarship notice. "We can try to compete for this scholarship, all we have to do is show that we want to continue pursuing music even when we do our PhDs and show that we have promise as a band! And before we do anything, let me check my snail-mail!" He went to his mailbox and gingerly opened the box, hoping to find large envelopes. There were three large envelopes and three small envelopes, all addressed to him. His eyes widened as he gasped out, "I got into Davis, Irvine, and Caltech. Didn't get into Harvard, MIT, or Yale. I guess I get to be a west coast boy still." He laughed a bit, relieved but nervous at not having gotten into Harvard or Yale, knowing exactly what his parents would've wanted of him.

"Vincent! Did the letters come yet?" shouted Vincent's mom from the kitchen. She had a very strong Chinese accent and was a short, matronly woman with a stern, no-nonsense expression. She emerged from the kitchen, looking excitedly at her son. "Your friends already got their letters, you should have yours!"

Shrugging, Vincent approached his mother and showed the letters to her, ready for any scolding for not getting into an Ivy-League school. "You get in UC System and Caltech, why not get in better schools?" she demanded angrily. "I tell you not to spend time with the giants and not so much time in

music! The other two, perfect friends, they get in best schools but you only get in not so good school! You just like your father!" His mother pointed at Tara approvingly, then shook her finger angrily at Vincent.

Vincent merely stood still and bit his lip, while Tara glanced at both Vincent and his mother. "Mrs. Fung, if it helps, Caltech is still one of the best schools in chemistry, as is UC Berkeley," said Tara, trying to be as helpful as she could.

"But no name, no prestige! He need prestige and good name too!" ranted Joan Fung. "I no want him to be like his father, get degree from UC Berkeley, can't get job, do drugs, then leave me to raise son all alone!"

Right as Joan stopped berating her son, a red 1996 hatchback Honda Civic drove up in front of the house. Tara looked nervously, understanding the implications for poor Vincent. Once the car stopped and parked, a tall young man in his mid twenties stepped out of the car. Standing at six foot six with extremely broad shoulders and a muscular build, few people dared to give John Gallagher any trouble. "Vincent and Tara!" he called out but as soon as he saw Joan, he whispered to himself, "Shit!"

"John! Did you check your mail yet?" called out Tara, trying to lead him away from Joan and Vincent. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see Vincent sweating profusely and Joan's face turning livid.

"Naw, going to check when I get home tonight. Oh, Radu and Katie can't make it today. Radu got fuckin' grounded for not getting into Stanford, Cornell, and Yale but hell, he fuckin' got into MIT. All he fuckin' needs is one school. I still can't believe the shit he goes through with his parents. Katie still hasn't come back from the fuckin' field yet, fuckin' asshole Dr. Arboles' shitty car broke down and can't drive back," he said to Tara, trying to keep his voice down. "But she did get into some bitchin' schools, Caltech and UC Berkeley." Tara felt certain that John probably got into Caltech and University of Florida.

As soon as John reported the situation to Tara, Joan's voice shot down to him. "And you, John, stop cursing so much! It's bad luck and you stay away from my son and this girl until you stop cursing! You bad role model, start act proper!" Tara merely looked up at Joan, then shrugged her shoulders. After what felt like an eternity to Vincent, his mother finally left him alone with Tara and John. "And Vincent, you better think of future!" finished Joan before disappearing into her study to finish some book-keeping.

Before Vincent fully absorbed what had happened, Tara ran up to hug him. "You'll be ok, she's just being a bit over-reactive," she whispered. "My

mom does that too.”

”I hope so. But at the same time, I feel like I’ve failed her, even if I’d never be able to live with myself for going to some school for the prestige and I don’t have any real interest in,” said Vincent, trying to hold back his tears, although a tiny one slipped out. ”What about your parents?”

Tara smiled, then she said, ”Well, they’re a bit worried that I’ll go too far away, but I think I already know where I want to go.”

John nodded. ”Caltech. No fuckin’ doubt about it. I’m know I fuckin’ got into Caltech and University of Florida. Not so fuckin’ confident about North Carolina State and University of Montana, but they’re shitty back-ups.” Glancing nervously towards the study again, John pulled Vincent and Tara closer. ”So what ya gonna do, Vincent? You’re not gonna let your overbearing mom fuckin’ boss you around like that, are you?”

Still shaken by his mom’s intense scolding, Vincent shrugged. ”I’ll just pick the school I like best. I can’t change admissions’ minds. But anyway, I thought we could do something fun before we all go off to graduate school wherever.” He pulled out the sheet of paper he had picked up at Caltech and showed it to both Tara and John. Both of them read the announcement, then smiled at Vincent.

”This’ll be one Geekster performance nobody will forget!” laughed Tara quietly, keeping her voice down to make sure Joan didn’t hear.