

Songbirds: The Diary of Dana Ma : Part 3

By: Dino Mahoney

Characters:

Dana: A school girl.
Winnie: Winnie Wong. Dana's best friend
Miss Wu: Dana's teacher
Mr Lo: The discipline teacher
Miss Yu. Sports teacher (small role, actor can double up)
Priscilla: Classmate
Mrs Ma: Dana's Mother.
Mr. Ma: Dana's father, a businessman.

Synopsis:

In Part 1 of The Diary of Dana Ma we heard the inner voice of Dana, a schoolgirl, keeping a diary while her parents were splitting up. In Part 2 we heard her parents arguing and eventually splitting up. In Part 3 we hear how the troubles at home affect Dana at school.

Scene 1.

Dana: Sunday January 23rd 'Dear Diary... why is this happening? Why is this happening to me?
Diary: Why? Why? Why? (SFX: Fade)

Mr Ma: Still up?
Mrs Ma: (Uptight) Where have you been?
Mr. Ma: You should have gone to bed.
Mrs Ma: Answer me Nelson... where have you been?
Mr Ma: (Sighs) Out with a client. Mister Horitaki.... He's over from Tokyo... He's an important client... I had to take him out. Okay?

Mrs Ma: Take him where?
Mrs Ma: We took the ferry over to Tsim Tsa Tsoi and then we walked around and we had dinner at the Ambassador and that was it.

Mrs Ma: It's two thirty Nelson. How long was dinner?!

Mr Ma: We went for a drink afterwards.
Mrs Ma: Where?
Mr Ma: Just somewhere local.
Mrs Ma: Were there hostesses there?
Mr Ma: No, I don't think there were.
Mrs Ma: Is everything you've just told me the truth Nelson.
Mr Ma: I'm your husband Martha and if you can't trust me... who can you trust. (SFX: Fade)

Mrs Ma: Mister Sing?
Mr Sing: That's right. Pleased to meet you. Please sit down.
Mrs Ma: Thank you..
Mr Sing: Now then... shall we proceed to business?
Mrs Ma: Please.
Mr Sing: I'll read from my notes if you don't mind... that way I won't get anything wrong. (Clearing throat) On Friday January 21st your husband Mr Nelson Ma left the Harbour View Hotel in the company of a Mister Hirotaki They then took the Star Ferry to Tsim Sha Tsui and had dinner in the Ambassador Hotel, after which they proceeded to The Kitty Kat Club. At twenty minutes to eleven they left the Kitty Kat Club and Mr Ma escorted Mr Hirotaki to the Star Ferry and then returned to the Kitty Kat Club. At eleven fifteen Mr Ma left the club in the company of a Miss Kiki Poon, a hostess at the Kitty Kat Club. They then proceeded to an apartment in the nearby Prosperity Building where Mr Ma remained until two o'clock in the morning. (SFX: Fade)

(SFX: Fade up on dinner at home. Chopsticks scraping against an emptied bowl)

Mr Ma: That was delicious Martha.
Dana: It was lovely mummy.
Mrs Ma: Good. You know I was thinking... maybe... as it's Sunday night... we could all go out together to see a film.
Dana: Oh yes please! Yes please! Can we daddy?! Can we?!
Mr Ma: I'd love to Dana, but I can't. I've got an important meeting.
Dana: (Disappointed) Ohhh, it's not fair!
Mr Ma: I know... why don't you two go together!
Dana: But we want you to come with us.
Mrs Ma: (Sarcastic) It's alright Dana... your father has got better things to do with his time than go out with his family.
Mr Ma: Don't say that Martha.
Mrs Ma: He has a very important meeting at the Kitty Kat Club with a Miss Kiki Poon.
Mr Ma: What?!

(SFX: Bowl being smashed to the ground)

Go then! Go to your meeting! Go on! Get out! And never come back!
Mr Ma: What are you talking about?!
Mrs Ma: Pack your bags and get out!
Mr Ma: Okay! If that's what you want! I'm leaving!
Dana: Daddy... no... don't!
Mrs Ma: Dana... go to your room.
Dana: Daddy!
Mrs Ma: Dana... your room!

(SFX: Door slams)

Dana: (SFX: Fade up) Dear Diary. Tonight something really horrible happened... I think it has been the worst night in my whole life so far. And it started so nicely. Mum made a delicious dinner... dad really liked it too... then mum suggested we all go to the cinema. Then it all went wrong. Horribly, horribly wrong.

Scene 2

Miss Wu: (To whole class) So for tonight's homework I'd like you to do exercise one, two... not three... but four and five on pages sixty two and sixty three. Is that clear?

All: (Dreary voices) Yes Miss.

Miss Wu: And Dana... which exercise mustn't you do?

Dana: (Yawning) Sorry Miss.

Miss Wu: Dana... don't yawn when you're talking to me... it's rude.

Dana: Sorry Miss.

Miss Wu: Well Dana... what's the answer?

(SFX: Bell rings signalling end of class)

Dana: Sorry Miss?

Miss Wu: I said... which exercise mustn't you do?

Dana: One, two, four and five Miss.

Miss Wu: Mustn't! Dana. Mustn't!

Dana: Three Miss.

Miss Wu: Finally! I don't know what's wrong with you Dana... you seem only half here to-day.... Come on now girls... be quick... you've got games and Miss Yu doesn't like to be kept waiting.

(SFX: Students leaving the classroom)

Dana: Sorry I've been a bit out of it to-day Miss.

Miss Wu: Maybe a brisk game of hockey will help you wake up a bit Dana.

Dana: Yes Miss.

Miss Wu: Was there anything else Dana? I'm sorry I'm in a hurry... I've got to get to my next class.

Dana: I just wanted to say...

Miss Wu: (Calling out to another girl) Priscilla... Priscilla look... you've left your games kit behind silly girl. (To Dana) Sorry Dana...

Dana: It's just that... well...

Miss Wu: I'm sorry Dana... I've got to rush. (SFX: Voice shrinking as she hurries off) I'll see you later.

Dana: (Disappointed) Yes Miss Wu.

Scene 3

(SFX: Ambient sounds of girls playing a game of hockey. Shrill whistle being blown on hockey field)

Miss Yu: (From a distance) Dana! For goodness sake wake up girl!

Dana: (Calling back) Yes Miss Yu. (Under her breath) Hate hockey.
(SFX: Shrill whistle)

Miss Yu: Okay girls. Go and get changed.

(SFX: Background hiss of showers in changing room)

Winnie: Hey Dana... what was wrong with you to-day?... Your game was complete and utter rubbish.

Dana: I'm not feeling very well Winnie.

Winnie: Why? What's wrong with you?

Dana: I don't really know.

Winnie: Are you sick?

Dana: Sort of.

Winnie: What is it? A cold or something?

Dana: Don't know.

Winnie: Why don't you go to the doctor's?

Dana: Don't want to.

Winnie: Well if you're feeling unwell and you won't go to the doctor's... you'll just have to suffer. Hope it's not catching whatever it is you've got.

Dana: It's not.

Winnie: How do you know? If you don't feel well it could be a virus and viruses are infectious... everybody knows that.

Dana: It's not a virus.

Winnie: How can you be so sure?

Dana: I just am!

Winnie: What, are you a doctor or something?

Dana: (Irritated) No of course not!

Winnie: Alright... no need to shout!

Dana: (Pause) It's something else.

Winnie: What? (Silence) Oh for heaven's sakes Dana... whatever is the matter with you to-day?

Dana: Can you keep a secret Winnie?

Winnie: Of course! (Silence) Well? Are you going to tell me or not?!

Dana: (Pause) Something's happening at home.

Winnie: Who's home?

Dana: (Annoyed) Mine of course!

Winnie: (Irritated) Alright! Don't be so touchy! I was only asking. It could have been anybody's home!

Dana: (Annoyed) But we're talking about me aren't we?!

Winnie: Yes. So?

Dana: So it's my home!

Winnie: Oh do get on with it!
 Dana: Forget it.
 Winnie: I thought you were going to tell me a secret?
 Dana: I was!
 Winnie: Well tell me then!
 Dana: I was going to only you kept interrupting me with stupid questions!
 Winnie: They weren't stupid!
 Dana: They were!
 Winnie: Well if that's how you feel about it don't bother!
 Dana: (Angry) It's about my Mum and Dad right?!
 Winnie: Your Mum and Dad?
 Dana: Why are you looking at me like that?
 Winnie: Like what?
 Dana: Screwing your face up like that.
 Winnie: I'm not! This is what I look like when I'm listening!
 Dana: (Blurting it out) Look... my Dad's been seeing this hostess called Kiki Poon and my Mum found out and she got really... (Trails off as Winnie starts laughing)
 Winnie: (Starts laughing immediately she hears the name 'Kiki Poon')
 Dana: What are you laughing at?
 Winnie: (Laughing) Your dad seeing a hostess called... Kiki Poon (she howls with laughter)
 Dana: It's not funny Winnie!
 Winnie: (Stops laughing) No... no... it's disgusting... I mean aren't hostesses like... not very nice... ughhh... and your dad is 'seeing' one?! Yuk! If my dad did that.... No, no he wouldn't he just wouldn't! Hey Dana... where are you going?! (Calling out after her) Dana!
 Dana: (From a distance) You're so stupid Winnie!... You really are... you're just... a silly little girl!
 Winnie: (Outraged) Well! At least my father doesn't run around with hostesses!

Scene 4

Miss Wu: (SFX: Fade in to her teaching a class) Okay... that's exercise two finished... now let's move on to exercise four. Fill in the gaps putting the bare infinitive of the verb into the appropriate tense. Question one... (Reading) 'Last week there was a terrible storm and the lightening 'strike' the tree' What tense should 'strike' be in? (Silence) Priscilla.
 Priscilla: 'Struck' Miss.
 Miss Wu: Correct. And why is it 'struck.' Because the verb has to be in the past tense.
 Miss Wu: Correct, but how do we know Priscilla?
 Priscilla: Because the sentence begins, 'Last week...' so it has to be the past and the past tense of the verb 'to strike' is 'struck' Miss.
 Miss Wu: Is the verb 'to strike' regular or irregular Priscilla?
 Priscilla: Irregular Miss.
 Miss Wu: Correct. Regular past tense verbs usually end with....?

Priscilla: E D Miss.
Miss Wu: Good. Now lets move on to the second question, 'I 'live' here since October 2001. Who can tell me what tense 'live' should be in? I 'live' here since October 2001.... Yes, Winnie.

Winnie: Please Miss.
Miss Wu: Answer the question Winnie.
Winnie: I will Miss... but I just wanted to say that someone's asleep.
Miss Wu: Someone's asleep?!
Winnie: Dana Miss... look... she's fast asleep.
Miss Wu: Good heavens, so she is.
All: (Titter and giggle)
Miss Wu: We'll soon see about that! Dana! (Clapping her hands together very loudly by Dana's head) Wake up!

Dana: (Yawning) What?
All: (Giggle)
Miss Wu: I'm sorry you find my lessons so boring Dana.
Dana: (Tired voice) Sorry.
Miss Wu: 'Miss' ... Sorry, 'Miss.'
Dana: (Sleepy) Miss. (Yawns)
All: (Giggle)
Miss Wu: And please don't yawn in my face Dana ... it makes you look like a hippopotamus!
All: (Laugh)
Dana: Sorry..... Miss.
Miss Wu: I should think so too. If Winnie hadn't kindly pointed it out you would have slept through the whole class and missed the answers to your homework. Now let's not waste any more time. Winnie... please... change the verb for us.

Winnie: 'I have been living here since October 2001.'
Miss Wu: Excellent Winnie. What tense and why?
Winnie:: Present perfect continuous Miss because we are talking about a continuous period that began at a certain point in the past and continued right up to the present. (SFX: Fade)

(SFX: Bell ringing for end of class)

Miss Wu: Very well... that's enough for to-day. Now get ready for your next class.
(SFX: Ambient sounds of class leaving the classroom)

Dana: So Winnie told Miss I was asleep... the rat! Well let's see how she likes this.
Winnie: (Screams as Dana pinches her hard)
(Sudden silence)
Miss Wu: What on earth was that?
Priscilla: Dana Ma pinched Winnie Wong Miss.
Winnie: (Agonized voice) It really hurts!
Dana: Did you Dana? Did you pinch Winnie?

Priscilla: I saw her Miss.
 Miss Wu: Did you or didn't you?!
 Dana: (Sulky) Yes.
 Winnie: Look Miss... she's bruised me!
 Miss Wu: Why Dona, why? If it's because Winnie told me you were asleep during the lesson?... Is it? (Pause) You should be thanking Winnie for that not pinching her... if Winnie hadn't told me you were asleep you would have missed a very important lesson. Very well Dona... I want you to write a letter of apology to Winnie and bring it to me tomorrow. Is that understood. (Silence) Dona! You can't hide behind silence!
 Dona: (Sulkily) Yes Miss.
 Miss Wu: Very well... now will you all please leave quietly and NO PINCHING!

Scene 5

Dana: Dear Diary, I was so tired I fell asleep in class. Winnie put up her hand and reported me to Miss Wu and Miss Wu scolded me for falling asleep in class. And she said, 'Thank you Winnie.' I looked at Winnie and she looked away. So at the end of the lesson, as we were leaving class, I got behind Winnie and I pinched her really hard. She screamed and the other girls gathered round. Priscilla said she'd seen me pinching Winnie and Miss Wu asked me to write a letter saying sorry to Winnie. I didn't answer and she said, 'You can't hide behind silence Dana.' But I'm not sorry, I'm not, I'm not, I hate Winnie and now I hate Miss Wu. I hate everyone. And I'm not writing that silly letter. I'm not! I'm not! I'm not!

Scene 6

(Ambient classroom sounds)

Miss Wu: Well Dana... where's the letter?
 Dana: I haven't written it Miss.
 Miss Wu: Why not?
 Dana: I'm... I'm sorry Miss but... Do I have to write it Miss?
 Miss Wu: Dana... you gave Winnie a nasty pinch... you hurt her for nothing and now you owe her an apology.
 Dana: But Miss...
 Miss Wu: No buts Dana... Now I'm giving you one more chance... bring that letter in tomorrow or you'll be in big trouble young lady. (SFX: Fade)

Dana: Miss Wu said that she would give me one more chance. She said that I had to write it tonight and give it to her tomorrow morning. I think she wants to read it aloud to the whole class. But I'm not going to write it, why should I? Winnie used to be my friend. Now she's my enemy. She put her hand up and told Miss I was sleeping. But I was tired. I hadn't slept all night... I couldn't stop thinking about what was happening to Mum and Dad. And now I'm being

punished. It isn't fair. I'm glad I pinched Winnie... she deserved it. This is my letter to Winnie. Dear Winnie, that pinch I gave you was nothing compared to what you did to me. I thought you were my friend and I tried to talk to you, to tell you what is happening to me... but you wouldn't listen.... You just laughed and ran away. And now I hate you. I really hate you. Your ex-friend, Dana. Huh, see how she likes that! No one understands. No one cares. Only you diary, you're the only one who understands. You're the

Scene 7

Miss Wu: Good morning Dana. I believe you have something for me? Or rather for Winnie. (Silence) Dana, it is very rude not to answer when you are being spoken to.

Dana: Yes Miss.

Miss Wu: Well Dana... have you or have you not written the letter of apology to Winnie?

Dana: No Miss.

Miss Wu: Very well... I gave you a second chance but you foolishly didn't take it. The matter is now out of my hands. I am reporting you to the discipline teacher, Mr Lo.

Dana: But Miss... I can explain.

Miss Wu: Not to me Dana... it's too late. You'll have to take your explanations to Mister Lo... but I don't somehow think he'll be very receptive to 'excuses' do you Dana? (Silence) Now go and sit down and TRY to behave.

Scene 7

(SFX: Knocking on door)

Mr Lo: Come in.

Dana: (Resentful. Rebellious)) Miss Wu said I had to come and see you.

Mr Lo: Ah yes, Dana Ma... come in. Don't look so angry girl, it's you who's done something wrong not me. (Silence) Now why have you been so disobedient? (Silence) Miss Wu said you've been falling asleep in the classroom and attacking other girls. Is this true? (Silence) I've just asked you a question Dana. It's rude not to answer. (Silence) Dana, I'm asking you why you are behaving so badly? Now answer me! (Silence) Miss Wu is right, you are very rude and disobedient.

Dana: No I'm not... You are!

Mr Lo: How dare you speak to me like that! This is a good school with a good reputation! We don't want girls in this school who don't know how to speak to teachers properly! You've been sleeping in class, attacking your fellow students, being rude to teachers and goodness know what you'll do next! I'm going to write to your parents... see what they have to say about this. Let them know what a rude little girl they are bringing up.

Dana: I don't care... you can write to who you want.

Mr Lo: Dana! Come back here when I'm talking to you! Come back here immediately!!

Scene 8

Dana: Dear diary, soon we shall be far away from here. I don't know where. But I shall try to keep you warm and dry. (SFX: Fade)

Dear Diary. I'm in Sai Kung. It's cold. Mum and Dad used to bring me here when I was a little girl. We'd sit at a table by the sea and have dinner. And once we got on a boat and went for a ride..... As I was leaving school I looked at Winnie and I thought... I'm never going to see you again. Never..... It'll soon be the Lunar New Year and Winnie can go home and get all her red packets and count her money and eat her steamed fish and roasted chicken and long noodles. I've just eaten a biscuit and I don't know where to sleep tonight. Maybe in one of the boats. I can rock from side to side and fall asleep. (Pause) Someone is looking at me. A man. I don't like him. I'd better move on before he asks me any questions.

The End