

Just Live

By

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OFFICE. INT. DAY.

NILES ZHANG is at his desk, typing up a report. His cellphone rings.

NILES

(Answering the phone)

Yes.

(Pausing)

Okay.

HOSPITAL ROOM. INT. DAY. CONTINUED.

THOMAS ZHANG is in a hospital bed. His mother, CAROL ZHANG, is beside him, holding his hand. Family friend, WEI LIN, stands to the side. Niles sits quietly in a off to the side, working on his report.

CAROL

You can't be working from now on.

THOMAS

It's time for me to retire anyway.  
Wei, I want hand you the business.

WEI

You know I can't run the restaurant  
without you. I'm getting old too. I  
know people who we can sell to.

THOMAS

I understand. So be it. Where's  
Niles?

Niles walks over.

THOMAS

Hey son, I was joking that if I  
died, you'd replace me, but lord  
knows you can't cook!

CAROL

Thomas, it's dinner time. We've got  
to go. I'll be back in the evening.

THOMAS

So, I'll see you tomorrow Niles?  
Goodbye everyone.

NILES'S DINING ROOM. INT. AFTERNOON.

Niles's and his mother are eating dinner. He sits quietly. Niles finishes his plate, puts it by the sink, and goes to his room. His mother watches him disappear from sight.

NILES'S ROOM. INT. NIGHT.

Niles is lying in bed. He phones his girlfriend, MARY YUAN.

NILES

Sorry I'm late. Had some trouble today. My dad is in the hospital. He's alright now.

MARY

Oh no. He's alive thankfully. The restaurant is going to be closed?

NILES

Sold off. He's retiring.

MARY

Remember when we were little? We'd always play there. It was the only Chinese restaurant in town then.

NILES

Yeah. Hey, sorry again I called late and all.

MARY

That's fine. You had to be there for your family.

Niles's eyes shift off to a lower corner of the room.

HOSPITAL ROOM. INT. DAY.

Niles walks in. The lights are off. Sunlight filters into the room through the blinds. Niles walks over. His father's face traced by the sunlight.

THOMAS

(Patting Niles's shoulder)  
Hey, Wei told me his friend wants to scrap the business and open a hip boba shop. What a shame. I need you to help me sell off all junk we've got there.

(CONTINUED)

Niles nods his head. Thomas looks at the television for a second.

THOMAS  
Another thing. You weren't there  
for your family again.

NILES  
What? I came to visit yesterday.

THOMAS  
Niles, your mother was crying over  
how you barely spoke to her.

NILES  
I had work to do.

THOMAS  
What's life if all you do is work?  
Don't waste your life working. I'm  
old. You're still young! Just live,  
Niles. Can you do this for me?

Niles silently nods his head as he looks at his father.

THOMAS  
And, learn to cook. If I'm gone and  
all you have is your mother, boy.

Thomas puts his hand on Niles's shoulder and nods his head.

NILES'S HOUSE. INT. AFTERNOON.

Back home, Niles heads to the kitchen. His mother is  
cleaning vegetables. Niles approaches from behind and hugs  
her. She stops and sees Niles in the window reflection.

NILES  
Hi, mom. Everything is going to be  
okay, right?

His mother tearfully nods her head.

NILES'S COROLLA. INT. NIGHT.

Mary is coming out of her house as Niles puts his car in  
park. He looks over and opens the door. Mary jumps in.

NILES  
Let's go to L.A.

MARY

What? We don't ever drive that far.  
Why so eager for a road trip?

GRIFFITH PARK. EXT. NIGHT.

Niles and Mary are sitting together on a knoll. The entirety of Los Angeles stretches across the horizon.

NILES

(Looking off toward downtown)  
I'm not an L.A. fan, but this is  
just so nice.

MARY

(Looking at Niles)  
I'm really happy to hear you had a  
good talk with your dad.

NILES

I think this whole thing had us  
both thinking about where our lives  
are headed.

RESTAURANT. INT. DAY.

Workers are remodeling the empty interior. Niles is packing things into a box. Mary is standing next to him.

MARY

(Looking around the room)  
This was like a second home, you  
know? Sucks they're turning this  
place into another boba shop.

Mary looks at a pile of boxes covered in red tape and marked with bold permanent marker print reading: "HOT".

MARY

What's left in those boxes?

NILES

Two hundred pounds of sriracha no  
one wants.

MARY

You should trade it for something  
you've always wanted on Craigslist.

OFFICE. INT. DAY. LATER.

Niles checks his email and sees an ad response. It reads: "Hello, I saw your offer for 200 lbs. of hot sauce for something awesome. Can we meet today before three? Niles replies: "I'm currently at work. You can pick up the sauce at 2345 La Hacienda Blvd. Let the people there know you came for the sauce."

RESTAURANT. INT. DAY. CONTINUED.

In the middle of a room is a single large box labeled in black permanent ink: "AWESOME". Niles and Mary open it. It's a box of colorful pinwheels. Niles takes one out of the box.

NILES  
Pinwheels?

He spins it around, creating a dazzling display of colors. Mary grabs a note attached to the box. It reads: "Here are awesome pinwheels. I hope you enjoy them all".

NILES  
(Carrying the box out the door)  
Hey, now that we've got these. I've got an idea.

Mary grabs the other end of the box and they leave.

GRIFFITH PARK. EXT. AFTERNOON. LATER. MONTAGE.

Niles and Mary are sitting together on the same knoll. They've planted many spinning pinwheels around them.

NILE'S GARDEN. EXT. DAY. LATER. MONTAGE.

Niles and his family are gardening. Niles waters a flower and places a pinwheel beside it. The pinwheel spins around.

NILES'S KITCHEN. INT. AFTERNOON. MONTAGE.

Niles and his father are cooking together. Niles opens a pot of soup. Thomas smiles. Star anise twirls in the broth.

END