

A NIGHT AT THE HUMAN GARDEN

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

WEI	Just a guy trying to do his job taking orders at the restaurant.
ANDY	A lost soul trying to find a purpose in life by enlisting in the army of General Tso.
MARGARET	A mother of two having a very tough evening with unruly kids.
MARIE	A woman struggling with depression.
ARNOLD	A simple man looking for a bipolar avian friend.

(A Chinese restaurant. A man is standing behind the counter talking on the phone and writing on an order pad.)

WEI

And an order of egg rolls. Anything else? *(Pause)* I'd recommend the sweet and sour chicken. *(He holds up a container)* It will be very fast... *(He then looks a little sad, and tries to convince the person to buy it.)* It's very fresh... *(They have refused, and he puts the container onto the counter.)* Yes, fortune cookies come with-- No, they are free. We include-- Yes, they come with-- Yes, many-- How many?!

(A man walks in, waits patiently for Wei to finish.)

We only have-- No... No. We don't have any other cookies besides-- No. No cake. Do you-- A what? I don't know what that is... No, I've never heard of-- No. We don't serve that. Nothing living... No. I-- Right. Twenty minutes okay thank you goodbye!

(Wei takes a big sigh, putting the call behind him, and turns to face the new customer.)

Well, that was strange.

ANDY

What was strange?

WEI

That call. The man tried to order a... never mind. What can I do for you?

ANDY

I'd like to speak to the general.

WEI

Sorry?

ANDY

The general. I'd like to speak with him.

WEI

The...

ANDY

The general. I want to speak with him. I'm here to—

What general? WEI

General Tso. I'm here to enlist. ANDY

What? WEI

I want to enlist. ANDY

In...? WEI

(Woman walks in, flustered and calling back out...)

Just stay in the car! MARGARET

The army. ANDY

I don't care... MARGARET

General Tso's army. ANDY

...what she said to y-- Don't you dare hit your sist-- Sit down in that seat this minute! MARGARET

There's no-- WEI

I'd like a happy family, please. MARGARET

What? ANDY

There's no such thing. WEI

MARGARET

There has to be!

ANDY

(Pulling out a menu...)

It's written right here.

WEI

That's just a—

MARGARET

A dream?

WEI

What?

MARGARET

A dream? Is there really no such thing as a happy f-- *(She glances out the door again, then yells back to her kids...)* What did I just tell you!?

(A young woman walks in, clearly down...)

Get back in that car and sit— *(Then to the woman who entered, who has turned around and started to walk back out again...)* No, not you miss. I was talking to my son.

(The woman, still dejected, walks towards the counter.)

MARIE

I'd like a Triple Delight.

ANDY

You can't hide him from me. I know he's here.

WEI

A Happy Family?

MARIE

No

MARGARET

Yes

ANDY

Bring me to him!

There's no General Tso!

WEI

Can you give me a Triple Delight?

MARIE

Can you give me a Happy Family?

MARGARET

Wait! Okay. You first.

WEI

I want a Happy Family.

MARGARET

One Happy Family.

WEI

Yes. Mine is miserable, and I can't take it anymore.

MARGARET

It's a lie. He says it's a lie.

ANDY

What is?

MARGARET

The whole menu.

ANDY

There's no Triple Delight?

MARIE

No, that's not—

WEI

Then can I get just a single delight?

MARIE

A what?

WEI

It doesn't even have to be all that delightful. Just a little—

MARIE

MARGARET

I'd be okay if you just took this family off my han—(*Spinning back at the door as she sees what is happening outside...*) Put that back in the glove compartment this instant, young lady before I—

MARIE

How about just a little smile? Can I get a smile?

(There is a moment of silence, and Wei smiles weakly, unsure of what Marie is talking about.)

MARGARET

I tell you what...

MARIE

I meant for me. I want to smile.

MARGARET

So what do you say?

WEI

Say?

MARGARET

Can you just take this family off my hands?

ANDY

(Having finally reached a conclusion...)

I don't believe you.

MARIE

Just for a moment. It's been so long.

WEI

Everybody stop!!!

(There is a long pause, as everyone stares at Wei in shock and confusion.)

WEI (CONTINUED)

What the hell is going on?!? What do you want?!

MARIE

Happiness.

MARGARET

Peace.

ANDY

Purpose.

WEI

This is just a restaurant. We don't have those things here. We have pork. (*They all stare at him.*) And steamed rice. (*They look disappointed.*) And wonton soup. (*Marie almost looks like this makes her happy, but then returns to being dejected.*)

(*A man walks in and says...*)

ARNOLD

I'd like a sweet and sour chicken.

(*Wei perks up, having finally found a situation he can handle.*)

WEI

Yes. Here (*He picks up the sweet and sour chicken and holds it out to Arnold.*) That will be nine fifty.

ARNOLD

What's this?

WEI

It's sweet an—

ARNOLD

In a box? How did you fit the chicken in the box?

MARIE

There aren't even air holes.

MARGARET

That's no way to treat a chicken.

ANDY

The general would *not* approve.

WEI

You said you wanted sweet and sour chi—

ARNOLD

Not dead. How sweet can the poor creature be if it's dead?

WEI

But...

MARIE

Poor thing.

ANDY

No wonder the General isn't here anymore.

MARGARET

No wonder you don't have any happy families.

ARNOLD

Butcher.

MARIE

I guess it really can get worse.

ARNOLD

Let's go.

MARGARET

Yeah.

ANDY

I think Burger King is having a special.

MARIE

I *love* Burger King.

(Everyone walks out, muttering various comments about how they wouldn't eat here anyhow. Wei just stands there, confused, as the lights fade out.)

(Lights out)