

**Film Title and Release Date:** *The Farewell* (2019)

**Film Length in Minutes:** 100 Minutes

**Film Genre:** Drama, and Comedy

**Reviewer Name and Grade:** Ashley L., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Date Reviewed:** February 27, 2021

The setting of *The Farewell* takes place in China in 2013. Billi is an emotional, and funny main character that finds it hard to hide her feelings. Billi's whole family returns to China with the disguise of a fake wedding for her cousin to say goodbye to her beloved grandma who has cancer. In China, you can't tell elders that they have cancer or that they're going to die because they believe the fear will kill the elders instead of cancer, so they can't tell their grandma about her cancer but use the excuse of a wedding to spend the most time with "nai nai" as possible. The doctors predict that "nai nai" has three months or less to live due to her stage four lung cancer. The family attends the wedding, and Billi goes to make an emotional speech. After the wedding, Billi tells her grandma she wants to stay with her because she has cancer, but grandma convinces her she isn't worried and is better now. Billi leaves and returns to America, and grandma proceeds still live.

*How did you find the film on Kanopy (by a title search, subject search, casual browsing, etc.)?*

I found it while casually browsing the website.

*Did the plot (for fictional movie) or presentation of information (for documentary) keep you interested?*

The plot kept me interested for the most part.

*Was the pace of the film too fast, too slow, or just right?*

The pace of the film was too slow.

*What grade level(s) is this film appropriate for?*

The movie is PG, so grade 6 and up because there is a wedding where they drank alcohol.

*4 stars: I enjoyed this film and found it worthwhile to watch.*

I did enjoy this movie, it combined elements of laughter, drama, and sympathy. The pace of the movie was at times slow, but it did teach an important lesson of family, and how we should spend time with each other, etc. Sometimes the movie bored me out, but for the most part, I thought it was pretty interesting. The last scene of the movie was my favorite, it showed us the real grandma still healthy and alive doing exercises. I also thought it was cool how it was based off of a true story.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Liam F., 9<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Date Reviewed: May 8, 2021**

The plot of the movie was the main character's grandma had lung cancer and she was going to pass in a few months, although the catch is that the grandma isn't aware she is going to die and thinks she is healthy, but her whole family does. It does seem messed up, but the family is Chinese and to them it is better not to tell the person that they are going to die a few months before they do because then the person will fear death all the time and will live their last months in fear. The person who is dying has a sister where she will tell her when it comes to the point when she is about to die. The family makes up a wedding, so that they can all see Nai Nai for the last time. Everyone in the family is ok with not telling Nai Nai the truth because they believe it is good for her sake, but Billi who is the main character does not feel that way. The family includes Billi, Haiyan, Lu, Nai Nai, Ling, etc they did not name. Majority is taking place in China, Billi and her parents who are Haiyan and Lu live in New York, Billi is the granddaughter of Nai Nai and Haiyan and his brother are the sons of Nai Nai. It takes place in modern time and this was released in 2019, so somewhere around there. Main events I would say are when the family are all together at first and they eat, the wedding is a pretty large event and also when they are at the hospital and the family has to tell the doctor to not aware Nai Nai that she is sick which the Doctor understands as it is a common thing in China. Billi stands out with her personality in this as she is independent and does not want other people to worry and can handle herself and she is not okay with lying to Nai Nai and some scenes she can barely hold her emotions, but as the film progresses, she understands and goes on like everything is normal. Billi's parents understand everything they are doing completely, but still can't hold their emotions at times. Nai Nai who is very nice and considerate, wants the best for her family, planned the whole wedding, and also does not want the family to worry. So they sort of only went in depth on Nai Nai and Billi's personalities, the others were not so touched on, or very subtle.

*How did you find the film on Kanopy (by title search, subject search, casual browsing, etc)?*

I found the film by casual browsing and it caught my eye, so I watched it.

*Did the plot keep you interested?*

Yes, it did as I was curious if they would ever tell Nai Nai that she was sick.

*Was the pace of the film too fast, too slow, or just right?*

It was a tad bit slow at times, but overall it was just right and pretty smooth. Like when they were having dinner at a big round table in the middle-ish, it felt a tad slow, but still enjoyable.

*What grade(s) levels is this film appropriate for?*

7th grade and up as it does have advanced dialogue that younger kids may not comprehend or enjoy, but it does have some funny dialogue here and there in the film that will attract kids in middle school etc.

*4 Stars*

Had good acting and could really see what they were going through with the characters being sad and felt real. I thought the whole wedding scene was great as some family members had speeches and it was all very emotional as one was directed towards Nai Nai. I was intrigued with the plot and if they would tell her. The main character was a good actress as you could see she was bottling emotions. The acting, the characters, the dialogue when the family was having dinner or breakfast was nice. Finally the music was fantastic, it fitted in every scene the music was playing, the music itself was actually great and I really enjoyed listening to it as they showed the sceneries.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Nicholas P., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

**Date Reviewed: March 13, 2022**

The Farewell is a comedy heavily based on director Lulu Wang's true story, and it stars Awkwafina in the lead role, Billi. The story starts when Billi's grandma, Nai Nai is diagnosed with terminal lung cancer and is projected to live only another 3 months. Instead of telling Nai Nai, the family thinks it's best if she does not know about her diagnosis. The family uses Hao Hao's (Billi's cousin) wedding in China where Nai Nai lives to unite the family so they can all see Nai Nai one last time. Billi wants to go to China to see Nai Nai one last time, but her parents think she will tell Nai Nai about her prognosis. They tell Billi to stay home. Billi does not listen to her parents and goes anyway. Through the movie Billi is conflicted on whether to tell Nai Nai about her diagnosis or keep it a secret. Later in the movie we hear Nai Nai kept a similar lie from her terminally ill husband. During the wedding, Nai Nai's son Habin gives a very emotional speech in which he apologizes to Nai Nai. After the wedding, Billi says goodbye to Nai Nai for what she thinks is the last time. At the end of the movie it is revealed that Lulu Wang's grandma who is the inspiration for the story is still alive 6 years after her diagnosis.

1. *How did you find the film on Kanopy (by title search, subject search, casual browsing, etc.)?*

I found the film on the homepage of Kanopy through casual browsing and was interested because of the

lead actress, Awkwafina from the Marvel blockbuster, Shang Chi.

2. *Did the plot (for fictional movie) or presentation of information (for documentary) keep you interested? Was the pace of the film too fast, too slow, or just right?*

The plot kept me interested throughout the whole movie. The film is slowly paced. There are a lot of moments throughout the movie where the pace was slow in order to make the characters feel relatable. A few examples within the movie of a slow pace are the dinner scenes. They would eat and talk at a normal pace. The film never skipped over these moments to rush to the next scene.

3. *What grade level(s) is this film appropriate for?*

The film is content appropriate for grade level 3 and up, but because of its slow pacing I would only recommend it to grade level 5 and up. Like mentioned before, there are slow moments that a young kid would find boring.

*I rate the film 4 stars.* Watching the film is an enjoyable experience. The part of the film I enjoyed is that it felt real. I could believe the family was a real family and not a bunch of actors pretending to be a family. Throughout the movie the family stuck together and supported each other. The cinematography was really good. A moment I noticed when the cinematography was really good was when Billi was leaving China. It was a depressing scene so the weather outside was raining. I liked that the movie took time to focus on the characters. Another aspect I enjoyed was the score. It always fits the tone of the story. A criticism I have for the movie is the ending. I feel like it rushes over the fact that Nai Nai is still alive today. I would have preferred it if we had gotten more time to digest the news. Another thing I would have liked to have seen is Billi's life in the United States. The film shows us a little piece of her life in America at the beginning, but not enough to show the hardships she describes going through later in the film. One last criticism I have is that there were a lot of side characters that did not have a story or development throughout the film. I would have either cut them or given them some of Billi's screen time. Overall, the film is really great and I would recommend it to others.

