

Turns Out Life as a “Zucchini” Is Intense

This beautiful new stop-motion film is magical, heartwarming, and a certifiable tearjerker.

By Chanel Parks



He would like to go by Zucchini, thank you very much.

30-Second Synopsis: At just 9 years old, Zucchini has a lot to deal with. In the wake of his mother's death, he is brought to an orphanage by Raymond, a friendly cop who is doing the best he can to help Zucchini. The painfully shy Zucchini suddenly has to learn how to interact with the other children: Simon, the king of the hill who's the child of drug-addicted parents, and Camille, the smart, mysterious new girl who witnessed a terrible crime. This is a story of hardship, of course, but it's also a testament to the power of a shared support system.



Zucchini makes a kite with a drawing of a superhero version of his father. IRL, though, his father abandoned him and his mother.

The Coolest Adults in the Film: Mr. Paul, the teacher at the orphanage, and Rosy, the aide, are super-chill adults who only care about the well-being and education of the kids. They turn a seemingly depressing place into a cool space where the kids can freely express their emotions and also go on cool ski trips. (Yes, the kids go on a weekend ski getaway with the couple, which seems pretty damn fancy for an orphanage field trip, right?)



The cute little crew goes skiing!

Scene That Gave Us the Most FOMO: During the trip, the kids dance to the smooth tunes of their teacher-meets-DJ, Mr. Paul. It's a wonderful moment that proves that in dark times, a dance party can be the best medicine—for a little while, anyway.

Most Breathtaking Landscape: Zucchini and Camille lie side by side in a moonlit snow bank during the ski trip. Not only is the moment cutely romantic, but Zucchini and Camille have a tough conversation about the unfortunate things she's seen, in an exchange that's both heartbreaking and exquisitely honest.



A girl just likes to be alone with her Kafka, you know?

Greatest Nod to a Literary Classic: In the courtyard, Camille is found reading a book that simply reads “Kafka,” above a drawing of a cockroach. Of course, she's reading Franz Kafka's 1915 novel, *The Metamorphosis*, a text that seems to be an overarching metaphor for the struggles of the film's characters—like Ahmed, who's trying to overcome his bedwetting habit, or Beatrice, who is coming to terms with her mother's deportation.



Zucchini processes the events of his life through the act of drawing—an ultimate testament to art as an expressive outlet.

The Storytelling Technique We're Stealing: Raymond, the cop who dropped Zucchini off at the orphanage, regularly visits him, and Zucchini sends him letters complete with rich illustrations. The correspondence is like one big customizable picture book and serves as a lovely alternative to texting, snapping, gramming, and the like.



Squad. Effing. Goals.

Be Prepared To: Read subtitles if you aren't fluent in French. However, the English-language version premiered at this year's Sundance Film Festival complete with the voice talents of Will Forte, Nick Offerman, Amy Sedaris, and Ellen Page. Both French and English versions will be released!

The Accolades: It already won an award for Best Animated Feature at the European Film Awards. Earlier this year, *My Life as a Zucchini* was nominated for a Golden Globe and is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature this Sunday. Good luck!



Seriously, though: how cute is he?