

More or Less
Chi Laughlin

PAGE 1 (SIX PANELS)

Title: More or Less

Page 1, Panel 1.

Chi's shitty apartment. This is a medium wide shot. We may not see it all in this panel, but it's a single 12'x12' room. The walls are cracked in various places, with fist-sized holes exposing what I guess must be crumbling drywall beneath the surface. Mounted on each wall are bookshelves, covered in books, a stereo, a blender, toiletries, etc.--all the worldly possessions of a struggling artist living alone. Pushed into one corner, next to a window, is a wooden desk, atop which are a few magazines, a composition book, some pens and a desk lamp.

Chi, middle-aged and slightly sleazy, sits at the desk, reclining in an office chair. He wears a ragged hoodie and jeans and squints to read a vibrating iphone.

SOUND EFFECT 1:
Bzz-zzztt.

Page 1, Panel 2.

Medium on Chi as he reads a message on the phone. A generic chat window floats in the air beside him. Maybe it's just the text bubble, and a small icon with the letter "J" identifying its sender.

TEXT MESSAGE 2:

J: I told them if they meet you in person, they'll hire you on the spot. They could definitely use you.

Page 1, Panel 3.

Similar to Panel 2, Chi taps away on the phone.

SOUND EFFECT 3:
tap tap tap

The message from Panel 2 remains in the air, but now a second message appears beneath it, with a "C" icon indicating Chi as the sender.

TEXT MESSAGE 4:

C: Man, I can't thank you enough.

Page 1, Panel 4.

Another medium shot, a third message appears in the air, again from “J”.

SOUND EFFECT 5:

Bzz-zzztt.

TEXT MESSAGE 6:

J: I’ve got my fingers crossed for you...You could do that job in your sleep.

Page 1, Panel 5.

A wider shot reveals more of the room. The messages have disappeared. Chi sits up in his chair, alert and excited, typing away on his phone.

CAPTION 7:

Finally.

CAPTION 8:

Some light at the end of the tunnel.

CAPTION 9:

I wonder what the average salary is for a job like that.

SOUND EFFECT 10:

tap tap tap

Page 1, Panel 6.

Close shot: Chi’s eyes go cartoonishly big.

CAPTION 11:

Holy shit!

PAGE 2 (SEVEN PANELS)

Page 2, Panel 1.

A medium shot of Chi, now leaning back in his chair, his hands in the pouch of his hoodie. The phone is now sitting on the desk beside him.

CAPTION 1:

That’s a proper, grown-up salary.

Page 2, Panel 2.

A wider shot as Chi kicks his feet up on the desk, lost in thought.

CAPTION 2:

If I made that much, I could pay off the bills from my ankle surgery--in no time.

Page 2, Panel 3.

A close shot on Chi as he smiles, poking the tip of his tongue at a noticeable gap in his grill where an upper left canine should be.

CAPTION 3:

Plus, I'd have insurance...so I could finally get my teeth fixed.

Page 2, Panel 4.

Medium wide on Chi, now wearing a coat and tie, surrounded by two or three various men and women in formal wear, all of them holding drinks. Chi is telling a story, flashing a big Brad Pitt-worthy smile.

CAPTION 4:

Imagine that...being able to smile and laugh without getting all self-conscious about it.

Page 2, Panel 5.

A close shot, the back of Chi's head, looking into a shaving mirror, holding two fingers up to his temple; In the mirror's reflection, we can see that he's examining a dark blemish in that area.

CAPTION 5:

Hell, I could get someone to look at this spot on my forehead, too.

CAPTION 6:

Maybe it's cancer and maybe it isn't, but at least I'd know for sure.

Page 2, Panel 6.

Wide shot of Chi looking around at his apartment, judging it.

CAPTION 7:

And I wouldn't have to live in this flophouse anymore.

Page 2, Panel 7.

A wide, high angle shot of Chi in a different, much more spacious apartment; this one is neat and clean with a modern decor. Chi is now dressed in a cable knit sweater and slacks instead of the hoodie and jeans.

CAPTION 8:

I could get my own place.

CAPTION 9:

No more roommates clogging up the toilet or overdosing on heroin.

PAGE 3 (SIX PANELS)

Page 3, Panel 1.

A medium wide shot of Chi in the same new apartment, but now he's crouched down on one knee, vigorously petting a really fat French Bulldog puppy. I mean really fat, like there's something wrong with it--but cute, too. This French Bulldog will continue to appear as this fantasy progresses.

CAPTION 1:

I could even get a dog if I wanted.

CAPTION 2:

How great would that be?

Page 3, Panel 2.

Wide shot of Chi walking the fat French Bulldog along a residential Brooklyn street. Chi's now wearing a fashionable silk scarf and a tan topcoat like the one Brando had in Last Tango.

CAPTION 3:

I'd be too busy during the day, but I could hire someone to stop by and take him for walks.

Page 3, Panel 3.

Still walking the dog, Chi is having a conversation with a young woman. Just to give her a face, let's say she looks like Emma Stone. Not exactly like Emma Stone. It's a fantasy, but let's not go crazy. She's more like some hard knock version of Emma Stone who led a life full of struggle and disappointment. She's kneeling down and fawning over the dog, while Chi is smiling that Brad Pitt smile he picked up on page 2.

Page 3, Panel 4.

Close on Hard Knock Emma Stone, petting the fat dog, looking up at Chi and smiling.

CAPTION 4:

That's what other people do.

Page 3, Panel 5.

Wide shot of the new apartment, cardboard boxes scattered around. Chi has just walked through the door with another box. Hard Knock Emma Stone, now his girlfriend, stands in the middle of the room, pointing out an empty spot on the floor where Chi can set the box.

CAPTION 5:

And if I had a girlfriend, we could talk about moving in together.

Page 3, Panel 6.

Wide shot. Dressed respectively in a tux and wedding gown, Chi and his new bride dance close together, staring dreamily into one another's eyes.

CAPTION 6:

And marriage.

PAGE 4 (SIX PANELS)

Page 4, Panel 1.

Chi sits on the edge of a hospital bed, where his wife is holding their newborn daughter.

CAPTION 1:

I mean, realistically, with that kind of money...I could have a kid.

Page 4, Panel 2.

Wide shot of baby's nursery, with a crib and lots of little animal decorations. Chi, dressed in pajamas, his hair a mess, sits in a rocking chair, cradling his sick daughter. A digital clock on the wall reads 3:30 AM.

CAPTION 2:

And everything that goes with that.

SOUND EFFECT 3:

WAAA-AAAAA-AAA!

Page 4, Panel 3.

A wide shot of Chi and his wife, slightly older, walking through the park with their daughter, now about ten. All three of them are wearing soccer jerseys, but the little girl has a full uniform and carries a ball.

CAPTION 4:

It's not too late.

Page 4, Panel 4.

Wide shot, inside a spacious home. This isn't even the nice apartment anymore, but a house somewhere in the suburbs. Chi and his wife stand in the foreground, their backs to us, both of them holding up their phones to snap photos of their teenage daughter, dressed in a formal gown, posing with her prom date.

CAPTION 5:
Do I even want a kid?

Page 4, Panel 5.

Medium close shot, in front of a suburban house. Chi and his wife stand close to their daughter, right on the brink of a farewell hug. All three of them are in tears.

CAPTION 6:
The thing is, I could afford it. How crazy is that?

Page 4, Panel 6.

Wide shot from behind as Chi and his wife stand together, holding each other close and waving goodbye to their daughter, who drives away in a little economy car loaded up with boxes.

CAPTION 7:
I could afford to support a family. To build a future.

PAGE 5 (NINE PANELS)

Page 5, Panel 1.

A Medium shot of on Chi and his wife, now in their 70s or 80s. This should look like something from a Viagra commercial or an L.L. Bean catalog. They're sitting outside on an overcast, early autumn day, dressed for cool weather. Chi stares off into the distance, while his wife leans in and rests her head on his shoulder.

CAPTION 1:
I could afford a life.

Page 5, Panel 2.

A much wider, reverse shot, shows Chi and his wife from behind and we see that they're sitting on a deserted stretch of beach, staring out across a still dark lake that stretches out for what looks like eternity.

CAPTION 2:
A real life.

Page 5, Panel 3.

Medium shot. This should match Panel 1, except that Old Man Chi looks down, startled a bit by the buzzing sound effect.

SOUND EFFECT 3:
Bzz-zzztt.

Page 5, Panel 4.

Medium Shot. Similar to Panels 1 and 3. Chi's wife never changes position. Old Man Chi picks up a cell phone and holds it up to read it.

Page 5, Panel 5.

A very tight insert shows part of an email as displayed on the cell phone.

EMAIL ON PHONE 4:

—submitting your resume. At this time, we have decided to pursue more qualified candidates. Please be assured—

Page 5, Panel 6.

Medium shot, back on Chi. This should match the composition of Panel 4, except now, instead of Old Man Chi, we're back on middle-aged Chi, alone in his shitty apartment, looking at his phone. He's completely crestfallen.

Page 5, Panel 7.

Close on Chi, his body slumping with disappointment. He rubs his eyes.

CAPTION 5:

This is a life, too.

Page 5, Panel 8.

Wide high angle on Chi, sitting forward at his desk as he begins to write in a composition book.

CAPTION 6:

More or less.

Page 5, Panel 9.

A wide angle shot of Chi, at his desk, writing in the composition book. Hanging in the air just over his head, we see a handwritten line from the composition book.

HANDWRITTEN LINE 7:

INT. CHI'S SHITTY APARTMENT - DAY

CAPTION 8:

End.