

DADDY ISSUES

"PILOT"

Written by  
Justin Viar

justin.viar@gmail.com  
(818) 438-1112

ACT ONE

**INT. SWIFT FAMILY CONDO - HOME OFFICE - MORNING**

A modest, tidy room. 90's sports memorabilia on the walls.

AT THE DESK: BOXES of ESSENTIAL OILS surround JASON SWIFT -- a slender caucasian in his 30's whose casual but stylish fit and clean shave belie the slacker underneath.

JASON IS FIXATED on his LAPTOP SCREEN...

*PORN-ISH* GRUNTS AND MOANS from the speakers.

When:

AMELIA (O.S.)

Daddy!

Jason SLAMS THE LAPTOP CLOSED.

AMELIA SWIFT, 8 year-old with the wits of a teen, enters and hands him a paper.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

Sign this test for me. I got a D.

JASON

(recoups)

Great job, honey! Should I sign it here by the... frowney face?

*From corner of his eye:* AMELIA OPENING THE LAPTOP.

HE LUNGES...

*Too late.*

AMELIA

(horrified)

Is that...

(leans in)

...German Pro Wrestling?

Cut to screen: That's *exactly* what it is.

JASON

Shush! It's the European League -- I got an inside tip!

AMELIA

Oh no.

JASON

Trust me -- I win this and we can send you to that fancy art school.

AMELIA

I want to be a physicist.

JASON

(points at screen)

Here's my guy -- Gargamel! He's gonna crush this little dude.

Enter wife SARAH SWIFT (30's Caucasian) with baby MADDIE.

Amelia SLAMS THE LAPTOP CLOSED.

SARAH

Eight ounces pumped and in the fridge. Don't forget Parent-and-Me.

AMELIA

(takes Maddie)

We got it, Momma.

SARAH

What was on the laptop?

AMELIA

I was helping Dad with his sales spreadsheet.

Jason nods vigorously in agreement. Notices...

JASON

(to Sarah)

Is that a tattoo?

SARAH

Rub-on. I noticed the servers with tats get better tips.

AMELIA

(looks closer)

Even if it's a Pokemon?

JASON

I'm sorry you have to go back to work so soon, babe.

SARAH

Hey, we can't all have guest-house-income like the Carlins.

(to Amelia re: paper)

Is that the English test?

JASON  
Yup! She nailed it!

SARAH  
Good job, honey!

Amelia looks at her dad: *thank you*. He winks back.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
(exits)  
See you tonight!

Coast is clear. Amelia lifts the laptop screen...

AMELIA  
Gargamel is on a stretcher.

JASON  
(drops head on desk)  
Dammit! I really needed a win.

AMELIA  
Why can't you just watch naked  
lady videos on there like all the  
other dads?

**EXT. PRISON - MORNING**

Beefcake MARCUS (30's, Black) strides from the gates toward SASHA (20's), her Prius and a BABY CARRIER on the ground.

His build says don't mess with him, but his eyes and smile are just too damn welcoming... for most.

Marcus embraces Sasha. Hands wander.

SASHA  
(pushing him off)  
Cool it.

He lifts the canopy of the carrier to reveal BABY JEWEL.  
He takes her hand.

MARCUS  
So soft. Mom is keeping you  
moisturized.

SASHA  
No -- that's what a baby feels like.

She snaps the canopy shut. Marcus makes another move...

MARCUS  
Mommy getting jealous?

SASHA  
Get your thirsty ass in the car.

**INT. SASHA'S CAR**

Marcus into the passenger seat.  
Sasha straps Jewel and carrier in the back.

SASHA  
(from the backseat)  
First up -- two hours with Jewel at  
Parent-and-Me class while I get my  
hair done.

MARCUS  
Oh, so I'm just the babysitter?

SASHA  
Excuse me?!

SLAM! Sasha storms around the car and into the driver's  
seat, HEATED. Wide-eyed Marcus prepares for the blast.

SASHA (CONT'D)  
Wrong, Marcus. Fatherhood starts  
today and will not end. It'll be  
stuck to you like gum on your shoe.  
You will spend every minute of  
every day thinking and-or stressing  
about it. This is your life now.  
I'm not doing it alone anymore.

An awkward silence.

MARCUS  
Okay, I get it -- class first,  
then home.

SASHA  
Home? Whose home?

MARCUS  
No -- come on! Where am I going to  
stay tonight?

SASHA  
I don't know. Call your foster mom.

MARCUS  
Which one?

SASHA

Jane?

MARCUS

Jane doesn't want me around. She didn't even visit me in there.

SASHA

Well, dude -- this is on you. Why didn't you make a plan?

MARCUS

(pleads)

Please -- I'll sleep on the couch. I'll sleep in the car if you want.

SASHA

You couldn't afford my parking space.

Marcus slumps into his seat.

MARCUS

Prison is starting to sound easy.

SASHA

You have no idea.

**EXT. TROPICAL ISLAND - LUXURIOUS BEACH - DAY**

Handsome and fit Japanese-American BLAISE (late 20's) SITS BEACHSIDE with a Pina Colada.

BLAISE

(to camera)

Hey guys! Ready to Blaze the World with Blaise? Today we have another adventure of food, fashion and fun!

BEHIND HIM: A GHOSTLY FIGURE BREAKS THE BEACH ILLUSION -- another Japanese-American in his 30's wearing tighty-whiteys.

**INT. KEN & BLAISE APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Blaise SWIVELS FROM HIS DESK to chastise KENICHI -- strolling past a green screen, eating a bowl of cereal.

BLAISE

Ken! You ruined the shot!

Ken plops on the couch. He means well, but his IQ outweighs his sense.

KENICHI

How? I thought you put the background in later?

BLAISE

You always hear half of what I say.

Blaise pulls a placemat under the bowl before it touches the coffee table.

BLAISE (CONT'D)

(re: production setup)

This is so I could travel less and see you more. Now our Saturdays can be all about each other...

A KNOCK on the door.

KENICHI

Oh, right -- my sister is dropping off the kids for a bit.

BLAISE

Half might've been generous.

Ken opens door for: VANESSA (20's), CHLOE (6) and BABY NATE in a stroller. Vanessa's stress at an 11... as usual.

VANESSA

Thank you so much, Ken.

She pushes the kids in, hands Ken CAR KEYS.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

I left the minivan downstairs.

KENICHI

You don't need it?

VANESSA

Hi, Blaise!

Chloe, sower of chaos, has already commandeered SCISSORS. Blaise gives chase.

BLAISE

(gritted teeth)

Hi Vanessa.

VANESSA

(to Ken)

Parent-and-Me is at ten. The backpack has snacks for Chloe and formula for Nate.

KENICHI  
Parent-and-Me?

VANESSA  
 Yeah, like Mommy-and-Me, but they  
 changed it to be more inclusive.

She pulls in MORE BAGS.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
 This has an extra change of  
 clothes... this has the diapers...

KENICHI  
 Why not Baby-and-Me? Swap the  
 pronoun and noun, since baby is  
 inherently gender-neutral?

VANESSA  
 Did you hear anything I just said?

KENICHI  
 It's all in the bags -- I'll figure  
 it out.

VANESSA  
 How do you survive?

BLAISE  
 (in scissor tug-o-war)  
 That's my job!

VANESSA  
 Be good to your uncles, Chloe!

She stops for a RARE QUIET PAUSE in the doorway.

KENICHI  
 You okay?

VANESSA  
 (recovers)  
 Yeah. See you in a few hours.

**EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY**

Ken CLOSES THE DOOR. Vanessa WIPES AWAY A TEAR.

SOMETHING IS AMISS.

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO****INT. JASON'S CAR - CITY STREETS - DAY**

Jason drives Amelia and baby Maddie in a 2018 Subaru Outback.

WOMAN ON SPEAKERPHONE (O.S.)

Don't worry, Mr. Swift -- we just need to make a visual check to ensure it's still in your possession. Then we can extend the payments.

JASON

Sorry -- I'm going into a tunnel...

He's not. He ENDS THE CALL.

JASON (CONT'D)

They say they're coming to look at it, but really they'll tow it away. Nice try -- but this is not my first rodeo!

AMELIA

Are you bragging that you've had your car repossessed more than once?

Jason WEAVES AROUND a car PARALLEL PARKING.

JASON

Damn -- that was a perfect spot. And he's never going to fit.

**INT. MINI-VAN - CONTINUOUS**

KENICHI

I'm totally going to fit.

KEN NAVIGATES IN REVERSE, looking back past CHLOE AND NATE.

KENICHI (CONT'D)

Is there enough room, Chloe?

CHLOE

(looking out window)  
Lots!

She guides from the backseats...

CHLOE (CONT'D)

You got it...  
 (beat)  
 A little more...

KENICHI

You sure?

CHLOE

Keep going...

CRUNCH!

She laughs hysterically.

Ken PANICS and SPEEDS OFF.

**EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS**

Marcus hops out of the Prius, YELLING AT THE MINIVAN THAT BUMPED IT.

MARCUS

Yeah -- You'd better drive fast!  
 (To Sasha)  
 Let's go get him!

SASHA

Settle down, Marcus... it was a tap. And we're parents -- we don't "go get" people anymore.

Sasha hangs a diaper bag on his shoulder.

SASHA (CONT'D)

If she poops you have to change her. Ask a mom for help. Except Melissa -- she's shifty. And if you wipe her, wipe away from the vagina like...

She pantomimes the wipe.

MARCUS

Sure.

SASHA

(still pantomiming)  
Show me, Marcus. Or she gets a U-T-I and that's a whole new problem.

MARCUS  
 (reluctantly mimics)  
Away from the vagina.

SASHA  
 Good. Have fun.

Back in the car, she points across the street...

SASHA (CONT'D)  
 Meet me at that park at Noon. It'll  
 be feeding time so don't be late.

MARCUS  
 Cool -- can I get some cash or...

She drives off.

He grunts and turns to baby Jewel in the bassinet stroller.

He touches her softly and can't help but smile.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
 Ok, baby girl -- let's roll.

He PUSHES the stroller but IT DOESN'T BUDGE.

He tries to release the breaks -- FUMBLING, TINKERING until:  
 embarrassed by the attention, he GIVES UP AND PUSHES again...

SCREEEEEEEEETCH -- the DEAFENING SOUND OF WHEELS SCRAPING the  
 concrete. Even more embarrassing. So...

In a HERCULEAN MANEUVER, he HOISTS THE ENTIRE STROLLER OVER  
 HIS SHOULDER and CARRIES it down the street.

That attracts only *slightly less* attention.

**INT. PARENT & ME CLASS - INDOOR PLAYGROUND**

A circle of ten MOMS/BABIES plus JASON and KEN with theirs.

CHLOE AND AMELIA PLAY IN A SEPARATE AREA with older kids.

TEACHER  
 Let's begin! First, please welcome  
 Nate's uncle Kenichi sitting in for  
 Vanessa today...

CLASS PARENTS  
 Hi, Kenichi!

Kenichi waves, releasing Nate's hand. NATE PLOPS OVER.

TEACHER

And I believe we'll have --

BAM! The door is KICKED OPEN. The crowd GASPS...

It's MARCUS -- still CARRYING THE STROLLER.

He feels the room staring at him.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Marcus?

MARCUS

Yes, ma'am.

TEACHER

Great! Please have a seat.

HE SETS THE STROLLER DOWN and walks to the circle.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Maybe bring the baby along, too?

*Awkward.* He steps back to retrieve Jewel.

Deathly silence as he STRUGGLES TO RELEASE HER STRAPS.

*Screw it* -- he HOISTS and CARRIES the stroller again...  
LANDS IT at the circle with a BANG... and SITS DOWN.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

We know baby Jewel, but tell us  
about yourself.

MARCUS

I'm Marcus -- Jewel's... dad?  
(off confused faces)  
I mean *I am* her dad, it's just --  
I've been in prison for eighteen  
months for...

TEACHER

Oh, you don't have to get into --

MARCUS

...putting a guy in a wheelchair.

JASON

Yowsa.

MARCUS

Wasn't my fault. He started it.  
I just finished it.

MELISSA, a tatoos'd rockabilly mom SWOONS.

MELISSA

Good to finally have a man in the class.

Jason is stung.

MARCUS

Next thing I know... I'm missing the birth of my child and basically the first year of her life.

The mood turns forlorn.

JASON

(comforting)

Plenty of time to build that father-daughter bond, my friend.

KENICHI

Unless she has another dad now or something. Does she have a new dad?

Marcus hadn't thought of that.

The group glares at Kenichi.

*I was just asking.*

The teacher deflects:

TEACHER

Let's grab the parachute.

CUT TO:

**INT. PARENT & ME CLASS - SHORTLY AFTER**

The parents WAVE A GIANT PARACHUTE over giggling BABIES.

MARCUS IS MOST ENTHUSED. KEN STRUGGLES with the basic task.

CLASS PARENTS

(SINGING)

*Para-chute goes up... one-two-three  
I'm underneath... hee-hee-hee  
Para-chute goes down... one-two-three  
I'm a lil' baby... don't step on me!*

MARCUS CRAWLS UNDER to play with the babies.

The babies love it. SO DO THE MOMS.

KEN GETS STUCK in the straps... then YANKED TO THE GROUND.

KENICHI

Help!

MELISSA casually SNAPS OPEN A SWITCHBLADE and SLICES HIM FREE.

KENICHI (CONT'D)

Thank God!

He gathers himself, then to Melissa:

KENICHI (CONT'D)

Did you just brandish a knife at a Mommy-and-Me class?

AMELIA TUGS on him...

AMELIA

You're Chloe's dad, right?

KENICHI

Uncle. Why?

WHOOOOOOOOOOO! The FIRE ALARM BLASTS! WATER DUMPS FROM THE CEILING! CHAOS!

Amelia points -- CHLOE ON TOP OF A PLAY STRUCTURE HOLDING a BIC LIGHTER near a FIRE SPRINKLER. A BIG SMILE on her face.

CUT TO:

**EXT. PARENT & ME CLASS - MINUTES LATER**

Sidewalk filled with drenched moms, crying babies and the three men. JASON has MADDIE in a backpack baby-carrier -- her head poking out like it's sprouting from his shoulder.

Ken flicks the Bic. Gets no flame.

KENICHI

(to Chloe)

How did your tiny hands even light this?

MELISSA

(grabs the Bic)

There it is!

She uses it to LIGHT A CIGARETTE and turns to MARCUS.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Nice of Sasha to take you back in.

She offers him a drag. He declines... and rotates the stroller away from the smoke.

MARCUS

Ends up that wasn't in her plans.

MELISSA

(feigns concern)

Oh no! Where are you going to stay?  
You know -- I just had my couch  
restored if...

JASON

(interjects)

Dude -- we're renting an extra room  
in the condo!

AMELIA

We have an extra room in the condo?

MARCUS

For real?

JASON

Yeah -- four-hundred a month.

MELISSA

(one-ups)

No charge for the couch... or  
wherever you end up sleeping.

JASON

Three-fifty!

(aside)

...and your clothes won't smell  
like a nineteen-eighties dive bar.

MARCUS

You got a deal, man.

AMELIA

(realizes)

Wait -- are you talking about my room?

JASON SHUSHES HER.

MARCUS

I have to give my parole officer an  
address today. You mind taking me  
by the station to check in? I just  
have to be back by Noon.

JASON

Sure, man!

(points to stroller)

We can use your Deluxe Babytron  
Seventy-Nine there -- it breaks  
down to a car seat super easy.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SIDEWALK - BY JASON'S CAR**

Marcus stares in awe as AMELIA CONVERTS THE FANCY STROLLER.

Jason places bets on his phone, Maddie still on his back.

JASON

Wow -- I like those odds.

(to Marcus)

You know anything about the Ranji  
Cricket League?

MARCUS SEES KENICHI across the street getting into  
*THE MINIVAN THAT BUMPED SASHA'S CAR.*

MARCUS

Hold up! Jason -- you got this?

JASON

Yeah, we're almost done.

Off Amelia's look -- *We?*

*Across the street...*

Marcus jogs up to Kenichi loading the kids into the car.

MARCUS

Hey!

Blank look from Kenichi.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It's Marcus -- I was in class with  
you like ten minutes ago.

KENICHI

Oh, right!

MARCUS

I don't want to be that guy, but  
you bumped my girl's car earlier,  
and I thought maybe I could get  
some insurance info...

Kenichi sighs and STARES DAGGERS AT CHLOE...

KENICHI  
You're really on a roll today, kid.

WOOP-WOOP! A POLICE CRUISER pulls onto the sidewalk.

COP 1  
(through passenger window)  
Problem here?

MARCUS  
(sotto)  
Oh, you gotta be kidding me.

TWO COPS SURROUND THE MEN within seconds.

COP 2  
(to Ken)  
You know this man?

KENICHI  
(skittish)  
No! I mean yes! I mean no to the  
problem part; yes to the man part.

Cops aren't buying it. Kenichi struggles to elaborate:

KENICHI (CONT'D)  
This is... Marcus! He's got a  
baby... and he just got out of  
prison today!

THE COPS' EYES LIGHT UP. Marcus's head drops.

MARCUS  
That you remember.

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE****EXT. SIDEWALK - BY JASON'S CAR**

Amelia spots the commotion around Marcus.

AMELIA  
I'll be right back.

JASON  
(still online)  
Uh-huh.

*Across the street...*

COP 1  
(reads a business card)  
Your P.O. is Cisneros? Tough pull.

COP 2  
Her desk is just a few steps from  
ours... should we say hello?

MARCUS  
I was just on my way to check in --

COP 1  
Better be there by eleven. She only  
works mornings on Fridays.

MARCUS  
(frustrated)  
What? They didn't tell me that!

COP 2  
Woah -- settle down, chief. Maybe  
we should take you there ourselves.

HE REACHES FOR CUFFS on his belt...

AMELIA'S CUTE FACE interrupts his line of sight.

AMELIA  
(sweetly)  
Wow, are you a real policeman?

COP 2  
We're in the middle of some work  
here, honey. Where's your parents?

AMELIA  
I'm with Uncle Marcus today.

She wraps herself around him.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
So I guess if you take him in,  
you'll need to take me, too. I'm  
sorry for the trouble -- I'm sure  
children are a lot of paperwork.

Cops exchange looks -- *Yeah, they're not dealing with this.*  
They head back to their cruiser...

COP 1  
(shouts back)  
Better be there by eleven.

They drive off. KENICHI EXHALES.

KENICHI  
They were going to kill us!

MARCUS  
They weren't going to kill us,  
buddy. Well, at least not you.

Amelia spots something across the street...

REVEAL: JASON'S SUBARU LOADED ON A FLATBED.

AMELIA  
Our car!

SHE JETS INTO THE STREET... SCREEEEETCH!

MARCUS YANKS HER BACK TO SAFETY.

He takes her hand and gets them across, HOLLERING AT THE  
FLATBED. IT DRIVES OFF BEFORE THEY REACH IT.

JASON AND MADDIE COME OUT OF A SHOP. HE'S HOLDING A CONE OF  
PINK ICE CREAM.

MARCUS  
Jason -- where is my baby?

Jason looks at the empty parking spot.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
No.

AMELIA  
You left a baby in the car to get  
me an ice cream?!

JASON  
(looks at cone)  
Oh, did you want one?

**INT. MINI-VAN - PARKED**

Ken buckles in. The SLIDING DOOR FLIES OPEN and MARCUS BURSTS IN WITH AMELIA, JASON, AND BACKPACK MADDIE.

MARCUS  
Follow that truck!

KENICHI  
I'm sorry?

MARCUS PHYSICALLY MOVES KENICHI TO THE PASSENGER SEAT... GETS BEHIND THE WHEEL... AND PEELS OUT WITH A CRAZY U-TURN.

CHLOE  
Awesome!

**INT. MINI-VAN - DRIVING**

JASON  
Okay, let's relax a second...

MARCUS  
RELAX? My kid is in that car!

KENICHI  
That car? On the flatbed?!

JASON  
Long story...

MARCUS  
No -- short story. This asshole left my baby in his car to go get ice cream.

KENICHI  
But why did it get towed?

JASON  
How we got here is not important.

CHLOE  
 (to Jason)  
 You're squishing your baby.

Chloe and Amelia take backpack Maddie off Jason and secure the unit with a seatbelt. It looks... *almost* safe.

MARCUS TEARS THROUGH A BUSY INTERSECTION.

KENICHI  
 This isn't my car!

THEY CATCH UP TO THE TRUCK.

Marcus HONKS. Jason and Amelia cram their heads through the sunroof, SHOUTING and WAVING at the driver.

Amelia sees Jason is still holding the ice cream:

AMELIA  
 Really, Dad?

MARCUS  
 (re: truck driver)  
 Why isn't he stopping?

MARCUS PULLS INTO THE ONCOMING TRAFFIC LANE and speeds toward the driver's window.

KENICHI  
 We're breaking so many laws!

Everyone tracks Jewel in the Subaru's backseat as they pass. She's cheerfully playing with a bottle of essential oil.

JASON  
 Hey -- that's a sixty dollar unit!  
 (off Amelia's look)  
 I can write it off.

THEY REACH THE DRIVER-SIDE WINDOW.

AMELIA  
 (yelling at driver)  
Stop! There's a baby in the car!

**INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS**

The driver looks dead ahead, OBLIVIOUS AND ENGROSSED. The ONLY SOUND HEARD IS FROM HIS EAR BUDS:

A podcast with a host speaking with NPR calmness...

PODCAST HOST (O.S.)  
 Welcome back to Tow Jam -- the  
 podcast for the Tow Truck Community.

OUT THE WINDOW: Jason and Amelia gesticulate in vain.

PODCAST HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Today -- Hitched: Love Stories From  
 the Road. Our listener Sammy came for  
 the car, but left with a wife!

**INT. MINI-VAN - CONTINUOUS**

Jason sees an oncoming vehicle. Yells down into the van:

JASON  
 Marcus -- we gotta ease up, dude!

Marcus reluctantly decelerates. Then:

DESPERATION from Amelia... She GRABS THE ICE CREAM and HURLS  
 IT AT THE TRUCK WINDOW... but wind carries it to the van  
 windshield and...

SPLAT! It BLOCKS MARCUS'S VIEW! Ken sees the car headed at them:

KENICHI  
PULL BACK!

Marcus BREAKS HARDER AND WEAVES RIGHT... just missing the  
 flatbed's back bumper... SKIDDING TO A STOP on the shoulder.

Marcus jumps out and runs. The truck shrinks into the distance.

He gives up... utterly distraught.

Amelia catches up.

AMELIA  
 Daddy is calling the dealership. He  
 said it's probably going there.

Marcus shaking. Amelia pulls on his hand.

AMELIA (CONT'D)  
 Come on -- we gotta get you to that  
 lady the police were talking about.

Fear turns to numbness... posture slumps...

MARCUS  
 They should put me be back in  
 prison anyway.

Amelia is stung.

AMELIA

No! I don't want you to go back! I mean — I wouldn't want you to if you were my dad.

(a beat)

And that's what Jewel would say.

That lands.

Marcus straightens up.

MARCUS

Let's go get her.

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR****EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY**

Marcus hops out the side of the van as it pulls up. He looks back at Jason in the van on his phone...

JASON  
They're still trying to reach  
the driver.

Marcus eyes a clock on the building -- 10:59.

AMELIA  
It's ok. We got this.

JASON  
We'll pick you up right here and  
get you to the park by Noon with  
baby Jude safely in hand!

MARCUS  
It's Jewel.

KENICHI  
(from driver's seat)  
Let's go, people -- this is literally  
a red zone and a police station!

The door slides closed on Marcus -- not confident with this team.

CUT TO:

**INT. POLICE STATION - CORRECTIONS DESK**

Marcus sits across from OFFICER CISNEROS, a gorgeous Afro-Latina killing it in immaculate plainclothes.

On her desk: perfectly placed and coordinated office accessories -- white with black polka dots -- a lovely contrast to the otherwise cold concrete bullpen.

SHE ALSO HAPPENS TO BE INCREDIBLY FRIENDLY.

CISNEROS  
I'm not sure why they said that --  
I work full-time Fridays.

Over her shoulder -- the two cops from earlier across the room making "kissy faces" at Marcus and humping the air.

Marcus shakes it off. He's got bigger problems.

CISNEROS (CONT'D)  
 (re: new address)  
 This is a good neighborhood. You  
 landed in a solid place.

She looks up from her paperwork -- MARCUS IS FIDGETY AND  
 SWEATY -- looking out the window for the van.

CISNEROS (CONT'D)  
 (empathetic)  
 I know -- the first days out can be  
 tough, but we'll get through it.

MARCUS  
 Yeah, yeah, cool.

CISNEROS  
 (suddenly more stern)  
 As long as you're with me on this.  
You with me, Marcus?

MARCUS  
 (straightens up)  
 Yes, ma'am.

CISNEROS  
 Good. Today we'll get you  
 processed. Tomorrow I'll come over  
 and we'll talk employment.

MARCUS STARING OUT THE WINDOW AGAIN.

She shakes her head: *No way this one is working out.*

**EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER**

MARCUS RUSHES OUT. Looks up and down the street -- no van.

A clock on the building reads 11:45.

He starts running.

**EXT. PARK - 20 MINUTES LATER**

SASHA FRANTICALLY SURVEYS THE PARK.

Then: MARCUS RUNNING TOWARD HER -- drenched in sweat.

SASHA  
 What the hell? Where's Jewel?

He reaches her, WAY OUT OF BREATH.

MARCUS

Sasha -- I thought about what to say the whole run. And I decided the best thing would be the truth.

SASHA

Get to it, Marcus...

MARCUS

Today was a lot. I was ready to give up, but then I realized I shouldn't. I can't. People have given up on me and I can't give up on...

Tracks a group rushing toward him...

MARCUS (CONT'D)

...Jewel?

SASHA

Yes -- Jewel! Where is Jewel?!

AMELIA (O.S.)

Right here!

Sasha turns -- AMELIA HOLDING THE BABY OUT TO HER.

Also there: Jason with backpack Maddie, Ken carrying baby Nate and Chloe by their side.

JASON

Hope you don't mind -- we changed her diaper and I put a little organic calming oil on her.

AMELIA

We were just taking her around the park while Marcus...

Off Marcus's drenched t-shirt:

KENICHI

...ran a marathon, apparently?

MARCUS

(plays along)  
Just some laps to stay healthy.

CHLOE

Uncle Marcus is the best!

JASON

Yeah! We're excited he'll be staying with us for a while.

Sasha is dumbfounded... then... impressed.

SASHA

Looks like you made some friends. And baby Jewel is so happy and...

KENICHI

Alive?

SASHA

Not what I was going to say, but yes -- alive. Maybe next you two can spend a full day together.

MARCUS

Absolutely! Easy-breezy!

Chloe SLAPS Ken's leg...

CHLOE

Hey Uncle Ken -- is it twelve o'clock yet?

KENICHI

(checks watch)  
Six minutes after twelve.

CHLOE

Shoot -- I missed it.

SHE CRUMPLES UP A PAPER... THROWS IT IN THE TRASH.

KENICHI

Missed what?

CHLOE

Mommy said to give you that at twelve o'clock. She said it's real important.

Ken FISHES IT OUT OF THE TRASH. There's already gum on it.

He peels it open and reads...

HIS EXPRESSION DROPS.

KENICHI

(sotto)  
She's not coming back.

MARCUS  
What's that, buddy?

Group silence off Ken's distress.

JASON  
Amelia -- take Chloe to the playground.

She does. THE OTHERS SURROUND KEN.

SASHA  
Their mom? Vanessa?

JASON  
Maybe you're reading that wrong.

Jason takes the note and studies it.

MARCUS  
Like... never coming back?

JASON  
I don't know -- it's pretty vague.

Ken stares down at the nephew cradled in his arms.

KENICHI  
I...

Overwhelmed and speechless.

Marcus knows.

MARCUS  
Yes -- you can.

He puts his arm around Kenichi.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
We'll help.

Sasha has never seen this from Marcus -- *who is this guy?*

JASON  
Yeah -- we got you, man!

Ken surveys his new friends -- *maybe he can handle this?*

AMELIA (O.S.)  
(shouting)  
Guys -- Chloe just tied a girl's pony tail to the see-saw and I can't detach her!

Off Ken -- *No, probably not.*

**EXT. SWIFT FAMILY CONDO - SUNSET**

A row of 1980's 2-story condos above garages.

SARAH  
(pre-lap)  
It's not even a room.

**INT. SWIFT FAMILY CONDO - HALLWAY**

Jason and Sarah speak alone.

JASON  
It is now!

SARAH  
Where do we put the other car?

JASON  
That's the brilliant thing -- I returned the Outback, so there's plenty of room!

SARAH  
You what? Why?  
(panics)  
Oh my God -- we can't afford it anymore! We're totally broke!

JASON  
No! We're fine! But we'll save a lot and have extra income from the rental... just like the Carlins!

SARAH  
(considering)  
Like the Carlins?

Jason clenches.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
I suppose...

JASON  
Perfect, right?

He kisses and holds her...

Him: *Nailed it.* Her: dubious.

**INT. JASON'S HOUSE - GARAGE**

Amelia riding her scooter just outside the garage door.

Marcus inside sitting on a saggy air mattress on the oil-stained floor. Half the space filled by a car.

AMELIA

...then Daddy said he'd pay his bill if they just give him the baby and don't report it.

MARCUS

Crazy!

AMELIA

I think they were fine with it. She kinda threw up all over the showroom.

She pulls her scooter in and CLOSES THE ELECTRIC GARAGE DOOR. He tries to get comfortable on the "bed".

AMELIA (CONT'D)

(re: the garage)

Sorry about this.

MARCUS

I've slept worse places. Very recently, actually.

AMELIA

Well, I'm glad you're here.

MARCUS

Me too, kid.

She starts up the stairs. He teases...

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Hey -- parenting isn't this tough every day, right?

Amelia turns back with a look -- *Yeah, kind of.*

She closes the door to the stairway. His smirk drops.

The garage door light times out - PITCH BLACK DARKNESS.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(meekly)

Hello?

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**TAG****INT. KEN & BLAISE'S APARTMENT - EVENING**

MADNESS! CHLOE RUNS AROUND WITH UNDERWEAR ON HER HEAD... NATE SCREAMS AND FLAILS on the couch.

Blaise tries everything to calm Nate... *except actually touching or holding him.* KEN SITS IN SILENCE.

BLAISE

Why won't it stop crying? Chloe -- take that underwear off and come help me with your brother.

CHLOE (O.S.)

Take my underwear off? Okay!

BLAISE

No, the underwear on your head!  
(to Ken)  
When is Vanessa coming? It's almost dinner!

KENICHI

Blaise -- I have to tell you something.

Blaise sees this is serious. *Does he even want to know?*

KENICHI (CONT'D)

Vanessa... isn't... coming back...  
(he panics)  
...until tomorrow.

BLAISE

Tomorrow! We have these monsters all night? We have no idea what we're doing!

KENICHI

I'm sure we'll figure it out -- it's all in the bags.

THE TOP BAG IN THE STACK TIPS OVER... the others fall like dominoes... OUT POUR MASSES OF INDISTINGUISHABLE BABY PRODUCTS.

Off the men, *overwhelmed.*

**END OF SHOW**