

Piddle Paddle Panda

Written by  
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Inspired by a True Story

FADE IN

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF SAN DIEGO - DAY

EXT. AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

A private jet touches down on the runway.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL HALLWAY - DAY

Security escorts a dignitary past an airport wall monitor. It flashes a local morning show.

MADILYN (V.O.)

Good morning San Diego. We're still awaiting a live report about all that beefed up security we see downtown. It's been a very busy morning in America's finest city.

INT. AIRPORT CUSTOMS OFFICE - DAY

The black passport book of Boris Shevchenko reads:  
"Diplomatic Immunity."

BILL (V.O.)

World dignitaries are arriving in preparation for the big event.

EXT. AIRPORT LIMOUSINE SECTION - DAY

Boris, face obscured, takes a swig from a flask as he is escorted into a limo by guards.

BILL (V.O.)

Security will be even tighter during the actual Papal visit to San Diego next month.

INT. KISD STUDIO - DAY

MADILYN OWENS (31), is super-attractive. BILL (64), gray hair, perfect features.

MADILYN

I've never seen such a heightened level of security in San Diego, Bill.

BILL  
Well, Madilyn. I've covered Papal visits to America for over forty-years. And of course, the Republican National Convention held right here in San Diego in nineteen-ninety-six.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

CALEB (mid-40's), surfer dude, looks back at the producer.

CALEB  
Here comes a boring story.

PETE JEONG (31), handsome, Asian-American.

PETE  
It's like every live truck on the planet showed up downtown today.

Pete kicks at something under a long countertop that seats back row news staff.

PETE (CONT'D)  
Ow!

CALEB  
Ow is right it's a train wreck out there. Ready camera two, take two.

PETE  
He bit my leg!

Everyone in the back row bounces up and down.

INT. KISD STUDIO - DAY

Maddy bobs her head, enduring Bill's story.

BILL  
Bob Dole arrived at the convention center by boat, and one of his escorts was a nineteenth century clipper ship.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

CALEB  
What is he talking about?

Front row tech staff is now bouncing up and down.

PETE

This is brutal. Show them a break.

Caleb covers his headset mic, grabs a male intern by the shirtsleeve.

CALEB

And take the little monster back to Maddy!

INT. KISD STUDIO - DAY

Madilyn adjusts to something under the news desk as DARLA (20's), refreshes anchor makeup. KURT (44), professional attire, runs up to the set.

KURT

No. No! Madilyn, Soloh isn't allowed in the studio! We pay you for daycare!

MADILYN

Preschool now Kurt. And the breaking news is that the new Pope might visit Comic Con this year, Bill. Not your old reporter stories.

BILL

Only a rumor not official, and besides I doubt you've ever even attended Comic Con.

MADILYN

I've been to Comic Con many times. Mostly when I was blackout drunk. Darla, can I get a woop woop?

DARLA

Uh, I love Comic Con.

BILL

She's probably blackout drunk right now, dear.

KURT

People. People! Madilyn, what do we do with him?

MADILYN

Get off the set Kurt I've got him.

Maddy is back on-air.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
San Diego is just one month away  
from welcoming our world's first  
African Pope.

KISD TWO-BOX

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO - DAY

Soderman (50's), quintessential So-Cal reporter, holds a mic.

MADILYN  
John Soderman is live with details  
of how security is, is preparing.

Madilyn leaves the KISD two-box, then reappears.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
Stay down there! I told you to stay  
down there!

SOLOH OWENS (pronounced Solo) (5), is an adorable little boy.  
He pops up on-screen in front of Madilyn.

SOLOH  
Mommy says guys dress up like  
superheroes at Comic Con because  
their imaginations are bigger than  
their penises.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Everyone laughs hysterically, except for Pete.

INT. OLD BALBOA PARK BUILDING - DAY

It's a large public space in an older section of the park.  
Two twenty-something janitors hold mops, watching the show  
inside a flat screen TV on the wall. They spot a Comic Con  
poster near it, then look at each other and smile.

INT. KURT'S OFFICE - DAY

Maddy and Pete sit in Kurt's large office. A mixture of  
station posters and framed art deco hangs on the walls. Caleb  
stands in a corner watching Soloh destroy the entire office.

KURT

Maddy what part of, permanently  
banned from the premises do you not  
understand!?

MADILYN

He was kicked out of another  
preschool yesterday. What did you  
want me to do Kurt, leave him at  
home alone?

Soloh has torn down a framed reprint of The Scream and is  
somehow dismantling the frame.

KURT

I asked you to keep him in the  
control room Pete.

PETE

He bit my leg!

Soloh hands torn fragments of The Scream poster to Caleb.

SOLOH

He scares me.

CALEB

(Whispering)

Get used to it kid, that's you in  
about ten years.

KURT

What the hell Caleb, you think this  
is funny? Why didn't you keep him  
in the control room?

CALEB

He was biting people again.

MADILYN

(Exasperated)

I thought he was over that biting  
phase.

Pete looks fondly at Maddy.

PETE

It didn't hurt that bad Maddy.

Soloh hands Caleb another portion of the torn poster.

SOLOH

Mommy says you're getting old.

CALEB

So are you.

Soloh kicks Caleb in the shin.

CALEB (CONT'D)

Ow! Maddy I'm gonna spank this kid myself! I told you I'd do it for you a long time ago!

MADILYN

Soloh come over here and sit down!

KURT

Get out of here Caleb you are not helping right now!

Soloh whacks Caleb with the broken poster frame.

INT. ABANDONED PLANNING OFFICE - DAY

The two janitors vape in a long-forgotten room. Their eyes discover a dusty schematic on the wall. It diagrams underground maintenance tunnels connecting to the convention center. They look at each other and smile.

INT. LA JOLLA HOTEL NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Madilyn and STACY (36), stylish, clasp hands, bouncing a few steps from dance floor to bar area. They pass Boris, face obscured, arguing on his cellphone at the end of the bar.

-He's speaking an unrecognizable language, still wearing the same sleek suit he sported upon his arrival at the airport, earlier that day.

MADILYN

Two tequila shots!

STACY

Wow more shots. So who did you trick into babysitting the spawn of Adam Vice tonight?

MADILYN

I don't want to talk about Soloh. He nearly ruined my career today. I only want to get drunk and dance.

Boris belligerently shouts gibberish, off camera. Maddy and Stacy sort of glance at him, continue their conversation.

STACY

We can order a ride right now Maddy  
and take Soloh out for ice cream.

MADILYN

That would be great but Soloh would  
just end up destroying the place  
and you know it. He's, so out of  
control.

(Sighing)

Sometimes I wish Adam would just  
come take Soloh for a while.

STACY

Adam is a rock star, that's no life  
for a kid.

MADILYN

I'm a rock star too Stacy! Soloh is  
just a little. My son is a little.

STACY

Monster. Everyone knows that  
sweetie. He's past the age where  
his antics are cute.

Suddenly, BORIS (late-60's), face mostly hidden, flails into  
view, knocking over a drink on the bar. Maddy and Stacy jump  
out of the way as Boris plops to the floor, springing right  
back to his feet.

BORIS

Free vodka for everyone!

A bouncer quickly arrives, reaches for Boris.

BORIS (CONT'D)

Do not touch me.

The bouncer backs off, as if Boris is an important guest.  
Boris brushes off his expensive suit.

BORIS (CONT'D)

You will escort me to my room now.

Boris exits with security. Maddy and Stacy belly back up, as  
ZACK (30's), wipes down the bar.

MADILYN

Who was that drunk old freak?

ZACK

It's an international hotel in La  
Jolla Miss Owens.



Zack places two shot glasses on the bar, begins pouring tequila. Maddy looks at her cellphone.

MADILYN

The sitter is texting me. I just don't feel like dealing with Soloh tonight.

INT. NATASHA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's a disaster zone. Soloh stands on a large, wooden mantle trying to climb higher above a brick extended fireplace. DAVE (35), hipster, motions frantically at Soloh then NATASHA (33), beautiful woman of color, who holds a phone to her ear.

DAVE

Soloh get down from there! Call her!

NATASHA

I AM!

Natasha watches the commotion as Soloh jumps down, tumbles, then runs away with Dave in hot pursuit of him.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Girl, you did not just send me to voicemail.

INT. LA JOLLA HOTEL NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Maddy pushes a button, puts her cellphone away.

MADILYN

Yep. She's already calling me to come get him.

STACY

He's your son, sweetie.

MADILYN

I know Soloh is safe, so tonight he's Adam's son. Even though Adam is out playing music somewhere thousands of miles away. But guess who will be there for Soloh, to be mommy again tomorrow?

Maddy downs her shot.

INT. PROUD MARY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

PROUD MARY (24), attractive, Korean gamer.

PROUD MARY  
Wait by the back door, Rowdy.

INT. ROWDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ROWDY (28), pudgy, Canadian gamer.

ROWDY  
You said back door. Speaking of,  
when you gonna ask out that hot  
girl you like at your work brah?

INT. PETE'S CONDO - NIGHT

PETE  
She's a co-worker. Ever heard of  
don't poop where you eat?

VIDEO GAMING THREEBOX - PROUD MARY/PETE/ROWDY

PROUD MARY  
Rowdy is right. You're a single  
successful guy T-C, just ask her  
out.

PETE  
We've got the tournament coming up.

PROUD MARY  
You ass, Rowdy! I told you to wait  
at the back door.

ROWDY  
Third team left, highest world  
level. We are so ready Proud Mary.

INT. PETE'S CONDO - NIGHT

PETE  
I'm going to bed.

Pete ends the transmission, sinks into his couch.

PETE (CONT'D)  
Maybe I should ask her out.

INT. MADDY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Madilyn lies in bed, suffering. The doorbell is ringing. Soloh rushes into the room, starts jumping on her bed, bouncing off an old stuffed bunny from the foot of her mattress.

SOLOH

I know where the key is! I know  
where the key is!

MADILYN

Soloh, get off my bed!

Soloh continues jumping, Maddy relents. She opens her eyes to discover a large dog sniffing her face, bolts out of bed.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

How did this horse get in here!?

Maddy turns to find Natasha holding a toddler.

NATASHA

You promised me if I watched Soloh  
you would pick him up by eleven pm!  
And why didn't you answer your  
phone all night I was worried sick!

MADILYN

Natasha I am so sorry. I was just  
on my way to come pick him up.

Madilyn yells back at Soloh, who is still jumping on her bed.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Soloh go make yourself some cereal!

NATASHA

He's been fed Madilyn. I woke up  
this morning and found all the food  
in our refrigerator thrown out on  
the floor. Didn't you ever teach  
that child not to climb inside  
appliances like a refrigerator or a  
dishwasher?

MADILYN

A what a what a what!?

NATASHA

Oh yeah, because you see. He was pretending to be an astronaut and decided our refrigerator was too big for an escape pod, so he gutted our dishwasher. Dishes, racks, everything, to make an escape pod. If something happened to that child I could never forgive myself!

MADILYN

Natasha I am so sorry.

Natasha tears up, shoves her toddler in Maddy's face.

NATASHA

And look at Macy's head! Soloh also thought it would be fun to pull her out of her crib so they could climb the rock wall together.

MADILYN

Wow you guys have a rock wall for kids in your home. That's amazing.

NATASHA

We don't have a rock wall for kids in our home, you irresponsible psycho! What kind of mother doesn't answer her phone all night!?

Natasha bows her head, showing Maddy her palm.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

(Praying)

Lord Jesus help me not to kick this crazy white girl's skinny little ass!

She's backing away now, glaring at Maddy.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

You and that little boy need help!

MADILYN

Nash, we've been friends since we were reporters together in Tucson! We had so much fun!

Natasha reaches the doorway, wipes tears.

NATASHA

We're not still in Arizona, Madilyn.

(MORE)

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I have a child now and so do you.  
You used me. This is not how  
friends treat one another. But I  
feel even worse for Soloh, because  
he needs his mom to get her raggedy  
life together and grow up!

Madilyn is weeping.

MADILYN

Natasha I'm sorry!

NATASHA

I will pray for you Madilyn. But  
don't ever contact me again, and I  
mean it. I will call child  
protective services if you ever  
contact me again.

The dog sniffs Madilyn's crotch. Natasha finds composure.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Come on out of here Buster. Ain't  
nothing worth finding up in her  
stanky drawers no way.

Buster barks at Maddy, they exit the room. Maddy grabs Soloh,  
collapsing bedside, gripping him tightly.

SOLOH

Are we gonna be okay mommy?

MADILYN

Yes honey, we are going to be okay.

She's kissing his head, sobbing.

INT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

ADAM VICE (43), tatted rock star, holds his phone at the bar.

ADAM

Woe woe slow down Maddy. We're back  
on our concert tour full-time. I  
can't come babysit the kid.

INT. MADDY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maddy's on her phone, cooking dinner. Soloh plays quietly on  
the floor.

MADILYN

I only need you to come watch him  
until I can find another preschool.  
What about your parents?

ADAM (O.S.)

They moved to a retirement villa in  
Borrego Springs Maddy. They don't  
allow kids there. Have your parents  
watch the kid.

MADILYN

Great one Adam you know my mom died  
when I was twelve.

ADAM (O.S.)

Your dad seemed like a nice guy.

MADILYN

Dad died two years ago Adam, how  
can you be such a loser!?

Maddy watches Soloh play in the cat litter box.

ADAM (O.S.)

I pay child support. What more do  
you want from me?

MADILYN

He needs his father!

INT. MUSIC VENUE - NIGHT

ADAM

I'll send you passes for Legoland,  
or a bunny or something. You loved  
bunnies. It's in the mail. Our set  
is up next I gotta go.

MADILYN (O.S.)

I need help Adam!

INT. MADDY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maddy air-throws her phone.

SOLOH

I'm building a sand castle. Cat  
poop holds the walls together.

MADILYN

Very creative Soloh. Now get out of the cat box and go play your video games. Wash your hands!

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Maddy and Bill are seen two-shot in the large control room program monitor.

CALEB

Sneak up theme music. Add copyright. Fade to black.

Pete steps down to tech row as everyone exits the control room. Bill leaves the news desk, but Madilyn remains on-set in the preview monitor.

PETE

Caleb, can I speak with you?

CALEB

Only tourists or die-hard locals still watch our show. Nice shop talk. Let's go eat lunch.

Pete and Caleb are alone in the control room.

PETE

I just need to ask your advice before I do something stupid.

CALEB

Dude. You want to ask Madilyn Owens out on a date.

PETE

How did you know?

CALEB

I knew you had a work crush on Maddy.

PETE

Do you think it's okay?

CALEB

If she says no, are you gonna stalk her?

PETE

Of course not.

CALEB

Then take a half court shot at the buzzer. You're not the first K-I-S-D employee to toss that air ball, pal.

Caleb turns to the preview monitor.

CALEB (CONT'D)

But I have a good feeling about you, Pete. I've known Maddy for a long time.

INT. KISD STUDIO - DAY

Madilyn sits alone at the anchor desk.

CALEB (O.S.)

She's about to lose her job.

PETE (O.S.)

We talked management down after Soloh's on-air appearance, and Kurt hired day-nanny services until they can find Soloh a new preschool.

CALEB (O.S.)

Soloh is not her biggest problem. Search vintage apps for San Diego Girls Gone Wild. Maddy is Hall of Fame.

Madilyn looks around, picks her nose, wipes a booger on Bill's chair.

CALEB (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Her party-girl antics were tolerable when Maddy and Adam Vice were a hot celebrity couple. Years ago. Then Adam got her pregnant, bolted town with his band. She never recovered.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

PETE

She's Madilyn Owens.

CALEB

She used to be Madilyn Owens. Now she's a single mom, raising an out of control little brat.

(MORE)



CALEB (CONT'D)

She needs good people like you in her life. But you are, for realz, the most introverted person I know. Are you really gonna ask her out?

PETE

Yes. I mean, if you think it's appropriate.

CALEB

Oh, it's appropriate. The legit question is if you can you handle the little monster?

PETE

Soloh? He is kind of wild. But he's just little kid.

CALEB

If you date Maddy you also date Soloh. You've gotta be one-hundred about this Pete.

PETE

I have no problem dating a single mom.

Caleb points to Madilyn in the preview monitor.

CALEB

Then go take your half court shot at the buzzer.

INT. KISD BREAKROOM - DAY

Pete approaches Maddy in the breakroom as she sits at a table texting on her phone.

PETE

Maddy I have something to ask you and since we work together I want to follow strict sexual harassment guidelines.

Maddy doesn't look up.

MADILYN

If that's a pickup line Pete I suggest you go back and practice a better one in the mirror.

She shuts down laughter of young interns with a glare, returns to her phone. Pete sighs, turns to walk away.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

You are the last guy at this station who would sexually harass me Pete. What's up?

Pete stops, turns back, takes a big breath.

PETE

Are you busy Friday night? My cousin just opened a new club in Del Mar.

He's got her attention.

MADILYN

Actually, I wanted to go to a new club in Del Mar with my friend Stacy on Friday night.

PETE

Club Utopia? I know the D-J! That's my cousin. He's also the owner.

MADILYN

That's the place. Unfortunately they don't allow kids.

PETE

Kids aren't allowed in the club area but kids are allowed in the restaurant. I like kids, if you and Soloh want to go there with me this Friday.

MADILYN

I'm texting you my address. I still have your cell number from our station wildfire coverage. Done.

She looks back up at Pete.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

I didn't know you liked kids. Do you have any kids?

PETE

No! I mean none that I know of. But I'm from a big family with lots of nieces and nephews.

MADILYN

You're cute. I've always thought so.

(MORE)

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
Then if you don't mind kids,  
specifically hanging out with my  
kid, be at my house around seven on  
Friday.

Pete checks his phone.

PETE  
Yeah, I got your address. But, that  
was. Somehow a lot easier than I  
envisioned in my mind.

MADILYN  
It's hard to find a good man who  
likes kids. I'll see you at my  
house around seven. Friday night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PROUD MARY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

PROUD MARY  
I told you to bring her flowers T-  
C.

INT. ROWDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ROWDY  
Did mommy leave pizza money on the  
counter for you big guy?

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pete's gaming, as Soloh jumps in and out of frame behind him.

PROUD MARY (O.S.)  
At least the child has an online  
gaming console.

PETE  
The kid has everything but a mom.

VIDEO GAMING THREEBOX - PROUD MARY/PETE/ROWDY

PROUD MARY  
She sounds like a hot pockets mom.  
I'll bet she has an entire freezer  
full of hot pockets. We must buy  
those online in South Korea.

ROWDY

We can buy pizza pops at any local convenience store in Canada.

PETE

What are you guys even talking about? This woman tricked me into babysitting her kid. She might have dead babysitters in her freezer.

ROWDY

Those are a bit harder to find at convenience stores. At least here in Toronto. Maybe around Listowel or further up North.

Pete finally cracks a smile.

PETE

You know what? Her loss. It was a dumb idea to ask out a co-worker.

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pete reacts as a cat storms the living room.

PETE

I gotta go!

Pete captures Soloh, as Soloh dashes after the cat with a knife. He slings Soloh on the couch, drops the knife on the floor.

PETE (CONT'D)

Woe woe little man what are you doing!?

SOLOH

Ralph ruined my sand castle again!

PETE

The cat's name is Ralph? You shouldn't chase Ralph around the house with a knife!

SOLOH

Ralph ruined my sand castle, again! And you were playing MY video games! I like playing video games.

PETE

I'm sorry. But it's really late, just go to bed right now!

SOLOH

No!

PETE

No? It's late. I'm in charge. Go to bed!

SOLOH

No!

PETE

Just go to bed! I'll. I'll read you a bedtime story or something if you'll just go to bed right now.

SOLOH

What's a bedtime story?

Pete looks around, the entire house is destroyed.

PETE

What? Wait. No one has ever read you a bedtime story?

SOLOH

No.

PETE

Sometimes I read bedtime stories to my nieces and nephews and it helps them fall asleep. I will read you a bedtime story if you will just go to bed right now.

SOLOH

You promise?

PETE

Just give me a few minutes to call your mom and let her know you are okay.

SOLOH

She told me she trusts you. So she won't be home until the sun is up.

PETE

Just go to bed. Where does your mom keep your books? Are they in your room?

SOLOH

I tore up all my books. Her books are over there.

It's a scattered pile of books near a bookshelf.

PETE

I'll find a good bedtime story.

Soloh rises, walks toward his room. He looks back at Pete.

SOLOH

You promise?

PETE

Give me a few minutes to find a book.

Soloh leaves the scene. Pete stands there a moment then picks up the butter knife and looks at it. He randomly tosses it back over the couch, the cat shrieks.

PETE (CONT'D)

Oh My God!

INT. CLUB UTOPIA - NIGHT

Maddy and Stacey sit in a VIP area with DAMEON (mid-20's), super-handsome Asian-American, other stylish people.

MADILYN

It's Pete! I should take this.

DAMEON

I still have another set. And you must attend the after-party!

STACY

Dameon is cute, but you already got that check-in call from you know who, sweetie. We should just leave!

Maddy looks at Dameon, back at her phone.

DAMEON

Pete is like an old grandpa in our family. He's a Zen Master with kids. He can handle whatever it is!

Maddy pushes a button, puts her phone away.

MADILYN

I know Soloh is safe. I'll call Pete back, before the next set.

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pete reaches her voicemail.

PETE

Maddy you need to come home. Soloh is okay, but there was something going on with the cat. Call me!

SOLOH (O.S.)

(Yelling)

You promised me a bedtime story!

Pete eyes the scattered pile of books.

PETE

(Yelling)

Still looking for a book Soloh!

INT. HALLWAY BOOKSHELF - NIGHT

Pete kneels, rummaging through scattered books, looking at a book then tossing it.

PETE (CONT'D)

War and Peace!? You are so full of crap Maddy.

Pete takes a deep breath, discovering a framed photo of Maddy's mom. The old photo lies flat, next to a stack of faded magazines on the bottom shelf.

PETE (CONT'D)

Magazines.

He holds up an old Time Magazine. Younger Vladimir Putin shakes hands with a Russian billionaire. The banner reads: "Russia's Rising Nouveau-Riche."

PETE (CONT'D)

Geeze Maddy these are ancient, I never knew you were a hoarder.

He picks up Grandma's photo and underneath it lies a cartoonish panda bear on the cover of a small, worn booklet.

PETE (CONT'D)

(Yelling)

I found one of your books Soloh!

Pete grabs The Tao of Piddle Paddle Panda, heads to Soloh's room.

## INT. SOLOH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Soloh's room is a jungle, and Soloh tucks under disheveled covers. Pete struggles to overcome clutter a bit, pulls a desk chair next to Soloh's bed.

PETE

Piddle Paddle Panda lives in a happy forest with all his friends. And, a few who aren't so happy. But Piddle Paddle Panda knows a happy, calm secret, passed down from his ancestors for thousands of years.

SOLOH

I think I've heard this story.

Pete sort of thumbs the book.

PETE

Hmm. I'm not sure this is even really a children's book. You want me to stop?

SOLOH

No. I like it. I like it.

PETE

Okay. Where was I? When hungry eat, when tired sleep. Live happy and calm, in panda peace.

Soloh bats his eyes, fighting sleep.

PETE (CONT'D)

Local villagers claim the happy, calm secret was delivered to the pandas by Buddha himself.

Soloh finally closes his eyes to sleep, dreaming.

## EXT. CRAYON DRAWN FOREST - DAY

PIDDLE PADDLE PANDA rolls merrily down a hillside, under a red crayon sun, lands with a bounce. CRAYON SOLOH sits at the bottom of the hill, sulking.

PIDDLE

(Madilyn's voice)

Why do you look sad?



CRAYON SOLOH  
My mommy never spends time with me,  
anymore.

Wild forest creatures appear, attempting to scare them.

CALEB (V.O.)  
(Echoing)  
Maddy I'm gonna spank this kid  
myself!

NATASHA (V.O.)  
(Echoing)  
You and that little boy need help!

Piddle Paddle Panda laughs at the scary forest characters and  
they all vanish, one by one.

CRAYON SOLOH  
How did you do that?

PIDDLE  
(Madilyn's calm voice)  
Piddle Paddle Panda knows a happy,  
calm secret.

A golden glow illuminates Crayon Soloh, he smiles. The red  
crayon sun nestles in blue skies, above a tranquil forest.

FADE

FADE UP

EXT. THE VATICAN - DAY

A wide shot of The Vatican.

INT. VATICAN CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

AGENT LARGE (mid-50's), immaculate-looking black man, dark  
suit, sits with several Vatican officials. CARDINAL BURCHELLI  
is examining documents.

CARDINAL BURCHELLI  
This is your official  
recommendation to Pope John Kwame?

AGENT LARGE  
Yes sir.

Cardinal Burchelli slides the documents to CARDINAL GOZZI,  
crusty Vatican stalwart.

CARDINAL GOZZI

I've obviously read every report  
pertaining to the security of our  
exalted leader the Pope. Pith! This  
is my opinion of this so-called  
comic book convention. Pith!

Everyone stands as POPE JOHN KWAME (65), enters the room.  
He's a large, foreboding Ugandan who sucks up all the oxygen.

POPE JOHN KWAME

Sit!

Everyone sits.

POPE JOHN KWAME (CONT'D)

You've travelled very far to speak  
with me, Agent Large. Voice your  
concerns.

AGENT LARGE

I strongly advise against adding  
the Comic Con event to your  
itinerary in San Diego, Your  
Holiness.

CARDINAL GOZZI

It is a barbaric Pagan festival  
beneath the dignity of the Papacy!

POPE JOHN KWAME

Gentlemen. These, superhero movies,  
provide inspiration to millions of  
children in Africa. Shall I not  
honor positive African  
representation in film when I visit  
America? And is this event not the  
international hub for this genre?

Agent Large looks at Gozzi who rolls his eyes.

POPE JOHN KWAME (CONT'D)

Speak your mind please, Agent  
Large.

AGENT LARGE

My team will assist protection at  
your pastoral service in San Diego  
Your Holiness, but Comic Con isn't  
a cathedral full of nuns and  
choirs.

CARDINAL GOZZI

It is a Pagan festival!

POPE JOHN KWAME  
Let him finish.

AGENT LARGE  
Thank you Your Holiness. Religious implications aside, this is an event filled with rowdy people, most of whom will be wearing elaborate costumes.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
Costumes, how rich.

AGENT LARGE  
It's called cosplay, Your Holiness. And those are just the friendlies.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
Hmm. I often feel as though I am a fictional character. Dressed up in this, cosplay.

CARDINAL GOZZI  
But Your Holiness. It is beneath your office!

POPE JOHN KWAME  
Cardinal Burchelli, I understand the Papal Guard is already in San Diego. What is the Vice Commander's latest report on the ground there?

CARDINAL BURCHELLI  
The Vice Commander in San Diego has cleared this event, Your Holiness.

Cardinal Gozzi stands, pounds the table.

CARDINAL GOZZI  
This is a mockery to the office of the Papacy! I must protest!

POPE JOHN KWAME  
Your protest is noted Cardinal Gozzi.

CARDINAL GOZZI  
I read the draft of your Papal statement on so called, evil energy.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
You are off the issue at hand Cardinal Gozzi.

CARDINAL GOZZI

The sacred Catholic Church is above international disputes, you have no right to interfere with shipments of Northern oil to your home continent we are not the U-N...

POPE JOHN KWAME

You are officially out of order.

CARDINAL GOZZI

And now you wish to appear at this Pagan festival in America!? You mock your office!

POPE JOHN KWAME

You will sit down and allow me to speak Cardinal Gozzi! As I remind you again the Papacy is my office, and not yours. I will not be bound by your traditions nor convention.

Cardinal Gozzi sits down in a huff. Pope John Kwame calmly watches him, turns back to the group.

POPE JOHN KWAME (CONT'D)

This, Comic Con, shall officially be added to my itinerary during my Papal visit to San Diego.

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pete is asleep on the couch. He opens his eyes. The previously destroyed living room is impressively tidy.

INT. HALLWAY BOOKSHELF - DAY

Grandma's photo now displays upright in a lower mid-section of the bookshelf, along with unevenly but carefully restacked books and old magazines.

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pete bolts off the couch.

PETE

What the hell? Soloh!

Pete rushes to Soloh's bedroom.

INT. SOLOH'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room is now functional, as every toy enjoys semi-organized, orderly space. Soloh sits quietly alone, coloring a ripped-out page from an old coloring book.

PETE

Soloh! Are you okay!?

SOLOH

I only have a few crayons left that I didn't break, but these are my favorite colors anyways.

PETE

Did a cleaning crew come inside this morning while I was asleep?

SOLOH

Sort of. It was a panda cub.

PETE

A what!? Why didn't you wake me up?

SOLOH

Because you were sleeping. Mommy's home.

Maddy appears in the doorway.

MADILYN

Who is that kid?

PETE

What do you mean?

MADILYN

That is not my son. Wow. You are really good with kids. And thanks for cleaning the house.

PETE

I'm out of here! This is too weird.

MADILYN

Pete I'm so sorry I didn't make it home last night. Your cousin invited us...

PETE

You need to get Soloh out of this house! Take him outside for some fresh air!

MADILYN  
Uh. Okay. I will.

PETE  
I'll see you at work.

She shouts at Pete as he rushes away.

MADILYN  
Thank you for cleaning the house!

Madilyn watches Soloh coloring inside the lines, on his scrappy piece of coloring book. His skill is remarkable.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
I suppose we could go to the  
Farmers Market in Solana Beach. Who  
are you?

She turns.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
Pete, wait!

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maddy reaches the living room just as the front door slams behind Pete. Her eyes catch the bookshelf.

INT. HALLWAY BOOKSHELF - DAY

She tears up, grabs the framed photo of her mom.

MADILYN  
How did this even get back up here?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. AN OCEAN VISTA POINT - DAY

YOUNG MADILYN (10), sits in a patch of grass near a tall palm tree with ELLEN (mid-30's), woman in the photograph. Ellen is obviously bald and wears a bunny-themed headscarf.

YOUNG MADILYN  
But I don't understand what that  
means, mommy.

ELLEN  
It means I'm very sick sweetheart.

YOUNG MADILYN  
I don't want you to die!

ELLEN  
Oh baby we will all die. You will  
be a mom someday and you will die.  
But you'll leave a part of you  
behind, inside your child, just  
like I will leave part of me behind  
inside of you. Don't be afraid.

YOUNG MADILYN  
I could never be as good of a mom  
as you!

ELLEN  
Oh baby yes you will. Yes you will.

MADDY'S DAD (late-30's), blue-collar work garb, approaches  
with a middle-aged Swami.

MADDY'S DAD  
This is Swami Nunda. He would like  
to lead us in a meditation of  
healing.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HALLWAY BOOKSHELF - DAY

Madilyn holds the photo to her chest, looking up.

MADILYN  
Oh mom I forgot. Adam left me, then  
Dad died. I felt so angry, and  
alone. I just, forgot how amazing  
you were.

EXT. OLD BALBOA PARK - DAY

The two janitors, RICK and SAM, stand over a maintenance  
tunnel entrance in the far back of the park.

RICK  
The map says these tunnels lead all  
the way to the convention center.

SAM  
Dude, we're in.

EXT. BEACHSIDE FARMERS MARKET - DAY

Soloh obediently holds Maddy's hand as they stroll through a small sea of smiling faces. White doves fly above. A bird dropping nearly lands on a FRAIL LADY's shoulder but a KIND GENTLEMAN reaches out and catches it in his baseball cap.

FRAIL LADY

Oh thank you, Dear.

KIND GENTLEMAN

My pleasure, ma'am.

Madilyn stops. She looks around, but all appears normal. She continues walking with Soloh. Gentle music plays as people behind them begin dancing. Soloh looks back and blows a kiss to everyone.

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT

A table. Soloh sits quietly eating ice cream as Maddy and Stacy stare at him.

STACY

I don't understand what the problem is Maddy, he looks perfectly fine to me. He's adorable!

Stacy rubs Soloh's head, pinches his cheek.

STACY (CONT'D)

You are so adorable, my little bubbale!

MADILYN

Get off of him with your Yiddish grandmother shtick Stacy, he's been like this all weekend. There is something wrong with him.

Soloh has ice cream on his face.

STACY

Ah look at all of that ice cream on your little face honey, let aunty Stacy wipe it off for you.

Stacy spits on a napkin, rubs it on Soloh's face. Madilyn grabs her arm and pulls her away from the table. Stacy holds up the napkin.

STACY (CONT'D)

You can do it- just spit on it.



Madilyn pulls Stacy outside the establishment.

EXT. ICE CREAM PARLOR SIDEWALK - NIGHT

MADILYN

Will you listen to me!?

Stacy shakes her head like she is snapping out of a trance.

STACY

I'm sorry Maddy! I am listening to you. Soloh is just so. Well-behaved.

They look back inside. Soloh cleaned his own face and cleared off their table. Other little kids gather around him.

MADILYN

I think Pete may have given him drugs, like maybe Adderall, or something. That's not my son.

STACY

Oh sweetie, he is your son. I'll admit I lost my senses for a moment, but he's just being so well-behaved that it's hard not to fuss over him.

MADILYN

Soloh snuck around the counter and ruined three barrels of ice cream the last time we were here, Stacy. Something's wrong with him.

STACY

He's perfect Maddy. You took a chance bringing him back here for ice cream because that's what moms do. Oh sweetie, you're just becoming a real mom!

EXT. BELLEVUE PRESCHOOL CHILD PICK-UP AREA - DAY

Maddy waits to spot Soloh in the child pickup area, noticing other parents already driving away.

MADILYN

Soloh this is the only pre-school that would accept you. Where are you and what have you done now?

INT. BELLEVUE PRESCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Maddy stops as Natasha exits with her toddler.

MADILYN

Natasha!

NATASHA

Hello Madilyn.

MADILYN

I left you a message. Thank you so much for helping Kurt get Soloh into this new preschool. Bellevue wouldn't have accepted Soloh without your support.

NATASHA

Well. I felt sort of guilty for some of the things I said to you. I was very angry at you Madilyn.

MADILYN

I'm the one who should apologize, again. I, I did receive a check-in call from child protective services last week.

NATASHA

It wasn't me. But precious, you can do this. Bellevue is a great preschool. Just take care of your child, and don't blow up this opportunity. I love you Maddy.

Natasha continues to the door.

NATASHA (CONT'D)

I need to get home with Macy.

MADILYN

Of course. I love you too Nash!

The entrance/exit door slams shut, behind Natasha.

INT. PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Maddy enters a classroom. Soloh stands surrounded by a few little kids and MISS MILLER. Maddy approaches the group.

MISS MILLER

Soloh is concerned about Charley.

Maddy nudges closer, beside LITTLE KID ONE and LITTLE KID TWO, and sees a large turtle, hiding in its shell, inside a 40-gallon aquarium.

MADILYN

What did Soloh do to Charley?

LITTLE KID ONE

Soloh thinks Charley is sad.

LITTLE KID TWO

Maybe he misses his wife.

Maddy leans-in for a better look inside the aquarium. Charley's head exits the shell. His small eyes grow extremely large.

SOLOH

He is not happy-calm in there.

Miss Miller shrugs at Maddy.

MISS MILLER

I did buy his food at a different pet store this week.

Miss Miller is done with the spectacle. She claps her hands.

MISS MILLER (CONT'D)

Your parents are waiting, we will all be back to check on Charley tomorrow.

Children exit the class.

LITTLE KID TWO

Goodbye Soloh.

LITTLE KID ONE

See you tomorrow Soloh.

Maddy and Miss Miller turn toward one another.

MISS MILLER

I'm Miss Miller. Kaitlyn. Kaitlyn Miller.

MADILYN

I'm Maddy. Soloh's mom.

MISS MILLER

Yes I know. I watch your show all the time. Every morning before I leave for school.

MADILYN

Thank you. Is Soloh doing okay so far?

MISS MILLER

Oh he's great. Best behaved child in my class. The kids love him. Soloh has received the citizenship award every day since he arrived as a new student at Bellevue on Monday.

MADILYN

Uh, wow. Okay. You have my cell number.

They turn and walk past the aquarium to the doorway. Suddenly, the turtle is frantically trying to crawl up the aquarium wall. Everyone looks back, watching Charley.

MISS MILLER

I'm just gonna, check on Charley.

INT. PEDIATRICIAN EXAM ROOM - DAY

Maddy and DOCTOR (mid-40's), sit staring at Soloh, as he quietly plays with Lego bricks in a small play area.

DOCTOR

I've run every conceivable test.

MADILYN

The last time we were in this office he destroyed the entire place and made your receptionist cry. What about the drug test?

DOCTOR

Negative. He was a bit rowdy during his last office visit, but Soloh is perfectly healthy. All known autism tests for children his age, negative.

MADILYN

He's received the citizenship award at his new preschool every day so far. The citizenship award!

DOCTOR

Have there been any changes in your routine? For instance, have you been spending more time with him?

MADILYN

Yes. It's fun to take him places again. He's so well-behaved.

DOCTOR

I'd say he is simply responding naturally to the fact that you are spending more time with him.

EXT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DAY

Maddy escorts Soloh out of the small medical office. They walk toward their car, parked a few blocks away in Old Town.

MADILYN

Soloh are you sure you feel okay?

SOLOH

I'm a panda cub mommy.

She stops and digs a folded paper out of her purse. She holds up a beautifully conceived crayon drawing of a forest.

MADILYN

Soloh this is beautiful. I found it in your room this morning. Why do you always break your crayons if you can make drawings like this?

SOLOH

So I could see the colors better.

MADILYN

I, I guess that makes sense. Soloh this drawing is. This drawing is beautiful honey and mommy loves it.

Maddy puts the drawing back in her purse. She takes a deep breath, sort of looks around, shakes her head.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Maybe you're just going through another phase. I like this phase.

SOLOH

When hungry eat, when tired sleep. Live happy-calm, in panda peace.

MADILYN

Where did you hear that?

Suddenly, an ELDERLY GENTLEMAN appears on the sidewalk.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

A fish truck dumped everything on  
this sidewalk and I still smell  
kakashka!

MADILYN

I beg your pardon?

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

Kakashka! I always smell poop!

A LITTLE GIRL runs up, stands just behind the elderly  
gentleman, looks directly at Soloh.

LITTLE GIRL

Thank you for saving him.

SOLOH

You're welcome.

A FAT MALE NURSE arrives on the scene.

FAT MALE NURSE

Oh thank god. Sometimes he gets out  
of the back gate. I run a small  
memory care home in the  
neighborhood.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

I know where I am.

FAT MALE NURSE

Oh really Igor? Where are we?

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

This is the fishing village of  
Vladivostok.

The fat male nurse leads him away, but the little girl  
remains standing there.

MADILYN

Uh, excuse me! What about the  
little girl!?

The fat male nurse turns back to Maddy.

FAT MALE NURSE

I don't know who she is.

A FIT MOTHER walks briskly up to the girl, grabs her hand.

FIT MOTHER

What have I told you about running  
ahead of me and talking to  
strangers!?

The little girl glances back at Soloh as she's led away.

LITTLE GIRL

But the man was lost mommy. That  
little boy saved him.

SOLOH

He wasn't happy-calm.

MADILYN

He's fine sweetie. Apparently.

Maddy is still dazed by the action.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

And what was the deal with that  
little girl? They just came out of  
nowhere. What did that old man say?  
A truck dumped fish poop on the  
sidewalk?

SOLOH

(Chuckling)

That sounds funny.

They laugh. A few cats have shown up and several birds rest  
above them. A kitten dashes toward a row of mom & pop  
restaurants, Soloh points to the festivities.

SOLOH (CONT'D)

Music mommy.

MADILYN

It's near the car honey, let's go.

EXT. OLD TOWN CANTINA ROW - DAY

Soloh hesitates to get in the car, he points again to the  
music originating from a corner cantina.

SOLOH

The music is happy-calm.

MADILYN

Happy-calm? So is that your newest  
catch phrase? We can listen for  
just a minute honey.

Maddy secures her purse inside the car. They lean against it, listening to the festive music.

SOLOH  
I like music.

MADILYN  
You come by it naturally.

SOLOH  
I found my father's shiny music circle in your room mommy, but I didn't know how to hear it. I want to hear my father's music.

MADILYN  
It's called a C-D sweetie they stopped making those. But I will find your father's music online and play it for you. Maybe, sometime.

The kitten returns and scruffs Soloh's ankles, crying. It is obviously very upset.

SOLOH  
The kitty is not happy-calm.

MADILYN  
We already have a cat, Soloh.

The kitten darts into bushes, shrieking.

SOLOH  
We should check on the kitty.

MADILYN  
Oh all right Soloh. We'll make sure the kitty made it home. It did look frantic or lost or something.

Maddy grabs Soloh's hand, investigating. They end up on the other side of the bushes.

EXT. HOUSING LOT - DAY

They're now on an old lot hosting a large two-story house. The house and property are oddly unkept for the neighborhood. Maddy and Soloh walk toward an old porch.

MADILYN  
You stay right here where mommy can see you.

(MORE)



MADILYN (CONT'D)  
I'm just going to knock on the door. What am I doing? This is crazy.

The elderly gentleman opens the door just as Maddy reaches it. Maddy is immediately taken back by the smell. The man rushes out on the porch.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN  
I knew the child would find me.

Maddy steps inside a dilapidated living room.

INT. RUNDOWN CARE HOME - DAY

Residents live in criminal squalor. The fat male nurse appears out of another doorway.

FAT MALE NURSE  
This is a memory care home.

MADILYN  
I know what this is.

EXT. HOUSING LOT - DAY

Maddy leads Soloh back to the outer edge of the walkway. Other neglected residents appear on the porch, as Maddy makes a phone call.

MADILYN  
Todd it's Maddy. You know that report we're doing on elderly abuse and fraud? I found another elder shack.

Maddy glances at Soloh, then watches the fat male nurse trying to herd residents back inside the house.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
Well, Soloh did. Somehow. Can you get to Old Town with your camera gear? I'm calling authorities now.

EXT. OLD TOWN HISTORIC MISSION - DAY

A rifle barrel points out of the bell tower.

EXT. CARE HOME PORCH - DAY

Rifle scope perspective crosshairs the elderly gentleman, then roams, discovering Maddy and Soloh on the property. The scope scene jiggles, returning to find the elderly gentleman shuffling back inside the house.

LATER

EXT. HOUSING LOT - DAY

Maddy stands with Soloh behind some police cars. Old people are escorted away by authorities. Cops place the fat male nurse into a patrol car.

FAT MALE NURSE

This is all a huge mistake.

The elderly gentleman gets one last jab as he passes the patrol car.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

That will teach you to mess with proud Vladivostok man. Svoloch!

He stops and tries to spot Soloh.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)

Where is that little boy? He saw in me, life is suffering. The first noble truth.

His escorts get him moving again.

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)

I am immigrating to California!

Maddy tugs Soloh closer to her body. She smiles at JANICE (37), who is now part of a neighborhood crowd, watching the commotion. Todd walks past them to reach the house with his KISD camera gear.

JANICE

My papi would never end up in a place like that. How about your father?

MADILYN

Oh uh. My dad died a few years ago.

JANICE

That's one way to go.

ROSA (7), holds the lost kitty.

ROSA

I'm sorry that your grandpa died.

SOLOH

I don't remember him, much. I miss his scrambled eggs with ketchup.

ROSA

I'm Rosa.

SOLOH

My name is Soloh.

TODD returns and interrupts them.

TODD

They may need a statement Maddy.  
And maybe we should do a stand-up.  
Just to cover everything.

JANICE

You are the people who found this  
in our neighborhood? We ain't even  
zoned for it.

Maddy presents Todd and Soloh.

MADILYN

I'm Madilyn Owens this is Todd. We  
work for K-I-S-D, and we are doing  
a television series on elder fraud  
and abuse. Can you watch my son?  
Soloh. Just for a few minutes? I'll  
be right over there.

Janice eyes Soloh, surveys the residents, peers at Todd.

JANICE

We ain't zoned for all this. You  
can quote me.

Janice grabs Soloh's hand and points to a small corner  
cantina, where the music originated.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Pick your boy up at Rosa's Cantina.

MADILYN

I beg your pardon?

JANICE

That's my cantina right there on  
the corner. I'll start by getting  
them fed.

TODD

She definitely owns Rosa's Cantina  
we bring our kids down here all the  
time.

MADILYN

I can't ask you to do that.

JANICE

I'm a single mom. I know work when  
I see it. It looks like you have  
unfinished business.

Janice glares sternly at Todd.

JANICE (CONT'D)

That's my quote about the zoning.

Janice leads Rosa and Soloh back toward her cantina.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Pick him up at the cantina. I live  
above it if this gets too late.

Todd watches them leave, turns to Maddy.

TODD

Was that Soloh? I've never seen him  
so well-behaved.

MADILYN

Can we just get what we need here?

EXT. OLD TOWN STREET CORNER - DAY

Boris, dressed in an orange Adidas track suit, watches from a  
safe distance near the mission. He swigs from a decorative  
metal flask as he argues on his phone.

-His face finally reveals the aged, but recognizable, Russian  
billionaire pictured on the old Time Magazine cover at  
Maddy's house.

BORIS

(In Russian, subtitled)  
General Igor Ivanov was here but  
authorities are now moving him...  
Tracking him down again is not in  
our agreement...

Boris angrily ends the call, rants at his phone.

BORIS (CONT'D)  
 (In English)  
 Your breath is vomit! Svoloch!

He looks down to find a stray dog peeing near his foot. He kicks at the dog, curses in Russian.

The subtitles read: "\$#\*&^!" "\*^%\$#!" "#\*%@%!"

BORIS (CONT'D)  
 (In English)  
 I hate California.

EXT. ROSA'S CANTINA - DUSK

Maddy rushes into the outdoor cantina to find Soloh laughing and dancing with Janice and Rosa, as a Mexican quintet performs on a small stage. SYD (43), portly Mexican-American, appears behind the patio bar.

SYD  
 They've been at it since they  
 finished their fish tacos.

Janice walks up, they grab two stools at the counter.

JANICE  
 Two virgins Syd and don't pinch the  
 grenadine for us. I'm Janice.

MADILYN  
 I'm Maddy. Thank you so much for  
 watching Soloh. I had no clue his  
 doctor visit here in Old Town would  
 turn into a night at work.

JANICE  
 I operate this cantina on a shoe  
 string. There is always work for  
 Syd to do.

Syd places drinks on the bar. He winks lovingly at Janice. She taps Maddy's shoulder.

JANICE (CONT'D)  
 (Laughing)  
 He thinks he's the last red hot  
 Latin lover. But he is the best  
 cook in Old Town.

The two moms turn sideways, watching their kids dance.

MADILYN

Wow. We never do this. Me and Soloh. The last time I was in Old Town was with my friend Stacy.

JANICE

Then you should join Soloh out on the dance floor we do this every night.

MADILYN

Dancing? Those are usually the nights I take an Uber home. But, I suppose this is good for him. For us. For both of us. I normally wouldn't trust him like this. Like in public. He's not always so well-behaved.

Janice chuckles, pointing out young children in the crowd.

JANICE

This is a single parent friendly establishment, and we got 'em all. You see that little guy? Dancing by the fountain? We call him the snake.

(Laughing)

The snake. That little chalupa.

MADILYN

He's four years old.

JANICE

Keep an eye on him because he will slither past every one of us and end up with both hands in all the ice cream behind the counter. Around here? We just let them be kids.

MADILYN

I so appreciate you watching Soloh.

Janice taps Maddy's shoulder.

JANICE

We will dance tonight.

Soloh runs up from the dance floor.

SOLOH

Syd is not happy-calm, mommy.

Janice grabs a muffin, then rushes around the counter to catch Syd as he collapses.

JANICE

Soloh thank god you were here! Syd is a diabetic, this concha should help until I can get him some insulin.

Janice looks up at them, as if she knows the routine.

JANICE (CONT'D)

It's the second noble truth, attachment to his own cooking causes his suffering.

MADILYN

Is he alright!?

JANICE

He will be. Thanks to Soloh.

Madilyn watches Janice attend to Syd. She notices birds nesting in trees, surrounding the cantina. She stares at Soloh.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Madilyn bursts into the control room. Everyone but Pete and Caleb quickly exit.

MADILYN

Why are you ignoring me Pete!?

PETE

Ignoring you? I see you every day.

MADILYN

I've tried to get you alone for an entire week now! I've been calling you, I've texted you!

CALEB

Classic ghosting.

PETE

Shut up Caleb!

MADILYN

There is something going on with Soloh since you watched him last Friday night!

PETE

You mean when you tricked me into babysitting him?

CALEB

Pete asked me to stay if you came in here Maddy but I think I should go.

MADILYN

Actually, Caleb. Adam took off the night Soloh was born, and you and your wife were the only friends there for me. I was just so bitter about Adam leaving that night. I'm so sorry for the way I've treated you these last few years.

CALEB

I appreciate your apology Maddy, but this is not one-hundred for me.  
(Sort of Singing)  
Should I stay, or should, I go now?

PETE

Shut up Caleb!

Caleb sits down at the font machine, pretends to type.

MADILYN

Will you at least meet me and Soloh this evening after work?

PETE

So I can babysit again?

MADILYN

No, we'll meet you at La Jolla Shores Park or somewhere.

PETE

Okay Maddy. But I'm not babysitting for you again.

MADILYN

I'll text you the info.

Maddy leaves the control room. Caleb stands, staring at Pete.

PETE

What's your problem?



CALEB

I said take a half court shot at the buzzer pal, but who are you?

PETE

Shut up Caleb you give bad advice.

EXT. OLD BALBOA PARK - DAY

Rick drops a backpack to Sam, who is already down in a tunnel. Rick climbs into the hole, then sloppily jiggles a manhole cover semi-back in place.

EXT. LA JOLLA SHORES PARK - DAY

Pete stands in a grassy knoll area, as Maddy and Soloh walk up to greet him. Soloh runs right up, just ahead of Maddy.

SOLOH

Are you gonna be my new daddy?

Madilyn reaches the plateau.

MADILYN

What did he say?

PETE

(Laughing)

He thinks I'm someone else.

MADILYN

Go play sweetie, let mommy speak with Pete.

Soloh runs straight into a large flock of birds on the ground, and they fly up, almost appearing as if they hover over him. Pete watches Soloh frolic.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Don't stare at him too long Pete, it's like looking at the sun.

PETE

Why am I here?

MADILYN

Did you do something to Soloh last Friday? Like drug him or spank him or something?

PETE

Of course not!

MADILYN

He's different since you babysat him.

PETE

Different? That's what little kids do Maddy they chase birds.

MADILYN

Oh, it's been like this all week, with birds. And people. Just random people flock to him on the street.

PETE

I got all your messages but I don't see anything wrong with the little guy.

MADILYN

C-P-S called me last week. They said it was a routine check-in call.

PETE

Maddy, everyone at work knows you love Soloh.

MADILYN

It's fine, I think. But now something strange is happening, and, and gawd Pete. I know you must already think I'm psycho for ditching you with him.

PETE

I left you one voice message because he was acting out missing his mom. I never called you psycho.

MADILYN

I knew he was safe with you. And your message only said something about the cat. I can't just drop Soloh off with his grandparents to get even a small break. Especially not to go do stuff with other people my age. Gawd, I do sound psycho.

PETE

It's only psycho if you didn't realize it was, yeah. Sort of psycho I guess.

(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)

It was cruel of you to make me  
think we had a date. I'd definitely  
call it, dysfunctional.

MADILYN

I deserve that. I'll never dump  
Soloh on anyone, ever again! Please  
forgive me!

Pete takes a deep breath, as if gauging Maddy's sincerity.

PETE

Alright, I forgive you. But you  
could have done this mea culpa back  
at the station Maddy.

MADILYN

I tried. You avoiding me all week.

Soloh runs past Madilyn and Pete, and they duck from all the  
birds he's steered their way. Maddy loses her balance,  
landing in Pete's arms.

PETE

(Sort of Singing)  
Why do birds, suddenly appear?

Maddy breaks their embrace.

MADILYN

This isn't funny Pete!

PETE

I'm sorry, I just don't know what  
you want from me.

She places her palm on Pete's abs.

MADILYN

I, I've never noticed how muscular  
you are. What kind of core workout  
do you do?

PETE

Why am I here Maddy?

MADILYN

Soloh is different since you  
babysat him, and I'm the only  
person who can see it.

PETE

You're talking nonsense.

MADILYN

Pete! Soloh is. He's...

PETE

Just a normal little kid Maddy.

Dogs in the park surround Soloh, and he's petting them, as dog owners also fawn over the cute little child. Birds still circle above him.

MADILYN (O/S)

That's not the same Soloh who bit you in the control room.

PETE (O/S)

It didn't hurt that bad Maddy.

Maddy drops her head, pauses, looks back up at Pete.

MADILYN

Will you hang out with us, just a little while, and tell me if you think Soloh is different?

PETE

You're joking, right?

Pete looks around.

PETE (CONT'D)

Did my cousin put you up to this?

MADILYN

I swear, his behavior changed after you watched him. I'm only asking you to spend a few hours with us.

PETE

I'm busy. I have friends arriving in San Diego next week. And you just want a babysitter.

MADILYN

I want... I need help. I need someone to confirm I'm not losing my mind. Please Pete. Just spend a few hours with us.

Soloh spots something, in the distance, walks back toward them. Pete watches Soloh approaching, turns to Maddy.

PETE

Okay. It's our day off tomorrow and you guys can hang out with me in Encinitas. But you can never leave me alone with him again, just to babysit while you go out and party like a rock star.

MADILYN

I promise.

Soloh arrives, grabs their hands.

SOLOH

Come with me!

MADILYN

We'll see Pete again tomorrow honey.

Soloh tugs at their arms.

SOLOH

Come with me. It's happy-calm.

Maddy and Pete relent, and Soloh leads them to the water's edge below the knoll.

EXT. THE PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

It's a spectacular San Diego sunset.

EXT. LA JOLLA SHORES PARK - DAY

They settle into the spectacle, sitting silently for a few beats. Maddy and Pete smile at each other, peering back out at the sunset.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Boris watches the same sunset. He pours a large glass of vodka as he converses on his cellphone.

BORIS

I agree this event offers our best opportunity. I'll meet your Vice Commander here at my hotel. I've located a rare edition Gogol at a small bookstore in San Diego but otherwise, I am keeping a very low profile...

(MORE)

BORIS (CONT'D)

Do not worry, Your Eminence, as  
Ambassador for Slavic Orthodox  
Church I blend into this city like  
wind from Pacific Ocean... And,  
blessings to you, Cardinal.

He downs the glass of vodka in a single gulp, then picks up  
an old book, speaking to it.

BORIS (CONT'D)

I will soon possess your most  
sacred twin my sweet Gogol. Maybe  
we keep low profile while  
celebrating a rare find, huh?

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Boris, dressed in a bright yellow Adidas track suit, watches  
a bikinied dancer onstage. He stands, placing a one-hundred  
dollar bill into the stripper's G-string. He turns to face  
the entire bar.

BORIS

Free vodka for everyone! I love  
California!

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maddy and Pete sit close together on the couch. Soloh is  
asleep, Maddy gently strokes his hair.

PETE

The sunset and the restaurant were  
amazing but how did we end up back  
here at the scene of the crime?

MADILYN

Soloh can be very persuasive.

PETE

I'd normally be. I'd be playing  
online video games right now. I'm a  
bit of a nerd.

MADILYN

That's not breaking news Pete. And  
I can be a bit of a nerd myself.

It's almost as if they might kiss. Maddy's phone buzzes. She  
picks it up, looks at it.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Your cousin. I forgot he might call tonight. But you don't have to leave.

Pete stands.

PETE

It is getting late. I'll see you guys at my place tomorrow. My sister Nari left gear she totes my niece in, when she visits San Diego. Come prepared to pedal.

EXT. BEACHSIDE BOARDWALK - DAY

Pete rides his bike along the boardwalk. Maddy appears on a bike, pulling Soloh in a bike trailer. They stop at a restroom area and Maddy heads to the potty. Pete also dismounts, stands near Soloh.

SOLOH

Do you love my mom?

PETE

What!? Your mom and me are just work friends.

SOLOH

She thinks I'm sick or something.

PETE

I know. Your mom is worried about you. But. Hey. I'm thirty-one and my mom still worries about me too. It's what moms do. They worry.

SOLOH

Are you gonna be my new daddy?

PETE

No little man. Why do you keep asking me that?

SOLOH

Because you are nice. To my mom. And me.

PETE

Soloh we should all be nice, to everyone. And.

(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)

We can all be friends without me  
ever, ever, being your dad. Do you  
understand that?

SOLOH

Yes.

Pete sticks a finger up his nose, makes a funny face.

PETE

Besides, I'm only nice to you...  
(Funny voice)  
because you're a booger.

SOLOH

(Laughing)  
You're a booger!

PETE

(Chuckling)  
I'll admit there is something  
special about your mom. I'm a bit  
of an introvert and she. Let's just  
say she pulls me out of my shell.

SOLOH

You're like Charley.

PETE

Who is Charley?

SOLOH

A lonely friend. He has everything  
to stay alive. Except my mom.

Maddy returns, grabs her helmet.

MADILYN

What are you two talking about?

SOLOH

I'm a panda cub mommy. And Pete is  
a turtle!

Maddy and Pete look at each other, snicker.

MADILYN

You are very private, Pete. You're  
the last guy at work I ever thought  
would ever ask me out.

Pete bristles, returns to his bike. She's following him.



MADILYN (CONT'D)

Oh Pete I'm sorry! But do you know what it's like to be me!?

PETE

No Maddy.

She's finished buckling her helmet, grabs his shoulder. He turns and they're nearly helmet to helmet.

MADILYN

I could be-with any shallow guy I want, except Soloh's father.

PETE

That's not breaking news Maddy.

MADILYN

Soloh said you're a turtle and that's what I thought. You seemed so?

PETE

Nerdy?

She steps back, finds her ground.

MADILYN

Not the word I was looking for but, yes. What grown man talks about anime or video games at work?

PETE

I'm sorry I don't like crowded bars or all-night rave parties. Unlike a single mom I know.

MADILYN

Fair enough. But you make everything you do like seem so, exclusive. I once mentioned an Amazon series about Lord of the Rings in the breakroom, and you almost bit my head off!

PETE

Because it's not cannon.

MADILYN

So what. It kept Soloh still for a few hours. We both have our own ways to escape. Yours just seem more, introverted or something.

PETE  
Like a turtle?

MADILYN  
Pete. You are obviously amazing.  
Any woman in San Diego would be  
lucky if you asked her out. I  
realize that. You. You didn't  
deserve how I treated you.

PETE  
And I said I forgive you. Can we  
just get to the spot Soloh said we  
should visit?

They look back, Soloh is petting dogs who surround his cargo trailer with their owners. Maddy wades through them, mounts her bike.

PETE (CONT'D)  
(Under his breath)  
Last time I open up to a little  
kid.

EXT. SELF-REALIZATING MEDITATION GARDENS - DAY

They pedal up the drive of a plush oceanside property, dismount at an entrance bike rack.

PETE (CONT'D)  
How did Soloh know about this  
place?

Maddy points to a giant palm tree, towering over the property.

MADILYN  
He was still in a stroller the last  
time I brought him here. I used to  
read to Soloh just right up there.

EXT. THE ENTRY PATH - DAY

A cosmic OLD WOMAN appears, holding literature, as they approach the main vista path.

OLD WOMAN  
Welcome to Self-Realizing  
Meditation Gardens. Our founder  
wrote many of his most sacred texts  
on these grounds.

They kindly wave-off her offer of literature, peer down the main vista path toward the ocean.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

The blessed one donated all of this sacred park for the public to enjoy and discover oneness.

MADILYN

We've been here before, thank you.

OLD WOMAN

This path reveals a view of energy.

Maddy pulls at Soloh's hand to get them moving.

MADILYN

Ma'am, I know where we're going.

OLD WOMAN

Flow in the view you find on this path. Flow in fresh love!

They bust out laughing, as they pass her.

PETE

Don't eat the plants!

MADILYN

Welcome to Soloh land, Pete.

EXT. AN OCEAN VISTA POINT - DAY

They reach the vista point, rejoice in the view.

PETE

Amazing. I pass this place all the time, but I've never been here.

MADILYN

My parents would bring me here. It's a poorly kept native secret.

PETE

I didn't know it was open to the public. Until I met Soloh.

MADILYN

I'd bring Soloh up here every Saturday morning in his stroller.

Maddy points at a landmark palm tree, across the viewpoint area. It's the same spot she visited with her mom as young Maddy.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
I'd read to him, just right over there.

They settle into the moment. The sun above them sparkles on the ocean like tiny pixies, dancing in the sea.

SOLOH  
I like it here mommy.

MADILYN  
So do I. I'm not sure why I stopped bringing you here. I suppose I let you run around too much as you got older.  
(Chuckling)  
It didn't help when you bit the Swami.

Pete looks at her.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
Two years ago.

Pete nods knowingly, returns to the view.

PETE  
This was a great idea Soloh. Soloh?

EXT. A PARK BENCH - DAY

Maddy rushes to find Soloh, watching SWAMI NUNDA (now-80's), who sits on a concrete bench.

SWAMI NUNDA  
The boy told me he is a panda cub and asked me why I am sitting here. That, is a very good question. My rump suffers day after day yet I return, because this uncomfortable bench offers my favorite view. Could the boy be a lama? Am I attached to this bench? I am, I. Am I? My rump suffers. I.

Maddy grabs Soloh's hand, they back away from the bench.

SOLOH  
He is not happy-calm, mommy.

MADILYN

He's attached to his bench honey,  
let's go.

Pete walks up closer, watches Swami Nunda babble incoherently about his uncomfortable meditation bench.

PETE

I think Soloh is right there might  
be something wrong with this man.

LATER

EXT. SELF-REALIZATING MEDITATION GARDENS - DAY

The driveway entrance. Pete reassures the old woman beside an ambulance. Maddy grips Soloh, as Pete returns to the bike rack.

MADILYN

I'm sure he's okay honey.

PETE

They don't think it was a stroke  
but good catch Soloh. The Swami  
will be okay. He will swam another  
day.

SOLOH

He has a hard job.

Maddy releases Soloh, they all turn to the bikes. She packs Soloh into his cargo trailer.

MADILYN

See. This is it. These coincidences  
I wanted you to witness so you can  
tell me that I am not losing my  
mind here.

PETE

What are you talking about Soloh  
may have saved that old Swami's  
life.

MADILYN

Soloh bit that old Swami the last  
time we were here. Didn't you  
honey.

PETE

You said that was two years ago.

Maddy looks over at the ambulance.

MADILYN

You don't think this is odd?

Pete watches the ambulance then looks at Maddy.

PETE

A Swami almost died. Again. Well he didn't almost die again, but it's always inconvenient when someone needs an ambulance. Soloh was perfectly behaved.

MADILYN

You don't see it yet.

PETE

Or maybe you're just seeing it.

Swami Nunda appears on a stretcher, being pushed to the ambulance. He spots Soloh and rises up.

SWAMI NUNDA

It's the third noble truth! Free yourself from attachment! I am free of that bench! A panda is awake!

The Swami lies back down on the stretcher as paramedics shove him into the ambulance. Madilyn, Pete and Soloh are ready to ride as they watch the commotion.

MADILYN

Pete!? Admit that's odd!

PETE

That. Was so odd.

They bust out laughing.

MADILYN

Well I'm glad he's okay.

SOLOH

It was a hard bench.

PETE

I promised dinner but I need to check the corner vintage shop for some welcome gifts for my friends.

They pedal back down the driveway.

MADILYN  
(Laughing)  
A panda is awake! A panda is awake!

Soloh laughs hysterically.

EXT. RAD RECORDS - DAY

They pull to a stop and the trio unsaddles in front of Rad Records & Books. They chain the bikes, enter the store.

INT. RAD RECORDS - DAY

It's a small, beachside vintage shop. JARED (37), beach bum, is plopped over the front counter, reading a comic.

JARED  
Hi Pete. Hey, I know you. You're Madilyn Owens!

PETE  
This is her son, Soloh.

JARED  
You have a very cool name.

PETE  
Yes he does. Anything rare arrive this week, Jared?

JARED  
Nada. Just a few meh edition Pokémon cards.

PETE  
We'll just look around.

Soloh heads straight to the comic book shelves. Madilyn nearly follows Soloh but Pete pulls her back into the moment.

PETE (CONT'D)  
He's a little kid in a comic book shop let him explore. He's happy-calm. Why does he keep saying that?

MADILYN  
Oh, it's his new little catchphrase for inner peace or something. Just wait until I find who taught him that.

PETE

I've heard it somewhere but I can't recall what genre of anime.

Maddy spots the vinyl record section, marches to it.

MADILYN

So this is where you hang out?

The used records are located behind a large post, obscuring it from Soloh. Pete sizes up an older man at the book section, then follows Maddy.

PETE

I knew you'd like this place.

The comics rest near vintage books. Soloh walks past Boris, who wears a blue Adidas track suit and holds a novel. They stand only a few feet away from each other, perusing their sections.

SOLOH

I like your clothes. Are you a coach?

Boris looks down at Soloh.

BORIS

I am an assassin, malen'kiy mal'chik. I wish to correct a wayward Pope.

SOLOH

You talk funny. And you don't sound happy-calm.

Boris erects himself.

BORIS

Nikolai Gogol is my favorite author. He calms me.

Boris touches the flask in his pocket. He starts to take it out for a swig, but restrains.

BORIS (CONT'D)

And vodka. Vodka makes me very happy.

SOLOH

Piddle Paddle Panda is always happy. Because he has food, and friends.



BORIS

I see. So you think I should be more like bear? A panda bear.

SOLOH

Like Piddle Paddle Panda.

BORIS

A big Kamchatka bear standing ten feet high with jaws powerful enough to crush a deer's skull. This is only bear I wish to be.

SOLOH

But that's a mean bear. Maybe you could be happy-calm if you weren't so mean.

BORIS

Mind your business. I owe many favors to powerful people and I desire to keep my position in life. You push many buttons, malen'kiy mal'chik.

SOLOH

You're scary.

Boris halts his increasingly aggressive stance, relaxes.

BORIS

I appreciate your concern young friend. But, I fear it is too late for me to find this, happy and calm, you speak of.

He moves to the comic racks, digs out two old comics.

BORIS (CONT'D)

Examine these, cartoons. The numskull who owns this shop undervalues their worth.

Boris places the comics back in a lower bracket where Soloh can reach them, walks away with his book.

BORIS (CONT'D)

Happy and calm. Ha ha. Like panda. Ha ha ha.

Maddy flips through albums at the record section, obviously enjoying it.

PETE

How did he get the name Soloh?

MADILYN

Adam wanted to name him after his dad. I didn't want to name him Hans, so we compromised on Soloh. Well I did. After Adam ditched me. Of course, I spelled it with an H on the end, so Disney wouldn't protest his birth certificate.

PETE

That's funny. You do have a bit of a nerd in you.

MADILYN

Princess Leia was my mom's favorite movie character. Star Wars was the last movie we watched at her bedside before she died when I was only twelve.

PETE

Maddy. I didn't know.

She discovers a familiar album, holds it up.

MADILYN

My mom loved Paul Simon!

PETE

Urban legend says Paul Simon wrote most of that album for Carrie Fisher. At least, She Moves On.

MADILYN

I remember that song! Mom loved music. I suppose that's why I was so attracted to rock stars.

Maddy slides the album back in its place.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Mom would have known Adam is a loser. But I don't seem to have her wisdom about such things.

PETE

She sounds amazing. Her wisdom is inside you, Maddy.

Soloh appears in the record section, holding two comics.

MADILYN

Soloh go put those back.

PETE

I doubt those are worth much or  
Jared would have already tried to  
sell them to me. I'll pay for them.

Soloh approaches Jared, reaches his comics upon the front  
counter. Pete also plops down the Paul Simon album.

JARED

Nice. A foreign language  
aficionado. Thirty-dollars for both  
graphics. Forty for the vinyl.

MADILYN

What!? Soloh go put those back! And  
Pete, if that's for me I don't even  
have a record player.

PETE

I'll loan you a vinyl record  
player. I want you to have it to  
remind you of your mom, Maddy.

JARED

And look what I found!

Madilyn cringes as Jared holds up a CD featuring Adam's face.

JARED (CONT'D)

I had this old Headache Chimps C-D  
in the back. I don't hear much  
about Adam Vice these days. Is he  
still even making music?

PETE

Not now Jared.

JARED

Maddy's Magic Eyes, that song had  
to be about you.

MADILYN

Adam Vice is a loser. I hate that  
song.

Madilyn grabs Soloh's hand, they exit the shop.

JARED

What'd I say?

Pete pays, collects their items, follows Maddy.

EXT. RAD RECORDS - DAY

Pete leans the album on his bike, hands the comics to Soloh.

PETE

I'm sorry Maddy. Jared doesn't know your story. With Adam Vice and all.

Soloh tugs at Pete, holds up the comic books.

PETE (CONT'D)

I bought those for you little man.

SOLOH

Your friends might like them. Look.

Pete accepts the comics, examines them, flipping pages.

PETE

Holy crap! Sorry about the potty mouth Maddy, but Soloh how did you find these?

SOLOH

The mean bear coach showed me. And I've seen comic books at my daycare places.

MADILYN

He's been thrown out of daycare for destroying things like comic books.

PETE

Technically, these are banned graphic novels not comics.

MADILYN

Are they illegal or something?

PETE

No Maddy these aren't illegal. Stalin banned these graphics in Russia, nearly one-hundred-years ago. I watched a podcast about it. In this condition? These might be priceless to the right collector.

Pete stops flipping pages, holds them toward Maddy.

MADILYN

I don't want them! I don't want Soloh to have them either.

PETE

Then I should give them back to  
Jared. I'll be right out.

Maddy leans against her bike, fretting. She watches Pete and Jared converse, through the shop glass window. Pete quickly returns.

MADILYN

Pete! These are exactly the weird  
coincidences I told you about!

PETE

I watch nerdy podcasts, Maddy. I  
should have recognized those old  
graphics at the counter, but I was  
focused on buying you the Paul  
Simon album.

MADILYN

I told you I don't have a record  
player.

PETE

You did. So, this one's on me.

They both turn to find Soloh enveloped by pigeons near a beach facing curb.

MADILYN

I am so sick of birds!

Pete grabs the album, walks over to where Soloh stands, surrounded by pigeons. Pete's eyes catch the beach.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - DAY

The section of North County beach area is empty, except a lone dolphin that has beached itself in shallow waves.

PETE (O.S.)

Oh my god!

EXT. RAD RECORDS - DAY

Pigeons scatter, as Maddy marches through them to the beach.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - DAY

Maddy reaches the dolphin, looks out at the sea. Pete and Soloh arrive at the strange event, Pete immediately engages his cellphone.

LATER

Maddy stands with Soloh a few yards away, as Pete and SCOTT turn and approach her. A crowd has also gathered, watching.

PETE

This is Scott the lifeguard guy.

SCOTT

Sea World will take care of everything.

The dolphin begins to move and wiggle.

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

Other dolphins appear in the ocean, fluttering in the waves.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - DAY

The stranded dolphin somehow wiggles its way back into the ocean. People gasp, then applaud.

SOLOH

Now he's happy-calm. In the ocean.

SCOTT

Sea World would have taken care of everything. But they will never believe this.

Scott shrugs, walks away. The crowd disperses. Maddy turns to Pete.

MADILYN

Now tell me you don't see it!

PETE

What do you mean?

MADILYN

Come on Pete these bizarre coincidences that keep happening!

Pete's thinking about it.

PETE

I'm just trying to recall what it's like with my nieces and nephews. One day it's chaos and coincidences and the next day blowing bubbles in a park.

(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)

The coincidences sort of vary from day to day. We're just hitting a lot of them today, Maddy.

SOLOH

We should build a sand castle!

PETE

See. Right on cue. It's just one of those little kid vortex days.

MADILYN

I can't believe no one can see all this but me!

Pete gently touches Maddy's arm.

PETE

Maddy. You're raising a small human all alone. I see it.

Maddy sighs, looks down at Soloh. Pete steps back, looks out at the surf.

PETE (CONT'D)

The bikes are locked up. And we do find ourselves standing on a beach. Let's have a swim before we head back for dinner.

MADILYN

We don't even have towels.

Pete rips off his shirt. He is buffed.

PETE

Marin County style, that's what my shirt is for. I have a towel for you guys in my saddle bag.

He kicks off his shoes, Soloh quickly follows his actions.

MADILYN

Pete! Soloh just rescued a dolphin!

Pete flips off his socks to enjoy the sand.

PETE

I spotted the dolphin not Soloh. And apparently it was playing some twisted survival game with its intoxicated puffer fish buddies or something. Just a drunk dolphin.

Pete and Soloh are swim ready. Maddy finally takes off her shoes.

MADILYN

What about all those pigeons?

Pete and Soloh run past her to the ocean.

PETE

We'll feed them next time. Last person in the ocean feeds a pigeon!

Maddy disrobes down to her sportswear.

MADILYN

Do I tell him this is the same beach where Adam and I?...

She runs after them, into the ocean.

INT. SMALL MUSIC VENUE - DAY

The venue is empty, except a few older guys playing pool in a gaming area. Adam Vice passes a long, padded bar, steps onto the music stage. RAY (40), wipes pint glasses behind the bar.

ADAM

Just an equipment check, Ray. Think we'll draw a crowd tonight?

RAY

You were the man, Adam Vice.

Adam fiddles with some gear. He spots an old acoustic guitar propped against the back wall, behind a drum kit.

ADAM

Hmph. Who unloaded that old banger out of the van?

Adam walks behind the drum kit, picks up the acoustic guitar, examines it.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Maddy gave me this guitar.

Adam looks around the stage filled with musical equipment. He strums the worn acoustic.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Still sounds like gold.



Adam finds a stool, strums his old guitar. He stops, looks out at an empty venue. An image of Maddy appears front stage. He croons a new tune.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
(Singing)  
I FEEL AN ACHING IN MY HEART WHERE  
YOUR SMILE IT USED TO BE/I'VE NEVER  
FELT SO HAUNTED BY THE GHOSTS WHO  
FOLLOW ME/CORRIDORS OF LAUGHTER ARE  
ALL NOW COLD AND EMPTY  
ROOMS/THERE'S JUST A FALLOW PATCH  
OF DIRT OUTSIDE WHERE FLOWERS USED  
TO BLOOM...

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

Maddy smiles and laughs, playing in the ocean.

ADAM (V.O.)  
(Singing)  
BUT WOULDN'T IT BE SOMETHING/IF  
ANYTHING AT ALL/WOULDN'T IT BE  
WONDERFUL/IF SOMETHING, CAME TO  
CALL/CAUSE GIRL I'D GIVE  
ANYTHING/TO SEE YOU AGAIN...

INT. SMALL MUSIC VENUE - DAY

ADAM  
(Singing)  
MAYBE MEMORIES ARE ALL WE NEED TO  
SPARK FRESH FIRE WITHIN... THIS  
ROAD IT FEELS SO EMPTY EVEN  
TRAVELING WITH FRIENDS/MILES PASS  
BY BUT ALL I SEE ARE FIELDS THAT  
NEVER END/EVERY STAGE IS VOID OF  
FORTUNE WITHOUT YOUR PRE-SHOW GOOD-  
LUCK KISS...

The image of Maddy stands front stage. Her image disappears.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
(Singing)  
A THOUSAND FACES STARE AT ME BUT  
NOT THE ONE I MISS...

EXT. THE OCEAN - DAY

Maddy, Pete and Soloh frolic happily in the waves.

ADAM (V.O.)  
 (Singing)  
 BUT WOULDN'T IT BE SOMETHING/IF  
 ANYTHING AT ALL/WOULDN'T IT BE  
 WONDERFUL/IF SOMETHING, CAME TO  
 CALL/CAUSE GIRL I'D GIVE  
 ANYTHING/TO SEE YOU AGAIN...

INT. SMALL MUSIC VENUE - DAY

ADAM  
 (Singing)  
 YOU WERE THE BEST OF ME/LOVER,  
 MUSE, AND FRIEND/YOU MADE MY WORLD  
 SPIN RIGHT/SO I CAN'T PRETEND/I  
 DON'T HOPE WITH ALL MY MIGHT/THAT  
 SOMETHING, MAYBE ANYTHING, COULD  
 HAPPEN AGAIN.

Adam stops strumming, Ray and the older guys clap loudly.

RAY  
 That was awesome Adam Vice! I've  
 never heard that one!

ADAM  
 Neither have I, Ray.

EXT. OCEAN BEACH - DAY

Maddy and Pete relax on the sand, chatting, as they watch Soloh build a sand castle. It is an unusually elaborate sand castle.

PETE  
 Wow he's really good. No wonder he  
 was mad at Ralph for ruining his  
 sand castle.

MADILYN  
 Yes, he's got lots of practice with  
 kitty litter.

PETE  
 Do you ever bring him to the beach?

MADILYN  
 That's what I've been trying to  
 show you Pete. He reached a certain  
 age and got so out of control that  
 I stopped taking him out in public.  
 (MORE)

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Suddenly, he's a perfect angel.  
It's all so strange.

PETE

You are his mom. But, I've thought about your situation Maddy. He's just a little kid. They feed off our vibes. You just did something that changed his energy.

MADILYN

You sound like Caleb.

PETE

I'm no expert but I know my nieces and nephews are like little mirrors. They reflect the energy we give them. Or become it.

MADILYN

Oh perhaps you're right. I did feel really guilty about how I abandoned you with him. Guilt rushed over me from the moment I walked into the house. Soloh normally destroys our entire house if I leave him with someone overnight.

PETE

He did destroy your house. But he told me, a cleaning crew or something came in while I was asleep.

MADILYN

A cleaning crew? He emptied the cat litter box into our hallway toilet.

They both look over at Soloh.

PETE

At least he tried to clean the house, I guess. I didn't stick around long enough that morning to notice details.

MADILYN

He also put his grandma's framed photo back on our bookshelf where it belonged. I took her photo down off the bookshelf, after my dad died a few years ago.

PETE

Wow.

MADILYN

Natasha said she would pray for me. Maybe God just answered her prayers. I did ask God's forgiveness. For being a bad mom.

PETE

You are not a bad mom.

MADILYN

I know I am for the way I treated you, and Natasha. Especially, Soloh. Everyone, really, after I finally realized Adam wasn't coming back.

PETE

His loss. But I am curious about Adam Vice. Caleb told me Adam left San Diego, but that's all I know.

MADILYN

Adam Vice is a loser. We met when I first moved back to San Diego from Tucson. Adam was this huge rock star.

PETE

Everyone's heard of Adam Vice. I mean, from back in the day. I think a few of my uncles still have his CD's.

MADILYN

He's older than me, it made him even more attractive. Adam was my world. I believed we were soulmates. Even after I got pregnant. He said it was great. Adam seemed okay about being a father until my water broke as he was playing a show downtown. I went to the hospital during Adam's set that night. I've never seen Adam again. Adam Vice is a loser.

PETE

That's insane Maddy. But. And please don't take this the wrong way because I'm only trying to help just like you asked.

(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)

Maybe you should never call Soloh's father a loser. I mean, especially around Soloh.

Maddy closes her eyes, opens them.

MADILYN

My dad used to tell me that.

She looks down, fidgets with sand.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Adam did agree to some child support. His parents are rich and basically paid me off by buying us a house. They never approved of me, especially after I got pregnant. So, I never really saw them again, either. I know I should feel lucky I have a good career, and we have a home. But honestly, sometimes I miss my old life with Adam.

Maddy watches Soloh, looks down at sand again.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

We're very lucky, I suppose. As abandoned people. Me and Soloh.

PETE

I don't think you have anything to feel lucky about. Except, Soloh.

MADILYN

Pete, I was rocking single parenthood until my dad died. Then I felt so alone in the universe with a toddler who wouldn't sit still. I wanted to run away from even being a mom. Like, I could never measure up to my own mother. Not all by myself.

PETE

Have you dealt with his loss?

MADILYN

Dad? He was just a house painter.

PETE

I didn't ask what your dad did for a living. It's just, I found that framed photo of your mom buried near old magazines at your house.

MADILYN

Dad collected those old magazines,  
from the year mom died.

PETE

Do you have any photos of your dad?

MADILYN

He didn't like being in photos. He  
was a house painter. And did some  
dry wall. Dad was never successful  
or anything. I put myself through  
college on student loans. Dad,  
couldn't save my mom. Because he  
had no health insurance.

They pause, fiddle with sand.

PETE

I suppose you're still unpacking  
some things, and, you're a way  
stronger person than me. But. Like  
I said Maddy, it's all about your  
energy. Maybe Solo heard you  
praying or something. He's just a  
little kid. Next week he will go  
right back to being out of control  
rowdy again.

MADILYN

Don't say that.

PETE

It's totally true. It's like your  
thing with birds. Birds are  
everywhere. And little kids are  
just little kids.

(Chuckling)

Just don't tell me you used to  
bring Soloh to this very same spot.  
Then I might believe your  
conspiracy theories about him.

Maddy tosses sand at Pete.

MADILYN

Coincidences not conspiracy  
theories. Thank you Pete. I feel  
much better about Soloh. But I need  
to tell you something.

They lean into an intimate bubble.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

(Whispering)

Actually Soloh was conceived in  
this very spot. Or at least right  
out there. In the ocean.

Pete jumps up, Maddy bursts out laughing. Soloh pauses, looks  
back at them, returns to his sand castle.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Pete?!

SOLOH

I'm hungry!

PETE

Thank you Soloh. Let's get back to  
my place for dinner.

MADILYN

You should have seen your face. And  
your shorts. Don't tell me you were  
going to change those later  
anyways.

Pete gathers things to head back off the beach. Soloh  
approaches as Maddy jumps up to help him.

PETE

We were just in the ocean. We  
should all rinse off in the beach  
shower up there. I have some old  
clothes you can borrow if you want  
to take real showers at my place.

SOLOH

Why mommy? What's in the ocean?

Maddy bursts out laughing again, as they continue gathering  
stuff. She suddenly strikes an upright pose and sings.

MADILYN

(Singing)

GIVE ME A SMILE, THE LOVE-LIGHT IN  
YOUR EYES. LIFE COULD NOT HOLD A  
SWEETER PARADISE. GIVE ME THE RIGHT  
TO LOVE YOU ALL THE WHILE. MY WORLD  
FOREVER, THE SUNSHINE OF YOUR  
SMILE.

Maddy's voice is beautiful. Pete and Soloh look at each  
other, then beam at Maddy.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
 Grandma used to sing that old-timey  
 song to me when I was your age,  
 Soloh. As she tucked me into bed.  
 She called music her fourth noble  
 truth. Her Nirvana.

Maddy picks up the Paul Simon album, studies it a moment.

MADILYN (CONT'D)  
 It's time. To move on.

INT. PROUD MARY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

PROUD MARY  
 Make T-C give you flowers, Madilyn.

INT. ROWDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ROWDY  
 Panda Cub is good. I've seen  
 professional gamers fail miserably  
 in this quadrant.

INT. PETE'S CONDO - NIGHT

Maddy and Pete sit with Soloh on the couch, watching Soloh  
 play an online video game with Team Proud Mary.

MADILYN  
 I've never sat and watched him play  
 like this. Quadrant by quadrant,  
 that is.

VIDEO GAMING THREEBOX - PROUD MARY/SOLOH/ROWDY

ROWDY  
 We're replacing you on the team  
 with Panda Cub, T-C.

PROUD MARY  
 Panda Cub is replacing you, Rowdy.

SOLOH  
 I like playing video games.



INT. PETE'S CONDO - NIGHT

PETE

Enough for tonight. Madilyn wanted to meet my friends and she did. I'll pick you guys up at the airport on Tuesday afternoon.

Soloh gently hands the controller to Pete, he ends the transmission.

SOLOH

I'll go potty now.

Soloh jumps off the couch, Madilyn and Pete stand.

MADILYN

So you're Thunder Carrot, huh?

PETE

My gamertag. I promised my niece I'd use any gamertag she chose for me. T-C for short.

MADILYN

Sort of cute, I guess.

PETE

It's actually an awesome gamertag.

Maddy looks around, as if hesitant to go home. Her phone buzzes, she looks at it.

MADILYN

Your cousin Dameon is persistent.

PETE

He's not my favorite cousin.

MADILYN

Here I am trying to change my life and a hot D-J keeps calling me.

PETE

You're doing great Maddy.

She leans in, closer to Pete.

MADILYN

Honestly, everything feels natural when Soloh and I are with you. I, I can be myself with you.

PETE

I feel the same about you Maddy.  
And Soloh. He's right. I do hide in  
a shell sometimes.

They sit back down together on the couch. Maddy looks at her  
phone, pushes a button, puts it away.

MADILYN

I don't want to deal with my old  
life tonight.

PETE

You could crash here for the night.  
I'll be up awhile anyways, watching  
anime.

Maddy rolls her eyes.

MADILYN

We've gotta work on your pickup  
lines, Pete.

PETE

No Maddy. I. No. That bedroom and  
bathroom downstairs where you  
showered this evening are all  
yours. It's up to you, just don't  
go home and make a bad decision. I  
know my cousin.

Soloh reappears, plops in her lap.

SOLOH

Can we stay here mommy?

MADILYN

I've never really watched anime.

PETE

Then, let's watch a classic. Space  
Battleship Yamato, vintage Star  
Blazers like way old school. Soloh,  
I have the American version  
featuring... Derek Wildstar.

Soloh's eyes grow big, he looks up at Maddy.

SOLOH

Derek Wildstar!

INT. A SEWAGE TUNNEL - DARK

Rick and Sam hold flashlights, trampling the tunnels.

SAM

The next connecting tunnel should  
be right through here dude.

Sam points his flashlight at a pile of rubble. Rick takes off his backpack, sets it on a wet platform.

RICK

We've been stuck down here for days  
man and this was just a practice  
run. I'm lost. I'm hungry. I need a  
few pipe loads man.

Rick finds his pipe and torch lighter.

SAM

Be careful dude it smells like gas  
down here.

Rick flicks his torch lighter causing massive flash  
explosions throughout the tunnel system. Rick and Sam are  
covered in ash and soot. They hear a rumble inside a large  
pipe above.

RICK

Uh oh.

A river of sewage flows upon them.

INT. PETE'S CONDO - DAYBREAK

The living room is dark, with the big screen TV monitor still  
glowing. Maddy appears in the room wearing a long T-shirt,  
looks around, but Soloh is not on the couch.

INT. PETE'S KITCHEN AREA - DAYBREAK

Madilyn enters to find an empty dining table in the kitchen  
area. The front door, visible over a half-wall, is ajar. She  
walks around the half-wall, opens the front door.

-Redemptive rays of sunlight strike her face.

EXT. PETE'S DOORSTEP - DAYBREAK

Soloh stands on the doorstep watching a sunrise over the  
North County hills.

MADILYN

You scared me honey what are you doing out here? Mommy doesn't work today. Come back inside and let's snuggle for a few more hours.

Maddy looks up, joining Soloh in the spectacle.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Good morning San Diego.

EXT. NORTH COUNTY HILLSIDE - DAYBREAK

The hillside. The landscape is serene.

A collection of Birds of Paradise. Daylight kisses them.

Fresh morning sun splashes young palm trees. A squirrel crunches a palm kernel, then scurries up a mature tree.

EXT. PETE'S DOORSTEP - DAYBREAK

SOLOH

I'm ready to snuggle now mommy.

MADILYN

Sounds wonderful.

INT. PETE'S KITCHEN AREA - DAY

Madilyn arrives in the kitchen area to find Pete and Soloh eating breakfast.

SOLOH

Pete made scrambled eggs with ketchup, mommy.

Maddy walks directly to the coffee pot.

MADILYN

I haven't slept that well in years, Pete. Soloh and I even caught a sunrise this morning.

PETE

Isn't the sunrise beautiful over those hills?

Maddy sits down with her fresh cup of coffee.

MADILYN

That was, yeah, sort of amazing.  
For an anime festival. I never  
realized the stories were so  
elaborate.

SOLOH

I'm Derek Wildstar!

PETE

Welcome to my world. Hey, all your  
clothes are laundered. Maybe we  
could take Soloh to Balboa Park  
this afternoon. We can drop off  
your car in La Jolla on the way  
down.

MADILYN

I don't know. It's Sunday. We work  
in the morning.

PETE

It's up to you. I work tomorrow and  
then I'm taking P-T-O for an  
amateur gaming tournament at Comic  
Con. Last Friday was my bad Maddy.  
I was so mad at you that night I  
just didn't pay enough attention to  
him. Soloh is a great kid.

Madilyn watches Soloh eating breakfast.

MADILYN

He is a great kid. Sure. Let's go  
to Balboa Park.

INT. MADDY'S CAR - DAY

Maddy and Soloh pull into their driveway.

MADILYN

(Laughing)

And then Grandma threw me all the  
way back in the water!

SOLOH

(Laughing)

I like it when you tell me stories  
about Grandma.

MADILYN

Oh honey it made me sad to think  
about them.

(MORE)

MADILYN (CONT'D)

But I promise I will tell you lots  
more stories about her from now on.

Madilyn puts the car in park, turns off the key.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

We're gonna ride with Pete to  
Balboa Park.

SOLOH

I like Pete mommy.

She smiles and her eyes light up.

MADILYN

I really like him too.

EXT. OLD BALBOA PARK - DAY

It's an older area of the park. Central Balboa Park is a  
short hike away, so they walk toward it.

PETE

Soloh never told me you read to  
him. He fooled me into thinking no  
one had ever read him a bedtime  
story.

MADILYN

He was very young. But I used to  
love reading to him. Especially  
mom's old books because it made me  
feel like she was close. I finally  
realized Adam wasn't coming back to  
us, and by that time Soloh was  
running around, and just got, so  
out of control. I mean, he bit you.

PETE

It didn't hurt that bad Maddy.

Madilyn stops, contemplating. Soloh holds her hand.

MADILYN

His favorite was this cute Eastern-  
philosophy booklet my mom bought in  
the gift shop at the San Diego Zoo.  
They exhibited pandas and...

She looks down at Soloh.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Oh my gawd! Piddle Paddle Panda knows a happy, calm secret. I taught him that!

SOLOH

Happy-calm, mommy. Like Piddle Paddle Panda.

PETE

That book! I read it to him the night I babysat at your house. My adrenaline was flowing so high that night I just forgot about it!

MADILYN

I knew you did something to him! Or. Or did I? I used to read it to him when he was a baby.

PETE

It was under your mom's photo!

MADILYN

But, that book is just a bunch of nonsense, about how pandas are happy and calm, just to sit and eat bamboo all day. It's silly. It reminded me of when mom would take me to the zoo. We'd stand in line together for hours just to glimpse the pandas... Oh, oh. Oh gawd...

Maddy kneels, addressing Soloh eye to eye.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Honey are you pretending to be Piddle Paddle Panda so, mommy will spend more time with you? Like I used to do? When I would read that book to you?

Maddy embraces Soloh, sobbing deeply.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Oh sweetie mommy is sorry! Mommy is so, so sorry.

Soloh's eyes finally find Pete, over her shoulder.

SOLOH

It's okay. Pete's mommy worries about him too.

Maddy stands, wiping teardrops, looks at Pete.

PETE

My mom definitely still worries  
about me.

MADILYN

(Laughing, sniffing)  
What mom wouldn't worry about her  
son known online as Thunder Carrot?  
Thank you, Pete.

Suddenly, Soloh breaks away and runs toward an old gardener  
near a flower bed. They follow Soloh to the spot. The OLD  
GARDENER looks up at them.

OLD GARDENER

It's like someone damaged these  
plants from underground. Their  
roots are scorched or something.

Soloh points to the dislocated manhole cover.

SOLOH

Over there, mommy. Something is not  
happy-calm.

LATER

Maddy, Soloh, and Pete stand inside yellow tape as a single  
cop and a maintenance worker escort Rick and Sam out of the  
drainage hole. Agent Large walks by them, flashes his badge  
at SAN DIEGO POLICEMAN.

AGENT LARGE

Heard some local police chatter  
about an explosion and a network of  
tunnels. Thought I'd check it out  
myself.

SAN DIEGO POLICEMAN

Public works guy says they nearly  
blew themselves up down there.

AGENT LARGE

My team will assume custody.

A small crowd is gathered outside the yellow tape recording  
the scene on their cellphones. Agent Large reacts to the  
smell then points to Maddy, Soloh and Pete.

AGENT LARGE (CONT'D)

And who are they?



SAN DIEGO POLICEMAN  
Those are the people who found  
them.

INT. A DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Adam Vice sits drinking with MUDDTOE (47), large, musician.

MUDDTOE  
Face it Adam, we've needed fresh  
music for a long time. Glad we  
recorded that new song you wrote.

MIKEY (42), tatted, approaches them with a cellphone.

MIKEY  
Adam check out this kid I found on  
Reddit! He saved the Pope from a  
bomb or something!

ADAM  
Aw Mikey the lowest point in my  
career and you wanna show me  
internet videos.

MIKEY  
It's Maddy!

ADAM  
I called C-P-S to try and get out  
of child support Mikey but they  
said it doesn't work like that.

MUDDTOE  
Child Protective Services? Is she a  
bad mother? I always thought she'd  
be a great mom.

ADAM  
She is a good mom Muddtoe, but  
we're not exactly blazing ticket  
sales these days now, are we?

Muddtoe stands, lifts Adam off a barstool.

MUDDTOE  
We're millionaires. We're playing  
to smaller audiences, so what! Now.  
I can whip your ass right here, or  
we can walk outside. Either way,  
I'm gonna slip off my belt and  
spank you Adam.

ADAM

Settle down. You're right Muddtoe.  
I have put that girl through a lot.  
And I do love her. Maybe it is time  
I go back to San Diego and fix  
things.

Mikey shoves his cellphone in their faces.

MIKEY

Will you guys look at this? It's  
Maddy! Adam is that your son or  
what?

ADAM

I've never met the kid but. Oh  
yeah. That's Maddy!

INT. KURT'S OFFICE - DAY

Madilyn and Pete sit in front of Kurt. Soloh sits next to  
them quietly playing a video game on Maddy's cellphone.

KURT

I've always admired Soloh.

PETE

That's a lie. Caleb told me you  
were ready to fire Maddy just three  
weeks ago.

MADILYN

Fire me? This is my morning show!

KURT

Caleb is an idiot, pay attention.  
Apparently two city janitors found  
schematics of maintenance tunnels  
that led from old Balboa Park to  
the Convention Center. They  
exploded something down there and  
got trapped underground.

Maddy and Pete look at each other.

KURT (CONT'D)

How did Soloh find them? Soloh is  
normally oh I don't know, too  
fussy, to hear people screaming  
from underground? Unless of course  
he put them down there.

PETE

Leave Soloh out of this!

KURT

Out of what? Why is Madilyn's infamous monster child suddenly an adorable internet hero?

PETE

Soloh is a great kid.

KURT

He's an intolerable brat. At least he was. However he did it, Soloh is now an exclusive story for us.

PETE

No. Stop right there. Soloh might be enlightened. Like, a lama or something. I totally believe your conspiracy theories now Maddy.

Maddy touches Pete's hand.

MADILYN

Pete. Soloh is just a little child. You helped me realize that. And I can't help but think my mom, somehow had something to do with all of this also.

PETE

I think so too, Maddy.

KURT

We have no time here for romance.

MADILYN/PETE

We're just friends!

KURT

Then join a bowling league. The Pope loves this story so Maddy they've granted you an exclusive interview at the Comic Con event. Pete, your vacation is canceled.

MADILYN

But Pete has a gaming tournament.

KURT

Well whoop de doo. Maddy I have a few protocol items to go over with you, Pete I'll meet with you in the morning.

MADILYN

Soloh can't even attend preschool right now because of all this publicity.

Soloh reacts to his video game.

SOLOH

I'm Derek Wildstar!

PETE

I might have a plan.

INT. PETE'S KITCHEN AREA - DAY

Team Proud Mary sits at the table.

ROWDY

You want to saddle us with a five-year-old kid?

PETE

You've seen him play. I have to work, and Soloh is our best option.

ROWDY

T-C! If you had to work we should have canceled our flights and entered the tournament next year! Proud Mary flew around the world.

PROUD MARY

You do not speak for me Rowdy. But, he's right. This tournament is now a waste of resources for both of us. I saved won for over a year just to get here. Rowdy probably spent his rent money.

ROWDY

I'd say don't speak for me Proud Mary, but yeah. And borrowed some money from my sister. I thought this was our big shot to turn pro. Maybe get sponsored or something.

PETE

Soloh is really good. He's worth at least a few kills before he's eliminated. Then he'll just chill with you guys in the gaming area where you can keep an eye on him away from the press.

PROUD MARY

Why us? I still don't understand how any of this involves us?

The doorbell rings. Pete stands to answer the door.

PETE

A fellow gamer needs our help and we're his friends!

Pete returns with Maddy and Soloh, as Proud Mary and Rowdy stand to greet them.

MADILYN

Hello. Nice to meet you in person. I'm Maddy, this is Soloh. But I suppose you guys call him Panda Cub.

ROWDY

Gamertag's Rowdyborg-seventy-nine, real name's Jessie.

PROUD MARY

Wow she's smokin' hot Peter. My name is Chae-Yeong.

MADILYN

Are you guys okay with this? Soloh joining your gaming team? And keeping him safe while we work? I can be there tomorrow afternoon but I'll be doing live reports on Thursday when the Pope arrives.

ROWDY

We won't make it out of Wednesday's first round.

Rowdy looks at Pete.

ROWDY (CONT'D)

Our passes only allow us in the gaming venue, anyways. We might as well babysit on Thursday.

Proud Mary kneels, gently touches Soloh's arm.

PROUD MARY

You are adorable. I'm sad your schooling is disrupted, Panda Cub. But I'm only okay with this if you are okay with it.

SOLOH

I'm Derek Wildstar!

ROWDY

A very old school anime reference. I like this kid.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Boris stands with the VICE COMMANDER in his hotel room. The television blares an all-female morning talk show.

BORIS

You are the Vice Commander of the Papal Swiss Guard. Tell me. What are we to make of all this, commotion?

VICE COMMANDER

It was a crude bomb if any. Perhaps a domestic organization, but I have nothing official to report yet.

BORIS

So our plan is still on schedule.

VICE COMMANDER

The Pope added a brief interview with the young boy's mother and the Cardinal complied, as not to arouse suspicion.

BORIS

This mission is very important to my superiors. We cannot fail or we both die.

VICE COMMANDER

I am familiar with the compound you smuggled into San Diego and will apply it directly inside the mitre.

Boris looks at the television show. A BOLD LADY argues her opinion.

BOLD LADY

As far as I'm concerned, that brave little boy saved the Pope, and all of us from a world-wide race war!

BORIS

Perhaps, this is all a convenient distraction.

The Vice Commander turns, staring at Boris as he pours a large glass of vodka.

VICE COMMANDER

Mister Ambassador. It is only nine A-M.

BORIS

My apology. I forgot you are Catholic. I will pour a glass for you, also.

INT. GAMING ARENA - DAY

The large venue seats gaming teams surrounded by cosplaying spectators. CRATOR DAY sets the scene.

CRATER (O.S.)

Opening day of the Amateur Gaming Championship held at San Diego International Comic Con this year and all eyes are on five-year-old Soloh Owens, the youngest contestant to ever participate in any public gaming event.

INT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - DAY

RON E VEE sits next to Crater.

CRATER

I'm Crater Day and as always, I'm joined by my partner, the legendary Ron E Vee.

RON E

Soloh Owens was a last minute substitution Crater, he's just a publicity stunt by a local TV station.

(MORE)

RON E (CONT'D)  
These sixty-nine other amateur  
teams are livid about it and they  
will quickly send the preschooler  
back home to mommy on day one.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Pete stands in the back row behind Caleb. The program monitor  
shows gaming teams stretching the floor of the venue.

CALEB  
Dodgeball wannabes.

PETE  
Just stay with the gaming live pool  
stream, for now.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

CRATER (O.S.)  
There's the bell!

Various shots of gamers reveal the intensity of the  
tournament, showcasing the magnitude of this sport.

CRATER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
To advance, at least two members of  
each team must survive a long  
journey through an apocalyptic  
cityscape into a safe zone at the  
end of this brutal course.

Team Proud Mary is focused on the energy mounted against  
them. Madilyn sits in the audience just behind them.

PROUD MARY  
Great job Panda Cub. Are you seeing  
this Rowdy? We can use it.

ROWDY  
It's like that old movie The  
Warriors. Half of the other teams  
will kill each other chasing us!

LATER

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The staff is reclined, watching the gaming pool feed.



CALEB  
Where are they hiding now?

PETE  
Rowdy is eliminated but Proud Mary  
and Soloh are almost inside the  
safe zone.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

Team Proud Mary is out of options.

PROUD MARY  
We can't hide here forever Panda  
Cub.

SOLOH  
I'm Derek Wildstar!

PROUD MARY  
Guns blazing agro, I like that. You  
run out and I'll toggle backwards  
to cover you. Are you ready?

Soloh looks up and around the venue, freezes for a moment.

CALEB (V.O.)  
(Echoing)  
Maddy I'm gonna spank this kid  
myself!

PROUD MARY  
Soloh! Are you okay?

Soloh looks back at Maddy.

MADILYN (V.O.)  
(Calm voice)  
Piddle Paddle Panda knows a happy,  
calm secret.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The control room staff cheers, springing back to work.

CRATER (O.S.)  
They made it! Team Proud Mary will  
advance to tomorrow's final round!

INT. MADDY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maddy sits on the couch with Soloh, reading him a real children's book. Ralph rests purring, next to them.

MADILYN

And they all lived happily in their curious, cottontail house. The end.

SOLOH

I like that story, mommy.

Maddy grabs her laptop, leans back on the couch with Soloh.

MADILYN

And I have a surprise. I am finally ready to do this. I will play your father's music for you. But, I want to be sure you are okay about playing in the tournament tomorrow.

SOLOH

Will you be there?

MADILYN

Oh sweetie, thanks to you I have the career interview of a lifetime.

She kisses his head.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

But I promise I'll be there.

(Sighing)

Somehow.

The doorbell rings.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

It's probably Pete. This song is called Maddy's Magic Eyes. Your father wrote it for me.

She pushes a button, music plays.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

INT. MADDY'S ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Maddy opens the door, reveals Adam standing on the front doorstep. He's holding a bunny.

MADILYN

Adam! I should have known. You saw Soloh's viral video. And what the hell is that?

ADAM

I told you I'd bring Soloh a bunny.

MADILYN

You told me you would mail him a bunny, Adam!

Maddy slams the door, bangs her forehead against it.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

He's holding a cute bunny.

She sobs a moment, sniffs, gathers her composure. She opens the door.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Why are you here Adam?

ADAM

You asked me to come here.

MADILYN

Hand me that poor rabbit.

She reaches out, assumes the bunny in her arms, snuggles it. Adam watches her, during a long, awkward pause.

ADAM

The new song I wrote about you is a hit. Have you heard it yet?

Maddy hawk tuahs, spits in his face.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Alright.

He's wiping spit off his face.

ADAM (CONT'D)

Alright. Alright. I deserve that. But calm down Maddy. I'm here to meet my son. You told me you were having some problems. You asked me to help, I'm here to help.

MADILYN

Help with what? I haven't seen you for five-years! Do you know?

(MORE)

MADILYN (CONT'D)

Have you even? ... What are you doing here Adam?

ADAM

I left you in a bad spot Maddy, I know that. I just got a little scared about becoming a father, that's all.

MADILYN

Oh my gawd!

Maddy snuggles the bunny.

MADILYN (CONT'D)

If it weren't for this cute little guy I'd stab out both of your eyeballs, you pathetic loser!

ADAM

I know you're mad at me. But...

MADILYN

Mad at you!?

(Laughing)

Adam I am way past being mad at you.

ADAM

I get it. We can work out the psychobabble between us at another time. But I'm here, because you called me. You said my son needs me. And I do still love you Maddy.

Madilyn breathes, bows and shakes her head. She places the rabbit on her doorstep, it runs away into darkness.

MADILYN

Soloh has changed. I've changed!

ADAM

Can I come inside to meet my son, or what?

MADILYN

If you walk through this door? Oh my gawd. Do not hurt him Adam! You can't just run away from Soloh like you before. I'll let you inside, only. Only. If you are ready to be Soloh's father.

ADAM  
I'm ready to be his father.

MADILYN  
For the rest of your life! Do you understand? Do you hear me? Adam Vice.

ADAM  
Loud and clear. Madilyn Owens.

EXT. SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

Large crowds revel outside the convention center to attend San Diego International Comic Con.

INT. SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

It's various shots of cosplaying Comic Con attendees enjoying many sponsored offerings inside the convention center.

INT. DISPLAY HALL - DAY

Madilyn stands interviewing a CELEBRITY. Todd holds a KISD logoed camera, broadcasting a local live-shot of Madilyn anchoring the event.

CELEBRITY  
I miss the fun times we had together here in San Diego with Adam Vice, Maddy. In fact, Adam is here at Comic Con and he asked me to put in a good word for him.

Adam approaches the interview area.

CELEBRITY (CONT'D)  
I know you two have a lot of catching up to do. Nice seeing you again, Maddy.

The celebrity leaves the interview area, as Adam walks up and stands next to Madilyn.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Kurt sits next to Pete, in the back row above Caleb.

PETE  
That's Adam Vice!

Caleb covers his headset mic, looks back at Pete.

CALEB  
That man is not one-hundred! You  
have a gaming pass to Comic Con. Go  
kiss Madilyn!

PETE  
Soloh has my gaming pass.

CALEB  
You have to try.

Pete doesn't hesitate, Kurt stands to yell as he marches out.

KURT  
Wait a minute Pete!

Pete pauses, turns back toward Kurt as he reaches the exit.

KURT (CONT'D)  
Our ratings were historic  
yesterday. We still have Maddy's  
interview with the Pope and the  
live gaming tournament finals.

Kurt sighs, tosses keys to Pete.

KURT (CONT'D)  
Take my station car. The K-I-S-D  
parking pass is in the glove box.  
You'll find an all-access press  
badge in my top desk drawer.

Pete leaves the control room.

CALEB  
Wow Kurt has a soul.

KURT  
Shut up Caleb, and stay on this  
soap opera with extreme close-ups.

INT. DISPLAY HALL - DAY

Madilyn stands beside Adam, holding her microphone.

MADILYN  
Adam Vice. We all know you saw  
Soloh's viral video but why did you  
suddenly leave your concert tour to  
visit Comic Con?  
(MORE)

MADILYN (CONT'D)

After all, your new song Something,  
Maybe Anything is blowing up right  
now. Why are you here, Adam?

ADAM

That's your song, Maddy. Because  
you and me are a classic comic book  
story. A good superhero always  
returns to claim his girl.

A Vatican official appears, signaling to Maddy.

MADILYN

Ask your son to teach you more  
about comic books.

Maddy extends her arm, drops the mic, walks away.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Madilyn and Todd follow the Vatican official through a dank  
corridor. Todd carries live gear. They stop outside a secure  
room. A SWISS GUARD offers entrance to Maddy.

SWISS GUARD

Only Madilyn Owens may enter this  
room. The interview is later.

INT. SECURE ROOM - DAY

Madilyn enters to find Pope John Kwame standing next to the  
Vice Commander. Pope John Kwame is dressed in full Pope  
regalia, except for his hat.

POPE JOHN KWAME

Madilyn Owens. You are a welcome  
face. Visit with me until we  
receive final clearance.

INT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - DAY

CRATER

We're at the Super Bowl of amateur  
online gaming. Tell us what we can  
expect here today, Ron E Vee.

RON E

Today it's simple, Crater. Scorched  
earth. Last gamer standing wins.

CRATER

We're set to start in just about an hour. But right now we're joined by Proud Mary, leader of the little team that could.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

Proud Mary wears a headset. Rowdy and Soloh stand behind her.

CRATER (O.S.)

Proud Mary, how did your team get here?

PROUD MARY

Practice. And our team is a family.

Proud Mary pauses, surveys the venue.

PROUD MARY (CONT'D)

Online gamers are a global village. I mean, look around here. Online gaming is a family for us, because it brings people together from all around the world.

RON E (O.S.)

Hello, Amanda Gorman? Ron E Vee here. Crater is asking you how you've made it to these finals with a five-year-old child on your team?

She throws off her headset, stands. The team begins a K-Pop horse-riding dance, Soloh centered, in perfect synchronicity.

CRATER (O.S.)

They're having fun! Great answer!

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO - DAY

Pete sits in gridlock traffic. He honks the horn.

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Kurt looks panicked in the back row, as Caleb directs live coverage of Soderman interviewing Godzilla and King Kong.

CALEB

This M-O-s is brutal. We need Maddy's live shot.



KURT  
She's in a secure room with the  
Pope and no one can reach her!

INT. SECURE ROOM - DAY

Pope John Kwame laughs, as he and Maddy sit together.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
So you assumed, Soloh became  
enlightened? Recalling some old  
book your mother bought at the zoo?  
Oh this is very rich.

MADILYN  
Piddle Paddle Panda had something  
to do with all this, I know it.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
My precious daughter, twas you who  
experienced enlightenment not  
Soloh. This entire story is about  
you!

BEGIN FLASHBACK MONTAGE:

EXT. NATASHA'S DOORSTEP - NIGHT

Soloh cries as Natasha grips his hand, watching Maddy walk  
away.

EXT. MADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maddy looks back at Soloh. He's crying behind their front  
window pane, as she enters an Uber car with Stacy. Pete  
closes the front curtain.

INT. SOLOH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Maddy watches Soloh color inside the lines, on his scrappy  
peace of coloring book.

EXT. BEACHSIDE FARMERS MARKET - DAY

Maddy dances with Soloh, as street musicians play gentle  
music. She looks around, noticing the kind gentleman, wearing  
a Padres baseball cap, and a frail lady walk past them.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE.

INT. SECURE ROOM - DAY

MADILYN

Oh my gawd! The whole world looked differently to me when I finally let go of my bitterness. I changed, not Soloh! I understand now.

Suddenly, there is activity on the Vice Commander's radio.

VICE COMMANDER

Ricevuto. All clear Your Holiness!

The Vice Commander motions toward the Pope's hat, sitting conspicuously untouched on a table.

VICE COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Please place the mitre on your head before we enter the hallway. Miss Owens you will conduct your interview in the ceremony hall.

MADILYN

With all due respect, our interview is an opportunity of a lifetime, but we've been sitting here nearly an hour. Soloh is about to compete in the amateur gaming finals and I promised him I would be there.

POPE JOHN KWAME

A very interesting choice. Do you advance your career or fulfill a promise made to your son?

MADILYN

I, I have to be there for my kid. That's what my mom would do.

POPE JOHN KWAME

Outstanding. And I would enjoy seeing Soloh in this, gaming tournament, for myself! We shall proceed to the gaming venue together and I will give my speech on the gaming floor. Then you may have your interview.

(Whispering)

Remain calm. Something is amiss here.

They stand, and Pope John Kwame begins disrobing his outer layer of Pope garments.

VICE COMMANDER  
But Your Holiness! I cannot allow  
you to deviate from exact security  
mapping and protocols!

POPE JOHN KWAME  
I'm eager to disrobe from my own,  
religious cosplay.

The Vice Commander uncovers, and touches his gun.

VICE COMMANDER  
I am the Vice Commander of the  
Papal Swiss Guard!

Kwame is stripped down to jeans and a T-Shirt.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
And I am the Pope. Will you shoot  
an unarmed black man simply for  
enjoying a moment of frivolity in  
San Diego?

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Agent Large stands outside the secure room as Maddy and Pope John Kwame exit. There is a commotion, but Large nods agreeably at Kwame, allowing them to escape down the hallway.

EXT. CONVENTION ENTRANCE - DAY

Pete stands in a long line, at his first security checkpoint.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

Adam is seated directly behind Team Proud Mary, and officials clear a few seats beside him. Maddy and Kwame squeeze-in beside Adam but SOME GUY is none too happy about it.

POPE JOHN KWAME  
The Lord will bless you for giving  
us your seats.

SOME GUY  
Yeah well screw you, jerkwad!

Maddy is seated between Kwame and Adam.

MADILYN  
Adam, this is Kwame. He's Catholic.

ADAM

Well I'm not Catholic man, but it's nice to meet you Kwame.

POPE JOHN KWAME

I have much to discuss with you at a later time.

Adam double takes, realizing Kwame is the Pope. Team Proud Mary, just below them, is ready for action.

CRATER (O.S.)

There's the bell! The final round is underway!

The gamers explode in a frenzy, the crowd cheers.

INT. PAPAL CEREMONY HALL - DAY

It's obviously a black tie event for international dignitaries and movie industry bigwigs. Boris stands in the back wearing a tuxedo and a Black Panther mask. He flips off the mask, whips out his cellphone.

BORIS

What do you mean you lost the Pope?

Boris rushes out an exit.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

Team Proud Mary finds Soloh surrounded by big guns.

SOLOH

I'm sorry I don't want to play video games anymore, but I should go sit with my parents. My father is not happy-calm.

ROWDY

No!

Soloh's avatar is eliminated. The audience applauds for Soloh, as he runs back and climbs in Adam's lap.

PROUD MARY

He's just a little child Rowdy we've always known that.

ROWDY

For Panda Cub!

Rowdy and Proud Mary start blasting.

INT. PAPAL CEREMONY HALL - DAY

There is feedback over the PA system, as the crowd murmurs.

INT. SECURE ROOM - DAY

People in hazmat suits examine the Pope's hat.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Agent Large stands outside yellow tape as the hazmat crew cleans inside the secure room. Boris turns a corner, approaching briskly, then slows down as he spots them. Todd is broadcasting live, exclusive KISD breaking news.

AGENT LARGE

Ambassador Boris Shevchenko! How convenient of you to join us.

BORIS

Agent Nathaniel Large. My old friend. We meet again.

AGENT LARGE

Under suspicious circumstances, as usual. I don't suppose you know anything about neurotoxin, lased in Pope John Kwame's hat?

BORIS

Of course not! As Ambassador for the Slavic Orthodox Church I offer condolences, mixed with hope of...

AGENT LARGE

Spare me your speech Shevchenko! I heard in London. And Cairo. And Budapest. Your little diplomatic passport book has prevented me from licit international surveillance on you, for many years.

Cardinal Gozzi appears beside Agent Large.

AGENT LARGE (CONT'D)

But under Vatican authority, Gozzi authorized full surveillance on the Vice Commander. We know you met with him.

CARDINAL GOZZI

This is a Pagan festival. But I protect my Pope.

AGENT LARGE

The Pope's sudden disappearance gave my team final cause to intervene. The Vice Commander, and Cardinal Burchelli, are now in custody. I finally got you.

BORIS

Fools! My superiors will not allow this Pope to disrupt the flow of Urals oil into Africa, and our plan would have succeeded if not for that, that woman. And her kid!

AGENT LARGE

Save your confession for later.

Boris casually pulls a flask from his tuxedo, takes a swig.

BORIS

Agent Nathaniel Large. You know I have full diplomatic immunity.

Agent Large grabs the flask, as team members handcuff Boris.

AGENT LARGE

Agent Boris Shevchenko. Where you're going? You're gonna need it.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

The gaming battle is now peak Zen for Rowdy and Proud Mary. There is a buzzer, and red lights sit solid bright on the jumbotron above them.

ROWDY

Woe woe Proud Mary, point that cannon away from me!

PROUD MARY

Oh my god that's you Rowdy! We won!

INT. KISD CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Caleb and Kurt high five each other. The tournament plays in the control room preview monitor and exclusive international live breaking news flashes in the program monitor.

INT. GAMING FLOOR - DAY

Pete finally arrives in the venue to find Pope John Kwame delivering his speech. Madilyn holds Soloh just behind him. Adam stands near them, a few steps away.

POPE JOHN KWAME

Shall we not all share divine  
superpowers, through acts of loving  
kindness toward each other? Giving  
no quarter to the evils of hatred  
or bigotry.

Pete wraps his arms around Maddy and Soloh, as Proud Mary and Rowdy also join them in the background.

POPE JOHN KWAME (CONT'D)

I affirm my blessing upon this,  
comic book convention!

Kwame walks off, the crowd applauds. Adam approaches closer to Madilyn. Pete releases Maddy and Soloh, then takes a step back. Soloh reaches out his hand.

SOLOH

Daddy!

ADAM

That's right Soloh. And Maddy I  
want you back.

SOLOH

You're my father.

Soloh points to Pete.

SOLOH (CONT'D)

He's my new daddy!

Madilyn puts Soloh on the ground and Soloh runs to Pete, throwing his arms around Pete's leg. Pete approaches Maddy again, with Soloh clinging to his leg. Adam smiles in acceptance, backing away.

PETE

Wait a minute little man. At least  
let me ask your mom out on a real  
date. Madilyn, will you go out with  
me?

MADILYN

Can Soloh come too?

PETE

Yes, Soloh can come too. But I will never babysit for you again. Unless it's for a good reason.

Soloh releases his leg, then Pete and Madilyn kiss in a 360-panoramic of the venue. Confetti falls from the roof.

Soloh dances with Adam as gentle music plays. Very force-like holographic images of Piddle Paddle Panda, Maddy's mom, and a dolphin appear together, smiling, watching the celebration.

-Maddy's holo-dad appears in house-painting garb, throws his arm around Maddy's mom shoulder.

Soloh swats confetti with Adam. Soloh stops, watches Pete and Maddy embracing, and suddenly the gentle Zen expression on his face changes back to the problem child.

-Soloh finds an abandoned plastic Thor hammer on the venue floor, approaches Maddy and Pete, and whacks Pete with it.

CUT TO:

Extreme close up of Rowdy looking directly into the camera.

ROWDY

Ruh Roh!

FADE

FADE UP

EXT. SAN DIEGO POLICE STATION - DAY

Sam and Rick walk out of a police station.

SAM

Dude that's the last time we ever try to sneak into Comic Con.

RICK

We'll find a way in next year.

FADE TO BLACK