

Family Day

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EXT. PARK -- DAY

The park is heavily wooded and mostly deserted. Traffic noise indicates a nearby road. A picnic table is covered with the aftermath of a meal - dirty plates, unfinished meals and containers of food. Four children play on nearby playground equipment, supervised by Belinda, 33, who nurses her newborn son Cameron. At the table with the rest of the adults, Peter, 34 and clean cut, calls to the eldest child.

PETER

Anna, I've got something for you.

Anna, a bright and happy 8 years old, comes over to him.

ANNA

What is it?

PETER

Here.

ANNA

Wow, a camera! Thanks, Uncle Peter!

PETER

No problem, sweetie. Go take pictures.

Anna runs off. Maggie, 36 and dressed sexy casual, shouts after her.

MAGGIE

Don't go too far!

ANNA

I won't, mom!

Anna's dad Jason, 36 and untidy, pushes his plate away.

JASON

You shouldn't have given her that.

PETER

It's point-and-click and I set the f-stop so everything will be in focus.

JASON

I mean, you shouldn't be buying her things all the time.

MAGGIE

Jason, give it a rest.

JASON

You want her to grow up spoiled?

MAGGIE

Don't be an ass.

PETER

It's no problem. I can afford it.

JASON

And I can't, is that it?

MAGGIE

Oh, for God's sake.

JASON

He's been rubbing it in my face  
ever since we got here, Maggie.

Max, 31, intervenes.

MAX

Okay, let's not do this. Family  
day, right? Let's be the family  
that gets along for a change.

JASON

Talk to Mr Success over there.

PETER

I'm just trying to help out.

JASON

I don't need your God damn help!

MAGGIE

Jason!

MAX

Jason, please.

JASON

You heard him! "Look at me, I'm  
the successful one".

PETER

I've worked hard to get where I  
am.

JASON

So have I.

PETER

And where are you, Jason?  
Unemployed.

JASON

Don't you dare start with me!

MAX

Enough!

Peter and Jason face off.

PETER

(standing)

I'm going to go across the road  
and get the children some dessert.

Peter leaves.

MAGGIE

Well done, genius.

JASON

Maggie, why don't you try not being a bitch today. Just for something new.

MAX

Can you two please...

MAGGIE

If you could get that chip off your shoulder maybe you could carry some of the load in this marriage.

JASON

What the hell am I supposed to do? There's no work. I'm not the only guy downsized out of a job, but you treat me like I'm responsible for the global financial crisis.

MAGGIE

My income is the only thing keeping us fed, Jason.

JASON

Would you stop throwing that at me? You're keeping us alive, I get it! What do you want me to do?

MAGGIE

You could show some God damn gratitude, for a start!

JASON

Well, thank you! Thank you for being the breadwinner. Hey, since you do that so much better than me, maybe you could be the one to get a new job. A better paying one. Dressed like that, you could stand on street corners and meet new and richer people.

Maggie is so mad she doesn't immediately know how to respond.

MAGGIE

I should never have stayed with you. I'm going to find Anna.

Maggie leaves. Max and Jason sit in uncomfortable silence.

JASON

Say it.

MAX

I wasn't going to say anything.

JASON

No, you probably weren't. Peter couldn't resist. Neither could I, I guess. You've always been the level-headed one.

MAX

You're too much like Dad was. Both of you.

JASON

Dad did all right.

MAX

So do you.

JASON

Jesus, Max. I got fired. My wife supports me by waiting tables.

MAX

You were laid off. Along with many others.

JASON

You've kept your job. Peter Perfect's business just keeps getting better.

MAX

Jason, it's not a contest.

JASON

If it's not a contest, then why am I such a loser?

Max chooses not to respond.

JASON (CONT'D)

Are you happy, Max?

MAX

Yeah, I am. I have a wife and four gorgeous kids that I love very much.

Max looks towards Belinda, who smiles and waves.

JASON

I don't know if Maggie and I are going to make it this time.

MAX

You managed last time.

JASON

That was different. We got our miracle last time.

Anna runs up to them, waving the camera.

ANNA

Daddy, look at my photos!

JASON

Show me, honey.

(scrolling through)

Wow, they're beautiful. What's this one?

ANNA

That's a bird.

JASON

That's great, precious. Show your Uncle Max.

MAX

(looks)

Hey, they're really pretty. Just like you. Anna, sweetie, I think your mom is looking for you. She went that way.

ANNA

Okay.

Anna scampers off.

JASON

That's our miracle girl.

MAX

She's beautiful.

JASON

Maggie wanted children so badly. When we found out how unlikely it was, she kind of... disappeared inside herself. There was nothing left to hang the marriage on. Anna saved us.

MAX

You'll get through this, too.

JASON

She's working nightmare hours and we spend all our time snapping at each other. I don't know how to fix this, Max. I don't know if I even want to.

MAX

Do you love her?

JASON

I don't know. She's not the person she used to be.

MAX

Are you?

JASON

No, I guess not. Since the layoff, I feel useless.

MAX

You're a great father.

JASON

That doesn't pay the bills.

MAX

What I'm saying is that work isn't the only measure of success. Anna is a great kid. Be proud of that.

JASON

She's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. And I can't even support...

Jason trails off, fighting tears.

JASON (CONT'D)

I hate this. Tell me what to do, Max.

MAX

I think you need a plan.

JASON

I don't know where to start.

MAX

Start in the most important place. At home.

JASON

(thinking)

Home. Yeah. I guess I could finally fix the back window. There are enough chores around the house to keep me busy while I'm looking for work.

MAX

And that would help Maggie to see you're putting in an effort.

JASON

Maybe it would. I guess I have been kind of prickly lately. She deserves better.

MAX

New plan, new man.

JASON

Worth a shot. Thanks, Max.

They shake hands. Anna runs up, camera in hand.

ANNA  
I took more photos, Daddy.

JASON  
(scrolling through)  
That's terrific, sweetie. Where's  
your mother?

ANNA  
Don't know.

MAX  
She must be getting worried if  
she's still looking for you, kiddo.  
Maybe we should go look for her.  
(Jason is silent)  
Jason?

But Jason has gone still and tense. He hands Max the  
camera.

JASON  
I don't think she wants to be found  
right now.

MAX  
(off picture)  
Oh, shit.

JASON  
Anna, go play with your cousins,  
okay.

ANNA  
Can I take my camera?

JASON  
Not right now. I want to show  
your pictures to your mother.

ANNA  
Do you think she'll like them?

Jason doesn't answer.

MAX  
Go on, honey. We'll call you soon.

Anna runs to join her cousins. Jason takes the camera  
back.

JASON  
Did you know about this?

MAX  
Jason, we don't know what "this"  
is.

JASON

I think it's pretty God damn obvious, don't you?

MAX

You had a fight. This doesn't mean anything.

JASON

We'll know soon.

Peter and Maggie return. Peter carries a bag full of ice-cream blocks.

PETER

Just desserts.  
(off their  
expressions)  
What?

Jason hands the camera to Peter. He sees the photo and goes still.

JASON

Nothing to say?

PETER

Good camera. Even the background is in focus.

JASON

Don't. Joke. About. This.

MAGGIE

What the hell are you playing at now?

She grabs the camera, sees the photo and goes white.

JASON

Explain.

PETER

Jason...

JASON

Not you. Her.

MAGGIE

I was upset, okay? Jesus Christ, after the way you acted I needed a bit of comfort, that's all. Peter happened to be there.

PETER

It was...

JASON

(to Peter)  
Shut up.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

(to Maggie)

You haven't kissed me like that since we dated.

MAGGIE

When we dated, you actually cared about me! You haven't touched me in months, and God forbid you should utter a kind word to me. Since you lost your job, you've been so wrapped up in your misery you haven't had time for anything else. You've been a complete asshole, and I've had enough of it.

JASON

How long?

MAGGIE

Long enough.

Jason digests this.

JASON

I was just saying you deserved a new man. I didn't realise you already had one.

MAGGIE

Don't you go all self-righteous, you jerk. This was your fault. I tried to be understanding, but you'd already gone. When your job vanished, so did you.

JASON

You know, before Anna, I was terrified you were going to leave me. The day you told me you were pregnant was the best day of my life, because I knew we were going to be all right.

MAGGIE

You're so God damn self-centred. Whenever something threatens your manhood, you sink into this black depression. It's just like the last time. I'm not going through that again.

JASON

I knew Peter was a prick but I didn't expect this from you. There's no way you could have hurt me more. We're better off without you.

MAGGIE

Oh, no you don't. Anna stays with me.

JASON  
Cold day in hell, Maggie.

MAGGIE  
You don't have a job, Jason. How  
are you going to support her?

JASON  
I'm not the unfaithful one.

MAGGIE  
The courts will take my side!

JASON  
She's my daughter!

PETER  
No, she isn't.

Everyone is blindsided by this statement.

JASON  
What did you say?

MAX  
Oh, shit.

MAGGIE  
Peter, no.

PETER  
There was no miracle, Jason. You  
were told you couldn't father  
children, and you can't.

JASON  
You asshole!

MAX  
Oh, shit.

MAGGIE  
For God's sake!

PETER  
It's past time, Maggie. This needs  
to be said. Tell me the truth.

Jason can't trust himself to speak. Everyone waits on  
Maggie. She gathers herself, and addresses Jason.

MAGGIE  
It was just one time. We were in  
trouble and I was lonely and Peter  
was there. That was the only time.

JASON  
Until now.

MAGGIE  
Until now.

JASON

Anna?

MAGGIE

I don't know. That's the truth,  
Jason. I never tried to find out.

PETER

Testing will prove it. She's not  
yours.

JASON

If you say another word, I will  
break you in half.

PETER

Not going to happen.

Jason goes for him. Max intercepts.

PETER (CONT'D)

Violence is going to look really  
good at the custody hearing.

MAX

He's right, Jason! Stop! It's  
not worth it!

Jason quivers with the effort of refraining from hitting  
Peter.

PETER

Just one more way for you to be  
impotent.

Jason goes for him again. Max stops him again.

MAX

Jason, no! Back off! You can't  
touch him!

PETER

Damn straight.

MAX

(turning on Peter)  
I, however, don't have that problem.  
So if you say anything else, Peter,  
I swear to you the next two things  
you see will be my fist, followed  
by a paramedic.

PETER

You'd never...

Max raises a fist.

PETER (CONT'D)

All right! Jesus!

MAGGIE

I'm sorry, Jason.

JASON  
I'll bet. New plan, new man.

MAGGIE  
Go to hell.

JASON  
No thanks. I'd rather stay out of  
your neighborhood.

Anna rejoins the group.

ANNA  
Did you like my photos, mommy?  
Mommy?

The adults make an effort to be normal.

MAGGIE  
They're beautiful, honey. Come  
on, let's go home.

ANNA  
Can't we stay for a bit longer?

MAGGIE  
No. It's over. Give your father  
a hug.

ANNA  
Why?

JASON  
I'm going to be staying with Uncle  
Max for a little while, sweetheart.

ANNA  
Are you in trouble, daddy?

JASON  
No, sweetie. I just have to help  
Uncle Max around the house for a  
while.

ANNA  
Okay.  
(she hugs Jason)  
Bye.

JASON  
I love you, baby girl.

ANNA  
Love you, daddy.

Anna takes Maggie's hand and they walk away. Peter looks  
at Max and Jason. He leaves without saying anything.

MAX  
Well, that's quite a kick in the  
balls.

JASON

It is that.

MAX

You okay?

JASON

I think so, yeah. The odd thing is that already I can see the upside.

MAX

You must have 2020 vision to see it from here.

JASON

Don't get me wrong, I still want to smash the prick. But this is a definite end. We've been hanging on so long there's a kind of relief in it. And she can't bring me lower than this. There's nowhere to go but up.

MAX

New man, new plan.

JASON

Something like that.

MAX

I admire your attitude, big brother. What about Anna?

JASON

She's my miracle girl. And no accident of genetics is going to change that.

Max nods his agreement. They reflect on the situation.

MAX

You know, there's one more really good thing to come out of this.

JASON

What's that?

MAX

We get to eat their ice-cream.

Max grabs one for each of them and calls to his kids to partake of the bounty.

FADE OUT: