

How to Kill Dad

Written by
Savannah Morgan

Logline: A desperate little boy turns to a sleazy divorce lawyer in an attempt to end his father's escalating abuse.

Copyright (c) 2015

Draft 2

thesavannahmorgan@yahoo.com

INT. DIEGO' ROOM - EVENING

DIEGO, a solemn 8-year-old Hispanic boy, stares intently at the TV. He has a bruised cheek and eyes red from crying.

The TV can't drown out the sound of his parents fighting in the living room. His mother's sobs are punctuated by the sickening THUD of a fist connecting to flesh.

VIOLETA (O.S.)

No!

A PUPPY whimpers at Diego' feet. Diego picks him up and turns up the volume. The puppy licks his face but he's engrossed in the CSI episode on the screen. A corpse with white froth oozing from her lips clutches a broken glass.

CSI TECH

Looks like she was poisoned.

Diego ducks under his bed and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. Row after row of childlike sketches depict varying methods of murder. It's titled "How to Kill Dad." He painstakingly adds "Poison" to it. A commercial comes on.

DAN

Hi, Divorce Dan here! If you want a divorce - and who doesn't - you need a lawyer.

His Theme Song plays: If your marriage is in the can, call Divorce Dan. The phone number and website flash on screen. Diego writes them down.

INT. ROSS' HOME OFFICE - 3AM

Diego creeps into the office and seats himself at his father's laptop. He wakes it, enters the password, and types in Divorce Dan's web address. Dan's theme song BLARES.

He frantically mutes it and waits, breathing hard. After a long moment, he clicks the "Make an Appointment" link. He enters his last name and the rest is auto-filled.

He changes the first name and picks a time for the appointment. A pop-up says "Check your email for confirmation!" He opens the email tab, reads the mail, and hits delete.

INT. DIEGO' BATHROOM - MORNING

Diego enters the bathroom. His mother is sprawled on the floor in her underwear. Ugly purple bruises cover her middle. A syringe lies next to her.

DIEGO
(Shaking her)
Mama. Mama?

She's out cold. He puts the syringe into a half-empty glass of Listerine. He bundles a towel under her head and covers her with another. As he brushes his teeth, he hums the "Divorce Dan" tune.

INT. DIEGO' KITCHEN - MORNING

Diego sits at the table eating cereal. Tension creases his brow. Heavy FOOTSTEPS sound in the hall. Diego' father ROSS storms into the kitchen.

ROSS
(yells)
Violeta! Where's breakfast?

He looks at Diego. Diego pushes the cereal towards him without raising his eyes.

ROSS (cont'd)
Forget it.

Ross stalks out. Diego watches him leave out the window.

INT. DIEGO' LIVING ROOM - MIDDAY

Diego watches cartoons. The phone rings. He lets it go to the answering machine.

VOICE MAIL
Hello, this is Vail Elementary
calling to ask why Diego isn't in
school today? Please call us back.

Diego gets up and deletes it. He looks out the window and sees a bright pink Smart Car covered in logos appear. DAN, a stereotypical slick-haired "car salesman" type, emerges from the car with a briefcase and a bright white grin.

INT. DIEGO' HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - DAY

Dan KNOCKS. DIEGO opens the door slightly.

DAN
Hi, I'm Divorce Dan! Is your dad
home?

Diego undoes the chain and opens the door.

DIEGO
Come in.

Dan saunters in and makes himself at home on the couch. He
flips his briefcase open on the coffee table.

DIEGO (CTN'D)
Why is your car pink?

DAN
I get paid to drive it.
(Dazzling smile)
So, where's Diego Cruz?

DIEGO
That's me.

DAN
(Disgusted)
Thanks for wasting my time kid.

Dan snaps his briefcase shut.

DIEGO
No, wait! I want a divorce.

DAN
You're a little young to be married.

DIEGO
My parents. They need a divorce.

DAN
Look, this isn't Mcdonald's. You
can't just order a divorce for your
parents.

DIEGO
Why?

DAN
Because you have to be an adult to
sign the papers!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIEGO
My mom can sign.

DAN
Is she here?

DIEGO
Yes. Come.

INT. DIEGO' BATHROOM - DAY

Diego' mother is still passed out. Dan enters on Diego' heels.

DAN
Jesus! Is she alive?

DIEGO
Ya.

Diego shakes her.

DIEGO (CTN'D)
Mama? Mama wake up, Divorce Dan is here!

She stirs groggily.

DIEGO (CTN'D) (cont'd)
You need to sign a paper to get a divorce.

Violeta finally becomes alert and starts screaming in Spanish.

VIOLETA
(in Spanish)
Pervert! Asshole! Get out of my house! Get out of here right now!

DAN
Easy lady, easy! I'm going!

She scrambles to her feet. The towel falls, revealing her bruises. Dan glances at her, then retreats.

INT. DIEGO' LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dan grabs his briefcase and pulls out a card.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIEGO

My dad. He gets mad sometimes.

DAN

Look kid, you have a screwed up situation, no lie. But I can't do anything until your mom or dad signs the papers.

Dan drops his card on the table. It has a gaudy gold edge.

DIEGO

(Beat)

What if my dad dies?

DAN

Then he won't need a divorce.

Dan heads out the door. Violeta enters. She picks up the card and tosses it in the trash. Diego stares at it.

VIOLETA

Diego, what's going on?! Your father will kill me if he learns a man was here!

DIEGO

He'll kill you anyway!

Violeta slaps him.

VIOLETA

(Horrorified)

I'm sorry my angel. I'm sorry. Your father loves us. He's just under a lot of stress.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan channel-surfs in a small living room. He pauses on a scene of a couple arguing. The man slams the woman's head into the table.

DAN

Oh come on. Really?

He sighs and pulls out his phone. He flips through his contacts and lands on Child Protective Services.

INT. DIEGO' HOUSE - EVENING

Diego and his parents are having dinner. There is a KNOCK at the door. Ross opens it. A CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES WORKER stands on the doorstep.

CPSW
Good evening sir, I'm with Child
Protective Services. Is Diego here?

ROSS
(Charming)
We're in the middle of dinner. What's
this about?

CPSW
We're just checking in. Diego missed
school yesterday.

ROSS
(Beat)
He was sick.

CPSW
I'm sorry to hear that. It will only
take a minute-

ROSS
I'm sorry but it's not a good time.

Her lips thin but she nods and turns away. Ross shuts the door firmly.

INT. DIEGO' HOUSE - EVENING

Ross sits back down to eat in tense silence. The puppy slinks away from the table.

VIOLETA
Who was it?

ROSS
Child Services.

VIOLETA
(Terrified)
Why?

ROSS
Diego skipped school yesterday.
(Beat)
The potato's cold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIOLETA
I'll zap it.

Ross hurls the plate across the room. It shatters against the wall. The puppy YELPS.

ROSS
All I ask is for you to do your God-damn job as a mother! Am I being unreasonable?

VIOLETA
Of course not.

ROSS
Am I being fucking unreasonable?!

He stands up and takes off his belt. Diego balls his hands into fists.

ROSS (cont'd)
(To Diego)
I'll teach you to skip school!

VIOLETA
Ross, please-

ROSS
Shut up you fucking junkie!

The tip of the belt smacks her in the face, splitting her lip. She falls to the floor and cowers. He grabs Diego and wails on him. The puppy WHINES and he swings at it too.

INT. DIEGO' BEDROOM - MORNING.

Diego lies in bed facing the wall. The puppy is curled against him under the covers. Heavy FOOTSTEPS pause outside his door.

ROSS (O.S.)
This is Ross Cruz. My son won't come to school today, he's sick. Thank you.

The front door opens and shuts. Ross's car drives off. Diego takes Dan's card out of his clenched fist and tucks it inside his pillowcase.

He limps down the hall, his face swollen. His mother is just entering the bathroom, likewise beaten and hunched, needle in hand. They stare at each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She shuts the door and locks it. He continues to the living room and picks up the phone.

INT. DAN'S CAR - MORNING

Dan is listening to a police radio, pen poised for an ambulance to chase.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
We have a 10-31 at Dole's Diamond on 5th. Requesting all officers.

DAN
Three burglaries in a row? Where's a domestic dispute when you need one?

Dan's theme-song RINGTONE goes off.

DAN (cont'd)
Divorce Dan, how can I help you?

DIEGO
(Distorted by his
swollen lip)
What do you know about death?

DAN
Excuse me?

DIEGO
I need to know about death.

DAN
Is that you Diego?

DIEGO
Yes. Please, what is the best way to kill someone?

DAN
I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that.

DIEGO
I can pay you. I have twenty-three dollars.

DAN
(Beat)
Ok, ok. I'll talk to you, but not on the phone. I'll come to your house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIEGO
I don't want mom to get mad again.

DAN
Right. What about meeting somewhere?
Is there somewhere close to you?

DIEGO
Dairy Queen?

DAN
Perfect, meet you at Dairy Queen in
an hour.

INT. DAIRY QUEEN - DAY

Dan drinks a coffee. Diego limps in wearing long sleeves and a ball cap.

DAN
(Shocked)
I'm calling the cops right now.

DIEGO
You can't. He'll hurt my mom.

DAN
Diego, they can protect you-

DIEGO
They can't! They're just like the
lady that came last night!

DAN
(Beat)
Fine. It's your funeral. What do you
want to know?

DIEGO
When can you kill someone?

DAN
You can't.

DIEGO
They do on TV!

DAN
First, are you planning on using this
information to commit a felony? Be
aware that if you say yes, I am
required to call the cops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Diego frowns at him.

DAN (cont'd)

Ok. The only way to theoretically be justified in using deadly force-

Diego looks completely puzzled.

DAN (CTN'D)

Right. Sorry. The only way it's ok to kill someone is if they try to kill you first. Self defense.

DIEGO

What about poison?

DAN

Slow and easy to detect.

DIEGO

Burning the house down?

DAN

The person might escape, and they can tell if you started it on purpose.

DIEGO

An accident? Like stepping on a deadly scorpion?

DAN

Prison is full of people who tried to arrange accidents. A lot of people do disappear on cruise ships though. No, never mind. Kid, you need to call the cops.

INT. DIEGO' ROOM - NIGHT

Diego sits with his list. Dan's card rests on top. All of the murder options except "Self Defense" are crossed off. He grips the pencil in a tight fist and puts an X across "Self Defense" too.

The puppy plays with a stuffed animal on the floor and chases it into a plastic bag.

DIEGO

(Hushed)

No, you'll suffocate!

A long beat. Diego' eyes narrow.

INT. DIEGO' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Diego slips into the kitchen and gets a black plastic trash bag out of the drawer. He pauses to listen.

INT. ROSS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

His father snores on his side next to Violeta. Diego tiptoes to the bed. He holds the plastic bag up and angles it different ways to see how to get it across his father's head.

The edges fall in and tickle Ross's nose. Ross swipes at it. Diego flinches and backs off. He tries again but can't bring himself to do it.

INT. DIEGO' LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Diego plays fetch halfheartedly with the puppy. Violeta preps a needle in the kitchen. Ross is eating breakfast.

There's a knock at the door. Ross gets up sullenly.

ROSS
What do you want?

DAN
Wow. You're bigger than I imagined.

ROSS
Do I know you? You look familiar.

Dan is rapidly rethinking this.

DAN
I - This is a mistake. Sorry.

Violeta appears in the doorway.

VIOLETA
You! You need to leave!

Dan's phone rings, playing the Divorce Dan ringtone.

ROSS
Ya, you're that guy from TV. How do you know my wife?

Dan backs away. Ross hauls him inside and pins him against the wall. Diego runs in with his yapping puppy at his heels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSS (cont'd)
I asked you a question!

DIEGO
Dad, please

DAN
It's not what you think. Calm down
sir, let's talk about -

Ross punches him in the face. Dan goes down on his knees.

DAN (cont'd)
Run Diego!

Violeta grabs Ross's arm. He knocks her off and punches Dan again, knocking him out cold. Ross turns on Violeta.

ROSS
A divorce lawyer? A DIVORCE LAWYER!
You fucking bitch!

He advances towards her.

DIEGO
No! Dad, no!

The puppy freezes in terror, tripping Ross. He grabs it by the scruff and lifts it into the air.

ROSS
Fucking dog!

He carries it into the kitchen, grabs a knife and raises it to stab the puppy. Diego goes ballistic and flies at him, biting, kicking, screaming. Ross drops the puppy and slashes Diego.

Violeta screams and knocks Diego out of the way. The knife plunges into her chest. Time stands still. Ross pulls the blade out and stabs her again, shouting.

ROSS (cont'd)
Look what you made me do! Look what
you made me do!

Diego grabs the syringe off the kitchen counter. Violeta loses consciousness, her weight bringing Ross to his knees. He raises the knife again, intent on finishing her.

Diego flies at him again and jabs the syringe into his knife arm. Ross grabs Diego's legs and Diego falls. Ross puts his arm around Diego's neck and suffocates him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door crashes open. Police flood in. They pull Ross off of Diego. Ross lunges at them with his knife. Bullets fly. He falls.

EXT. DIEGO' HOUSE - DAY

Diego, Violeta, and Dan all lie on stretchers. A paramedic places a sheet over Ross. Two cops walk over to the stretchers.

COP 1

... Long history of domestics at this address. Who called it in?

COP 2

(to Cop 1)

Anonymous tip. If we'd arrived any later...

Cop 1 approaches Diego.

COP

Are you alright son? Can you tell me what happened?

DIEGO

I think you need to talk to my lawyer.

COP

Your lawyer?

Dan's phone rings, blasting out the Divorce Dan theme song. His eyes meet Diego's. Diego smiles.