

Jose Ossa Sr. (Father):

I am in so much pain. My family is falling apart. They won't listen to me, they talk back, my leg is hurting me, and no one understands what it means to be the father in this house. When the kids were little and we only had Junior and Carmen, we ran with a wild crowd, but now I am too old for all that. I keep telling these kids that they need to settle down and give me space. "Just keep me happy. A quiet happy home, and I won't bother you". That's what I tell them. But they get mouthy and forget that no matter how big they get, I am still the papa, still the boss of the house. If they don't like it, they can get their own place, but while they are here they go by my rules.

Junior thinks he can come and go as he pleases. Earlier today, he strolls in with this macho grin, walks over to MY refrigerator and takes MY beer and then lights himself one of MY cigarettes. When I started raising cane with him, he just laughed. My wife tried to tell me to calm down, in front of the kids. Well, I had to take a stand. I can't have the one laughing at me and the other trying to boss me around, so I grabbed her and shook her. I asked her who she thought she was talking to, taking sides against me with that kid, but she wasn't talking so big when I shook her twice and then Junior had to get involved. She's not his business. She's not worth it, but he came at me with a knife, telling me to leave her alone, and then Carmen jumps in the game. They were all against me, I tell you, and Carmen gets stabbed. So now she's hurt, he's on the run, and I'm left dealing with the cops and CPS again. This wife of mine and these kids, they always bring me down. Maybe I should kill myself and teach them a lesson.

If there is one thing I learned in that class, it's that the papa never wins with these people. We agreed to keep it simple. Junior is on the run anyway, and he picked a fight with me. Leave my wife out of it, although it is her fault for stepping in on men's business. I'll deal with her later.

Sophie Ossa: (Mother)

Oh Lord, here we go again. Usually I can calm him down or get the kids out of the way when I see this coming, but today's fiasco came out of nowhere. Junior swaggering in, Jose waiting to bring him down a peg, and although I try to step in and take the brunt, no one ever backs down in this family. It's Junior's first offense, so Jose is right, he will probably get a little jail time and then get out. He did pull the knife. And I told him a million times that I can handle it with his dad, not to step in. It only makes it worse. If only Carmen hadn't stepped in, I could have handled it. But if the DV comes up again, we'll lose the children. It took me six months to get little Louis back on a routine again after he went to foster care last time: his ADHD and his anxiety get so bad when he worries. The girls got kicked out of one home and lost a semester of school. And we know our relatives in Florida can't pass the check.

This CPS looks like the last one. I guess they all seem the same. I bet they don't even have anyone who speaks Spanish. I know the drill, "What happened? What happened next?" and "We'll help you". All they did last time was take my kids, promise help, and then put me in a dirty shelter with people who don't want to work. And they all want to send me to therapy. Why do I need therapy? I take my meds when I can afford it, but I don't hurt anyone. Meanwhile, you send me to a kid who doesn't know enough to wear shoes that won't cripple you and you think she is gonna help me figure out what to do? I've been getting by for 20 years. I have a record myself and the courts got mad at me for dropping injunctions before. I'm just too tired to go through all of this again.

I know what kind of help you people offer. I have my own plan. I'll help the older ones move out to safety, and then I'll find a way to keep the younger ones out of the way when Jose gets like this.

Junior stabbed Carmen in a fight with his father. That's all there is.

Carmen Ossa:

Ooooh, that still hurts! And now I'm on these meds for the pain, so I hate to be interviewed. I don't know if I can keep my story straight.

One thing will keep me going: I know what it is like to be in foster care. I'm 18 so I can go with a friend, but Melitza and Louis will have to go back, and they were never together the first time. I don't think they can take it. I'll stick with the story we agreed on, even though I would love to see my father go to jail, where he belongs.

I really thought Junior was gonna kill him, and I was thinking that would happen sooner or later, but when he went for the knife and mom was in the way, I just couldn't stay back. Really, I'm surprised he stopped me. It was like I had this surge of rage and I was gonna knock them all to the ground. We can't live like this.

The minute after the cops go out I'm gonna put some cash where I said I would for Junior and then I'm gonna talk to mom one more time about leaving. If she won't do it, I'm 18. I am gonna get a job and an apartment of my own and let Louis and Melitza come live with me. Maybe I can even get custody if there's more trouble down the line. I know this, our family is so screwed up that I have to get out of here alive and take these younger kids with me. Maybe someday Junior can come back too, but for now, I'll do what I have to do to keep my brother and sister together with me.

Louis Ossa:

Ohnoohnoohnoohno. Keep cool. Don't flutter. Don't jump. Don't talk too loud or too soft. Keep it cool. Remember what we practiced.

Junior came home and fought with my dad.

Dad tried to calm him down.

Junior pulled out a knife.

Junior went for Dad.

Carmen stepped in.

I heard it but I didn't see it.

My mom was in the other room.

My dad has not hit anyone since we came home from foster care.

My dad loves us.

My dad would kill himself before he would hurt us again.

I can't go to foster care again. Who will watch out for my mom and sisters and my dad. These people cannot take care of themselves without something happening. Keep calm.