

WITNESS PROTECTION

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

A semi-trailer backs into an old, abandoned warehouse located on a deserted side street in the city.

Two GUARDS dressed in black and carrying assault rifles watch the street as the truck disappears into the warehouse. The two men take one more look around before going into the loading bay as the door slowly closes.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Inside the warehouse loading bay, the truck comes to a stop. The DRIVER gets out of the cab and heads to the back of the truck.

ANTONIO DEVENEZIA, mid 30s, suit and slicked back hair, looking like a mobster from the 1950s, waits at the back of the truck. Next to him is his lieutenant, RONALD SAPORITO, mid 20s.

ANTONIO

Open it.

DRIVER

Yes, sir.

The driver opens the back of the truck to reveal stacks of large cardboard boxes.

Antonio motions for the driver to get out of the way, and he and Ronald jump up into the trailer.

Antonio grabs a box and puts it on the floor. He pulls out a fancy looking switchblade and cuts open the top of the box.

Antonio and Ronald look inside the box. Satisfied with what he sees, he closes the box flaps.

Antonio looks over to the driver, who is waiting a respectful distance away.

ANTONIO

Beat it.

The driver walks out of the warehouse. Ronald opens the box and rifles through it without taking any of the contents out.

RONALD
I'm not sure I'm comfortable
dealing in this stuff, boss.

Antonio walks over to Ronald and puts his hand on his shoulder. He reaches into his suit pocket with his other hand and pulls out a folded piece of paper.

ANTONIO
Ronnie, Ronnie, Ronnie. Who took
you off the streets into the
family?

RONALD
Your dad.

ANTONIO
And who bailed you out after you
got caught running your first
numbers racket?

RONALD
Your dad.

Antonio grabs Ronald's shoulder hard.

ANTONIO
(yelling in Ronald's face)
And who is rotting away in prison
right now?

Ronald hangs his head.

RONALD
Your dad.

ANTONIO
That's right. My dad, who once
ruled this town like a medieval
king, is wasting away in that cell.
My family name meant something. It
struck fear whenever spoken. Now,
people laugh at me when I walk down
the street.

Antonio opens the box again, looking inside.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
The Gruppo Di Nove is going to take
back control of this city again,
Ronnie.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

JEFF PERRY, late 20's, lies under the covers of his bed, sound asleep.

On the wall are older pictures of planes and newer pictures of drones. Hanging from the ceiling by wire are model planes. On a desk sits a partially finished drone, with an instruction manual and tools scattered about the desk.

Other completed and partially completed model planes and drones are stacked haphazardly around the room.

Sitting on top of a dresser is a glass class. Inside the glass case is completed fixed wing drone.

An alarm clock reads 8:00am and starts to buzz.

The alarm clock reads 8:30am, and the buzzer still buzzes. Jeff lies underneath the covers, still sleeping.

The alarm clock reads 9:00am. The buzzer is still going, and Jeff sleeps on.

The alarm clock reads 9:21am. The buzzer still buzzes. Jeff stirs, reaches out and hits the snooze button.

The alarm clock reads 9:29am. The buzzer starts again. Jeff reaches out and hits the alarm button. He yawns, rubs his eyes and stretches in bed. He opens his eyes and looks at the clock.

JEFF
Oh, crap!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jeff runs through the house, tucking in a uniform shirt that has a logo that says 'Electronics Shack' on it.

JEFF
Mom, I'm late! Why didn't you wake me up? Mom? Mom!

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Jeff opens up the door to the garage and sees his mom's car is gone.

JEFF
Damn it!

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Jeff pedals furiously through the city streets. He crosses streets and intersections without regard to traffic, causing cars to stop short and honk at him.

JEFF
Sorry! Sorry!

EXT. ELECTRONICS SHACK - DAY

Jeff arrives at the back of The Electronics Shack, jumping off his bike. Jeff's friend, MICHAEL QUENTIN, late 20's, is smoking a cigarette by the back door.

MICHAEL
You better get in there. Mr. Harper is pretty pissed off at you.

JEFF
I know, I know. My mom didn't wake me up this morning.

MICHAEL
I don't think he is mad at you for being late.

JEFF
Crap, what did I do now?

Jeff hurries into the store. He finds Mr. Harper at the register in the front of the store. A long line of customers snake through the queue line, all carrying a 52" TV box. Mr. Harper is talking with cashier MADISON PARKER, a gum chewing 18 year old girl.

MADISON
You keep telling us the customer is always right.

MR. HARPER
(angrily)
And you didn't think this was the least bit unusual?

MADISON
Hey, I went all the way to the back of the store to look at the sign above the T.V.s, and it said \$40.

Jeff rushes up the register.

JEFF
Sorry I'm late, Mr. Harper. Uh,
what sign?

Mr. Harper turns to face Jeff, anger making his face blotchy.

MR. HARPER
Do you remember that ad display I
had you make yesterday?

JEFF
For those big screen T.V.s? Yeah.

MR. HARPER
And do you remember what price I
asked you to put on the big sign
above the display?

JEFF
Yeah, \$400.00 . I remember because
as I was making the sign I realized
I was missing a zero. So I went
into the back room to find another
zero. Well, I couldn't find one
right away, and it was time to
clock out, so I figured I would
look for it again when I got in
this morning and.....uh oh.

MR. HARPER
That's right, Jeffrey. All these
people grabbed T.V.s before I could
change the sign.

JEFF
Can't you just tell everyone there
was mistake?

Mr. Harper points to a sign hanging on the wall.

MR. HARPER
And what does that sign say, Mr.
Perry.

JEFF
(squinting a little)
'Shoplifting Is A Crime. Violators
Will Be Prosecuted!'. I don't know
if you can arrest everyone, Mr.
Harper. It's not really a
violation, it's more like an
accidental touching.

MR. HARPER
Not that sign, you idiot! The one
next to it.

JEFF
'We Will Match Any Advertised
Price'.

MR. HARPER
Right, so we have to match the
advertised price, even if it's our
own!!

JEFF
Perhaps you can take the difference
out of my paycheck?

MR. HARPER
You won't be getting any more
paychecks, because you're fired!!!

EXT. BACK OF ELECTRONICS SHACK - DAY

Jeffrey dejectedly walks out the back door of the store.
Michael is still by the door, smoking.

MICHAEL
Did you get fired?

JEFF
Yep.

MICHAEL
Well, if you got fired, then I got
fired, too!

JEFF
Thanks, Michael. You're a good
friend.

As Jeff and Michael walk around the store and through the
front parking lot, Jeff stops to help an elderly lady
struggling to put one of the big T.V. boxes in her car.

ELDERLY LADY
(pinching Jeff's cheek)
Aren't you just a helpful young
man? You should go in and get one
of these T.V.s on sale before they
are all gone.

JEFF
Actually, I think you got my ex-
employees discount.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Jeff pushes his bike as Michael walks besides him.

MICHAEL
So, was this a record?

JEFF
Was what a record?

MICHAEL
The longest you ever worked in one
place. You worked at The
Electronics Shack for what, 3
weeks?

JEFF
Let's see (pause), I lasted a month
at the Banana Shack, and the
Sunglasses Shack for 5 weeks.

MICHAEL
Dude, this is a bronze medal!

He and Jeff high-five.

JEFF
Let's celebrate!

EXT. THE MILKSHAKE SHACK - DAY

Jeff and Michael stand at The Milkshake Shack, a small kiosk
on the side of the road. Michael is drinking a milkshake.
REBECCA, 18 years old, hands Jeff a milkshake.

REBECCA
Here you go, Jeff. One extra large
vanilla milkshake, half milkshake,
half whipped cream.

JEFF
Thanks, Becca! Good seeing you
again.

EXT. SUBDIVISION STREETS

Jeff and Michael walk in a subdivision, drinking their milkshakes. They stop in front of Jeff's house.

MICHAEL

Is your mom's boyfriend going to give you one of his lectures?

JEFF

Oh, God. Probably. 'Jeff, you need to learn responsibility.', 'Jeff, you have to be accountable for yourself.', 'Jeff, when are you going to get a place of your own?'. Gah! I wish he would hurry up and marry my mom. The dude is loaded! I wouldn't have to work any more of these stupid jobs.

MICHAEL

Yeah, that would be cool. Then you could finally become a professional drone racer.

JEFF

Yeah, well, only if he hurries up to make my dreams come true.

MICHAEL

Right. Ok, Jeff. I gotta head home. Talk to ya later!

JEFF

See ya.

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

Jeff's house is a typical suburban looking split level. He enters the lower level door that leads into the garage. He leans his bike up against the wall, noticing his mom's car is parked in the garage.

Jeff climbs the stairs to the upper level, sipping at his milkshake.

The walls of the stairwell are covered in family pictures in chronological order. They start with pictures of Jeff as a baby, along with his mom and dad. One picture shows Jeff's dad in a pilot uniform holding a toy plane with Jeff.

When Jeff appears to be about 8, the pictures just show him and his mom. Toward the top of the stairs, the pictures show Jeff wearing a variety of retail worker style uniforms.

Jeff reaches the top of the stairwell and stops at the door that leads into the kitchen. There is giggling on the other side of the door and what sounds like a slap, followed by more giggling.

Jeff doesn't notice as he fishes out more whipped cream from the bottom of his milkshake. He barges in.

INT. KITCHEN

JEFF

Hey, ma! You didn't wake up for work this morning. You made me late and....

Jeff surprises his mom, DONNA PERRY, late 40's, and her boyfriend, RICHARD WHITE, early 50's, who were on the kitchen floor. They both stand up and are completely naked.

From Jeff's vantage point, they are behind the kitchen island which covers them from the waist down. Whipped cream covers Donna's breasts and Richard his holding a can of whipped cream. Whipped cream drips from his chin.

Jeff looks at them and then the milkshake in his hand. He throws it in the sink in disgust.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Oh, God.

DONNA

(flustered)

Jeff, honey. You, uh, are home a little early, aren't you?

Donna slowly sinks down behind the kitchen island and comes up with a pair of bathrobes. She gives one to Richard and puts the other one on herself.

RICHARD

You got fired again, didn't you?

JEFF

No...maybe...yes.

DONNA

Oh, sweetie. I'm so sorry.

JEFF

Yeah, well, its ok. I am sure I'll find another job soon. In the meantime, I think I'll just hang out and chill for awhile, catch up on some shows I've been missing till something comes along.

Donna and Richard exchange glances with each other.

DONNA

Honey, there something we need to talk about.

JEFF

What?

DONNA

Let's go into the living room and sit down.

JEFF

Oohhhkaaayyy...

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jeff, Donna and Richard walk into the living room and sit down on the couch.

RICHARD

Jeffrey --

Jeff makes a hand motion on his chin, indicating to Richard there is something on his face. Richard realizes his face is still covered in whipped cream and wipes it off with his robe.

DONNA

Jeff, dear. This is no easy way to say this, but Richard and I got married this morning.

JEFF

Wha...uh...huh?

DONNA

We felt it was time, and we didn't want a ceremony or anything, so we went down the courthouse and got married.

Donna holds out her hand showing an expensive looking wedding ring on her finger.

DONNA (CONT'D)
We're sorry we didn't ask you to
come along with us to the
courthouse. It was kind of spur of
the moment thing....

Donna trails off as Jeff looks intently at her.

JEFF
So you two are now officially
married now? You are husband and
wife?

RICHARD
That's right.

Jeff is silent for a few moments then bursts out into a
gleeful whoop.

JEFF
Whoo hoo!!!

Jeff jumps on and off the couch, playing an air guitar.

Richard and Donna look at each other, confused. Jeff
continues to air guitar.

RICHARD
Jeff...Jeff...JEFFREY!

Jeff stops.

DONNA
There's more, honey.

RICHARD
You have 30 days to find a job and
move out.

JEFF
Whaaaaaaaaatttt?

DONNA
Jeff, dear. Now that we're married,
we need a certain amount of privacy
and, quite frankly, you're always
around. It'll be hard for us to be
a still relatively young husband
and wife if you live with us.

The news hits Jeff like a ton of bricks and leaves him
stunned. He begins to panic.

JEFF

But 30 days? What if I don't find a job by then? How am I going to be able to afford it? I don't know anything about finding a place to live. What if I accidentally get an apartment in a crackhouse? What if I end up living in a cardboard box behind Lu Chin's House of Oriental Massage?

DONNA

Jeff, Jeff. Calm down, honey.

RICHARD

Once you find a place, we'll pay the security deposit and the first two months rent. After that, you're on your own. It's time you learned to be a responsible adult.

JEFF

But 30 days? Can't I live here until I find a job and save some money.

DONNA

You can't honey. We sold the house. We have to be out in 30 days. I'm moving in with Richard.

JEFF

But I can move in with you!

RICHARD

No.

Donna gets up and hugs Jeff for a beat.

DONNA

Oh, honey. You were so young when your father died. Too young to become the man of the house. I selfishly kept you to myself because I couldn't bear the thought of anything happening to you, too. For that, I am really sorry, but Richard made me realize there is so much more life to live, for both of us. I've kept you from really living life, and now we will both get a chance to. Do you understand?

JEFF
Yeah, ma. I understand.

A silence descends in the living room as Jeff mulls over his new circumstances. Donna and Richard watch him for a moment then begin eyeing each other.

DONNA
Jeff, honey. Why don't you go to Michael's for a little while? When you come back, make sure you knock first.

EXT. SUBDIVISION STREETS - DAY

Jeff walks along the streets of the subdivision with looks of sadness and worry on his face. He swings for awhile on a swing in a small pocket park.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Jeff walks up to Michael's house. It is a run down double wide trailer in an equally run down part of town. The front lawn is dirt with assorted pieces of junk strewn around.

Jeff knocks on the battered aluminum front door. When he does, multiple dogs bark in the trailer. Michael's mom, MELISSA QUENTIN, 50 years old, answers the door. Her face is lined, a cigarette hangs from her mouth, and she is wearing dirty sweatpants and a T-shirt.

MELISSA
What?

JEFF
Hi, Mrs. Quentin.

MELISSA
(to the dogs behind her)
SHUT UP!

The dogs pause for a second and start barking again.

JEFF
Is Michael here?

MELISSA
Where else would he be? College?
Saving the world? Or God forbid,
working?
(MORE)

MELISSA (CONT'D)
or perhaps his only goal in life is
to permanently imprint his ass
cheeks on the couch in front of the
TV? Yes, that's the one!

She steps aside to let Jeff enter the trailer.

The trailer is dirty, dusty, and yellowed from all the smoke.
The decor looks like it is from the 1970's.

Jeff stops to pet the three dogs that were jumping on him.

JEFF
Hi, Moe. Hi, Larry. Hi, Curly.

He leans down towards the third dog.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(whispering)
In my head I'll always call you
Shemp.

Michael is playing a video game on the couch. Jeff sits next to him.

MELISSA
And now the four stooges have
become five. I'm going to the store
for some more smokes. Michael, why
don't you clean up a little while I
am gone?

MICHAEL
Sure, ma, I'll get right on that.

Melissa leaves. Michael, of course, doesn't stop playing his game. He hands Jeff a second controller. Jeff just stares at it. After a moment, Michael realizes Jeff isn't playing.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(without taking his eyes
off the screen)
Dude, what's wrong?

JEFF
My mom and Richard got married this
morning.

Michael stops playing and stands up.

MICHAEL
That's awesome! Now we can get a
band together.

He begins air guitar. The dogs start barking again.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
Yeah!! 'Lace Force'!

JEFF
No, you don't understand. They're
kicking me out of the house!

MICHAEL
What? Your mom is kicking you out?

JEFF
Yeah. I think Richard is telling
her to do it. He said I have to go
find a job and be a responsible
adult.

MICHAEL
Wow, man. I thought for sure you
would live with your mom forever.

JEFF
Me, too. Stupid Richard. It was so
much nicer when it was just my mom
and me. Now I gotta start looking
for a new job and a place to live.

MICHAEL
You could move in here! My mom
won't mind.

Jeff looks around the trailer.

JEFF
Yeah, I don't think so.

Michael shrugs his shoulders.

MICHAEL
How long you got?

JEFF
30 days.

MICHAEL
Sounds like a reverse prison
sentence. 30 days of freedom left!

JEFF
Yeah

MICHAEL

Hey, I got a new game. Check this out.

Michael changes the game on the TV using his controller. A screen pops up: 'W.P.P: Witness Protection Program. Protect the Witness'

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

So you are a U.S. Marshal, and you have to protect this witness from the Mafia. It's a lot of fun!

Michael plays the game for a few minutes, then notices Jeff sitting there with a glazed look on his face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(snapping his fingers)

Hey, man. Jeff? Earth to Jeff!

JEFF

Dude, that's it!

MICHAEL

What's it?

JEFF

The Witness Protection Program. I just need to get into the Witness Protection Program!

MICHAEL

What?

JEFF

(gesturing to the game)
It's all right there! Look! Look at the house they give the witness.

Michael turns back to the game. The Marshal and the witness are inside a big mansion.

MICHAEL

You're right. They get to live in a big mansion.

JEFF

I bet they'd give me a cushy, easy job that pays a lot of money. I'd get a new name and move to a new town. You can live with me and we can get a band together!

MICHAEL
Yeah!

Jeff and Michael air guitar for a few seconds.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
It's gets even better, man. Check
this out.

Michael gestures back to screen. On screen the next to the witness is an extremely attractive, well endowed lady.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
They give you a hot wife as well.

JEFF
Whoa!!! Alright. Now all I gotta do
is figure out how to witness a
crime horrific enough put me on
easy street!

Jeff and Michael lean back on the couch and think.

MICHAEL
I could rob The Electronics Shack.

JEFF
What?

MICHAEL
Yeah. When you go in to get your
last paycheck, I'll go in there
wearing a mask. I'll slip a note to
the cashier demanding money. You
could come in and rip off my mask
and save the day. Oooh, if
Madison's working the register,
I'll write my phone number on the
note and tell her to call me. Hot
girls love bad ass robber dudes.

JEFF
So, let me get this straight. You
want to rob The Electronics Shack
while giving someone your phone
number, and have me take off your
mask so everyone can see that it's
you robbing the store?

MICHAEL
Do you think she'll call me?

JEFF
You could call her with your one phone call. No, we have to think this through. Where are most crimes committed?

MICHAEL
Where?

JEFF
In places where there's a lot crime.

MICHAEL
Right.

JEFF
I have an idea.

EXT. THE MILKSHAKE SHACK - DAY

Rebecca hands Jeff a giant milkshake mascot suit. Michael helps him get into it.

REBECCA
I'm a little surprised you want to do this, Jeff.

JEFF
Well, you know me. You have the best milkshakes in town, and I want to spread the word.

REBECCA
Uh, huh. If you remember, the last time I hired you and made you wear this thing, you lasted about 45 minutes and then quit.

JEFF
It was hot that day. I was getting heat stroke.

REBECCA
It was November and there were light flurries.

JEFF
What can I say? I generate a lot of heat.

REBECCA

I fiddled with the fan a bit, so it
now it'll blow air down on you
while keeping the suit inflated.
Should keep you cool even on a day
like today.

JEFF

Aw, thanks, Becca. You're awesome.

REBECCA

I know. Once in a while the fan
struggles to keep up. If you feel
it slow down, just hold one side of
it and whack the other side.

Rebecca puts one hand over her head and mimes whacking
something above her head with the other.

Jeff finishes getting into the mascot suit. Michael flips a
switch on the back and the suit inflates like a balloon.
Rebecca hands him a small stack of coupons.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Here's a stack of \$2.00 off
coupons. I would suggest heading
off to the park and hand them out
to families and such.

Jeff takes the stack of coupons and riffs through them.

JEFF

This is it?

REBECCA

How many more do you want?

JEFF

How many ya got?

Rebecca turns back into the kiosk and comes out with a thick
stack of coupons and hands them to Jeff.

REBECCA

This is all I have. Do you think
you can hand all those out?

JEFF

Becca, I guarantee I will come back
empty handed.

REBECCA

Uh, huh. Why am I not instilled
with confidence?

JEFF
Have I ever let you down?

REBECCA
Yes. Yes, you have.

Jeff turns and waddles down the street with Michael in tow.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Jeff and Michael walk down a street, near a park. Cars honk as they drive by Jeff in the milkshake mascot suit. Jeff waves each time someone honks.

MICHAEL
I'm still not sure how looking like a giant milkshake is going to get you into the witness protection program.

JEFF
Simple. Everyone loves milkshakes, right?

MICHAEL
Right.

JEFF
I bet I have 1000 coupons. It's like having 1000 gold pieces! When we go to the bad part of town, someone is going to mug me for these coupons.

MICHAEL
Yeah. Robbing from The Milkshake Shack is like a federal crime or something!

JEFF
With you hiding nearby and taking video, this is a cinch to work.

Jeff and Michael walk by a large park. There are numerous families with a lot of kids doing park like activities. A FEW KIDS see the milkshake mascot and excitedly run over to Jeff. They dance around him and jump on him.

KID #1
It's the Milkshake Man! It's the Milkshake Man!

The other kids get more excited and continue to climb on him.

JEFF

Hi, kids! Oh hey, don't jump on me.
Ha ha, you kids are really excited
about milkshakes. Wow. Ok, this is
fun, but I need to be somewhere.

The first kid jumps into the arms of Jeff, who catches him.
As he does, he drops his stack of coupons.

KID #1
I love you, Milkshake Man!

JEFF

Ha ha, well I love you, too, little
kid. Ok, climb on down now.

Another kid picks up one of the coupons off the ground and
reads it. She yells to her friends on the playground.

KID #2
Hey, he has milkshake coupons!

A mass of KIDS and their PARENTS run over to Jeff grab the
coupons off the ground, much like candy tossed into a crowd
at a parade. In the excitement, Jeff is knocked to the
ground, unable to get up and looking like a turtle on his
back.

JEFF
Help!

As the crowd disperses, Michael helps Jeff to his knees.

MICHAEL
They took all the coupons.

Jeff looks around and picks up the last remaining coupon off
the ground. He holds it up to show Michael.

JEFF
Not all of them. We still have one
left for us.

As Jeff holds the coupon, the first kid, still lurking
around, grabs it out of his hand and runs off.

KID #1
Thanks, Milkshake Man!

Michael helps Jeff up to his feet. Jeff's milkshake suit is
slowly deflating.

JEFF
Oops. Looks like the motor got
knocked around.

Jeff holds one side of the motor sitting above his head in the suit and whacks the other side. The motor hums softly and his suit slowly re-inflates. They walk down the street.

MICHAEL
Do you think you can get into the
Witness Protection Program if you
report a mugging by 300 kids?

EXT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - DAY

Antonio steps out onto the porch of his house, a turn of the century Victorian in an upscale neighbor.

He walks down the steps toward a waiting luxury car. Ronald exits the driver's seat and opens the back door for Antonio, then gets back into the driver's seat. The car drives off.

INT. ANTONIO'S CAR - DAY

ANTONIO
Is everything set up?

RONALD
Yes, sir. Everyone I contacted said
they'll be at the meeting.

ANTONIO
Good, good. For too long Gruppo Di
Nove has been irrelevant. The other
families will see we can rip the
power out of the hands of those
that don't deserve it and take back
what is rightfully ours!

RONALD
Not sure everyone will agree, boss.
The families have never dealt with
this kind of stuff before. Some of
them want to go back to running
gambling houses, smuggling guns and
setting up protection rackets, like
the good old days.

ANTONIO
Gambling houses? Running guns?
Protection rackets?
(MORE)

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

There's an Indian casino on every street corner. Every business has a live feed security system in it, and if you want a machine gun, just shop at Wal-Mart! No, Ronnie. I am the future of the Gruppo Di Nove. It has been a long time since there has been a true Godfather at the head of all the families.

RONALD

Whatever you say, boss.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Jeff, still in his inflated milkshake costume, and Michael walk down the street. Cars honk as they go by. Jeff waves halfheartedly at each honk.

JEFF

I don't know, Michael. This is a lot more work than I thought it would be. I mean, there are crimes happening everywhere and everyday!

MICHAEL

I guess we just aren't in the right place at the right time.

Jeff and Michael turn into an alley that runs behind the shops lining the street.

As they approach a small hispanic goods store, they notice a ROBBER (male, 30's) putting on a ski mask and entering the back door.

Jeff grabs Michael's arm and shakes it.

JEFF

Did you see that?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Poor guy. He must get either really cold or have some weird skin disease, like that kid in Mask. I would cover my face up every time I went out if I had a face like that, too.

JEFF

No, you dummy. He's robbing the store! Here's our chance!

Jeff and Michael creep up to the store and look through the back window.

INT. HISPANIC GOODS STORE - DAY

The robber has his gun pointed at the CLERK and three CUSTOMERS in the store. He gestures with his gun, and the clerk opens the register as the customers pull money out of their purses and wallets.

JEFF

Crap! There are customers in there.

MICHAEL

Yeah, talk about being in the wrong place at the wrong time. It would suck to get robbed.

JEFF

No, not that. If there are customers in there that means there are other witnesses to the crime. They aren't going to put us all in Witness Protection. I need to be the only witness.

MICHAEL

What are you going to do?

Jeff looks around at the store trash piled along the wall.

JEFF

Put this suit to good use. Time to bring out the scary Milkshake Man!

Jeff grabs an expired bottle of mild salsa and opens it. He spreads the salsa around the mouth of the milkshake costume, mimicking blood dripping from the mouth.

MICHAEL

Great idea. Let me help!

Michael grabs another bottle of salsa, not noticing that it is inferno salsa. He opens the bottle and spreads it around the eyes of the costume, which also happen to be where Jeff's eyes look out of the mascot costume.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Now you look really scary!

JEFF

Yeah, thanks. Now I will just go in there and...

Jeff pauses and shakes his head a little bit.

JEFF (CONT'D)
That stuff is making my eyes tingle
a little bit. Oh, man it is really
starting to hurt.

Michael looks down at the bottle and sees it says 'Inferno'

MICHAEL
Uh oh.

The stinging increases and Jeff starts dancing around.

JEFF
Oh, this hurts. Ow, Ow, Ow.

The salsa starts to soak through the costume and Jeff tries to wipe it from his eyes, making it burn his eyes more.

He screams and flails around, inadvertently bursting through the back door. He hits the top of the suit on the doorway, jarring the motor. The motor hums louder and his suit begins to overinflate.

INT. HISPANIC GOODS STORE - DAY

Jeff stumbles into the store, screaming. His hands covers his eyes. The screaming along with the salsa dripping like blood from underneath Jeff's hands and the costume's mouth make a scary sight.

The motor makes a rattling noise and Jeff's mascot suit begins to expand even larger

The customers and the clerk scream in terror and run out of the front door.

The robber is startled and turns his gun on Jeff. He looks quizzically at the costume

ROBBER
Milkshake Man?

Jeff's screaming intensifies. He takes his hands away from his eyes and opens them. They are severely bloodshot.

JEFF
OOOOOWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!

ROBBER
(now terrified)
El Milkshake Diablo!

The robber shoots at Jeff. The bullet hits the costume's inflator and causes a huge explosion of air, throwing Jeff backwards and blowing out the front windows and the robber through them.

EXT. HISPANIC GOODS STORE

Jeff sits in the back of an ambulance. The E.M.T. finishes flushing Jeff's eyes and hands him a towel to wipe the solution of his face.

E.M.T.

I got all the salsa out, but you are might still sting a bit for awhile. Grab some eye drops on the way home.

JEFF

(shaking his hand)
Ok, thanks, man.

Jeff leaves the ambulance. His mascot suit is in tatters. Michael is waiting at the back of the ambulance.

MICHAEL

How ya doing?

JEFF

How to do you think?

MICHAEL

Are they going to put you in the Witness Protection Program?

JEFF

The guy confessed on the spot. He kept muttering something about 'El Milkshake Diablo' coming to get him. He couldn't wait to go to jail.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry, man.

JEFF

Yeah, this was a dumb idea. Guess I gotta go find some stupid job.

MICHAEL

I gotta head home. Do you want to come over and hang for awhile?

JEFF

Nah, I don't think so. I gotta return the suit to Rebecca and explain why it blew up. You go on. I'll catch up with you later.

MICHAEL

Ok, man.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Antonio and Ronald stand next to the warehouse cargo doors as it slowly opens. A stack of boxes rest nearby.

Three mid size cars pull into the warehouse from the alley: a Toyota Prius, a Honda Accord Hybrid and a Ford Fusion.

Eight people emerge from the cars: JAVIER (Hispanic male, 30s), KUMIKO (Oriental female, 30s), RENALDO (Jamaican male, 30's), ALEX (Canadian male, 30's), MIKKEL (German male, 30's), JADE (African female, 30's), AHMED (Arabian male, 30's), and TODD (Caucasian male, 30's).

They walk up to Antonio and Ronald, who are standing next to the stack of boxes.

RENARDO

It has been a long time since the nine of us were together.

ALEX

It has to be about 20 years ago, eh?

JADE

I remember our fathers meeting in a place not unlike this one. We were told to go off and play while they were meeting about something.

JAVIER

There was a lot of shouting and arguing from what I remember.

MIKKEL

Our fathers didn't leave that meeting on good terms.

AHMED

Our families fought each other after that.

TODD
Till each family was weakened
enough for the feds to move in and
destroy the empires they took so
long to build.

A beat as everyone looks at Antonio

KUMIKO
Why did you ask us to meet you,
Antonio?

Antonio walks by the other eight, looking each of them in the eye as he speaks.

ANTONIO
It's appropriate that you speak of the past. There was a time our last names meant something. Just speaking those names caused closed doors to open, the unattainable to be given freely, and grown men to tremble in their shoes!

JADE
I remember being driven to school in this huge Cadillac. As a young girl, I couldn't believe how big the back seat was.

JAVIER
Even if there was an hour long waiting list, any restaurant we went to, we were seated immediately at a table in the back. Sometimes they kicked out people eating to get a table for us.

MIKKEL
I grew up in a big mansion out in the country. I took baths in a tub as big as a pool. There were a dozen servants that took care of us.

AHMED
One summer day, I had asked my father to buy me an ice cream cone. We stopped at a small stand. The man behind the counter said he wouldn't serve ice cream to any 'ragheads'. My father politely thanked him and we left.

(MORE)

AHMED (CONT'D)
When we drove by the next morning,
I remember the stand was a smoky
ruins, and body bag was being
lifted into a hearse.

Antonio turns to face the group.

ANTONIO
And now look at us! When we walk
down the street, we are pointed out
as has-beens. They look at us and
snicker, forgetting the fear that
our families instilled in this
city. Closed doors stay closed. We
have to fight to take what is
rightfully ours. We all drive
sensible, fuel efficient cars. For
Christ's sake, you all carpooled
here!

The others look down, ashamed at that comment.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
We have lost our dignity and our
respect.

TODD
So what are you proposing, Antonio?
That we pick up where our fathers
left off? We start running drugs
and guns again? Do we start shaking
down shop owners and setup gambling
dens and juke joints? Those days
are long gone.

Antonio walks to the stack of boxes and picks one up.

ANTONIO
No, Todd. I am proposing something
much more profitable.

EXT. CITY ALLEY - DAY

Jeff walks down an alley, carrying a bag from a pharmacy in
one hand and the tattered, salsa covered remains of the
mascot suit in the other.

Jeff walks by a chihuahua rummaging through some trash bags
in the alley. As Jeff passes, the dog catches the salsa sent
from the suit and follows Jeff.

The day is hot, and sweat starts to run into Jeff's eyes. He
rubs his eyes and walks on.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Todd and the others stand around Antonio, who is holding one of the boxes from the stack.

ANTONIO

It's too tough to get into the drug trade. Whatever people aren't cooking at home, the Cartel has a tight lid on.

ALEX

Well, that's good, you know. Drugs just aren't nice to people.

Antonio looks at Alex for a beat before continuing.

ANTONIO

And guns? No need to smuggle them in anymore. Everyone who wants one has one. No, my friends. The times have changed, and we must change with it. We will start dealing in...this!

With a flourish, Antonio opens the lid on the box. The rest of the group leans in, and gasps in recognition of what lies inside.

EXT. CITY ALLEY - DAY

The chihuahua continues to follow Jeff as he walks down the alley.

He crosses the street and is now on the same block as the warehouse. More sweat gets into his eyes, making them sting.

JEFF

Ow!

Jeff stops and puts the salsa covered mascot suit on the ground. He opens the bag and pulls out a small bottle of eye drops.

As he unwraps the bottle, the chihuahua starts licking the salsa on the suit. Jeff doesn't notice.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

The group looks at each other in shock.

RENARDO
That is ambitious plan, mon.

KUMIKO
U.S. Customs keeps a very close eye
to make sure none of this gets into
the country. Are you sure you want
to start dealing in this stuff?

ANTONIO
They do keep a close eye. Do you
know how much of this stuff was
confiscated last year?

Everyone in the group shakes their head.

AHMED
How much?

ANTONIO
One billion dollars worth. Billion,
with a B! That's just in one year.

MIKKEL
(whistling)
That is a lot of money.

JADE
I think you have our interest,
Antonio.

EXT. CITY ALLEY - DAY

Jeff puts drops in each of his eyes. He blinks a few times,
then bends over to pick up the suit, acting like his vision
is fuzzy from the drops.

As he lifts the suit, the chihuahua grabs the other end with
his mouth.

JEFF
What the...? Hey!

Jeff now notices the dog and squints at him. He pulls at the
suit. The chihuahua hangs on and they have a little tug of
war.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Come on, doggie. Let go. Please
don't ruin this suit anymore than
it already is.

Jeff gives the suit a good yank out of the dog's mouth. The chihuahua growls loudly and bares his teeth at Jeff.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Uh oh.

Jeff turns to run as the chihuahua pounces at him. He runs down the alley with the dog chasing him.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Antonio addresses the group.

ANTONIO
A billion dollars of this stuff was confiscated last year. Why? Because people are stupid! The people bringing this in lack organization and discipline.

Antonio grabs Javier by the shoulders.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
Think about it. We learned a lot from our fathers. We learned how to smuggle contraband into this country. We learned which cops and politicians can be bribed, and which ones had to be leaned on. We learned how to set up a distribution network, all from watching our fathers.

JAVIER
Our fathers failed and ended up in jail or dead.

Antonio lets go of Javier's shoulders and faces the whole group.

ANTONIO
Our fathers got greedy. That's what did them in at the end. If we can take 10%, just 10% of the product that got intercepted by the feds and get it to the street, that's one hundred million dollars, and that's just to start!

A distant barking comes from down the alley. No one inside the warehouse pays much attention to it.

The group huddles while Antonio patiently waits. The group breaks their huddle.

AHMED
We're in.

EXT. CITY ALLEY - DAY

Jeff runs down the alley with the chihuahua still chasing him. As Jeff approaches the open warehouse cargo door, the dog leaps onto Jeff in an attempt to get the salsa covered suit, propelling Jeff through the open doorway.

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Ronald is handing out a box to each person. Antonio's face shines with excitement.

ANTONIO
Take a sample, everyone. It's the dawn of new era! It's the rebirth of Il Gruppo Di Nove! Our new empire will be built on...

He reaches into the box he was holding and pulls out a purse.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
Counterfeit Gucci bags!

Jeff crashes into the pallet of boxes, spilling the fake Gucci bags onto the warehouse floor.

The crash knocks Antonio and Jeff to the ground, and they end up face to face with each other. Everyone else stands in stunned silence.

JEFF
Uh, hi.

Antonio and Jeff scramble to their feet. Gucci bags are scattered over the floor. The mascot suit lies nearby, with the chihuahua licking at the salsa stains.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I'm really sorry about that. I'll help you repack these uh... Gucci bags?

ANTONIO
He's seen my face. Get him!

JEFF
Uh, oh.

There is a classic Keystone Cops effort to get to Jeff. People slip on the handbags, chase Jeff around the cargo bay, etc. In attempt to get away, Jeff picks up some handbags and throws them at the people chasing him.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I said I was sorry. Geez!

Antonio positions himself between Jeff and the door. He slowly advances on Jeff.

ANTONIO
You picked a bad time to take a stroll down this alley.

JEFF
Well, it really wasn't a stroll. See, I put on a milkshake suit and got mugged by a bunch of kids. Then I got salsa in my eyes and someone took a shot at me and my suit exploded. Then on the way home I got attacked by a man eating chihuahua because I was still all salsa-y smelling, and..

ANTONIO
Shut up! I don't care about chihuahuas and I hate milkshakes!

JEFF
You hate milkshakes? What kind of monster are you?

ANTONIO
One that is going to make you disappear.

Antonio approaches Jeff. Jeff notices the chihuahua licking the suit next to him.

Still holding a fake Gucci in one hand, he quickly picks up the suit and flings it at Antonio, who catches it.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
What is this? Is this supposed to stop me or scare me?

JEFF
That won't scare you.

The chihuahua growls, bares his teeth and advances on Antonio.

JEFF (CONT'D)
But he might.

Antonio backs away from the dog.

ANTONIO
Nice puppy. Who's a good puppy?

The chihuahua jumps on Antonio.

EXT. CITY ALLEY - DAY

Jeff runs out the door and down the alley, purse in hand.

INT. WAREHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Antonio rises off the floor, seething with anger, his suit torn with bite marks.

The other mobsters gather around him.

KUMIKO
If he goes to the police, we are
going to have a problem.

TODD
The cops could be swarming all over
the place here soon.

AHMED
Yes. I do not think we will be able
to help you unless you can tie up
this loose end.

The others nod in agreement.

ANTONIO
Oh, I will clean up this mess,
don't you worry. I won't let anyone
stand in the way of Il Gruppo Di
Nove!

JADE
Call us when you do.

The others get into their cars and drive out of the warehouse, leaving Antonio and Ronald standing amidst the counterfeit bags.

ANTONIO
Get this cleaned up quickly.

RONALD
Yes, sir.

ANTONIO
And Ronald? Find out who that was.
We need to make him disappear.

RONALD
Yes sir.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

DETECTIVE WALKER (30s) walks into CAPTAIN ELAINE JACOBS (40s) office, carrying a folder and the fake Gucci bag Jeff carried out of the warehouse.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Captain, it looks like we may
finally have a lead on that
counterfeit handbag ring.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
Really? Word on the street is that
it's setting up to be the biggest
organized crime operation in years.

DETECTIVE WALKER
(handing her the folder)
We caught a break. Some guy
stumbled into an abandoned
warehouse full of these.

He hands her the handbag.

Captain Jacobs looks at it for a moment and lays it on her desk.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
That's some high quality
counterfeiting. How good is the
lead?

Detective Walker opens the folder on the captain's desk. The first page is a photo of Jeff.

DETECTIVE WALKER
This is the guy that came across
the counterfeit ring. According to
his statement, they were just about
to distribute the bags onto street.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
(reading the file)
Jeff Perry. Looks like a real
winner. Could he ID anyone?

DETECTIVE WALKER
He said he got a real close look at
one of them.

Detective Walker turns the page in the folder, revealing a photo of Antonio.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
(with a sharp intake of
breath)
Antonio Devenezia! How solid is the
ID?

DETECTIVE WALKER
Picked him right out of a lineup
book. Said he would never forget
that face, especially since Antonio
threatened to make him disappear.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
Did you find anything at the
warehouse?

DETECTIVE WALKER
Nothing we can use. Looks like
everything was cleared out in a
hurry.

Captain Jacobs turns in her chair to look out the window,
lost in thought for a moment.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
I've been after Devenezia for
years. He's trying to resurrect the
Mafia in this city. I've pinned a
bunch of crimes on him, but any
witnesses seem to disappear right
around trial time.

DETECTIVE WALKER
Depending on how bad you want him,
we could call the U.S. Marshals and
place him in the Witness Protection
Program.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
Do it. I don't want any of this
crap out on the streets of my
city...

She picks up the Gucci bag and waves it at Detective Walker.

CAPTAIN JACOBS (CONT'D)
...but I want Devenezia even more.

DETECTIVE WALKER
It'll be nice to get that scum off
the streets.

Detective Walker turns to leave.

CAPTAIN JACOBS
And Detective? The Marshals will be
letting me know where they stash
him in case they need back up. If
Devenezia finds out where Perry is
hiding and tries to go after him,
well, it would just give us more
ammunition to put that Godfather
wannabe in prison for a long time.
Perhaps even in a cell right next
to his dear old dad.

Detective Sinclair smirks and walks out of the office.

EXT. U.S. MARSHALS TRAINING ACADEMY - DAY

SHERI HANSEN (26) runs on a law enforcement obstacle course,
wearing U.S. Marshals workout gear. She climbs over walls,
runs up and down hills, and jumps over hurdles.

She stops at the last part of the obstacle course, a firing
range with a paper target 25 yards downrange. She steps up to
the line and pulls a handgun out of the holster strapped to
her waist.

Sheri fires 12 shots into the center ring of the target. She
sets the gun down and steps back from the line. She pulls a
stopwatch out from around her neck and clicks it.

SHERI
Damn it.

Someone hands her a towel from the side. She turns and sees
CAROLYN PETERS (50s), the Director of the Training Academy.
She's carrying a folder under her arm.

Carolyn looks at the time on the stopwatch.

CAROLYN
Personal best?

SHERI

But not course best. This was my last shot at it.

CAROLYN

You still graduated top of the class, Sheri.

SHERI

Barely.

CAROLYN

Your dad would be very, very proud of you.

SHERI

Thanks.

Sheri gathers her gear and they walk back toward the Academy building.

CAROLYN

If your dad was still around, I imagine he would have been running this place instead of me. When we worked together, he always loved it when rookies were assigned to our office. Felt it was his duty to make sure they learned the right and proper way to do things.

SHERI

Too bad he didn't always practice what he preached.

Carolyn grabs Sheri by the arm and turns her so they are face to face.

CAROLYN

Hey! Your father was smart man, a good man, and above all a careful man. He helped refine the program back when we were all chasing the big Mafia crime families.

SHERI

He's the only one who has ever lost a witness in the program. How can you say he was a careful man? He screwed up and got himself and the witness killed!

Carolyn drops her arm and sighs.

CAROLYN

We still don't know what happened, Sheri. We don't know if he made a mistake. It could have been just bad luck. Someone being in the wrong place at the wrong time and spotting the witness.

SHERI

Yeah, well, the rules are in place for a reason. If he followed them, he wouldn't have let me and my mom grow up alone.

CAROLYN

It's not all black and white out there, Sheri. That's probably the only lesson you didn't learn while in the Academy. As it is, I have your first assignment.

She hands Sheri the folder she was carrying. Sheri pulls it out and skims it.

SHERI

Are you kidding me?

CAROLYN

Nope.

SHERI

My first assignment is protecting a witness? I thought witness protection was handled at the state level now.

CAROLYN

The Federal program was designed to protect witnesses from Organized Crime hitmen and yes, the Mafia has become largely irrelevant. It's the drug gangs that go after narcs, and those are handled at the state level, but this has attracted special, high level attention.

Sheri continues to flip through the pages in the folder.

SHERI

We're going to be federally protecting someone who stumbled across a counterfeit Gucci bag ring?

CAROLYN

Our intel team is saying that someone is trying to resurrect an Organized Crime family, and counterfeit bags are a billion dollar industry, but the main reason it's coming to us is the huge embarrassment the President suffered.

Sheri looks quizzically at Carolyn.

SHERI

Which one?

CAROLYN

The one where his wife was photographed carrying that counterfeit Gucci.

SHERI

Ooooooh, right. The press wouldn't leave that alone for days.

CAROLYN

He really wants to make sure that stuff doesn't stay on the streets. He's pushing Congress for a bill to introduce the death penalty for Gucci traffickers, but I doubt it will pass. We'll probably just get another "Just Say No" campaign.

Sheri and Carolyn continue walking back to the Academy.

INT. CAROLYN'S OFFICE - DAY

The walls of Carolyn's office is decorated with awards, certificates, and pictures. She sits down at her desk while Sheri sits in a chair opposite the desk.

SHERI

Why are you giving me this assignment? Why not someone more experienced?

CAROLYN

A couple of reasons. There really aren't too many agents with Witness Protection left in the area. Those that ran the program have all retired.

Carolyn reaches behind her and takes a picture off the wall. It is a younger version of her with two other men in Marshal Academy sweat pants and sweat shirts. It looks like they just got done with a training exercise and are smiling at each other.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Secondly, I know you have studied your dad's case pretty thoroughly, even though it wasn't part of the curriculum.

Sheri's eyes widen in surprise.

SHERI

How did you know I was doing that?

CAROLYN

The case officer mentioned that you checked out every file, report, and write up that even touched your dad's case. Besides...

Carolyn picks up the picture and looks at it for a moment before handing it to Sheri.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

I spent a lot of time going over the case myself. Your dad and I were pretty close. The three of us made a pretty good team.

Sheri looks closer at the picture. Carolyn is in the middle, with the name Peters stitched on her shirt. The man on the left has the name Emery stitched on his shirt, and Sheri's father stands on the right, with Hansen stitched on the shirt.

SHERI

That's you and Uncle Benji with my dad!

CAROLYN

It is. Not too long before your dad met your mom. Not even a baby on the way and Ben was already demanding your dad name him godfather of his first born.

Sheri continues to stare at the picture.

SHERI

I never heard much from Uncle Benji after my dad died.

CAROLYN

In a way I'm not surprised. Your dad and Ben were as close as brothers. He took your dad's death pretty hard. I think in a way he felt responsible.

SHERI

Responsible? In what way?

CAROLYN

Both your dad and Ben were considered for witness protection duty. Your dad was the one that got the case, but it could have easily been Ben who drew the assignment. I imagine Ben deals with a lot of 'it should have been me' thoughts.

Sheri hands the picture back to Carolyn.

SHERI

(bitterly)

Yeah, well, if it was Uncle Benji instead of my dad, they both might still be alive.

Carolyn sighs and shakes her head.

CAROLYN

Well, you'll get your chance to talk to him about it.

SHERI

What do you mean?

CAROLYN

Ben is the District Chief in the crime jurisdiction. You will be reporting directly to him.

SHERI

It'll be good to see him again. I had better get going, then.

Sheri gets up to leave.

CAROLYN

Sheri...

Sheri pauses in the doorway.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
Protecting a witness is just as dangerous now as it ever was. You and the witness will be keeping a very, very low profile. This is not a glamorous assignment. Some witnesses can be very challenging to deal with.

SHERI
Yeah, I know. I've read the file on every witness protection case in the last fifty years.

CAROLYN
Ben was really shaken up over your dad's murder. He has vowed to never lose another witness or agent again. Listen to what he has to say, and learn from him.

Sheri nods her head and turns to leave the office.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
And Sheri? There are only a few people that will know the location of the witness. You, Ben, and the ranking police officer in the district he is being stashed. If you need backup, it'll come, but it won't come quickly. You'll most likely have to handle any situation yourself.

SHERI
I understand.

CAROLYN
And above all, don't trust anyone....anyone!

Sherri nods her head again and leaves the office.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - NIGHT

A black S.U.V. drives into a run down cul-de-sac. Old, poorly maintained houses line the cul-de-sac, many with overgrown weeds and broken down cars in the yard.

The S.U.V. pulls into the driveway of a small, bungalow style house with an attached garage. The garage door slowly opens, and the S.U.V drives in. The garage door closes behind it.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - NIGHT

Jeff enters the kitchen through the garage with BEN EMORY (50s).

The house is run down, and looks like nothing has been updated since the 1970s. Cabinet doors hang slightly askew, and the refrigerator hums loudly. A dish drying rack sits next to a discolored sink.

Jeff carries a large duffel bag that he sets it on the floor.

BEN
(with forced enthusiasm)
Welcome to your new home!

JEFF
I'm living here? I thought we were just stopping here for the night. You know, to throw the bad guys off the trail until we got to my mansion.

Ben looks at Jeff quizzically.

BEN
Mansion?

JEFF
I thought all witnesses were put into fancy mansions.

BEN
I see. Well, what actually happens is that we run a comprehensive personality and aptitude test on the witness, based on things like work and school history, types of friends they associate with, etcetera, and put them in an environment where they would most likely fit in.

JEFF
This house screams loser.

BEN
Yep.

JEFF
Oh.

Jeff and Ben walk through the rest of the house.

BEN

You see, Jeff, the idea is to have the witness blend in with their surroundings, to make them as unobtrusive as possible. You have to be like a chameleon. We have to put you in a place you would mostly likely have been in anyway.

A beat up couch and an old recliner sit on faded orange shag carpet. The only modern item is a new 52" flat screen T.V.

JEFF

Well, at least the TV is new.

BEN

We actually got a ridiculously good price on it.

JEFF

Hmmm.

The house has one bedroom and one full bath. The bedroom contains an old bed and an old dresser. The bathroom has a rust stained tub and sink.

Jeff and Ben walk back to the kitchen.

JEFF (CONT'D)

This isn't at all what I was expecting.

BEN

I'm sorry it's not the Ritz, but the main reason you're here is to keep you alive. Remember, you can't do anything that will make you stick out. That way you'll make it to trial.

JEFF

Do I have to stay inside all the time?

BEN

Not really. It's okay to go outside around the house. If you say hello to your neighbors, that's ok as well, because that would be normal. It's when people do things that aren't normal is when other people remember them. Eventually we'll get you a job as well, but until then don't leave the area.

JEFF
Can I order a pizza?

BEN
No. We don't want people coming to house. There's food in the fridge and the cupboards. It's stocked with plenty of fruits and vegetables. We don't want you keeling over from a heart attack before the trial.

JEFF
I don't see a microwave.

BEN
The one that was here blew up when we tested it. We have a new one on order.

JEFF
But I don't know how to cook.

BEN
I think there might be a cookbook in one of the drawers. Just follow the directions.

Ben opens the door to head out to the garage. He turns back to Jeff.

BEN (CONT'D)
I can't stress this enough, Jeff.
Keep a low profile. Don't do anything out of the ordinary. Don't invite anyone over. Blend in.
Understand?

JEFF
I understand.

BEN
Someone else will be stopping by a little bit later. Her name is Sheri.

JEFF
Is she hot?

BEN
Why does that matter?

JEFF
Never mind.

BEN
Ok, take care and think safety
first!

Ben walks out into the garage. Jeff watches the S.U.V. pull out of the driveway and drive down the road.

JEFF
Great. My wife will probably be something else broken down from the 70s with shag carpet.

Jeff opens the fridge and looks at the food inside. He grabs a package of beef and puts it on the counter. He pulls a frying pan out of the cupboard and places it on the stove.

Jeff looks between the meat and the pan for a few moments. He sighs and opens the fridge back up, taking out a package of carrots. He grabs his duffel bag and takes that and the carrots into the living room.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Antonio and Ronald walk down the steps of the Federal courthouse.

ANTONIO
Can you believe it? \$2,000,000
bail!

RONALD
I'm surprised the judge set any kind of bail, boss, considering the charges against you.

ANTONIO
Yeah, well, the judge is an old family friend.

RONALD
At least you are out.

ANTONIO
In the old days he would have found a way to dismiss the charges. This is what I'm talking about, Ronnie. We have no influence any more. No power, no control.

RONALD
Now that you are out, you can continue working on your plan.

They walk to their car, which is parked on the street. Ronald opens the passenger door for Antonio, then gets into the driver's seat. The car drives off.

ANTONIO
Any word on where that stupid,
loser witness is?

RONALD
Not yet, boss.

ANTONIO
Damn it, Ronnie! If he testifies,
we're all screwed. Start shaking
people down. Break a few bones if
you need to, but find him!

RONALD
Yes, sir.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - MORNING

Jeff sleeps in the recliner wearing nothing but underwear. A tattered robe lays on the back of the recliner. On Jeff's stomach is an empty bag of carrots and a video game controller.

The T.V. shows the video game Witness Protection. The game is paused in action, with the witness character and his digitally enhanced super model looking wife on the screen.

A loud knock at the door awakens Jeff. He sits up and takes the game controller and carrot bag of his chest.

Jeff remembers where he is and why he is there. Another loud knock causes Jeff to panic and hide behind the recliner.

JEFF
They found me!

More knocking at door.

SHERI (O.S.)
Mr. Perry? Are you awake?

A look of confusion crosses his face. He looks at the TV screen and the image of the hot wife.

JEFF
She's here!

Jeff puts the robe on and cinches the belt. He walks toward the door and smooths his hair down.

Sheri knocks again.

SHERI (O.S.)
Mr. Perry? Are you in there?

JEFF
(giggling)
She calls me Mr. Perry.

Jeff realizes his breath his bad.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Uh, just a minute!

Jeff opens the fridge and looks at the packages of vegetables and herbs. He takes out a box of mint leaves, opens it and eats the leaves. He spits them out into the sink

JEFF (CONT'D)
Ugh. Yuck!

SHERI (O.S.)
Mr. Perry?

JEFF
I'm coming...

Jeff flings open the door and assumes a grandiose pose.

JEFF (CONT'D)
...my darling!

Sheri stands on the other side of door, carrying a folder. She is dressed plainly, with no makeup and her hair up in a severe bun. Jeff's face falls in disappointment.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Oh.

SHERI
Oh?

JEFF
Ohhhhhh boy it's good to see you!
Come on in!

Sheri steps into the house. She sees Jeff's continued look of confusion.

SHERI
Is there something the matter, Mr.
Perry?

JEFF
You can call me Jeff.

SHERI
I will not.

JEFF
Ok. No, nothing's the matter. It's just that you're not exactly what I expected.

Sheri walks to the kitchen counter and puts the folder on it. She opens and reads from the top sheet inside.

SHERI
You, however, are exactly what I expected. Jeffrey Dale Perry, Age 28. One living parent, father deceased. Graduated high school with a C average. Started college 5 different times but quit each time during the enrollment process.

JEFF
It's a lot of work filling out those applications.

SHERI
In the last two years you have worked at The Electronics Shack, The Banana Shack, The Milkshake Shack, The Sunglasses Shack, The Taco Shack, The Shoe Shack, The Burger Shack, The Pizza Shack and, at a place I can't even begin to comprehend what they do, The Shack Shack.

JEFF
All those shacks have to come from somewhere.

SHERI
(flipping the page)
Hobbies include toy drone flying, playing video games and....

Sheri looks for other hobbies but can't find any in her packet. Jeff leans on the counter and assumes a sexy pose.

JEFF
And long walks on the beach watching the sunset.

Sheri doesn't notice Jeff's pose and flips through the packet some more.

SHERI
I don't think so. It doesn't say that in here.

JEFF
Wow. They really do their research to match us up, don't they?

Sheri closes the folder

SHERI
I assure you, Mr. Perry. There is no one better to take care of you than me. I have been trained in the most advanced techniques.

Jeff leans a little closer to Sheri in a seductive manner.

JEFF
That's what I like to hear.

SHERI
It can be pretty lonely in the Witness Protection Program. I am here to make sure all of your needs are met.

Jeff leans a little closer while Sheri is still clueless as to why Jeff thinks she is there.

JEFF
(using air quotes)
So, are we using "protection" for everything we do?

A confused look crosses Sheri's face.

SHERI
I believe in maximum protection at all times. I'll make sure there are no holes in your protection. I want you to stay as safe as possible.

Jeff leans even closer to Sheri

JEFF
Ah, well. I suppose that is smart. Not as fun, but smart. So, are there any other details in that folder about me?

SHERI
Like what?

Jeff pulls the cinch on his robe. The front of his robe opens as he leans closer to Sheri.

JEFF
(whispering)
You know. Personal measurements.

Jeff goes in for a kiss. Sheri grabs his arm and flips him to the floor. She jumps on his back, pinning his arm behind his back.

SHERI
What the hell do you think you're
doing?!?!

JEFF
Hey! I'm not really comfortable
with all this rough stuff. It's not
one of my turn-ons.

SHERI
Your folder didn't indicate you
were any more of a pervert than a
normal man. Why would I care about
your turn-ons?

JEFF
Well, if you were going to be my
Program wife, shouldn't you know
about them?

SHERI
Your Program wife?

Sheri gets off of Jeff's back. Jeff stands and rubs his arm.

SHERI (CONT'D)
Mr. Perry. You seem to be mistaken
as to why I am here. I am from the
U.S. Marshal's service, and I will
be your handler for as long as you
are in the Program.

JEFF
So I'm not getting a hot girl to be
my pretend wife?

SHERI
Why would you even think that?

Jeff quickly looks over his shoulder at the T.V. screen and back to Sheri.

JEFF
Oh, no reason, I guess. It was just something I heard.

SHERI
Mr. Perry. I'm the only thing that's keeping you alive until Devenezia's trial. I expect you to follow the rules given to you exactly as they have been laid out to you.

JEFF
(mumbling to himself)
At least something's getting laid around here.

SHERI
I'm sorry?

JEFF
Nothing.

Sheri hands him a box.

SHERI
Here is a cell phone to use while in hiding.

Jeff grabs the box and rips it open.

JEFF
Thank goodness! I'm way behind on my status updates, Instagram pics (and whatever popular social media activities are at the time of filming).

Jeff picks up an old style flip phone and turns it over in his hands.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Where's the screen?

Sheri plucks the phone out of his hand and flips it open. A very small screen lights up. She hands it back to Jeff.

SHERI
There are no games or social media apps on here.
(MORE)

SHERI (CONT'D)
You can only make phone calls on here, and the only number programmed in there is mine. You are to use this only for emergencies. I'll be stopping by three times a week to see how you're doing. More frequent may make the neighbors suspicious. Remember, DON'T do anything out of the ordinary. DON'T invite anyone over. DON'T leave the area, and DON'T do anything stupid.

JEFF
You're a real don't kind of gal. I bet you were a hoot at prom.

SHERI
What I DO do, Mr. Perry, is keep my witnesses alive.

Sheri leaves the house.

JEFF
She said doo-doo.

Jeff carries the phone back into the living room and sits in the chair.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Hmmm. I know she said not to invite anyone over, but Michael isn't really an anyone, he's my best friend.

He opens the phone.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Do I actually have to type his phone number in? I don't know his number..

Jeff holds the phone up to his mouth.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Hey, Siri. Call Michael.

He waits. Nothing happens.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Hey, Google. Call Michael

Same result.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Heeyyyyy, you. Call Michael.

Nothing.

Jeff sighs and puts the phone down. He goes to the bag containing his drone and opens it.

JEFF (CONT'D)
If I have to stay in the neighborhood, at least I can see what's around here.

Jeff assembles his drone and flies it out an open window. He sits in the chair with the controller in hand.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Let's see what kind of losers live around here.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - DRONE POV - DAY

The drone glides past houses with faded paint, sagging porches, and empty lots overgrown with weeds and rusty appliances.

BACKYARD - HOUSE 1

MR. WONG (60s) shirtless and sinewy, performs an intense martial arts kata with a bamboo staff while smooth jazz plays from an old boombox sitting on a chair.

JEFF (V.O) (CONT'D)
Ok, cool. Kung Fu Kenny still auditioning for Cobra Kai season 9.
Respect.

FRONT YARD - HOUSE 2

A ramshackle house sits under permanent construction. Tarps flap. A REDNECK COUPLE, EARL, in cutoffs and boots, and TAMMI (30s), wielding a wrench like a war hammer, are yelling at each other while trying to install a toilet... on the front porch.

An old excavator rusting in the overgrown lot, its claw arm raised like it's ready for battle.

JEFF (V.O) (CONT'D)
Wow, House Flipper meets Mad Max. I bet their wedding registry was at Ace Hardware.

GARAGE - HOUSE 3

The door is open. DENNIS (50s) unshaven and in full camouflage, is labeling cans of beans with a Sharpie. A handmade sign reads "Do Not Enter Unless Invited by the Constitution!"

JEFF (V.O) (CONT'D)
Great, a prepper. I'm probably
sitting on a bunker full of beef
jerky and rage.

BACKYARD - HOUSE 4

A backyard converted into a makeshift stage: bedsheets hang as curtains on a clothesline, mannequins arranged as audience members. A cracked disco ball dangles from a tree branch. An old beagle sits on the patio.

STELLA (60s), draped in a crushed velvet cape and holding a plastic skull, emerges from behind the curtain like it's Broadway opening night.

STELLA
Tonight's performance of Hamlet:
The Solo Musical... will proceed
with or without electricity!

JEFF (V.O)
Ah, local theater. Where the roles
are unpaid, and the trauma's free.

GARAGE - HOUSE 5

A small garage with a homemade satellite dish made from a wok and a garden rake.

RUBY (11), thick glasses, lab coat, and a laser pointer clipped to her headband, adjusts a mini solar panel rig. A potato battery experiment sizzles beside her. A small sign nearby reads:

"WELCOME TO RUBY LABS: TRESPASSERS WILL BE TESTED ON"

The drone creeps closer.

JEFF (V.O) (CONT'D)
What the Bill Nye is this kid
doing?

Ruby senses the drone. She doesn't look up - she just smirks, reaches down, and lifts a laser pointer duct-taped to a magnifying glass.

She points it directly at the drone's camera.

DRONE POV

The screen whites out in a strobe of static and blinding light. The drone starts spinning and losing control.

INT. SAFEHOUSE

Jeff frantically jiggles the controls, panicking.

JEFF
No! My baby! Evasive maneuvers! Go
to manual! Engage shields!

The drone crashes audibly somewhere outside.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(standing up, solemnly)
Pilot down. Time for a rescue
mission.

Jeff dramatically cinches his robe and heads for the door.

EXT. RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jeff, still in his robe and slippers, sneaks into Ruby's yard, looking for the downed drone.

Ruby, holding the drone, emerges from the garage, startling him.

JEFF
Hey! I come in peace. Please don't
vaporize me!

Ruby inspects Jeff skeptically.

RUBY
Your drone is primitive and
vulnerable to basic EM attacks. Are
you aware of the FAA guidelines
you've violated?

JEFF
I'm more of a 'fly first, apologize
later' kind of guy.

Ruby hands his drone back to him and studies him closely, adjusting her thick glasses.

RUBY

You're new here. Based on you attire, I'd hypothesize you're either unemployed and actively avoiding gainful employment.

Jeff clutches the drone defensively.

JEFF

I prefer 'Professional drone enthusiast.'

RUBY

Professional, huh? Your drone got taken out by an eight dollar laser pointer.

JEFF

Yeah, well. I was testing it's anti-laser capabilities. It failed. Obviously.

RUBY

Clearly. Maybe next time keep it out of my airspace?

Jeff gives an awkward thumbs-up

JEFF

Roger that.

He takes his drone and heads back to his house.

INT. SAFEHOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeff slumps onto the couch and drops the drone onto the coffee table with a THUNK.

JEFF

Great. One flight, one laser strike, and now I'm grounded... again. I'm going to die of boredom before the mob even finds me.

He looks around the quiet, dimly lit living room. Orange shag carpet. Paneled walls. A dusty entertainment console under the TV catches his eye.

He crouches down and opens the creaky console door. Inside is a VCR and a stack of taped over, sun-faded VHS cassettes labeled in black marker: *Knight Rider - Pilot*, *Miami Vice - Boat Explosions*, *Battle of the Network Starts*, *Night Court*, and other shows from the early 80s.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Great, maybe I can throw them at
the mob when they show up.

Underneath are old looking board games such as *Sorry*, *Connect Four*, and *Operation*.

JEFF (CONT'D)
This is it. This is how I go out.
Death by Reagan-era media.

Jeff goes to the window and looks out.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Everyone in this neighborhood can't
be as crazy as that kid, can they?
Someone will want to hang out.

With a renewed look of hope and confidence, Jeff heads out the front door.

BACKYARD - HOUSE 1

Jeff walks over to Mr. Wong's house, passing a mailbox with the name Wong on it, and taps on the wooden gate that leads to the backyard, where he saw Mr. Wong practicing is kata.

JEFF
Hello? Uh, neighbor? Won't you be
my neighbor? Ha ha.

No reply. Jeff taps a little louder.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Hello?

Jeff lifts the latch, slowly opens the gate and peeks his head around the gate. He can see Mr. Wong still working on his bamboo kata with his back to Jeff.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Hello?

Jeff cautiously walks forward toward Mr. Wong, not realizing he is trampling some exotic looking flowers in a garden bed. He gets near Mr. Wong when suddenly Mr. Wong wheels around, thrusting his bamboo staff toward Jeff's neck, stopping a half and inch from Jeff's throat.

JEFF (CONT'D)
WHOA! Hey! What are you doing? I
just came over to say hi.

MR. WONG
You just trampled my Hardy Wang
Lilies!

JEFF
I'm sorry? I stepped on your
Hardy....what?

Mr. Wong points down with his Jeff toward his feet. Jeff looks down and sees he crushed a bunch of lilies.

MR. WONG
My Hardy Wang lilies. They are
extremely rare!

JEFF
Did you say....Hardy Wang?

MR. WONG
Yes! Hardy Wang. It's a flower!

JEFF
That sounds more like a urology
problem, not landscaping.

MR. WONG
It is a botanical species from the
Sichuan Province! Developed by the
famous botanist Lin Wang.

JEFF
Look, man. I didn't mean to step on
your...hardy wang. And that's a
sentence I never thought I would
say.

MR. WONG
That bed took me years to
cultivate. You have no respect for
Wang.

JEFF
You're not wrong. I've never
respected a Wang in my life.

MR. WONG
That's it!

He pokes Jeff in the chest with his staff, pushing him back from the lilies.

JEFF
Ok, ok! Message received. I'll stay
away from the Wang flower bed.

MR. WONG
It's the Wong bed. I'm Wong. The
flower is Wang!

JEFF
Wait. So I stepped on Wong's Wang
in Wong's bed?

Mr. Wong bends to try and straighten a crushed lily.

MR. WONG
Look at my Wang! It was standing
tall this morning. Now it is
flopped over.

JEFF
Gravity is cruel mistress.

MR. WONG
My Wang was in full bloom. Now it
is bent and leaking sap!

JEFF
Well, I clearly stepped on the
wrong Wang in the wrong Wong bed.
I'm just going to go now.

Jeff leaves Mr. Wong's backyard.

He walks up to Earl and Tammy's house. As he steps on the front porch he notices the recently installed toilet on the porch. On the toilet hangs a sign that says "No trespassing. Strangers not welcome!"

JEFF (CONT'D)
I hope that isn't the guest
bathroom.

He looks around