

WITNESS PROTECTION

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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 case. Inside the glass case is a 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 guitaring. 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  
OOOOOWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!

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 sweats 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  
Ohhhhhhhh 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

You're 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