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Couples Hang

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COUPLES HANG

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Sun blazes over a perfect early-summer day in suburban Chicago.

CHIP GLEESON (white, early 40s, dad-bod athlete energy) lines up his shot. RANDY LANE (Black, early 40s, smoother) watches.

WHAP.

Chip's shot flies long and dead-straight.

RANDY
Lessons paying off.

CHIP
And the performance-enhancing
drugs.
(beat)
Creatine counts, right?

They hop into the golf cart.

MONTAGE - BRO-GOLF GLORY

- Randy hits a perfect drive.
- Chip one-ups him with a longer one.
- Randy drains a forty-footer.
- Chip drains a fifty-footer and celebrates like a lunatic.
- High fives. Light beers in plastic cups.

BACK IN THE CART

CHIP
Can't ask for anything better out
here in the 'burbs.

RANDY
Cheers to that.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

A chaotic suburban playground. Kids everywhere.
LAUREN GLEESON (late 30s, pretty) and KELLY LANE (late 30s, pretty) sit on a bench watching their daughters.

LAUREN

So we show up to the party, right?
Stacy gives me a hug. Fine. Normal.
But then? Three more hugs. And she
gave Chip two. At a two-hour
toddler party. Who's hugging at
halftime?

KELLY

She's aggressive. Last time we went
over, Randy and I literally
competed to see who'd get the
fewest hugs. I won. Three. Pure
defense.

LAUREN

And she just shoves those double-D
tattas at you like she's serving
wings at Twin Peaks.

They crack up. Lauren checks her watch.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Guys should be wrapping up. They're
grabbing hot dogs and spritzers.

Kelly leans forward and YELLS across the playground:

KELLY

Girls!

Four messy-haired girls (two 5, two 7) scuttle over like
feral kittens.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Chip and Randy stroll the aisles with post-golf swagger. Chip
grabs hot dog buns, steps back.

CHIP

Go long.

Randy shakes his head — then sprints down the aisle anyway.
Chip spirals it. Randy catches it, nearly wiping out a
bewildered family.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Was that Randy Lane... or Rome
Odunze?

RANDY

If Odunze had plantar fasciitis and
a mortgage, sure.

They bicker at checkout about who pays. Chip wins.

EXT. GLEESON HOUSE - LATER

Chip and Randy burst onto the patio with grocery bags. The girls splash in the pool. Kelly Lauren lounge with spritzers.

CHIP
(shaking a bag)
I've got more where that came from.

RANDY
Only question is - how am I getting home?
(points across street)
Oh right. Thirty-seven steps.

Laughter.

EXT. PATIO - SUNSET

A cartoon movie plays on a huge projector. The girls sit on the lawn with popsicles. Adults lounge, tipsy and sun-dumb.

KELLY
Can this never end?

LAUREN
(to her spritzer)
I'll commit to you forever.

They cheers lazily.

A phone BUZZES. Kelly checks it.

KELLY
Hey Randy, it's your boss? Weird time.

Randy stands, answers.

RANDY
Hey Steve, I was just-
(listens)

His face shifts.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Miami? Two weeks?
(beat, huge grin)
Are you serious?
(MORE)

RANDY (CONT'D)
(listens more)
No — thank YOU.

He ends the call, electric.

KELLY
You have to go for two weeks?

RANDY
No.
(beat)
In two weeks... we're moving there.

Kelly gasps — then beams.

Chip and Lauren exchange a stunned look.

RANDY (CONT'D)
That promotion?
(beat)
Got it.

Chip high-fives him — but the gut punch lands. The perfect couples hang... just ended.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE — MUCH LATER

Night winds down. The Lanes and their daughters stand at the door.

LAUREN
One hug.
(beat)
Normal amount. Nothing Stacy-level.

Warm hugs all around. The Lanes head into the quiet night.

Chip — tipsy — shuts the door. Looks out over the messy kitchen.

CHIP
(sighs)
Alright, ya big idiot... cleanup time.

He tosses a can at the recycling bin. Misses badly.

EXT. PATIO — NIGHT

The backyard is still. Projector screen sways. A half-eaten popsicle melts into the grass. Chip collects floats and cups, half-heartedly.

A distant COYOTE HOWL.

Chip looks around. Shrugs. Too drunk to care. He collapses onto a lounge, pulls out his phone.

CHIP'S PHONE — GALLERY:

- The four adults sunburnt on a cruise deck.
- All eight at the beach in matching goofy hats.
- Randy feeding Lauren an ice cream while Chip fake-gags.
- Both families in Halloween costumes.

Chip exhales.

CHIP

(soft)

How the hell do you replace that?

The glow of the screen lights his face.

EXT. LANE HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A moving truck rumbles. Movers haul boxes.

Across the street, Chip steps out in robe and slippers, coffee in hand, hungover as Hell.

RANDY

Jesus, man. Glad I didn't ask you for help.

CHIP

I heard the bureau pays for the whole move. Didn't want to interfere with taxpayer dollars.

He forces a smile.

CHIP (CONT'D)

So this is really it?

RANDY

It is, my friend.

Chip tries to play it cool — fails.

CHIP

You know they don't have Portillo's in Miami. And humidity affects your backswing. Scientifically.

RANDY
Nice try. This train left the
station yesterday.

TIME CUT - LATER

The truck is almost full. Chip approaches Randy. They hug —
long and real.

CHIP
Love you, man.

RANDY
Back at ya.

Chip wipes his eyes.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Are you... crying?

CHIP
What? No. My eyes are just...
leaking. Emotion.
(beat)
You're the best damn neighbor a
suburban dad could hope for.

Randy softens.

RANDY
You can visit anytime. And hey —
you'll find a new Randy.

Chip shakes his head.

CHIP
I don't think so.

EXT. STREET - LATER

The moving truck pulls away. The Lanes follow in their SUV.

Randy HONKS twice — their signature signal.

Up in his second-story window, Chip stands alone.
He lifts a tiny, heartbroken wave.

CHIP
(quiet)
See ya.

The SUV turns the corner and disappears. Chip keeps staring long after it's gone.

ONE WEEK LATER

EXT. GOLF COURSE - EARLY MORNING

Chip hits balls alone at the range, the real course entrance in sight.

THWACK. THWACK. THWACK.

A group of dads laughs on their way to the first tee. Three guys. A perfect opening.

Chip gathers courage. Starts walking..

A fourth jogs up, fist-bumps the group. They take off.

Chip deflates, trudges back, half-heartedly whacks another ball.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - EARLY MORNING

Lauren sits on a bench, coffee in hand. Lucy and Ruby play nearby.

A WAIL.

RUBY
(crying)
She stole my airplane!

Lucy sprints past with the toy overhead like a trophy.

LAUREN
Lucy! Get back here and apologize!

LUCY
Or what?

Lauren freezes. That's a line.

LAUREN
Oh, bold choice. We're done. Let's go.

She drags them off.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Chip wanders the aisles, aimlessly filling his cart. A guy his age in a Bears jersey passes.

CHIP
Go Bears!

The guy gives a bare-minimum nod.

CHIP (CONT'D)
Caleb's lookin' sharp this year,
right?

The guy taps his earbuds, mouthing: *"I'm on a call."*

Chip nods.

EXT. GLEESON HOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Chip bursts onto the patio with hot dogs and chips as his prize.

Lucy and Ruby fight in the pool. Lauren sprawls on a lounge, exhausted.

CHIP
Supporting-character energy out
here. Contagious.

LAUREN
Girls have been monsters. I require
spritzer.

Chip fetches one, sits beside her.

(Beat)

CHIP
...You say something?

LAUREN
What? No.

CHIP
Got a funny work story though. You
know Cal - new surveillance guy?

LAUREN
He peed himself on a stakeout.

CHIP
Right. Told you that.
(beat)
Randy would've lost it.

Silence.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Chip walks Muffin, his round corgi. CARL JENKINS (50s)
unloads groceries.

CARL
Morning, neighbor! Still debating
that Subaru.

CHIP
It's an important decision, Carl.
Wouldn't rush a commitment like
that.

Carl nods and considers the sage advice.

They continue. Muffin lunges at MRS. ELEANOR KLAP (70s)
walking her cat in a harness. The cat HISSES.

CHIP (CONT'D)
Looking sharp as always, Eleanor.

She grunts.

Chip rounds a corner. HENRY CAVENDER (80s) rips crabgrass
from his lawn with war-veteran intensity.

CHIP (CONT'D)
Looking good, Henry. When you
finish, my place is next!

Henry forces a smile.

CHIP (CONT'D)
(under breath)
Tough crowd.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE - MUCH LATER

Chip enters, drained, lonely. Muffin waddles off. Chip
collapses onto the couch.

INT. THE CRIME CAVE - MORNING

The war bunker. Whiteboards, sticky notes, red string, empty cans. Chip sleeps on a lumpy couch, sweatshirt half-off.

Lauren enters, sighs, nudges him.

LAUREN

Chip. We need to talk.

Chip groggily sits up.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

You need to snap out of this. You have real work to do.

(gestures)

People in prison who didn't commit the crimes.

She grabs a framed photo of CHIP with exonerees at a reunion barbecue.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

(pointing at photo)

You're Chip Gleeson. The PI who got Robert Reed out when the whole system gave up.

Chip stares, unmoved.

A long beat.

CHIP

But we had it all, Lauren. Great house. Cute kids. Jobs we liked. And the perfect couples hang - every weekend. Now it's gone.

Lauren softens, sits beside him.

LAUREN

I miss them too, you know. Kelly was the only mom I didn't feel judged by.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

We can find that again. Remember when we first moved here? You tried so hard to make friends.

Chip huffs.

CHIP

I really did. Jujitsu classes... that
guy's book club... pickleball
leagues...

(shudders)

And that private detectives group.
I was the only one without a
mustache.

Lauren cracks up.

LAUREN

My personal favorite – the
Craigslist ad. "Guy seeking guy to
hang with."
How did you think that was gonna
land?

CHIP

Seemed reasonable at the time.

A quiet beat.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Then the Lanes moved in. And it was
three years of neighborhood bliss.

LAUREN

(smiles)

It really was.

(beat; darker)

Now I dread the weekends.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Chip drives. Lauren rides shotgun. Their girls fight in the
backseat. They pass a house PACKED with cars.

CHIP

The Atkinsons must be having a
party.

He slows. Through a gap – a giant pool party: kids
cannonballing, adults laughing, floaties everywhere.

Chip and Lauren look at each other.

LIGHTBULB.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE - THE CRIME CAVE - DAY

Chip and Lauren stand at separate whiteboards, buzzing. The boards display a full neighborhood map — blocks, cul-de-sacs, sticky notes, family names. Chip scrolls through his laptop, intense.

CHIP

Okay — over on Elm, we've got the
Lundersons. Ugh. Terrible name.
He's 41, she's 31.

(beat)

I like him already.

Lauren shoots him a sharp look.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Two kids — boy and girl, four and
eight.

Lauren writes the names on the corresponding house.

LAUREN

What about the Todds? Over on
Walnut. We walk past them on the
way to the park.

Chip winces like he bit into something sour.

CHIP

Yeah... Steve Todd. IT or something.
I'm a pass on him. Dead fish
handshake. I just... can't.

LAUREN

That's your one peremptory
challenge, Chip.

CHIP

I object, counselor.

They grin — they're *back in this*.

EXT. GLEESON BACKYARD - LATER THAT EVENING

A perfect summer night. The pergola lights glow.
The Cubs game plays on the outdoor TV — muted.
Chip and Lauren huddle together like they're planning a
heist.

LAUREN

Okay. I sent out the invites on Facebook. We have twelve couples coming. Twelve contestants... for our new *Couples Hang*.

They clink beers.

Chip pulls out a clipboard with a MULTI-COLUMN SPREADSHEET.

CHIP

Okay — here's the list.

CHIP (CONT'D)

We rank them in six categories.

LAUREN

Six?

CHIP

I winnowed it down from fourteen.

A beat.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Category one: Kids.
Do our kids and their kids get along? Do their kids bite?

LAUREN

Reasonable.

CHIP

Two: Alcohol usage. We want casual drinkers. No more than two mid-day. Marijuana okay, but *edible form only*. No vapes.

LAUREN

Vapes are gross.

CHIP

Three: Conversation. Self-explanatory.
Four: Fitness.

LAUREN

Fitness? Seriously?

CHIP

They don't have to be CrossFit. Just... not "sloppy jalopies."

Lauren rolls her eyes.

LAUREN

Fine. Five and six?

CHIP

Five: Energy.

Juice.

Can't have friends fading out at five-thirty.

(beat)

And six: Sports. Gotta play at least one. And you need to talk three out of four — NFL, MLB, NBA. Hockey's a bonus.

CHIP (CONT'D)

And I forgot seven

LAUREN

No Chip. No.

CHIP

Lawn watering habits. You know how passionate I am on this. Water once, in the early morning, before people walk their dogs. No afternoon watering, it just evaporates.

LAUREN

I can work with that.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

I'll keep an eye on kids and drinking.

CHIP

I got the rest.

They sit back, sip their beers.

LAUREN

You think this'll work?

CHIP

Twelve couples. We only need one. That's... eight percent.

LAUREN

It better work. Winter is coming.

They exchange frightened, dramatic looks.

INT. GLEESON LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is spotless – unnaturally so.

Chip adjusts a string of fairy lights like he's prepping a crime scene.

He's wearing his brightest Hawaiian shirt – loud, floral, confident.

Lauren enters from the hallway – spray tan glowing, hair done to *perfection*.

She stops, takes in Chip.

LAUREN

Wow. You look like... a tourist who won a small-claims lawsuit.

CHIP

Thank you. Exactly the energy I'm going for.

Lucy and Ruby come skittering down the stairs, wearing their "nice" outfits – which means clean-ish.

They stand at attention like tiny soldiers.

LUCY

We promise to be on our best behavior.

Doorbell rings loudly.

LAUREN

Here we go. What could go wrong.

The whole family rushes toward the front door like a well-rehearsed fire drill. Chip flings it open, wearing his biggest, most desperate smile.

A COUPLE in their mid-30s stands there – GARY and MELISSA – each holding a kid (4 and 8). One of the kids is... on a LEASH. A real child leash. With a monkey backpack.

GARY

Hey-oh! I'd shake your hand but—
(gestures to the giant box
of liquor bottles he's
hugging)
—didn't wanna drop the essentials.
Did a little pre-gaming on drive
over...

They squeeze through the doorway like a single, chaotic unit.
As they spill into the foyer..

An ELDERLY MAN in his 80s shuffles in behind them, confused,
moving at glacier speed.

MELISSA

I hope you don't mind. He wanders
off if we leave him home alone.

Chip and Lauren share a look — the "Oh no.. we've made a
terrible mistake" kind.

Chip recovers quickly, forcing enthusiasm.

CHIP

Great to have you! Pool's in the
back!

He gestures grandly.

EXT. GLEESON BACKYARD - DAY

SUPER: TWO HOURS LATER

UNIMAGINABLE CHAOS.

SIRENS WAIL. Smoke clouds the yard. A 40-FOOT TREE IS ON
FIRE. At the top, a TERRIFIED 7-YEAR-OLD clings to a branch,
screaming.

Firefighters scramble with a ladder truck, racing to reach
him. Another crew hoses down the flames.

Across the yard—

The OLD MAN from earlier lies face-up on the trampoline,
shirtless. Two paramedics work frantically over him.

MEDIC

(shouting)
Defibrillator!

A LITTLE GIRL stands nearby, trembling.

LITTLE GIRL

Is Grandpa gonna die?

MEDIC

Not on my watch, little girl!

At the POOL—

Water sloshes with liquor bottles, cigarette butts, and floating pool toys. Kids continue swimming like it's a war zone.

A LITTLE BOY points, horrified.

LITTLE BOY
There's a TURD! There's a TURD!

DRUNK DAD
(IN POOL)
That's not a turd.
(beat)
That's a *snake*.

Kids SCREAM and launch themselves out of the pool.

A fully NAKED MAN, swimsuit on his head like a crown, sprints into frame and cannonballs into the water.

NAKED MAN
(screaming)
I'll get him!

A TV NEWS VAN pulls into the driveway. A LOCAL ANCHOR strides in, mic in hand, prepping for a LIVE SHOT.

At the GRILL—

CHIP stands with tongs in one hand, bleeding from a head wound, staring at the chaos.

He turns slowly toward LAUREN — Forty feet away, she kneels beside an injured mom, wrapping her ankle like a battlefield medic. Her hair is fried, eyebrows singed, spray tan streaked.

She looks up at Chip with ferocious, exhausted intensity.

Chip mouths, silently, desperately:

CHIP
WHAT. THE. FUCK?

Lauren nods once, as if to say: *I know. I know.*

Smoke billows. Children scream. Sirens blare.

INT. GLEESON HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Chip and Lauren hobble through the front door like two survivors of a small war.

Chip sports a fresh bandage on his head. Lauren looks no better than earlier.

LAUREN'S MOM, RAVEN (60s, dry), sits calmly on the couch reading a hardcover thriller.

Without looking up—

RAVEN

Kids are asleep. Little angels.

(beat)

Police left an hour ago. So did the news crew. Nice anchor lady said it'll lead the ten o'clock.

Chip slumps onto a chair, defeated.

CHIP

I know making couple friends is hard... But if it's *this* hard... maybe we're just meant to be alone.

Lauren sinks down beside him. They look like two exhausted contestants eliminated in the first round of "Survivor: Suburbs Edition."

Raven turns a page, unbothered.

EXT. THE LANES' OLD HOUSE - MORNING

A calm, bright suburban morning.

Across the street, the Gleeson home looks like a crime scene Disneyland — yellow tape dangles, the yard is wrecked, a flamingo lies dead on its side.

Chip is outside cutting away the police tape, determined to pretend things are normal.

A LUXURY SUV glides up the street and turns into the Lanes' old driveway.

Chip freezes. He ducks behind his car in full stakeout posture, peeking over the hood.

The SUV doors open with elegant, cinematic precision:

— A ridiculously fit, handsome man in his early 40s steps out. Tan. Polished. Calves like carved marble.

— From the passenger side, a glamorous woman in her 30s emerges. Hair perfect. Sunglasses expensive.

— The back doors pop open and two perfectly groomed little girls, ages 5 and 7, step out with synchronized confidence.

They look like they're auditioning for a luxury car commercial.

Chip's jaw drops.

CHIP
(to himself)
Holy. Shit.

He sprints into his house like he just spotted a fugitive.

INT. GLEESON HOME - CONTINUOUS

Chip bursts inside, breathless, wild-eyed.

CHIP
Lauren!
(beat, panting)
The perfect couple... just landed.

EXT. LANE HOUSE - MORNING, LATER

Chip and Lauren BURST out their front door — hair brushed, shirts straightened, posture upgraded.

They speed-walk across the street like two people pretending they "just happened to be outside."

At the driveway:

ALECTO DELEON unloads boxes.

His wife JENNA adjusts her sunglasses.

Their kids, WILLOW and SAGE, sit angelically on the curb, quietly reading books.

Chip and Lauren arrive, breathless but trying to seem casual.

CHIP
Welcome to the neighborhood! We, uh
—
(gestures vaguely)
—we live right over there.

ALECTO
Bro! No way. That's awesome. I'm
Alecto.

They shake. Alecto's handshake is PERFECT — firm, warm, confident. Chip melts.

LAUREN
I'm Lauren. This is—

JENNA
Oh my gosh, HI! We literally said on the way here, "I hope the neighbors are normal and not murder-y."

CHIP
(laughing too hard)
Oh, totally! We're... not... murder-y!
Ha! Ha ha! Ha...

Lauren elbows him.

JENNA
Your yard is adorable, by the way.

Lauren straightens like she was knighted.

LAUREN
Thank you — we, um, did some light landscaping. You know. For fun.
Casual fun.

ALECTO
We love hosting. We grill a ton.
You guys grill?

Chip's eyes widen. His dream.

CHIP
Do we grill?
(laughs too loud)
We grill constantly. Nonstop grillers.

Lauren nods aggressively.

LAUREN
Yep. Grill people. That's us.

WILLOW
Mommy, can we show them our chore charts?

JENNA
(to Lauren)
We're big on structure. Keeps the chaos away.

Lauren smiles like she, too, loves structure.
She does not.

A perfect breeze drifts across the street. Chip glances at Lauren.

A shared moment: *Is this really happening?*

ALECTO

Hey – we're doing pizza tonight.
Want to come over? Low-key. Kids
can play.

Chip and Lauren freeze. This is it. These are the new Lanes.

CHIP

(low, awed)

Yes.

(normal voice)

YES.

(too intense)

Yes yes yes we would love that.

Lauren laughs to cover the desperation.

LAUREN

We'd love to. Welcome again.

They all smile.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE - EVENING

Chip and Lauren stand in front of their daughter, like two drill sergeants giving final prep before a parade. Lauren kneels, holding their shoulders.

LAUREN

Okay... this is important.
Tonight, we are all... perfect.

RUBY

Like princess perfect?

CHIP

Like future-Supreme Court-justice
perfect.

Lucy nods solemnly.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Let's review.

No fighting.

No arguing.

(MORE)

CHIP (CONT'D)

No screaming.
No "accidentally" breaking
anything.
Nothing about Daddy's crime cave.

LAUREN

And when Willow and Sage show you
their chore charts –
(smiles tightly)
– you smile. And say "Wow." Like
that.

Ruby practices an unconvincing smile. It looks like a dental exam.

CHIP

Close enough.

They exchange nervous, excited energy – like they're about to audition for a reality show.

EXT. DELEON HOUSE - EVENING

Chip, Lauren, and the girls walk up the driveway carrying a bottle of wine.

The house is immaculate. No boxes. No clutter.
Sparkling SUV's.

Lauren whispers:

LAUREN

Did... did they hire a moving crew? A
design team? A full HGTV army?

CHIP

(under breath)
They've lived here... twelve hours.

He rings the doorbell. Chip straightens his shirt. Lauren smooths her hair. They all put on their "perfect family" smiles.

The door swings open.

ALECTO appears – crisp henley shirt, perfect posture, radiating confidence.

ALECTO

Welcome, neighbors!

Jenna glides into view behind him – casual elegance, like she always looks like this.

JENNA

We are so happy you're here. Come in!

INT. DELEON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chip and Lauren enter... and freeze. The home is flawless. Not a box in sight. Minimalist, tasteful décor. Fresh flowers.

Alecto leads them through the living room.

ALECTO

We still have a few small things to put away.

He gestures at... a single throw pillow slightly askew.

Chip nods like this is a major renovation.

EXT. DELEON BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Chip and Lauren step outside — and stop dead. AN OUTDOOR STONE-FIRE PIZZA OVEN.

Smoke rising beautifully. Fresh ingredients in wooden bowls. Alecto tossing dough into the air like a man born in Naples.

CHIP

(whispering)

How... did they build this... today?

Alecto beams.

ALECTO

Hope you don't mind — figured we'd do pizza the *real* way.

He pulls out a perfect Neapolitan-style pizza, crust bubbled, basil glistening.

JENNA

We get our produce from the Saturday farmer's market. Everything's organic. Hand-picked. The tomatoes were blessed by a retired Italian nun.

Chip looks at Lauren like he just witnessed sorcery.

CHIP
We... usually get Domino's.
(suddenly horrified)
I mean—we *could* get Domino's.
Like... ironically.

Lauren pinches his side.

AT THE TABLE

The four adults sit around the outdoor table, plates full of picture-perfect pizza.

Conversation flows easily – too easily.

JENNA
So, what brought you two to
Chicago?

Lauren gives the polished answer, the one she rehearsed in the car.

LAUREN
Better schools. Closer to work.
Community.

ALECTO
Same here. Community's everything.

Chip smiles, relieved. They're connecting.

CHIP
So, uh—where'd you guys move from
again? Nashville, right?

JENNA
Yes! Loved it there.

CHIP
And before that?

Alecto nods vaguely.

ALECTO
Oh, you know.
(beat)
Europe.

Chip waits for more. Nothing comes.

CHIP
...Where in Europe?

ALECTO
(laughs lightly)
Oh, all over. Kind of a citizen of
the world.

Chip blinks.

LAUREN
And what do you do for work?

Alecto sips his wine.

ALECTO
I'm in business.

CHIP
...What kind of business?

ALECTO
You know. Business-business.

Chip freezes a smile.

CHIP
Ah. Yes. Of course.
The... business of business.

Jenna changes the subject quickly – too quickly.

THE KIDS

Willow and Sage stand politely nearby.

WILLOW
May we go play downstairs?

LAUREN
Uh – yes! Of course!
(beat)
Stay... perfect.

Lucy and Ruby quietly follow Willow and Sage inside.

Chip and Lauren exchange hopeful, terrified looks. Everything
is going so well. Almost... too well.

INT. DELEON HOUSE - NIGHT

Laughter hums as the four adults sit around a stylish
reclaimed-wood table, sipping wine.

Alecto swirls his glass, eyes twinkling.

ALECTO

Chip, what are your thoughts on
good bourbon?

CHIP

My thoughts are good on good
bourbon. My thoughts on average
bourbon are also very good.

Alecto grins.

ALECTO

Excellent. I believe I have
something *above average* we can
sample. Join me in the study?

Alecto rises, Chip pops up a half-second late, trying to
match his vibe.

They walk down the hallway. Chip glances around, still
struggling to understand how this house has zero moving
boxes.

INT. DELEON STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Chip enters and freezes.

The study is... stunning. Warm wood paneling. Antique globes.
Wall-to-wall leather-bound books. Maps that look like they
were stolen off an 18th-century pirate ship.

Chip spins slowly, overwhelmed.

CHIP

The Lanes used this as a playroom.
Foam blocks... plastic kitchens... a
bouncy horse named Sheila.
This looks like Winston Churchill's
weekend retreat.

ALECTO

(smiles)

I can connect you with my designer
if you'd like.

Chip nods politely.

Alecto gestures toward an oversized leather chair. Chip sits;
it swallows him.

Alecto moves to a small walnut cabinet, opens it, and pulls
out a pristine bottle. He admires it reverently.

Chip's eyes go wide.

CHIP
Holy mother of pearl. Is that...?

ALECTO
Old Rip Van Winkle Handmade Family
Reserve.
(beat)
Yes it is, my friend.

Chip nearly falls out of the chair.

CHIP
Aleto, I can't.
That bottle costs more than my SUV.
Like... with the rust repair
included.

ALECTO
Nonsense. What's the point of
having good bourbon if you don't
drink it with good people?

CHIP
Well... if you insist.

Alecto pours two flawless glasses. Hands Chip one with ceremony.

They sip. Chip tries to hide the wince.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door swings open and Chip and Lauren tumble inside, glowing like they just met Beyoncé.

Chip still has half a slice of artisan pizza in his hand. Lauren's holding a tiny mason jar of some organic hummus Jenn "insisted" she take home.

They shut the door behind them and immediately burst into excited chatter.

LAUREN
Jenn is incredible. I mean—
incredible. She does pilates with a
private instructor. At her *house*.
Like... who even has that? Who just
has a pilates studio in their
basement?

CHIP

Right? And that house—
(points behind him)
—insane. Perfect floors. Perfect
lighting. Perfect smell.
How did they get it like that so
quickly?

LAUREN

Meanwhile, we've lived here five
years and we still have moving
boxes in the coat closet.

They laugh, riding the high.

Chip tosses his keys down, spins like a man who just got
promoted at Dad School.

CHIP

I'm calling it. We found them.
Our new couples hang.

Lauren does a tiny celebratory dance.

LAUREN

I already texted Jenn about a
girls' workout. She said her
instructor takes new clients "if
the energy feels aligned."
Which I think means yes.

Chip spreads his arms wide, triumphant.

CHIP

All smiles over here.

He starts toward the kitchen—then stops.

Something nags at him. He squints into the distance like he's
trying to read a fortune cookie from across the room.

LAUREN

What? You look like you're doing
long division in your head.

Chip hesitates.

CHIP

There were just... a couple weird
things...

Lauren paces, peeling off her shoes. Chip stands in the
doorway, still buzzing with nervous energy.

LAUREN

Nope. Nope. Nope.
 Chip, you're doing it again. We
 finally find the perfect couples
 hang and here you are—picking at
 flaws like you're dusting for
 fingerprints.

CHIP

I know, I know.
 (raises hands, mock
 surrender)
 I loved them. I did. This is gonna
 work. But—

LAUREN

But *what*?

Chip gathers his thoughts, as if presenting evidence.

CHIP

Okay, hear me out. Alecto—amazing
 name, by the way—pulls out this
 bottle of Old Rip Van Winkle—

LAUREN

Old what? Old who?

CHIP

Old Rip Van Winkle Handmade Family
 Reserve. Super, SUPER fancy
 bourbon. Like... thirty-thousand-
 dollars-a-bottle fancy.

Lauren blinks.

LAUREN

For bourbon?

CHIP

For *magic in liquid form*.
 I've had it once—Jake's bachelor
 party in Gatlinburg. Best night of
 my life and the worst next morning
 of my life.
 I might not know much, but I *know*
 bourbon.

LAUREN

Yes. You do.

CHIP

But what Alecto served?
 (shakes head)
 (MORE)

CHIP (CONT'D)

It didn't taste right. It wasn't Old Rip. It tasted like... I don't know...

(conflicted)

Like a mid-shelf bottle trying to fake its way into an Ivy League school.

LAUREN

So maybe it was an off year? Or it spoiled? Or whatever bourbon does?

CHIP

It doesn't work like that. Bourbon doesn't go bad, it just gets more... bourbon-y.

(then, pivoting)

But you're right. Who cares.

Beat.

He can't resist.

CHIP (CONT'D)

...but—

LAUREN

Chip, STOP. Don't ruin this.

But Chip is already excited again, leaning forward like he's solving a case.

CHIP

But the whole *business* thing! He couldn't even say what he does. "I'm in business"? That's what someone says when they're either a billionaire or laundering money in a strip mall.

LAUREN

Jenn did jump off that topic *fast*...

CHIP

And he wouldn't tell us where he's from! Who says they're from "Europe"? Europe is a *continent*, not a hometown. I cannot place the accent.

LAUREN

It was... a little odd. Alecto sounds Greek? Maybe?

(MORE)

LAUREN (CONT'D)

But Chip—let's not let a few minor weirdnesses ruin a great evening. I mean, God only knows what *they're* saying about YOU right now.

Chip winces, imagining it.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Chip saunters out to his mailbox in a robe, coffee in hand. He opens the box, pulls out a thick envelope, scans it—

CHIP

(quiet but intense)

Fuck.

Across the street, Alecto emerges from his backyard holding pruning shears — crisp white tee, perfect hair, like a man who never sweats.

ALECTO

My friend... trouble?

Chip forces a smile.

CHIP

Hey Alecto.

Yeah. Just... uh... a little mishap at a pool party. Apparently the Naperville Yards HOA is "concerned." Talking sanctions.

Alecto's expression darkens — but politely.

ALECTO

No one pushes around my friend.

Alecto crosses the street with a graceful, terrifying calm. He plucks the letter from Chip's hand, skims it quickly.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

A meeting this Wednesday?

CHIP

Yeah. I guess I'm supposed to... defend myself?

ALECTO

(smiles warmly, but with menace)

You will not be alone.

Chip beams.

INT. HOA HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

A depressing beige conference room. Ten NEIGHBORS sit at a long table.

CHIP sits at the end, guilty posture, hands folded like a kid awaiting punishment.

DENNIS JOHNSTONE (60s, permanent frown) stands with a thick folder.

DENNIS

Let's see... violations of HOA ordinances 1, 7, 9, 11, 13...

(checks papers)

...and section B of ordinance 15.

Chip cringes.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

One dead tree, two hospital visits, one indecent exposure call—

(beat)

I move we sanction the Gleesons with probation and a steep fine.

Chip opens his mouth to defend himself—

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN.

ALECTO strides in wearing a perfect three-piece suit. The room stills.

ALECTO

Good evening.

I'm Alecto DeLeon — here on behalf of Chip Gleeson.

Dennis squints.

DENNIS

Are you his lawyer?

ALECTO

(smiles, gentle menace)

No. I'm his friend.

He places a firm hand on Dennis's shoulder and **guides him back into his chair**. Polite. Terrifying.

Alecto steps to the center of the room.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

Before any action is taken... I'd
like to speak.

No objections. Nobody dares.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

If you would — please close your
eyes.

A few obey.

Alecto calmly *stares* at the others until the rest close
theirs, too.

He begins pacing — slow, hypnotic.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

Imagine a neighborhood where no one
says hello.
Where people avoid each other.
Where an elderly neighbor carries
groceries alone, and no one
notices.

Faces soften.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

Now imagine a child injured on the
street...

(beat)

...and every door stays shut because
people don't want to "get
involved."

A beat of uncomfortable silence.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

Open your eyes.

They do.

Alecto gestures toward Chip.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

Look at this man. Chip Gleeson.
The neighbor who takes out my trash
when I forget.
Who mows lawns when someone's sick.
Who brings casseroles to grieving
families.

Chip wells up, confused and touched.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

I hesitate to embarrass him, but—
One morning, I saw him kneeling in
his yard...
cradling a baby bird that fell from
its nest.

Chip mouths: *What?*

ALECTO (CONT'D)

He nursed that fragile creature for
weeks.
Bottle-fed it four times a day.
They named her Tweetie.

Chip wipes a small tear. The HOA board melts.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

And the morning she flew... I saw
that little bird outside my window.
Alive because of a neighbor like
Chip.

The room is silent. Even Dennis snuffles.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

Yes, his party was... spirited.
But he is the kind of man who makes
a community a community.

A beat. Total silence.

EXT. HOA BUILDING - NIGHT

Chip and Alecto exit.

Chip BLASTS Alecto with a high-five.

CHIP

Dude! That was art.
By the end I thought they were
gonna give me a gift card and a
hug.

Alecto shrugs modestly.

ALECTO

Anything for a friend.

CHIP

You took a few... liberties...

(beat)

But it worked.

Alecto gives him a warm, cryptic smile.

ALECTO

A lie isn't a lie... if you believe
it.

Chip's smile falters, just a little.

Alecto pulls him into a confident hug. Chip melts into it.

INT. GLEESON HOME - NIGHT

The front door BURSTS open. Chip practically *skips* inside,
glowing like he won a trophy for "Best Suburban Dad."

Lauren looks up from the couch, eyebrows raised.

LAUREN

Either we didn't get fined... or you
won the lottery on the way home.

CHIP

Remember how I told you Alecto was
gonna come for support?

Lauren nods slowly, bracing herself.

CHIP (CONT'D)

He did way more than that. He
didn't support me — he *represented*
me. The man gave a speech that had
DENNIS in tears. Dennis, Lauren.
The guy who threatened to sue us
over inflatable holiday
decorations.

LAUREN

He is a smooth customer.

CHIP

Smooth? Lauren... I've been in a lot
of courtrooms. I've seen closing
arguments that made grown men weep.
But this? This was like—

(beat, animated)

—remember that scene in *A Time to
Kill*?

(MORE)

CHIP (CONT'D)

When Matthew McConaughey— actually
never mind. Point is: biblical
stuff.

Lauren tries to imagine this, fails.

LAUREN

So what did he even say?

CHIP

Oh, buckle up. He tells this giant,
sweeping, totally made-up story
about me... nursing a baby bird back
to health.

Lauren blinks.

LAUREN

A *what*?

CHIP

A baby bird. In my hands.

LAUREN

Chip—

CHIP

I know! It's insane! But the HOA
ate it up like it was the Sermon on
the Mount. At one point, I swear
Dennis stood to clap.

Lauren shakes her head, half amazed, half concerned.

LAUREN

And Alecto just... made that up?

CHIP

Yep. Whole thing. Said — and I
quote — “A lie isn't a lie if you
believe it.”

Chip nods thoughtfully, then suddenly realizes how unhinged
that sounds.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Which... now that I say it out loud...
is a little weird, right?

Lauren stares at him, processing that last line.

LAUREN
Yeah, Chip. It is.
(beat)
Very weird.

Chip's smile falters for the first time.

EXT. GLEESON'S STREET - MORNING

A classic post-Chicago-windstorm scene: trash cans knocked over, recycling skittered across lawns, rogue Amazon boxes rolling like tumbleweeds.

Chip steps outside, robe flapping, coffee in hand. He surveys the carnage.

He sighs, sets his own trash can upright... then notices:

Across the street, the DELEONS' bin lies on its side, lid open, contents spilled.

Chip jogs over – neighborly instinct activated. He lifts the toppled can.

Two EMPTY BOTTLES roll out and clink against the pavement.

Chip freezes.

He bends down, picks one up.

CLOSE ON LABEL:
BLACK DAGGER
– with a cartoon skull that looks
hungover.

Chip stares at it, stunned.

CHIP
(softly to himself)
Kentucky's cheapest bourbon?

He turns the bottle in his hand, processing.

A beat.

Then another beat.

Then—

A THIRD beat, because the betrayal needs time to marinate.

Chip looks up at the immaculate Deleon house.

Back to the bottle. Back to the house.

He exhales through his nose – cosmically disappointed.

Chip gently sets the bottle back in the can.

Straightens it neatly. Lines it up with geometric precision. Clasps his hands behind his back, staring at it like it's evidence in a homicide.

A long, quiet beat.

He walks back toward his house, robe swishing with purpose – a man on the verge of connecting some very unsettling dots.

INT. CRIME CAVE - GLEESON HOUSE - DAY

Chip sits hunched at his desk. A NEW WHITEBOARD is plastered with notes under the header:

"ALECTO DELEON – ???"

Bullet points include:

- *Europe?*
- *Business-business*
- *Pizza proficiency abnormal*
- *Bourbon FRAUD??*

Chip types furiously on his laptop.

Lauren walks down the stairs holding a mug, stops halfway when she sees the setup.

LAUREN

Big case?

Chip doesn't look up.

CHIP

I don't know yet. But things aren't adding up.

Lauren steps closer, squints at the whiteboard.

LAUREN

At first I thought you were nuts... but I'm starting to see it.

Chip swivels dramatically in his chair.

CHIP

Right?!

Lauren folds her arms.

LAUREN

Like — remember when they came over to the pool? Alecto wore one of those adult swim shirts. It was a hundred degrees. And he looks ridiculously fit—

CHIP

(interrupting, defensive)
Oh, does he?

LAUREN

(ignoring him)
So why wouldn't he take his shirt off? Maybe he didn't want to embarrass you?

CHIP

Ha-ha. Very funny.
But seriously — does he have prison ink or something?

Lauren waves this off.

LAUREN

So what'd you find, Magnum?

Chip gestures helplessly at the computer.

CHIP

That's the funny thing: nothing. The whole family are ghosts. Jenn's Facebook — which, yes, I checked — is all people from our neighborhood. No history. No friends from before. It's like she didn't exist until moving to Naperville Yards.

Lauren processes that.

LAUREN

...Weird.

CHIP

And Alecto? Zero public footprint. None. No LinkedIn. No Twitter. No business registrations. Even his Zillow profile is blank. Zillow, Lauren. ZILLOW.

LAUREN
Okay, that actually is suspicious.

CHIP
Thank you!

She thinks for a moment.

LAUREN
What about the assessor's office?
House sale records. Public info.

Chip leans back, rubbing his temples.

CHIP
It hasn't posted yet.
Which is strange. It always posts
by now. I might need to take a
little trip down there...

Lauren raises an eyebrow.

LAUREN
The plot thickens...

Chip nods seriously.

CHIP
Thick as a deep-dish pizza, babe.

Lauren sips her coffee, already regretting encouraging this.

INT. BALL FACTORY- DAY

Chip, Lauren, Jenn and Alecko are at a local kids play gym.
Maniac kids running around, ball pits, climbing towers, giant
slides.

Chip and Lauren have pre-schemed. Chips going to drill Jenn
for more information, Lauren will siphon off Alecko for the
same.

CHIP
(under his breath)
Okay. Phase One. Soft questions at
first. Then drill down.

LAUREN
Chip, we're not the FBI.

CHIP
Randy was *literally* FBI.
(beat)
And we're just... gathering intel.

Lauren rolls her eyes.

LAUREN
Just don't scare her.

CHIP
I'm charming. I'm disarming. I'm—

A gigantic inflatable ball hits Chip in the face. He stumbles.

CHIP (CONT'D)
—resilient.

Lauren pats his shoulder and heads toward the coffee bar with Alecto.

Chip turns to Jenn with an over-friendly grin.

AT THE COFFEE AREA - ALECTO & LAUREN

Alecto stands perfectly poised as chaos swirls around him —

LAUREN
So! Alecto. Just curious... where
exactly did you and Jenn meet?

Alecto sips his latte with elegant calm.

ALECTO
Ah... it's a bit of a long story.
Different places. Different times.
The universe converging.

Lauren blinks.

LAUREN
...Okay. But like, which place,
though?

ALECTO
(smiles)
It depends what you consider a
place.

Lauren stares, lost.

LAUREN
I'm gonna need... like... a noun,
Alecto.

ALECTO
We met "abroad."

LAUREN
Where abroad?

ALECTO
(smiles cryptically)
Wherever the wind took us.

A kid cannonballs into the foam pit behind them. Lauren forces a polite laugh.

AT THE TRAMPOLINE AREA - CHIP & JENN

Chip and Jenn stand beside trampolines, watching their kids bounce like caffeinated squirrels.

Chip leans in casually.

CHIP
So Jenn... you two moved from
Nashville, right?

JENN
Oh, yeah! Loved the live music.
Miss the food.

CHIP
And before that...?
Where'd you grow up?

Jenn thinks.

JENN
Uh... Colorado mostly. And then a few
years in... Arizona?
(beat)
Or maybe it was New Mexico?
My dad moved around a lot.
Or my mom.
One of them.

Chip tilts his head like a bloodhound catching a scent.

CHIP
...Huh.

Jenn smiles sweetly.

JENN
We kind of traveled a ton. You know
— military family!

CHIP
Oh, your parents were military?

Jenn laughs.

JENN
Oh, no. Not them.
Just... like... us. In spirit.

Chip's eyes widen.

CHIP
In... spirit.

Jenn nods.

AT THE COFFEE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Lauren continues her "interview."

LAUREN
So what exactly do you do for work,
Alecto?

ALECTO
Business.

LAUREN
Right, but what kind?

ALECTO
The successful kind.

LAUREN
...Meaning?

ALECTO
(smiles warmly)
Meaning I'm very good at it.

Lauren stares like she's watching a man lie about his age on a dating app.

A KID nearby faceplants off a trampoline. A mom gasps.

Before anyone moves, Alecto turns his head, assessing like a trained EMT.

ALECTO (CONT'D)

He's fine — see how he's holding his wrist? No fracture. Just a bruise.

(beat)

Ice it ten minutes on, ten off.

Lauren gives him a confused double-take.

LAUREN

Have you taken first-aid classes or something?

ALECTO

(smiling too long)

Something like that.

Lauren sighs.

CHIP & LAUREN RECONVENE - BY THE FOAM PIT

They meet behind the giant climbing wall, whispering intensely.

CHIP

Everything okay over here?

LAUREN

No.

Everything is not okay.

He answered every question like a fortune cookie written by a cult leader.

CHIP

Jenn said he grew up in "Europe-Europe."

LAUREN

What does that even mean?

CHIP

Nothing. It means nothing.

They both turn to look at the Deleons — who appear perfect, calm, unbothered, almost floating above the chaos.

LAUREN

(whispers)

They're hiding something.

CHIP
(whispers harder)
They're hiding everything.

A random kid cannonballs into them, knocking Chip into a foam pit.

CHIP (CONT'D)
(muffled, sinking)
This is how it begins...

Lauren pulls him out, shaking her head.

LAUREN
So what now?

Chip stands, eyes narrowing with righteous suburban determination.

CHIP
Now?
Now the surveillance begins.

He pulls out his phone like it's a badge.

CHIP (CONT'D)
Operation: Neighbor Watch – Phase
Two.

Lauren sighs deeply.

LAUREN
God help us all.

Chip nods solemnly.

CHIP
God... and Ring Doorbell.

INT. CRIME CAVE - TIME INDETERMINATE

The lights are dim. The whiteboards glow like conspiracy billboards. Chip paces with manic detective energy – part Columbo, part suburban dad who hasn't slept.

He dials.

CHIP
(into phone)
Hey buddy! How's Miami? You a 'Fins
fan yet?

CUT TO:

EXT. MIAMI DOCK - DAY

RANDY stands on a pristine dock, sunglasses on, prepping a boat that looks like it costs more than Chip's house. Pelicans glide. Waves shimmer. Randy is peak tropical cool.

RANDY
Chipster! Been meaning to call.
The Bureau's kept me swamped. Narco
boat traffickers.

Chip's eyes go wide.

CHIP
That sounds... dangerous?

Randy shrugs like it's nothing.

RANDY
If you call cruising the high seas
in the sunshine dangerous, then yes
— I'm in constant peril.

Chip nods, impressed.

CHIP
Yeah, okay, uh — I got a little
situation up here.

Randy pauses mid-knot.

RANDY
Situation?

CHIP
It's the new neighbors.
They seem perfect. Super nice.
Amazing kids.
But... I've done a little digging and
—

RANDY
(cutting him off)
Chip. Buddy. Listen to yourself.
You're investigating the neighbors?

Chip stops pacing, defensive.

CHIP
Well, I mean... yeah? A little?
But you won't believe what I found
— or *didn't* find — on a deep dive.

Randy pinches the bridge of his nose.

RANDY
(doomed sigh)
Chip...

A boat HORN blasts.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Ah — that's my cue. We're shoving
off. But my advice?
Leave. The neighbors. Alone.

CHIP
But— Randy — Randy, wait—

CLICK. The call drops.

Chip stares at the phone like it just betrayed him.

CHIP (CONT'D)
(sarcastic, wounded)
Love you too... ex-bestie.

He dramatically tosses the phone onto the couch, then turns back to the web of red string like a man who *definitely* will not be leaving the neighbors alone.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - MORNING

Chip has transformed the guest room into a makeshift surveillance bunker.

A folding chair. Binoculars. Notebook labeled "OPERATION: DELEON." Half-eaten snacks.
A beer he's *pretending* is for camouflage, not breakfast.

The blinds are shut except for one tiny sliver he peers through like a deranged raccoon.

In the distance, a LOUD BRAKE SCREECH echoes down the street — the garbage truck.

Chip perks up.
Adjusts his binoculars with military precision.

CHIP
(whispering, intense)
Showtime.

OUT THE WINDOW — The DeLeon garage opens with a smooth, luxurious hum.

ALECTO emerges.

He wheels the trash can down the driveway, posture perfect, hair immaculate.

He places the can perfectly at the curb. Then... stands there. Waiting. Hands clasped behind his back. Like he's presenting the trash to royalty.

Chip's eyes widen. He scribbles frantically in his notebook.

CHIP (CONT'D)
(to himself, breathless)
That's the third week in a row you
wheel it out *exactly* when the truck
arrives...

He zooms in tighter, fascinated.

CHIP (CONT'D)
What are you hiding, Alecto...
(suspicious, dramatic)
What... are you hiding?

Chip keeps watching, binoculars glued to his face, as the garbage truck approaches like a scene in a nature documentary.

INT. DELEON HOUSE - PILATES STUDIO - MORNING

A pristine, *HGTV-on-steroids* home pilates studio. Soft lighting. Orchid in the corner. Reformer machines that cost as much as a used car.

Lauren and Jenn stretch on mats.

BLOSSOM - 20s, "fasting-fit," glowing with the self-esteem - packs up her equipment.

BLOSSOM
See ya next week, girls!

Lauren and Jenn wave. Blossom floats out like a fitness fairy.

Door shuts.

JENN
God, I love her.
(beat)
And I hate her.
(smiling)
You remember what your body looked
like at twenty-six? No kids?

Lauren side-eyes Jenn – who is *absurdly* fit, zero mom-wear-and-tear.

LAUREN

...Do you?

Jenn laughs – a little too brightly.

A beat as they stretch.

JENN

So Chip's excited for the Bears game this weekend? Alecto's pumped. He loves the Niners.

Lauren freezes mid-stretch.

LAUREN

(confused)

The Niners? Chip said Alecto wasn't into football. Said he was a huge soccer fan – from his "European days."

Jenn blinks – tiny glitch in the matrix.

JENN

Oh. Right. Yeah. I... can't keep the teams straight. Niners... Football Club... Chelsea... Manchester... Cubs...

Lauren stares. That string of sports teams made zero human sense.

LAUREN

(polite smile, suspicious eyes)

Uh-huh.

They both stand.

JENN

Well... great stretch! See you tonight?

LAUREN

Absolutely.

Jenn heads toward the stairs. Lauren watches her go – something's off.

As Jenn walks down the hall, she passes a signed, framed Joe Montana jersey. She stops. Stares at it for a long beat. Her face tightens – something doesn't compute.

JENN
(mutters to herself)
...Right. The Niners.

She forces a smile and continues upstairs. Lauren remains in the studio, frozen, gears turning.

Something is very wrong with the DeLeons.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - DAY

Crowds pour into the stadium in a swirl of navy, orange, and hopeless optimism.

Chip and Alecto weave through fans. Chip is buzzing with excitement. Alecto? Wearing the world's crispiest, stiffest BEARS JERSEY — *tags still dangling visibly*.

CHIP
Dude... you know you can take the tag off, right?

Alecto examines it like it's a foreign object.

ALECTO
Ah. Yes. This is... part of the ritual?

CHIP
No, it's—

(sighs)
Never mind.

Alecto rips the tag off with ceremonial gravitas.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - THEIR SEATS - DAY

Chip leads Alecto down a staircase toward fantastic midfield seats.

ALECTO
(low whistle)
Your lawyer friend must be... very good at law.

CHIP
He sues orthopedic surgeons. He's literally never lost.

They sit. The stadium ROARS around them.

Alecto sits ramrod straight.

CHIP (CONT'D)
 Alright man. Bears vs. Niners. NFC
 showdown. What's your prediction?

ALECTO
 Hmm.
 (very serious)
 I believe... the Bears will score the
 most baskets.

Chip slowly turns to him.

CHIP
 You mean... touchdowns?

ALECTO
 Yes. Those.

Beat.

ALECTO (CONT'D)
 I prefer real fútbol. The kind
 played in my homeland.
 (pauses)
 Europe.

Chip nods too slowly, like he's dealing with a toddler or a
 spy.

CHIP
 Yeah. No, that narrows it right
 down.

GAME ACTION MONTAGE

- Bears score early. Soldier Field ERUPTS.
- Alecto flinches like the stadium exploded.
- Alecto stands to cheer two seconds late - tries to copy
 whatever everyone else is doing.
- Alecto asks Chip what the yellow flag means every time.
- Chip is too happy to care.
- They high-five awkwardly, then again more confidently.
- They're having... a blast.

BACK TO SCENE

The crowd roars again. Chip jumps. Alecto jumps too - but
 cautiously, scanning.

Chip finally notices where he's looking.

CHIP (CONT'D)
Hey man, everything good?

Alecto stiffens.

ALECTO
Of course. Yes. Why would it not
be?

Chip gestures toward a pair of men three rows back, in
nondescript hoodies, not cheering, just *watching Alecto*.

CHIP
I dunno. Those guys have been
eyeballing you like you owe them
money.

Alecto avoids Chip's gaze.

ALECTO
It is nothing. Just... familiar
faces. From long ago.

Chip raises an eyebrow.

CHIP
Like... high school? Or "I served
time with these dudes" long ago?

Alecto forces a smile — it almost looks human.

ALECTO
You are funny, Chip. Very funny.
(beat)
I'll be right back. Need restroom.

He slips out of the row and disappears up the tunnel. Chip
watches him go, unsettled.

INT. SOLDIER FIELD - CONCOURSE - CONTINUOUS

Alecto moves briskly through crowds of drunken fans and nacho
cheese.

The two suspicious men emerge from behind a pillar.
They follow.

Alecto speeds up. So do they.

He ducks into a corridor— The men close in.

Alecto turns a corner—
Then another—

He pauses, presses himself against a wall, breathing tight and controlled like he's done this before.

He glances around – trying to find an escape route.

The men sweep past, searching.

Alecto waits. Perfectly still.

When the coast is clear, he slips back toward the stands, shaken.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - THEIR SEATS - MOMENTS LATER

Chip watches the game, but keeps glancing up the stairs, worried.

Alecto returns, pale, rattled.

CHIP

Hey man, you okay? You look like
you saw a ghost.

ALECTO

Just... bad stadium sausage.

Chip squints.

Alecto forces a smile, but his eyes are locked on the crowd – searching.

CHIP

(quietly)

Those guys from before... still
around? I know when someone is
being watched, cause I'm usually he
watcher.

Alecto doesn't answer. Just sits. Hands clasped. Eyes forward. Jaw clenched.

Chip looks at him, unsettled, while the crowd erupts around them.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - MID-GAME - DAY

The game is electric. The crowd is losing its mind. Chip tries to focus on the field, but keeps sneaking looks at Alecto – who is scanning the stadium constantly.

CHIP
Hey, uh... buddy. You sure you're
okay? You look like you're waiting
for a sniper.

Alecto forces a stiff smile.

ALECTO
Just... very invested in the game.

CHIP
Right. Because you love the Bears.
The team with... baskets.

Alecto doesn't react. He's staring at something behind Chip.

Chip follows his gaze — the *two suspicious guys* are still
there, whispering, watching.

Chip's discomfort grows.

CHIP (CONT'D)
(low)
Okay, dude. Seriously. Who are
those guys?

ALECTO
(too quickly)
No one. Forget them.

Before Chip can press further—

A LOUD COMMOTION erupts two rows down.

A BEARS FAN — big guy, jersey stretched to its breaking point
— suddenly CLUTCHES HIS THROAT.

His friends jump up, panicking.

FRIEND #1
He's choking! HE'S CHOKING!

The entire section gasps. People stand, frozen.

Chip rises, startled.

CHIP
Oh my God—someone get a medic!

But before anyone can move—

Alecto launches over the seats like a panther.

CHIP (CONT'D)

Holy—
(startled)
Alecto?!

ALECTO
(COMMANDING)
Tell me—what was he eating?

FRIEND #1
A hot dog! He inhaled it!

Alecto instantly tries abdominal thrusts —

CHIP
(wincing)
He knows the Heimlich? Do I know
the Heimlich?

It doesn't work. The guy's face is turning deep purple.

ALECTO
His airway is fully obstructed.

The friend panics.

FRIEND #2
What do we do?! What do we do?!

Alecto scans the area, mind calculating fast.
He spots a long STRAW sticking out of a giant soda.

ALECTO
(steady, urgent)
We're going to open his airway.

Chip's eyes widen like saucers.

CHIP
Open it?
Like with—tools?!

Alecto reaches into his pocket and — impossibly — pulls out a
small folding knife.

He clicks it open in one smooth motion.

The crowd GASPS. People back away, unsure if they should
intervene.

ALECTO
(to the choking man)
Stay with me.

Alecto wipes the blade on his shirt, positions the straw, and
—

SWIFT, PRECISE, MICRO-SURGICAL MOVEMENT.

The straw goes in.

A beat.

The man GASPS through the straw. Color slowly returns to his face.

FRIEND #1

Oh my GOD!

You—You saved him!

The crowd MURMURS with awe. Someone records on their phone.
Another fan hollers:

FAN

Yo! This dude's a doctor or
something!

Chip stares at Alecto — blown away, terrified, impressed.

CHIP

Alecto...

(soft, stunned)

What the hell was that?

Who are you?

Alecto doesn't answer. He's staring past Chip again.

The two suspicious men are SHOVING through the aisle, heading toward them.

Alecto's face goes cold.

ALECTO

(very low)

Chip. We need to leave.

Now.

CHIP

What? Shouldn't we wait for the
ambulance? Give a statement?

ALECTO

No.

(grabs Chip's arm)

We are in danger.

Chip looks around — confused, scared, adrenaline spiking.

CHIP
Danger from *what*?!

ALECTO
From *them*.

He nods toward the men closing in.

Alecto pulls Chip up the stairs with urgency.

CHIP
(stumbling)
Dude—are you a doctor? A fugitive?
A European ninja? What—

ALECTO
Hurry.

They disappear into the rushing crowd.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - CONCOURSE - CONTINUOUS

The stadium ROARS behind them as Alecto drags Chip through the concourse at warp speed.

CHIP
Alecto—slow down! My Fitbit is
overheating!

Alecto doesn't look back. His eyes stay locked on the thousands of fans around them — scanning, calculating, *hunting the hunters*.

They pass a concession stand.

VENDOR
Hot dogs! Ice-cold beer—

Alecto suddenly yanks Chip left, behind a pretzel cart.

CHIP
(whisper shouting)
Okay, you're either CIA or you're
late for a yoga class.

Alecto peeks out — the two suspicious men appear in the concourse, searching.

ALECTO
Stay low.

CHIP
I AM low! I'm basically a shrub!

Alecto moves again — swift, fluid, impossible to follow — pulling Chip into a side hallway.

INT. SOLDIER FIELD - SERVICE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Dim. Concrete. Industrial pipes hum overhead.

Alecto moves like he knows the layout. Chip stumbles behind him.

Alecto stops at a locked door labeled "EVENT STAFF ONLY." He slips a tiny metal tool from his pocket and—

CLICK.

The door opens. Chip stares, horrified.

CHIP

Okay. No. No. Normal dads do NOT
lockpick at the Bears game! Normal
dads eat nachos and complain about
parking!

ALECTO

Get in.

INT. UTILITY STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Dark, echoing. They descend fast.

ALECTO

Those men—
(breathing hard)
—have been tracking me for a long
time.

Chip stops dead on the stairs.

CHIP

TRACKING you?
Alecto, what *exactly* did you do
before moving to Naperville Yards?
And "business-business" is no
longer an acceptable answer!

Alecto opens another door.

ALECTO

Later.

CHIP
 No! Not "later"! Now!
 Are you a criminal? A spy? A cult
 leader?

Alecto freezes. Listens. Footsteps echo above them.

The men are in the stairwell. Alecto shoves Chip through the next door.

EXT. SOLDIER FIELD - LOWER BOWL EXIT - CONTINUOUS

They burst into sunlight behind the stadium. Fences. Tents. Tailgaters packing up.

Alecto scans quickly.

ALECTO
 This way.

Chip follows, completely out of breath.

CHIP
 (weak)
 I regret every pretzel bite I've
 ever taken.

They weave through fans wearing jerseys and face paint. Alecto keeps glancing behind.

Chip sees it too - The two men EXIT THE STADIUM behind them, eyes locked on Alecto.

CHIP (CONT'D)
 (terrified)
 Okay, confirmed: those guys are not
 here for the nachos.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Alecto and Chip SPRINT between rows of cars. Car alarms chirp. Tailgaters stare. Chip dodges a cooler.

CHIP
 (shouting)
 Who are they?!
 Drug cartel? Shadow government?
 Members of the 1985 Bears looking
 for revenge?!

Alecto spots Chip's Subaru nearby.

ALECTO
Your car. Now.

CHIP
My CAR?! She tops out at 61 miles
an hour downhill!

Alecto grabs Chip by the collar.

ALECTO
Chip—trust me. We need to
disappear.

Chip swallows hard, nods. They jump into the Subaru.

INT. SUBARU - CONTINUOUS

Chip fumbles with the keys.

CHIP
My hands are shaking! I can't
believe we're fleeing a crime
thriller in a vehicle marketed to
dog owners!

Alecto whips around, checking mirrors.

ALECTO
Start the engine.

Chip does.

ALECTO (CONT'D)
Fast.

CHIP
(terrified)
This IS fast!

The Subaru lurches forward at a very unimpressive speed.

They pull out of the lot just as the two men reach the row of cars. One of them points toward the Subaru.

Chip panics and floors it — the Subaru makes a polite humming noise.

CHIP (CONT'D)
YEAH! EAT MY HYBRID DUST!

Alecto finally exhales, though he's far from relaxed.

ALECTO
(quietly)
Thank you, my friend.

Chip looks over at him — shaken, adrenaline-charged, mind spinning.

CHIP
Alecto...
I think you owe me...
about forty-seven explanations.

Alecto looks out the window, conflicted.

ALECTO
And you'll get them.

Chip's jaw drops. In the rush, just now noticing that Alecto's vague European accent has been replaced with a nasally California surfer tone.

INT. SUBARU - MOMENTS LATER

The Subaru hums down the expressway — the least dramatic getaway car imaginable. Chip and Alecto breathe, slowly coming down from the adrenaline.

Alecto's eyes dart to Chip.

ALECTO
Time to call Randy.

Chip stiffens.

CHIP
Randy? My Randy?

ALECTO
(with a "come on" tone)
For all that's good and holy, Chip...
you're a private investigator.

Chip nods — solemn, but also like he's pretending he *always* understood this.

CHIP
Right. Right. I'm a PI. Obviously.

(beat)
So Randy's move to Miami...
(off Alecto's silence)
They were *stashing* you? Witness
protection? For what?

Alecto exhales. The mask finally starts to slip.

ALECTO

A trial.

(beat)

A drug cartel murder.

Chip's eyes bulge.

CHIP

Wait—are you a cartel *snitch*?

ALECTO

No. I'm Gary Huggins.

(beat)

A thoracic surgeon from Sacramento.

Alecto — now Gary — yanks off a perfectly styled hairpiece. Underneath: smooth, shiny bald dome.

Chip recoils like Gary just pulled off his entire face.

CHIP

HOLY—

(beat)

...oh my God.

GARY

(flat)

Yeah. Thanks for the support.

CHIP

No, I mean—some guys pull it off!
Bruce Willis pulls it off. The Rock
pulls it off.

(beat)

You... sort of pull it off.

Gary pins him with a deadpan glare.

GARY

Focus, Chip. Everyone's in danger.
We need to get Lauren and the kids
— and Jenn and the girls — out of
Naperville Yards. Now.

Chip processes... then a lightbulb goes off.

CHIP

I know just the place.

He grabs his phone.

CHIP (CONT'D)
Siri, call Lauren.

SIRI
Calling Lauren...

Ring. Ring.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Chip? Aren't you at the—

CHIP
(interrupting, urgent)
Lauren, listen to me. This is not a
joke.

A beat. Lauren's voice tightens.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Chip... what's going on?

CHIP
You need to grab the kids. Grab
Jenn and her girls. Don't pack.
Don't look around. Just leave.
(beat)
Something with Gary— I mean Alecto.
Randy's involved too.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Chip, you're *scaring* me.

CHIP
Good. I need you scared. Because
you need to *move*.

Lauren tries to steady her voice.

LAUREN (V.O.)
Go where?

Chip looks over at Gary, who looks back knowingly. Chip
inhales dramatically.

CHIP
The G-Spot.

Gary gives a sly smile.

INT. ADVENTURE WATER PARK - GURNEE, IL - DAY

A sprawling indoor water park stretches out like a
chlorinated wonderland, five football fields wide.

The beat-up Subaru limps into the lot. Chip and Gary climb out.

At the entrance, Lauren, Jenn and the four girls wave enthusiastically.

Gary stares at the building.

GARY
This... is the G-Spot.
(Eyebrows raised)

Chip nods reverently.

CHIP
For suburban families? It sure is.

A beat. Gary instantly regrets asking.

GARY
Right. I'll check in with Randy.
You handle the civilians.

Gary stays by the car, dialing. Chip approaches the group.

The moment he's close enough—

JENN
Chip! Thank you for keeping Gary
safe.

She hugs him tightly.

CHIP
Honestly, I think it was the other
way around. But hey — I *did* get us
out of there in a Subaru.
(points to himself)
American hero.

Lauren steps forward, stressed but relieved.

LAUREN
Jenn filled me in... a *little*.
Something about danger and witness
protection and a Niners jersey lie?

Chip nods.

CHIP
Yeah. We're... in it.
Deep.

SUDDENLY — THE GIRLS SWARM HIM.

Lucy hugs his leg. Ruby clings to his waist.

LUCY

Daddy, are we hiding from bad guys?

Chip freezes – trying to be honest and not terrify them.

CHIP

Uh... we're... playing a very advanced
game of
(glances at Lauren)
Super Safety Tag.

Ruby gasps.

RUBY

Are we winning?!

Chip nods solemnly.

CHIP

We are *crushing* it.

Willow and Sage stand a few feet back, very calm, very DeLeon.

SAGE

In our house we call this
"situational awareness training."

WILLOW

We completed Level 3 last year.

Chip and Lauren exchange a "wait-what?" glance.

Then Chip gestures toward the giant water park entrance.

CHIP

Okay. Before we get the whole
story... we all need a beer by the
pool.

Lauren releases a deep, tortured sigh.

LAUREN

God yes. If I'm being hunted by
cartel guys, I'm not doing it
sober.

They head toward the sliding glass doors – past fake palms, screaming toddlers, and the tiki bar advertising "Bud Light Towers – \$19.99."

CHIP

Good news. At the G-Spot... therapy
is available by the *pitcher*.

The kids sprint ahead toward the water slides.
Lauren and Jenn follow. Chip glances back at Gary — still on
the phone, still terrified.

He joins the group.

Together, they disappear into the chlorinated chaos.

INT. INDOOR POOL - GURNEE WATER PARK - DAY

A giant, chaotic indoor water park. Chlorine haze. Screaming
kids. Echoes of lifeguard whistles every five seconds.

The four girls cannonball through wave pools, ride slides,
flop around like caffeinated seal pups.

Nearby, Chip, Lauren, Jenn and Gary (formerly Alecto) cram
around a tiny plastic table and umbrella, even though they're
inside.

Gary takes a long, weary pull from his beer.

CHIP

I thought you only drank world-
famous bourbon?

GARY

Yeah... about that.

CHIP

I knew it. I'm actually a halfway
decent PI sometimes.

(beat)

Only sometimes.

Gary rubs his face, bracing himself.

CHIP (CONT'D)

And Alecto? And the accent?

GARY

Alright. I'll tell you what I can.

(beat)

Buckle up...

He takes another long swig.

LATER — SAME AREA

A few empty beers now decorate the table like sad centerpieces. Gary inhales deeply, finishing his story.

GARY

So... that's it. The whole truth. Or at least the part that won't get anybody subpoenaed.

Lauren sits back, stunned.

LAUREN

It was all... an act? We thought you two were perfect.

Jenn throws her hands up.

JENN

We thought YOU two were perfect! When this all happened, we decided to try and have some fun with it. I encouraged the Alecto thing...A little role playing...

GARY

I even took an improv class, hired a voice coach. I committed.

Chip shakes his head, processing.

CHIP

So one minute you're a suburban doctor in northern California... and the next minute a cartel goon drags you out of your office, forces you to perform emergency surgery on a gunshot victim, and then stabs you ten times?

GARY

(quiet, dry)
Nine times.
(oddly proud)
The tenth was more of a poke.

He lifts his shirt — revealing a shredded six-pack and a map of scar tissue.

Lauren and Jenn gasp. Chip points at the scars.

CHIP

Ah. So THAT'S why you wore the
adult swim shirt. Honestly? Gonna
say it – almost a deal breaker.

They all LAUGH.

A lifeguard blows a whistle at some unseen kid-related
offense. The girls shriek happily down a nearby slide.

Gary's phone buzzes. He checks the text.

GARY

Good news. Randy says the Bureau
approved expenses at the...
(sighs)
G-Spot...

Everyone winces in unison.

GARY (CONT'D)

Four days, fully covered.

The group looks at each other – the absurdity, the relief,
the insanity of it all – and raise their cheap water-park
beers.

ALL

Cheers.

In the background, Lucy wipes out beautifully in the wave
pool. Ruby laughs and falls on top of her.

Chip watches them with a soft smile.

CHIP

(to himself)
Yep.
G-Spot it is.

MONTAGE – FOUR DAYS AT THE GURNEE WATER PARK

A) DAY 1 – WAVES & CHAOS

– The four girls cling to inner tubes as the giant wave pool
CRASHES.

– A HUGE WAVE slams into Chip, flipping him backwards like a
ragdoll.

– Gary catches Chip mid-wipeout, rescuing him like a
lifeguard hero.

Chip coughs.

CHIP (CONT'D)
I'm fine! That wave sucker-punched
me, that's all!

Gary nods knowingly.

GARY
That was a child-level wave, Chip.

B) DAY 2 - WATER SLIDE GAUNTLET

— Lauren, Jenn, and the girls race up the metal stairs of the tallest slide.

— At the top, Lauren freezes.

LAUREN
Um. This is... significantly higher
from this angle.

Jenn gently pushes her.

JENN
Don't think, just go—

Lauren screams all the way down.

— At the bottom, she SPLASHES into the pool.

Chip gives her two thumbs-up.

CHIP
You sounded like Taylor Swift
getting tased.

Lauren flips him off lovingly.

C) DAY 2 - LAZY RIVER NONSENSE

— All eight float together down the lazy river.

— Chip and Gary try to strategically steer their tubes but keep spinning in useless circles.

— The girls form a "tube train," Willow as conductor, barking orders.

— A lifeguard watches them, deeply annoyed.

LIFEGUARD
No tube trains.

The girls ignore him and add more tubes.

D) DAY 3 - ARCADE BATTLE

- Chip and Gary face off at Skee-Ball.
- Gary nails perfect 50s with insane precision.
- Chip underhand-chucks a ball, misses the table entirely, hits a nearby prize display.
- Tickets explode everywhere.

CHIP

I loosened the machine for ya.

Gary smirks, unimpressed.

E) DAY 3 - TIDAL WAVE CAFE

- The two families sit at a cafeteria table eating soggy chicken tenders and \$11 fries.
- Jenn gracefully re-wraps the girls' wet hair with spa-level precision.
- Lauren tries to do the same for Ruby's braid... Ruby screams like it's being amputated.

F) DAY 4 - WATER PARK NIGHT EVENT

Lights dim. Neon glows. Music thumps.

- Gary and Chip attempt to boogie board in the FlowRider wave machine.

Gary does a smooth surfer-style glide.

Chip tries the same... immediately face-plants and skids out of the machine sideways, screaming.

The teens watching CHEER like they just saw a wipeout compilation in real life.

G) THE "PARENT HOT TUB BREAK"

- Lauren, Jenn, and Gary melt into the big hot tub.
- Chip enters the hot tub TOO FAST and goes under like a sinking yacht.
- The group laughs as he surfaces, gasping.

H) NIGHT SWIM - QUIET MOMENT

– Both families float together in the warm shallow pool at night.

– Calm, colorful lights shimmer across the water.

– The girls lean on the adults, exhausted from four days of joy.

– Chip and Lauren exchange a look:

We needed this.

Gary watches the girls splash quietly.

He finally smiles – a real, unmasked one.

INT. GURNEE WATER PARK – EARLY MORNING

Quiet for once. No screaming kids. No tidal-wave machine.

Chip strolls down the hall in flip-flops, holding two coffees. He stops at the Huggins' door and knocks.

Knock-knock.

Silence.

He knocks again, lighter this time.

Knock-knock?

Nothing.

Chip frowns, crouches to peek under the door. Darkness.

He stands, sighs, turns back toward his own room.

Halfway there—BUZZ. His phone.

TEXT FROM RANDY:

*Your friends had to leave without
saying goodbye. For their safety. I
hope you understand.*

Chip stares at the message. A small, sad smile forms.

CHIP

(whispers)

Yeah... My best friends just keep
walking out of my life.

He pockets the phone and walks inside.

EXT. GLEESON'S STREET - DAY

A calm suburban morning. Sprinklers ticking. A jogger sweating too hard. A beige SUV that looks like every other beige SUV.

Chip walks down to his mailbox, coffee in hand.

Across the street, PROFESSIONAL MOVERS are loading the Huggins' (formerly DeLeon) belongings into a truck—quick, quiet, practiced.

No Jenn. No Gary. No Willow. No Sage. Just a moving crew finishing a disappearing act.

Chip watches, then gives a faint, knowing smile. He turns back toward his house.

INT. GLEESON HOUSE - MUCH LATER

Night. The girls giggle in the other room, watching cartoons. Chip and Lauren snuggle under a throw blanket on the couch, sharing a bowl of popcorn.

Chip grabs the remote.

CHIP
Should be on now..

He clicks the channel.

ON TV - ABC NEWS

ANCHOR (V.O.)
Tonight: dramatic new testimony in the Cortez cartel murder trial. A surgeon who was kidnapped, tortured, and left for dead—

Chip and Lauren glance at each other.

ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
—bravely took the stand today, describing how he escaped, and how federal agents relocated his family for their safety.

Chip lowers the remote. Lauren reaches for his hand.

ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Authorities say his cooperation was crucial... and his whereabouts are being kept strictly confidential.

Chip stares at the screen... then gives a tiny, proud, bittersweet smile.

Lauren leans her head on his shoulder. They sit together in the glow of the TV.

EXT. GLEESON NEIGHBORHOOD - MORNING

A perfect suburban day. Sprinklers arc. Joggers jog. Chip strolls Muffin, who waddles proudly.

As Chip turns the corner—

NEIGHBOR #1 (50s) waves excitedly from his driveway.

NEIGHBOR #1
Chip! Wild story on the news.
Cartel guys... right here in
Naperville Yards! Can you believe
it?

Chip gives a humble shrug-smile. Keeps walking.

NEIGHBOR #2 (40s) power-walks up with iced coffee.

NEIGHBOR #2
Mr. Private Eye! Dude, were you
involved? I can't wait to hear all
about it at the annual pool party!

Chip stops.

CHIP
(under breath)
Annual pool party?

He looks around—the whole neighborhood suddenly feels warmer, friendlier, almost... proud.

Chip walks on, thoughtful.

INT. GLEESON HOME - LATER

Chip enters with Muffin. Lauren is prepping breakfast. Chip stops in the doorway, a smile forming.

CHIP
Damn the HOA... let's give the people
what they want.

Lauren raises her eyebrows – slow, mischievous smile forming.

EXT. GLEESON HOUSE - DAY – THE FINAL POOL PARTY

A giant banner hangs between the pergola beams:

“THE GLEESONS’ ANNUAL POOL PARTY – TAKE 2”

The backyard is PACKED:

Kids cannonball under the strict supervision of a HIRED LIFEGUARD.

A MEDIC TEAM lounges near the patio, sipping lemonade like it’s Coachella.

Neighbors mill around happily – safe, relaxed, absolutely unaware they’re one bad decision from the sequel.

Someone grills skewers on a perfect new stainless-steel grill.

Chip works the crowd like a proud mayor of Suburbia.

He passes DOUG – a sweaty guy in swim trunks and an ankle monitor.

CHIP

Pants stay on this time, Doug?

DOUG

(scandalized)

Absolutely. Confirmed.

Chip fist-bumps him.

A RIPPLE MOVES THROUGH THE CROWD.

People turn. Murmur. Point.

Walking into the backyard, hand-in-hand:

Gary, Jenn, Willow and Sage.

The crowd APPLAUDS – like local heroes have returned.

Chip’s jaw drops.

CHIP

You–

I mean–

You’re HERE?!

Gary grins wide.

GARY
Surgeon job opened up. We bought
the place on Elm.

Chip squints.

CHIP
Elm? Why not across the street?
It's still for sa-

A voice behind him:

RANDY (O.S.)
It's not for sale.
Because we still own it.

Chip spins.
There stands Randy, Kelly, and their two girls.

A slow-motion, glorious Bro Reunion Run unfolds.

Chip COLLIDES with Randy in a massive dad-hug, lifting him
off the ground.

The backyard CHEERS.

Lauren hugs Kelly. Jenn hugs Lauren. The girls all pile on
Willow & Sage.

Chip pulls Randy aside near the grill.

CHIP
Okay, buddy - real talk.
Why didn't you tell me about Gary
and the whole... cartel witness
thing?

Randy gives a small, genuine smile.

RANDY
Bureau regulations.

(beat)
Plus...
I knew you'd take care of them
either way.
That's the kind of friend you are.

Chip swallows hard - it lands.

He nods.

CHIP

Well... you're stuck with me again.

Randy raises his beer.

RANDY

Wouldn't have it any other way.

They CLINK.

WIDE SHOT — THE BACKYARD

Kids laughing.
Grill sizzling.
Neighbors chatting.
Lifeguard watching.
Medics sipping lemonade.
Everything is summer-perfect.

Chip steps beside Lauren.

They look out over the yard — THEIR yard — filled with friends, laughter, love, and ridiculous Naperville energy.

LAUREN

You realize... we kinda pulled it off. New friends. Old friends. No fires. No snakes. No naked man in the pool.

Chip wraps an arm around her.

CHIP

(beat)
Give it time.

Lauren laughs, leaning into him.

CHIP (CONT'D)

We didn't find the perfect couples hang.

(sincere)
We built it.

They clink solo cups.

LAUREN

To the Gleeson annual pool party.

CHIP

And to never, EVER inviting Gary to bring bourbon again.

Gary raises a plastic cup from across the yard — having overheard.

GARY
(blushing)
Fair!

Everyone LAUGHS