

LITTLE IN COMMON

“Pilot”

Written by

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CHARACTERS

*** Note: all parents are in a mid-30s to mid-40s range.

THE WELLERS (White)

Dennis: The new middle school principal, aging progressive hipster. Laid-back Jeff Bridges vibe. Recently relocated his family from San Jose, CA to Austin, TX.

Ellie: A former school counselor turned stay-at-home mom. Blogs for a parenting website. Also an aging hipster. Would love to be as laid back as her husband, but has trouble getting there.

Donovan: Sensitive nerd-leaning oddball sixth grader who has decided to reinvent himself after moving to a new town.

Minnie: Family black sheep second grader. Hyper competitive jock. Loves every mass-marketed piece of consumerism her parents loathe.

THE BURLESONS (African-American)

Ty: Former Division 2 athlete who now satisfies competitive urges by coaching Little League. Cares a little too much. Former sports reporter turned house husband.

Brooke: A lobbyist on the fast track to success. Quintessential helicopter parent. An epic achiever. Believes appearances count. Just as competitive as her husband.

CJ: A sixth grade himbo. Affable and loyal. Adored by all. Between his looks and his athleticism, he doesn't have to try hard. He doesn't. His parents do that for him.

Nicole: A sheltered dreamer. During soccer games she's distracted by butterflies and flowers. Also, an unrepentant tattletale.

THE PACHECOS (Latino)

Benny: The unpretentious gladhanding owner/face of Pacheco's Pizza. Think Food Network Chef Guy Fieri. He met his wife while Spring Breaking on South Padre Island.

Maya: Super-friendly behind-the-scenes brains of the restaurant. Like her husband, a practitioner of a laissez faire brand of parenting. Blue collar. Libertarian. An unsentimental realist.

Gabby: Badass sixth grade girl still playing Little League with the boys. She's Tom Sawyer leading our boys into adventure and trouble.

Raquel: She's a 7-year-old fashionista. An aspiring Manhattanite socialite trapped in Texas.

TEASER

OVER BLACK

UMPIRE (O.S.)
Steerike one!

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS - NIGHT

A LITTLE LEAGUE GAME already in progress. The Pacheco's Pizza Outlaws have the bases loaded. A visibly-rattled DONOVAN WELLER (11, White, oddball) steps back into the batter's box.

ON TY BURLESON (30s, Black, intense) standing in the third base coach's box. He gives ridiculously complex signs for a little league game.

IN THE BLEACHERS our White progressive parents DENNIS and ELLIE WELLER watch nervously.

ELLIE
No way that pitcher is Donovan's age. He's got sideburns...Russell Crowe is pitching to our kid.

A row down, the PITCHER'S YOUNG MOM appears offended.

PITCHER'S MOM
Would you care to see his birth certificate, Ma'am?

Ellie is horrified that she's been overheard. She backpedals.

ELLIE
Oh. No need. Total hyperbole. Just -- you know -- worked up.
(then, quietly to Dennis)
We must be sitting in the players' wives section.

Sitting just below the Wellers are three 7-year-old girls: MINNIE WELLER (White, jock), RAQUEL PACHECO (Latina, socialite) and NICOLE BURLESON (Black, sheltered dreamer.)

MINNIE
Hey Gaylord! You pitch like a girl.

DENNIS
Sweetie, that's offensive. To gays ...and girls, I think.

ELLIE
Royalty isn't crazy about it, either.

MINNIE

It's a Gaylord Perry reference.

Ellie looks to Dennis for confirmation. Dennis shrugs. Ellie lets it go. She can't see Minnie smirk to her friends.

Leading off first is CJ BURLESON (11, Black, himbo.) He's distracted by EIGHTH GRADE MINXES in short shorts leaning against the baseline fence. The pitcher nearly picks him off.

CJ's mom, BROOKE BURLESON (30s, Black, super-achiever,) yells at him from the stands.

BROOKE

Get your head in the game, Son!
(then, to girls)
You girls. He's 11. He sleeps with
a SpongeBob night light.

CJ regards his mom, mortified.

ANGLE ON THE PITCHER who delivers the next pitch. Donovan swings painfully late. Strike Two. Ty calls time and jogs down the third baseline, motions Donovan over.

IN THE STANDS. Our unpretentious Latino parents, Benny and MAYA PACHECO watch the game in matching Pacheco Pizza Tees with a caricature of Benny spinning pizza dough on his finger.

BENNY

Oh, good. Ty's coaching up the new kid. What should they do? Squeeze play? Hit and run?

MAYA

Pray for rain, Babe. Pray for rain.

ON THE FIELD Ty huddles with Donovan.

TY

Quite a situation, son. Last at bat. Bases loaded. Two outs. You know what we need now?
(off Donovan's head shake)
We need a hero.

UP IN THE STANDS, Dennis and Ellie remain concerned.

ELLIE

Oh, god. This is exactly why we didn't want him playing. It's too much pressure. This could scar him.

WELLERS' POV: Ty bends down on his knee, puts a supportive hand on Donovan's shoulder.

DENNIS

Ty looks like he's keeping things
in perspective.

BACK ON THE DONOVAN/TY HUDDLE.

TY

(gesturing to the other
team with contempt)
Look at 'em. The Deer Park Huntsmen.
Average Deer Park home goes for two-
point-four million. They're looking
down their nose at you, Donovan.
This is more than a game. This is
class warfare. This is your chance
to stick it to Whitey.

The other team's MASCOT -- a parent dressed in a long red coat, riding breeches and wool-felt top hat blows "Fox Away" on a bugle. The other team's fans respond with a cheer.

DONOVAN

(looking around)
Their catcher is African-American.

TY

He's a race traitor, D. Show him
how we roll in Fairview, dog.

DONOVAN

You know I'm white, right?

TY

Not to me, kid. Not now. You're
better than that.

Adorable tomboy GABBY PACHECO (Latina, 11,) the Outlaw base-runner currently on third, calls out to Donovan.

GABBY

Man up, D. You can do it.

When Gabby speaks to him, Donovan transforms like Popeye after a can of spinach. It's clear the boy is smitten. As he enters the batter's box, he digs his back foot into the dirt and stares down the pitcher. He spits for punctuation.

As the pitcher delivers, we PUSH IN FAST on Donovan's face. His eyes go wide, and we...

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

ON SCREEN: **One Week Earlier.**

EXT. MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK -- MORNING

Our White dad, Dennis, walks the family dog. As the dog pauses to do his business, Dennis puts a plastic bag on his hand. Suddenly, a voice calls out. Dennis looks up, sees neighbor CLAY ELLUM (late 50s, mean) has stepped out on his porch.

CLAY ELLUM

Sir! If that dog follows through on his current mission, you can expect me to return the favor by purging my bowels on your lawn.

It takes a beat for Dennis to determine the man is serious.

DENNIS

That's cool. Just, you know, bag it.

INT. WELLER HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Dennis' wife Ellie finishes up a couple EGG WHITE OMELETS, calls out--

ELLIE

Kids! Breakfast.

Minnie bounds in, takes a seat as Ellie sets plates down.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Where's your brother?

MINNIE

He said he'd be down when he finished his dream journal.

(re: her plate)

Seriously? Egg whites? Can a brother get some yolk?

ELLIE

Sure. And how about a cigarette and a doughnut with all that fat and cholesterol? No ma'am...

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I am *not* Sid Vicious's mother. I will *not* help you kill yourself.

MINNIE

I am *not* Sid Vicious's mother. I will *not* help you kill yourself. *

Ellie shoots Minnie a look, sets a TABLET on her plate.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Here. If you're going to turn up your nose on what's good for you, take this.

MINNIE

(examining tablet)

What's this? *Drugs?* You give me a free taste today, so tomorrow, when I come back for more, you jack up the price.

ELLIE

It's a Flinstones chewable.

MINNIE

So you say. It's anti-drug week at school; Miss Berezowski told us most kids first get hooked from a family member's stash.

ELLIE

It's not a stash. It's a pantry.

MINNIE

("worn down")

Fine...

(pops chewable, reacts)

Yum. More please.

Ellie rolls her eyes, walks away with the jar.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

(begging dramatically)

Please. Hook me up, lady.

Donovan enters carrying something fragile in his hand.

ELLIE

Whatcha got there, Donovan?

DONOVAN

A ladybug crashed into my window. She just needs a little TLC.

Minnie picks a banana out of a bowl on the table.

MINNIE

Maybe she's hungry--

She tosses the banana at Donovan who simply doesn't have the motor skills to deal with these two things at once. In a singularly unathletic catastrophe, he muffs the banana, drops the lady bug and crushes it as he stumbles around.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Classic.

DONOVAN

I'll leave you to your karma.

MINNIE

(dry)

No. Not that.

Dennis returns from walking the dog.

ELLIE

Hey, honey. Reminder. After the game tonight there's a slumber party here with a couple girls from Minnie's team.

DENNIS

(impressed re: Minnie)

Our little assimilator. Two months in Austin, already making friends, fitting in...

(to Ellie)

Have we met the families?

ELLIE

Barely. The Pachecos. They're the people next door...

(soft-pedaling her reservations)

...with the trampoline. And the inflatable movie screen in their back yard. And the refreshingly populist taste in film.

INT. WELLER HOME, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT - PAST

Minnie and Dennis cuddled up on a couch, attempting to read. The sound of MEN SHOUTING, MACHINE GUN FIRE, EXPLOSIONS and a SPEED METAL SCORE next door makes it impossible. Reflected light from the screen shoots through the Weller's window.

EXT. PACHECO BACK YARD -- NIGHT - PAST

Latino couple Benny and Maya soak in an ABOVE-GROUND HOT TUB engrossed in the splatter flick projected on a ten foot inflatable screen. IN THE B.G., we see a disgruntled Ellie appear in her living room window and close the drapes.

INT. WELLER HOME, KITCHEN -- MORNING

As before.

ELLIE

We haven't formally met the
Burlesons, but I pointed them out
to you at Minnie's last game.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS -- DAY - PAST

*ON African-American couple TY and BROOKE screaming at a pee
wee girls soccer game--*

TY

Don't let up, Girls. No
mercy. Step on their throats.

BROOKE

Hey, Ref! If you had one more
eye you'd be a cyclops. *

REVEAL DENNIS and ELLIE gawking at these intense parents.

INT. WELLER HOME, KITCHEN -- MORNING

As before. Dennis taking that in.

DONOVAN

Mr. Burleson is a little league
coach. A lot of the kids in the
neighborhood are on the team.

DENNIS

And I'm sure they benefit from his
passion for sport.

DONOVAN

Maybe you could ask him if I could
join the team.

Donovan sees that his parents have been left speechless.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

What's the big deal? Minnie plays
soccer.

DENNIS

You and your sister are very
different creatures, buddy.

MINNIE

I can walk and chew gum... I don't
cry at the end of Wall-E...

DONOVAN

Because you have no soul.

ELLIE

Are you sure about this? The only
sport you've shown an interest in
is Quidditch.

DONOVAN

New city. New school. New me.

Dennis and Ellie share a look of trepidation.

DENNIS

It might be too late, but I'll look into it.

INT. SECOND GRADE CLASSROOM -- DAY

Minnie, Raquel (Latina, 7) and Nicole (Black, 7) sit in the back of a classroom during a DARE presentation. Minnie whispers to Nicole.

MINNIE

My dad is going to talk to your dad. You've gotta stop this.

A BAG OF MARIJUANA is projected up on screen.

POLICEMAN

--and this is marijuana. Does anyone else know any other names for this drug?

VARIOUS SECOND GRADERS

Weed! Ganja! Pot! Chronic! Herb!

Nicole is riveted to the screen. Minnie snaps her fingers in front of Nicole's face.

MINNIE

My brother playing baseball? It's a joke. I'll go down in history as that spaz's sister--

Nicole shushes Minnie. She is absorbed by the DARE lecture.

VARIOUS SECOND GRADERS

--Maryjane! Skunk! 420! Alabama Cripple Stick! Jolly Green Gangsta!

POLICEMAN

(taken aback)

Moving on. What we have here is a bag of hallucinogenic mushrooms. Also known as *shrooms*--

PUSH IN ON A MESMERIZED NICOLE looking up at a new slide.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Users say they have mind-altering *trips* when they're *shrooming*...

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS -- NIGHT

Our Latino dad, Benny Pacheco, coaches a soccer game played by 7-year-old girls. One of his players gets the ball stolen. She drops to the ground and pouts cross legged while the action moves beyond her. Benny turns to his daughter, Raquel.

BENNY

Raquel, honey, get in there for Kelly.

RAQUEL

Oh my god. No way. Last time, I was all, "hey I'm coming in for you," and she was like, "your dad's the coach, and you think you're so special," and I'm like, I don't think I'm special, but at least my mom didn't come back from Mexico with Katy Perry's boobs --

Intrigued, Benny turns, squints, surveys the crowd.

IN THE BLEACHERS-- Donovan stares longingly at Gabby Pacheco (Latina, 11) as she plays catch with CJ Burleson (Black, 11) on the sidelines. He elbows Dennis, indicates CJ's parents.

DONOVAN

Is now a good time to talk to Mr. Burleson?

Off Dennis. He sees no way out of this.

ON TY AND BROOKE who watch the match with focused intensity.

TY

Benny keeps playing Nicole on the back line. Her talent's wasted back there.

BROOKE

She braided the goalie's hair during her last shift. I think Benny's maxing out her potential.

Dennis approaches, speaks to Ty and Brooke, though neither seem to realize he's there.

DENNIS

Hey guys. I'm Dennis Weller. I wanted to introduce myself. I hear your daughter is spending the night--

Ty and Brooke unexpectedly stand and begin shouting.

ON THE FIELD--

Minnie has broken away from the pack. She buries a shot. Then, hooking her thumbs under her jersey straps, she prances across the field like Rasheed Wallace after a breakaway dunk, capping the over-the-top performance with a 10-foot knee slide into a pack of cheering teammates.

BACK IN THE STANDS Dennis buries his face in his hands, embarrassed by his daughter's *look-at-me* display.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Dear god.

Ty and Brooke celebrate, still oblivious to Dennis' presence.

TY

That new girl's a ringer. Whose kid is she?

BROOKE

I hear she's the daughter of the new principal at the middle school.

DENNIS

Guilty.

(as they finally take note
of him standing there)

Listen, her big brother is interested in playing baseball, and I understand you're the coach. Now I realize it's probably too late--

TY

That's your daughter? The one that just scored her fifth goal?

DENNIS

That's her.

TY

Hell, yeah, I'll take your son.

We hold on Dennis, troubled.

ELSEWHERE ALONG THE SIDELINES Maya Pacheco approaches Ellie.

MAYA

Hey, neighbor. Raquel is so excited about tonight's sleep over.

ELLIE

Oh good. It's all Minnie has been talking about.

MAYA

You mind giving Raquel a ride home with you? Benny and I were hoping to sneak in 20 minutes of alone time -- if you know what I mean --

ELLIE

(really?)

Um...

(then, realizing)

We only have the one booster seat.

MAYA

Well that's one more than we have. She'll be fine. Listen, Fridays are Tarantino night in our back yard. How about, after the girls go down, you and your man join Benny and me in the hot tub...pop open a few cold ones?

ELLIE

Well, you know, we're hosting the slumber party. I kind of feel like we should be there for it.

(isn't this obvious?)

In case anything goes wrong--

MAYA

Oh! That's right. People say you blog for that website: SuperMom.com.

ELLIE

(mildly embarrassed)

Yeah. But the title is ironic. I mean, no one can really be "Super Mom." It's just for mom's like you and me who give it our best shot. Sharing strategies, advice--

MAYA

(already bored)

C'mon! Hot tub! The girls'd be right next door. If the Son of Sam shows up, they could just holler.

Ellie tries to come up with a diplomatic reply. Maya sighs.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I get it -- *prudence*. But you gotta let us welcome you to the neighborhood. Back yard cookout. Monday night. We're hosting. No excuses--

Off Ellie, a deer in headlights.

INT. WELLER HOME - KITCHEN -- MORNING

Slumber party morning after. Minnie, Raquel and Nicole, all garishly made-up and sporting multi-colored hair extensions, giggle around the breakfast table. Ellie fills Raquel's orange juice, manages a strained cheerfulness.

ELLIE

Raquel, be sure to tell your mom those make-over kits were a really fun idea.

Dennis enters swinging his car keys.

DENNIS

We're off to baseball practice.

Ellie angles Dennis away from the girls, lowers her voice.

ELLIE

Are you sure about this, Dennis? We're not in San Jose any more. This is Texas. They're psychotic about this sports stuff. Even cheerleaders' moms kill each other.

DENNIS

Give him time. He'll fit in.

Donovan enters wearing his mom's WIDE-BRIMMED GARDENING HAT.

DONOVAN

Couldn't find a baseball hat, but this should keep the sun out of my eyes.

Ellie sighs. Dennis takes the hat off Donovan's head.

DENNIS

We'll stop at a sporting goods store.

Dennis puts his hand on Donovan's shoulder, steers him toward the back door. As they pass by the table, Minnie throws a fake punch to Donovan's groin. Donovan reflexively cringes.

MINNIE

You'll do great, Stud.

DONOVAN

(recovers, then, innocently)
You look like whores.

MINNIE

Mom!

ELLIE

He makes a valid point, honey.

As Donovan and Dennis head out the door, Ellie picks up a plate of bacon from the stove, takes it over to the girls.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Who wants more bacon?

RAQUEL

Pigs are filthy. I don't eat filthy animals.

The girls all giggle, knowingly. Ellie is confused.

ELLIE

Oh, this is turkey bacon. Locally-sourced--

NICOLE

Yeah, but bacon tastes *gooood*. Pork chops taste *gooood*.

MINNIE

Sewer rats may taste like pumpkin pie, but I'd never know, cuz I wouldn't eat the filthy--

ELLIE

All right.

(realizing)

You watched Pulp Fiction out your window last night.

NICOLE

Minnie watches movies all the time from her window.

MINNIE

God, Nicole! You're such a snitch.

Ellie goes to her window, looks out. She can see the giant inflatable screen in the Pacheco yard. Off her fretting.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS - DAY

Ty Burleson hits a fly ball into the outfield. CJ makes a running catch, fires the ball into a cutoff man.

Donovan prepares to catch the next fly, squints, flinches, sticks his glove up. The ball hits the ground five feet away.

Gabby spears a liner at short, whips the ball to first.

Donovan muffs a slow grounder. He throws his glove at the ball and miraculously stops it. He tracks it down and wings it into the ether between first and home.

Dennis anguishes as he watches Donovan whiff at three fat BP pitches. Ty wanders up to Dennis, speaks through the fence.

TY

Listen, Dennis. Donovan's a good kid, but fall league's for serious players. League says I've gotta play every kid three innings. I'm not sure it's fair to the others to put Donovan out there.

Dennis watches Donovan take another hopeless cut, considers.

DENNIS

I'll talk to him.

TY

That daughter of yours...she adopted?

INT. WELLER HOME - KITCHEN -- DAY

Dennis and Ellie debrief in their kitchen.

ELLIE

It couldn't have been that bad.

DENNIS

On the car ride home, Donovan talked about needing to improve his footwork. It was like Hitler second-guessing his facial hair. I've gotta talk to him, suggest maybe sports isn't his thing.

INT. WELLER HOME - DONOVAN'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Dennis enters Donovan's room and discover's his son has changed into his new baseball uniform. Dennis observes as Donovan models in front of the mirror, proudly striking cartoonish jock poses. Dennis sighs, clears his throat.

DONOVAN

Hey, dad. Check it out. I'm a baseball guy now.

DENNIS

I think they're called "players"

DONOVAN

Great! Now I'm a player.

DENNIS

Well...

(letting that slide)

Listen, son, All those other kids on your team -- they've been at this a while. You sure you're not in over your head a little?

DONOVAN

Dad, I never told you this, but at my old school in California, the other kids thought I was weird.

DENNIS

I'm sure they found you endearingly off-beat.

DONOVAN

No one used those words. The point is, I want to fit in here, and this is my chance.

Dennis nods gravely, conceding the point.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Plus, I'm in love with the shortstop.

Off Dennis's concern.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS -- NIGHT

We return to the baseball game from the teaser.

ON THE DEER PARK HUNTSMAN MASCOT as he blows a "Fox Away" on his horn.

TY BURLESON pulls his eyes away from the mascot. Behind him the opposing team from the teaser warms up.

TY

I hate these pampered-ass rich Deer Park punks.

WIDEN TO REVEAL him delivering a pre-game speech to his team.

TY (CONT'D)

They got the Baby Mozart. Got the Swedish nanny. Got the 600-thread count Egyptian cotton sheets.

(MORE)

TY (CONT'D)
AND they got the 'nads to think
they're comin' to our house and...

Ty trails off as he spots Donovan jogging their way.

DONOVAN (O.S.)
Coach! Hold on. I'm here!

Ty deflates. He looks from Donovan to Dennis, shoots him a "really?" look. All Dennis can do is shrug in response.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELDS - NIGHT

We return to Donovan's at bat from the teaser. Gabby shouts to him from third base.

GABBY (PRELAP)
Man up, D. You can do it!

Donovan digs into the batters box, puffs up. The crowd is going crazy. The intimidating pitcher winds up, delivers.

RETURN TO THE SHOT OF DONOVAN'S EYES GOING WIDE--

At the last moment, Donovan squeezes his eyes shut, and the ball drills him in his ribs. In Peckinpah-homage SLOW MOTION, Donovan grimaces, buckles and collapses in a cloud of dust. Ellie stands, gasps.

ELLIE
My baby!

Outlaw supporters go nuts. Gabby runs in from third, stomps on home plate, throws her arms around Donovan and picks him up. Teammates flood out of the dugout and begin celebrating.

ELLIE (CONT'D)
What is wrong with you people!?

INT. PACHECO'S PIZZA -- NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS BENNY PACHECO as he slices a pizza, takes it from the kitchen and sets it down in front of Donovan, seated at a long table of Outlaw players.

BENNY
On the house for the man of the hour.

Gabby leads CJ over to where Donovan sits.

GABBY
Yo, D-Well. Show CJ your bruise.

Donovan lifts up his jersey revealing a round purple welt.

CJ

Oh, man, that's sick. It's already turning green.

GABBY

Hey, we're going to the park tomorrow. Wanna come?

Donovan lights up.

A COUPLE TABLES OVER Dennis and Ellie register his joy. Ellie warms into a smile. She takes note of Dennis' loopy grin.

ELLIE

What are you grinning about?

DENNIS

The shortstop's a girl.

ELLIE

And..?

DENNIS

Nothing.

(beat, misty)

Look at him. He's fitting in. I think we made the right call.

(calling out to Donovan)

Donovan! Come here, son.

Donovan makes his way over to his parents table.

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Having fun?

DONOVAN

Did you know a hit-by-pitch counts as an RBI?

DENNIS

I did not. Say, you looked ready to crush one up there. What'd your coach say to fire you up?

DONOVAN

He said if the pitcher threw inside again, I should lean into it. Take one for the team.

Off Dennis and Ellie, their jaws dropping to the floor.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. WELLER HOME - KITCHEN -- DAY

Ellie chops veggies. Dennis seems troubled.

ELLIE

I say you just call Ty, tell him what you think of his coaching.

DENNIS

Donovan's got practice in a couple of days, I'll talk to him then. Face to face. I just want to be ready. Now can we try this again? Really get under my skin this time.

ELLIE

Sure, honey.
(gruff male voice)
Dennis Weller. How's it hangin'?

DENNIS

Off center, Ty. ...Frankly. I'm troubled that you resorted to emotional blackmail to get my son to lean into a pitch.

ELLIE

(erupting, fierce, still
in gruff male voice)
Emotional what-mail? Speak English, you sanctimonious Prius-driving, wanna-be Ivy Leaguer. Know what I'm *troubled* by? I'm troubled by the fact, I've got an automatic out coming up to the plate three innings a game because someone wasted this boy's youth with poetry camp and harpsichord lessons.

DENNIS

(rattled)
Whoa! I'm not sure he'll have that kind of insight. Besides, you were on board for the harpsichord.
(excited Ellie voice)
"He'll learn 'Scarborough Faire!'"
(back to his own voice)
Remember?

ELLIE

Stay in character, honey. This is important.

DENNIS

And I could've gotten into Brown; I just didn't apply.

EXT. BACK ALLEY -- DAY

Donovan, Gabby and CJ walk down a residential alley. Donovan operates a REMOTE CONTROLLED TOY HELICOPTER.

CJ

Dude. That thing's awesome.

DONOVAN

(pleased, dreamy)

Sometimes the world from above seems too beautiful, too wonderful, too distant for human eyes to see.

(off their looks)

Lindbergh said that. I can't take credit.

(they're still staring)

It was on the box it came in.

GABBY

I'm guessing you didn't surf much out in California.

DONOVAN

Not a lot. No.

(re: the helicopter)

Uh oh. Losing power. Black Hawk down.

ANGLE ON THE HELICOPTER as it disappears over a fence. Donovan and Gabby each react, aghast.

GABBY

Oh, crap.

DONOVAN

What? What's wrong?

CJ

Sorry, man. Kiss it goodbye. It's not even worth it.

Suddenly, we hear the sound of a MOTOR TURNING OVER.

GABBY

Not this time.

A determined Gabby sprints for the fence. She pulls herself over. CAMERA FOLLOWS her over the fence, revealing the HELICOPTER in the middle of a large manicured back yard.

CLAY ELLUM rides a lawn mower straight for the helicopter. He spots Gabby, shifts into a higher gear. The race is on.

It looks like it'll be a close race, but Clay whistles, and two LARGE DOGS emerge from a DOGGY DOOR at the house. Gabby is forced to retreat, the dogs chasing after her.

CJ and Donovan watch it all from their spot on the safe side of the fence. They urge Gabby on as she races toward them.

Clay runs over the helicopter, shoots plastic shards across his lawn. Gabby launches herself over the fence. She drops to the ground on the other side, and pants. She shouts--

GABBY (CONT'D)

I'm coming for you, Old Man!

EXT. PACHECO HOME - DOORSTEP -- LATE AFTERNOON

Ellie and Dennis step up to the Pacheco's door, push the doorbell. Ellie carries a tray of crudités. Dennis carries a six pack of micro-brew.

ELLIE

Should I say anything to the Pachecos about their outdoor movies? I was really hoping our kids would learn that sex was a loving act between consenting adults, not the prelude to getting a machete through the sternum.

DENNIS

Let's play that by ear. I'm a bit more concerned about this girl he has a crush on. According to her school records, she's got a bit of a checkered history.

Before Ellie can respond, Benny opens the door.

BENNY

Hey, welcome y'all. Come in.
(noticing)
Veggies and beer. Right on. Let me grab those from you.

INT. PACHECO HOME - CONTINUOUS

The trio moves into the house.

DENNIS

I discovered that beer on a micro-brewery tour through Oregon.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

It's a seasonal pumpkin brew with a note of allspice on the finish.

BENNY

I'll put it right under the spotlight in the fridge. I'm gonna run all this to the kitchen. Everyone's out back. The kids are already having a blast.

Benny exits. Dennis and Ellie head toward the patio doors. Dennis takes Ellie's elbow, pauses before they head out.

DENNIS

All right. These folks are gonna be our neighbors for a long time. Let's get our game face on. Eyes on the prize.

ELLIE

You're right. I can do this. I can be laid back. I'm Mrs. Laid Back.

EXT. PACHECO BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

The Weller's enter the Pacheco's back yard. Immediately--

DONOVAN

Hey, Mom! Look!

Ellie and Dennis looks up just as CJ and Gabby double-bounce Donovan on the trampoline rocketing him 12 feet in the air.

ELLIE

Donovan! Get off that trampoline this instant! What have I told you about those things?

Everyone -- Maya, Gabby, CJ, Donovan, Minnie, Raquel, and an older woman we haven't met yet -- turn and stares at Ellie.

DONOVAN

--that you love me too much to see me crippled?

DENNIS

(sotto to Ellie)
Good start.

MAYA

(addressing her daughter)
You're good, Gabby. Keep bouncing. I don't love you quite as much as Super Mom loves her son.

The older woman speaks up.

OLDER WOMAN/INEZ

Gabby, see if you can nail that flip off the garage roof!

MAYA

Dennis and Ellie. This is my mom, Inez. She's going to help with the kids tonight so we can relax, let our hair down.

TY (O.C.)

We're here! This party is in effect!

Dennis and Ellie turn and see Brooke, Ty and Nicole entering through the gate. The Wellers visibly deflate. Dennis attempts to cover for their reaction with sudden enthusiasm.

DENNIS

Look at that! Coach Burleson's family. Everyone's here.

BROOKE

Wouldn't miss it. We've been living in the same neighborhood, coaching each other's kids now for three seasons. You're in the club now!

DENNIS

Fantastic! Anyone else ready for a beer, yet?

Benny steps out of the house unaware of any awkwardness.

BENNY

All right, gang. Dinner is served!

Benny steps back inside. As guests drift toward the back door, Maya raises her hands, makes an announcement.

MAYA

Folks. You are in for a treat. Ask anyone in town who makes the best under-eight-dollar pizza, they'll tell you Benny Pacheco. That's just the tip of the iceberg. My man is also a three-time champion in the State Fair culinary throwdown.

Ad-libbed impressed murmurs as everyone files in. As Ellie passes Maya, attempts to get things back on an even keel.

ELLIE

Wow. A chef next door! Dennis and I are total foodies.

MAYA

Then unhitch that belt, cuz you're in for a ride.

As Ty passes by Dennis, he slaps him on the back.

TY

That boy of yours really came through for us last night.

DENNIS

I'm glad you brought that up--

TY

Gotta admit, I didn't know whether to shoot you or myself when y'all showed up at the game. I thought we had an understanding. Then there he comes, skipping across the field.

DENNIS

I don't think my son's masculinity is really the issue here.

The brewing dispute is cut off by Donovan jumping on Dennis' back.

DONOVAN

Piggy back ride!

INT. PACHECO HOUSE, DINING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Everyone gathers around a long table full of covered trays. As Benny carries out a final covered tray, sets it down--

BENNY

Friends and neighbors, they say my rivals have caught up with me. I beg to differ. Behold Reason 1 why they are -- and shall remain -- my bitches in the deep fryer division.

ELLIE

(sotto: to Dennis, scared)
Deep fryer division? That's a real thing?

BENNY

(pulling off the lid)
First: The Porky Pig.
(MORE)

BENNY (CONT'D)

Caramel filled pork rinds, dipped in chocolate and pecans, battered, deep fried and served with maple syrup dipping sauce.

ELLIE

(blanches, then sotto: to Dennis)

I'll fake a seizure. You grab the kids.

DENNIS

(sotto: to Ellie)

Eyes on the prize, Mrs. Laid Back.

BENNY

Choice two: The Starving Cardiologist. A refried chicken-fried steak-on-a-stick inside a strawberry waffle crust. Queso-filled, tallow-fried and smothered in a Dr. Pepper-brown sugar glaze.

TY

Well, hell yeah. Get me a bib and a defibrillator.

DENNIS

(gamely chiming in)

You had me at "tallow."

BENNY

Last, but not least -- Don't Messal With Texas: A tequila-cream-stuffed beignet slathered with butter rum frosting -- don't strike a match near this monster!

BROOKE

Oh, Benny. You have outdone yourself, my friend.

ELLIE

(meekly)

Is my veggie plate here, somewhere?

(to Donovan, Minnie)

Kids, Ants On A Log!

MINNIE

(eyeing the beignet)

Get bent, Mom.

(off Ellie's look)

...is something I heard Bart Simpson say once.

BENNY

I didn't forget about you, Ellie.
They're right here.

Benny pulls the lid off a final tray revealing that he's deep fried all the veggies as well.

TIGHT SHOT of Dennis squeezing Ellie's hand. She takes a deep breath.

FOREBODING SCORE slowly swells, evokes Agent Starling sneaking through Buffalo Bill's lair.

Ellie takes a small sample from one of the trays. A look passes between Ellie and Dennis as she raises the fork.

ELLIE

Hey, you only live once.

SCORE BUILDS as Ellie takes a tentative bite and begins to chew. The tension has become unbearable.

MAYA

Mom! Turn down the damn TV.

ANGLE ON THE LIVING ROOM where we can see the back of Inez's head as she watches TV on the couch.

INEZ

Sorry!

Inez uses the remote to turn down the Hitchcockian thriller.

MAYA

(whispers)
She's losing her hearing.

BENNY

So, what do you think?

PUSH IN ON ELLIE. A tear has appeared in her eye. Then, almost rapturously--

ELLIE

It's...incredible. It's amazing. I
want to bathe in this sauce.

It's a Mikey-likes-it moment. Hoorays all around.

MAYA

Everyone dig in!

People grab paper plates, pile on food. Dennis devours caramel pork rinds like a starving dingo. Then, through a full mouth--

DENNIS

You have well and truly made those
other guys your bitches.

TY

(amused agreement)
Well and truly, old sport.

BROOKE

You're a bad, bad man, Benny
Pacheco.

The enthusiastic response to the meal has Benny beaming.

ELLIE

Why haven't I deep fried everything
I've ever eaten?
(spoken to her chest)
Suck it up, arteries.
(back to Benny)
What else can you do this to?

BENNY

Step into my kitchen--

Kids load more on plates, resume gorging. The tide of the
party has turned. All lingering tensions dissipate.

INT. PACHECO HOUSE, KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Benny pulls items out of his fridge, presenting them to
Ellie. First, a stick of butter.

BENNY

Deep-fried butter? Kinda 2008, but
an old school classic.
(pulling out a jello mold)
Jello! They say it can't be done,
but I'm working on the physics.

Benny and Ellie don't notice as Nicole pushes through the
swinging kitchen door. She freezes as she hears Benny say--

BENNY (CONT'D)

And check these killer 'shrooms! We
can do these tonight. People won't
know what hit 'em. This is going to
blow their minds.

We push in on Nicole. Her mind is already blown.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEEXT. PACHECO BACK YARD -- NIGHT

Several margaritas later -- as evidenced by empty glasses and our adults' overall gregariousness. No kids are present.

We join an energetic game of Charades in progress. Ellie, Maya and Ty on one side; Dennis, Brooke and Benny on the other. Benny approximates the "Running Man" dance.

BROOKE

(excited)

The Running Man? Dead Man Jogging.

Benny shakes his head, waves off the clue. He takes a new tact, stomping his foot, clapping in a herky-jerky manner.

TY

(off his watch, gleefully
counting down)

Ten seconds... Nine...

DENNIS

My Left Foot!

BROOKE

(floundering)

Hee Haw? Monkey with cymbals?

Benny moans, completely exasperated, switches to a dance move in which he spans an imaginary partner's ass.

DENNIS

Spanking the Monkey!

TY

Time! Game over, baby! Ha!

Groans from Benny's team. Benny is flabbergasted.

BENNY

C'mon! Boogie! Boogie Nights!

BROOKE

(incredulous)

For real? That's your boogie?

BENNY

Boogie means dance, right? What was I doing? I was *dancing*.

Benny looks for confirmation. Maya and the Wellers fidget, look away.

BROOKE

Dancing? That's what you call that?

TY

(to Brooke)

Hey, lay off Benny. This is on you.
My boy had his boogie shoes on. I
got boogie fever just watching him.
I was transported to a boogie
wonderland.

(in Brooke's face)

How's all that smack talk feel now?

(a bad Brooke impression)

My husband can't play charades. My
husband can't count syllables. My
husband can't decipher basic human
gestures--

BROOKE

Let's see if you can decipher this
basic human gesture.

ON A TIPSY ELLIE as Brooke makes her gesture.

ELLIE

Oh, I know that one.

MAYA

(to Ellie)

Clearly, more drinks are in order.

ELLIE

(going with the flow)

Really? That's where--? Okay...

INT. PACHECO HOUSE -- NIGHT

Maya leads Ellie through the living room where we see Inez
watching TV while the three younger girls shoot Nerf guns at
each other. Ellie surveys the tableau, furrows her brows--

ELLIE

Guns?

INT. PACHECO KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Maya enters, begins pouring ingredients into a blender.

ELLIE

Hey, did you see the big kids?

MAYA

(shouting)

Mom! Where're Gabby and the boys?

INEZ (O.C.)
Oh, they went out.

ELLIE
Out? Out where?

MAYA
(shouting)
Out where, Mom?

INEZ (O.C.)
(annoyed)
We're watching Criminal Minds!

MAYA
Shoot. Looks like we're out of the
tequila balls.

ELLIE
There were, like, 30 left.
(realizing)
Oh, god. What if the kids took
them?

MAYA
I'm sure they're fine.

ELLIE
How can you be so blasé?

Maya's shoulders slump. This is a bridge too far.

MAYA
Blasé. Is that French for I don't
care about my kids?

ELLIE
(backpedaling)
Oh, no--

MAYA
I get it. I shouldn't let my kids
jump on a trampoline or play with
toy guns. I should feed them baby
carrots. I should keep my daughter
in a car seat until she reaches
puberty.

ELLIE
I don't care how you raise your
kids except when it affects mine.
My boy is missing with 30 100-proof
pastries.

(MORE)

ELLIE (CONT'D)

My daughter threatened to go medieval on my ass when I asked her to pick up my room.

MAYA

And how is that my fault?

ELLIE

She's watching Pulp Fiction and every other violent, erotic, nihilistic cinematic masterpiece you screen in your back yard.

MAYA

There's a tree!

ELLIE

What?

MAYA

There's no way she can see the screen. The tree is in the way.

Off Ellie's disbelief.

EXT. PACHECO BACK YARD - NIGHT

Brooke and Benny are still into it over charades.

BENNY

I know what this is -- it's a black thing. You think no one else knows how to dance.

BROOKE

Definitely not Mexicans. But it's not your fault. There's no damn bass in your music. Just accordions.

BENNY

You think that's all there is to Latino music?

As Brooke and Benny continue their argument, Ellie and Maya buzz by behind them, both with a head of steam, Ellie carrying a pair of Nerf guns.

CAMERA GOES WITH ELLIE AND MAYA--

MAYA

You're crazy. There's no way they can see the screen from there.

As Maya and Ellie pass by Dennis and Ty, CAMERA STAYS ON THE MEN, already debriefing about the baseball game.

TY

You're mad about *that*? You should be handing me a coach of the year trophy. Would you rather he strike out? Lose the game? He needs *someone* to teach him to be a man.

DENNIS

You're a psycho. You ordered a little boy to take a fastball in the ribs.

TY

Oh, I see your problem. You think that shit hurts.

(calling to Benny)

Benny! You got a baseball handy?

INT. POLICE CRUISER - MOVING -- NIGHT

Two cops, one male, one butch-y female, drive slowly down a street shining their spotlight on the house numbers painted on the curbs. They pull up in front of the Pacheco house--

BUTCH FEMALE COP

(droll)

2511 -- this is our drug den.

The cops park, get out of the car.

EXT. PACHECO HOUSE -- NIGHT

As the cops get out, we hear Santana's psychedelic classic "Black Magic Woman" cranked in the back yard. Our female officer signals the male officer to follow her to the gate.

EXT. PACHECO BACK YARD - NIGHT

IN FRONT OF THE MOVIE SCREEN. Ellie performs a surprisingly on-the-money Al Pacino Scarface imitation while brandishing the twin Nerf guns.

ELLIE

Say hello to my little friends!

ANGLE ON MAYA who has climbed the tree between the houses.

MAYA

(shouting down)

I can see your shoe! Your *shoe*!

(facetious)

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

Oh no! My moral foundation is crumbling! Let's go do a drive by!

ON THE BACK PATIO. Brooke and Dennis are involved in a dance-off, each performing parodies of the other's ethnic dance styles: booty-popping soul sister/passionate Latino stud.

BROOKE

"Aieeee-yi yi! Hey, macarena!

BENNY

Unnh! Uh huh! Uh huh!

OUT IN THE BACK YARD, we find Ty, unimpressed.

TY

C'mon, Baby. Throw the thing. Hurt me! You can't do it! I'm Superman!

A ball flies in and nails Ty in the chest.

TY (CONT'D)

All day, baby. All day.

Ty picks up the ball off the ground, tosses it back to an agitated Dennis who begins another windup.

ANGLE ON OUR TWO COPS WATCHING THIS PLAY OUT.

The cranked Santana song has reached a particularly druggy refrain as the cops glance at each other, mystified. Then...

BUTCH FEMALE COP

Hey!

All our adults turn. With his attention diverted, Ty takes a baseball to the nuts. He collapses in a heap.

BUTCH FEMALE COP (CONT'D)

Raise your hands if you're on drugs!

INT. PACHECO HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

CAMERA PANS the room landing on each of our sheepish adults. Ty has a bag of frozen peas on his crotch.

BUTCH FEMALE COP

Every time the DARE program visits a local elementary school, we end up fielding calls very much like this one.

(considering)

Well, not quite like this one.

MALE COP

Child Protective Services will have to follow up on this as well.

Brooke eyes Nicole, who along with Minnie and Raquel, is spying from behind the kitchen island.

BROOKE

Child Protective Services may have their work cut out for them after I debrief my daughter about this.

ELLIE

CPS? Is that necessary? Dennis and I are truly conscientious parents.

MAYA

And the rest of us aren't?

Every parent jumps in, ad-libbing protestations. Our female cop, sighs, interjects--

BUTCH FEMALE COP

If I can be so bold, from what we've seen tonight, maybe it's best if you three families avoid hanging out. On your own, I'm sure you're all great parents.

TY

Damn straight, we are.

All the parents ad-lib their vigorous assent. Just then, our male cop's radio squawks.

POLICE DISPATCHER (O.S.)

Unit 16. We've got a disturbance call in your vicinity. Three juveniles. Two male. One female. African-American. Anglo. Hispanic.

All six parents realize this must be their kids. They eye each other nervously, wondering who will crack.

ELLIE

Oh god. It's not their fault. They're probably drunk...

Before the cops can process this information, there's SHARP KNOCKING at the front door. Benny gets up to answer it.

Standing on the other side is neighbor Clay Ellum. He's got CJ, Donovan and Gabby with him. He's carrying a Hefty Bag bulging with toilet paper rolls. He addresses the cops.

CLAY ELLUM

(addressing cops)

I saw the patrol car over here, and I figured I could save a step. I caught these three punks running away from my car with all this toilet paper. I'd say their intention was pretty obvious. Cuff 'em, boys.

(to the kids)

Hands against the wall. Spread those feet.

(then to Gabby)

Miss Pacheco, I'm sure you already know the routine.

BUTCH FEMALE COP

Hold on, Sir. Did they actually TP the house? We can't write 'em up for bad intentions.

CLAY ELLUM

No toilet paper in the trees, but one of 'em did stuff my tailpipe full of pastries of some sort.

ELLIE

Oh, thank god. That's what they were doing with them.

MALE COP

Gabby, wasn't it clear the last time that you were out of warnings?

CLAY ELLUM

Clear cut vandalism. No more candy-ass warnings for this troublemaker. I pay taxes.

GABBY

You know what? I'd do it ag--

Before Gabby can get out her defiant confession, Donovan surprises everyone by stepping in front of her.

DONOVAN

I did it. I stuffed the beignets in the tailpipe.

All eyes shift to Donovan.

DENNIS

Donovan. Why on earth would you--

DONOVAN

He ran over my helicopter with his lawn mower.

CLAY ELLUM

It was on my property.

TY

(to Clay)

You're one mean old bastard.

(to Donovan)

Sounds like he had it coming. Nice job, Donovan.

CJ, seeing the respect earned through Donovan's confession, jumps in with a bit of his own.

CJ

I super-glued his mailbox! He has two of my footballs!

BUTCH FEMALE COP

Looks like everything kinda balances out here.

(addressing Clay)

Mailbox and a tailpipe for helicopter and a couple of footballs. Justice is served.

CLAY ELLUM

If you say so, sir.

Clay turns toward the door. He pauses, takes a parting shot.

CLAY ELLUM (CONT'D)

And you wonder why they turn out rotten.

The cops regard each other, shrug.

BUTCH FEMALE COP

I think our work here is done.

The cops ad-lib goodbyes, head out the door.

GABBY

Mr. and Mrs. Weller. Everyone knows I did it. Truth is -- Donovan tried to talk me out of it. He said there was no revenge so sweet as forgiveness, but that sounded kinda retarded to me, so I didn't listen.

HEART-TUGGING SCORE begins seeping into the scene.

ELLIE

(moved)

Thanks, Gabby. You're a good kid.
Maybe you could avoid using that--

(stopping herself)

You're a good kid. The end.

(addressing Maya)

Maya, I'm sorry I slighted you as a
parent. Clearly, you know what
you're doing.

TY

And you know what, Dennis. Donovan
doesn't need anyone teaching him
how to be a man. You've done a damn
fine job already.

ORCHESTRAL STRINGS BUILD TO A MAWKISH CRESCENDO

DENNIS

You know what, I think all of our
kids have really shown us
something. We must all be doing
something right to raise such--

MAYA

(sharply)

MOM! The volume!

ANGLE ON INEZ in front of the TV, remote in one hand,
cocktail in the other. She dials down the volume.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(apologetic, whispering)

Her hearing--

INEZ

My hearing's fine. I'm trying to
drown out this Leave it to Beaver
horseshit.

DONOVAN

(realizing, perturbed)

Wait a minute. What's this business
about me not being man enough?

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

EXT. PACHECO BACK YARD -- NIGHT

ANGLE ON THE INFLATABLE MOVIE SCREEN.

Steven Seagal throws a screaming foreigner off a rooftop.

REVEAL all six kids hot tubbing, their eyes glued to the screen, Inez passed out in the middle of them.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET -- NIGHT

All six of our grown-ups are ducked down behind a car. They're giggling, tipsy and a bit winded.

ELLIE

This is awesome.

TY

I say we get the back yard, too.
Who's in?

Ad-libbed gung-ho assent. Everybody's on board. All our players exit frame.

CRANE SHOT PULLS BACK REVEALING Clay Ellum's front yard has been toilet papered into the stone age. There's not a square inch uncovered by Charmin.

We see our six adults, armed with more rolls of toilet paper, climbing drunkenly over Ellum's back yard fence.

A beat. Then--

BACK YARD FLOOD LIGHTS COME ON AS AN ALARM SOUNDS.

A moment later, we hear the sounds of two snarling, barking dogs emerging from inside the house.

We FREEZE as our terrified parents' faces appear above the fence as they try to escape.

END OF SHOW