

[SCENE START]

EXT. ELIAS'S BACKYARD - DAY

It is the picture of Canadian normalcy. The lawn is immaculate. A sprinkler CLICKS rhythmically, watering a small, well-tended garden. The smell of burgers on a propane grill hangs in the bright, sunny air.

A half-dozen families from the neighborhood are milling about, drinking beer from cans, laughing. Kids shriek with delight as they run through the sprinkler. This is a "welcome to the neighborhood" BBQ for the three new families that recently moved in.

Across the lawn, "JOSHAWA LE'CLAIR" (32) is the life of the party. He leans against the deck railing, holding a can of Coors Light and telling an animated story to a group of other dads, who are roaring with laughter.

JOSHAWA

So I swear, the guy at the registry looks at my Quebec plate and says, 'Welcome to Alberta! First lesson: we don't honk our horns here unless a moose is actively on fire.' I had no idea what to say! In Montreal, a horn is like a second language!

He is the charismatic, friendly new guy. He seems to have no connection to anyone else.

Nearby, MAYA (26) sits on a patio chair, picking at a paper plate of pasta salad. She's in a quiet conversation with another young mom, SARAH. Maya seems shy, introverted, letting Sarah lead while she occasionally nods and offers a small smile.

SARAH

...so the waitlist for the good daycare near the community league is just insane. Is your little one starting school this year?

MAYA

(She gives a practiced, slightly sad smile)

Oh, um, no. He's with his dad this weekend. It's just... better for him to have the stability, you know? With the move and everything.

She appears completely normal, another young mom making small talk.

At the grill, ELIAS (38), in a plain t-shirt and jeans, looks every bit the part of the friendly, slightly quiet new neighbor. He expertly flips a row of burgers, his movements economical and precise.

DAVE (40s), another neighbor, wanders over to the grill, holding an empty can of beer.

DAVE

Lookin' good, Elias. Don't burn 'em now.

ELIAS

(He offers a soft, disarming smile)

The key is patience, Dave. A lesson I'm still trying to learn.

DAVE

(Sighs, shaking his head)

Tell me about it. Got my carbon tax rebate. Fifty-three bucks. Barely covers the gas to get to the job I don't have anymore. Meanwhile, they're sending billions back east for God knows what.

Elias chuckles sympathetically. He doesn't say anything political. He just gives a quiet, knowing nod. It's a gesture of pure validation. Dave, feeling heard, gives him a friendly pat on the shoulder and wanders off to rejoin the party.

Alone at the grill, Elias flips a final burger. He then pulls his phone from his pocket, a natural, modern motion. He squints at the screen as if checking a recipe or a timer for the grill. He then places the phone, screen-down, on the polished stainless-steel side-table of the BBQ.

THE FINAL SHOT OF THE EPISODE:

CAMERA PUSHES IN SLOWLY on the reflective metal of the grill's side-table.

The world behind Elias—the idyllic, sun-drenched BBQ—is reflected on its surface in BEAUTIFUL SLOW MOTION. We see kids running, Dave laughing with Joshawa, Maya chatting with Sarah. A perfect, innocent scene.

Then, the CAMERA PUNCHES IN, focusing tightly on the reflection of the phone's screen on that same metal surface.

And the world in the reflection explodes into slow motion.

It's not a recipe. It's the stark, black VSI AEGIS INTERFACE.

Text flashes across the screen at an impossible speed: **TARGET ACQUIRED:**
DAVE_HENDERSON. INITIATING PROFILE SCULPTING...

What follows is a dizzying, 1 second visual of Aegis hijacking and rebuilding Dave's entire digital life at hyper speed.

- The Facebook icon flashes. A dozen "likes" appear on secessionist pages. It joins three private "Alberta Action Front" groups.
- The YouTube icon flashes. A dozen subscriptions to right-wing commentary channels are added. His "watch later" playlist is populated.
- The Spotify icon flashes. His podcast queue is instantly filled with VSI-approved, anti-Ottawa content.
- A flurry of Google searches are executed: "Alberta independence," "federal equalization unfair," "join the Alberta Action Front," "proof of carbon tax failure."

The entire hack takes maybe three seconds of screen time.

The Aegis interface flashes one final message: **PROFILE SCULPTING COMPLETE. ASSET CULTIVATION PHASE INITIATED.**

The phone's screen goes dark.

BACK TO SLOW MOTION: We stay on the shot of the side-table. Elias's hand enters the frame and picks up the phone. He pockets it without looking at it.

He turns and, with his tongs, calmly places a perfectly cooked burger on a bun. His expression is neutral, friendly. The perfect new neighbor.

In the background, out of focus, Maya and Joshawa continue to laugh and talk with the other families, completely oblivious.

FADE TO BLACK.

[END OF EPISODE]