SIN CITY

"PILOT"

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - DAY

The desert. Empty. Biblical. Camera ZOOMS over a hill and there it is. Las Vegas.

VINCE (V.O.)
My father always compared Las Vegas to Sodom and Gomorrah. He said 'on your way out of the city, you'll see the people who looked back turned into pillars of salt.' Me? I like salt.

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN - DAY

A hand on a SALT SHAKER over a plate of scrambled eggs. Reveal VINCENT SMITH, 30s, self-assured with a child-like glint in his eye, dressed as a room service waiter.

He's talking to ALICE JONES, 30s, blonde, glasses, in a hotel maid uniform. They're testing high-tech hidden earpiece COMMS. At least she is. He's still focused on the eggs.

Vince puts the cover on the plate, loads it on a room service TRAY. He turns to go, then stops.

VINCE
What are you calling this?

ALICE
Calling what?

VINCE
This con.

ALICE
(thinks)
"Methodology in Criminal Recidivism."

VINCE
Okay, I know you're new to this, but cons have romantic names. "The Spanish Prisoner." "The Fiddle Game."

ALICE
Well, this "operation" is based on research by the University of New Mexico.

VINCE
Is that supposed to make me feel better?

ALICE
Look, we need proof that Dale Dawson killed his wife. This is the best way to do it. Call it whatever you want. Now let's review.

Alice takes out a small NOTEBOOK. Vince reacts. She does this a lot.

ALICE
You knock. Dawson comes to the door. What's next?

Vince doesn't respond. Instead, he pours all the salt from the shaker into a coffee cup and hands the empty shaker to Alice.

With a flourish, he snaps his fingers over the cup and shows the salt has vanished. Vince points to the shaker sitting in Alice's palm. It's full again. He does this a lot.

ALICE
(sighing)
Just go.

INT. HOTEL SUITE / HALLWAY - DAY

Trashed. DALE DAWSON, 40s, real estate developer and middle-aged frat boy, is in his underwear, passed out on the bed.

VINCE (O.S.)
Room service.

A hung-over Dawson crosses to the door. Vince enters with his room service tray. Passing the half-open door to the bathroom, Vince sees something, drops the tray and screams.

It's a WOMAN'S LEG hanging out of the bathtub. Vince and Dawson enter the bathroom.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A very pretty young woman (we'll later meet as SAMANTHA) is underwater, bruised and dead. It's every man's Las Vegas nightmare.

Dawson is in shock. Vince turns to go. Dawson stops him.

DAWSON
Where are you going?

VINCE
I'm calling the cops.

DAWSON
Wait... I didn't do this. I've never seen this girl in my life. I swear.

Vince looks around at the empty liquor bottles, sees a trail of CLOTHES, a man's and a woman's, leading to Dawson's bed.

VINCE
You sure about that?

At this, there is urgent KNOCKING on the door.

ALICE (O.S.)
Housekeeping.

Dawson shoves past Vince. We INTERCUT with Alice in the hallway. She speaks with a vaguely Eastern European accent.

DAWSON
Later, please!

ALICE (O.S.)
Are you okay, sir? I heard a crash.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dawson opens the door a crack. Alice is there with a HOUSEKEEPING CART.

DAWSON
Tripped on the coffee table.

ALICE
Do you need ambulance?

DAWSON
No. No. I'm fine. Thank you.

He throws a DO NOT DISTURB on the door and closes it quickly. Alice smiles, heads down the hall. She's met by GIGI SANTANA, 40s, no-nonsense.

GIGI
I have a show in twenty minutes. You promised to return it.

ALICE
Just a little longer, Gigi. We're kinda busy here.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Dawson locks the door, turns back to a nervous Vince.

DAWSON
Don't move.

Dawson crosses to the FLOOR SAFE. He punches in the combination, opens it and breathes a sigh of relief. It's there. A GYM BAG. He opens it. It's full of CASH.

On top of the cash is a PISTOL. Vince doesn't have to act nervous. He is. A beat and Dawson moves the gun away.

DAWSON
I'll give you ten grand not to call the cops. I'll give you twenty to help me.

Vince considers this for a moment. Really milks it.

VINCE
I can help you get her out of the hotel. After that, you're on your own.

Dawson is relieved. Welcome to Vegas, where any room service waiter will help you ditch a dead hooker for a price.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

Vince bursts into the hallway and rejoins Alice, on the move. Gigi tags along.

ALICE
What are you doing? That was supposed to take ninety seconds!

VINCE
The mark has to think it's all his idea. Hi, Gigi.

GIGI
Hi, Vince. That's a good color on you.

VINCE
Thank you.

ALICE
(to Vince)
What about Samantha? She's been underwater. For five --
(checks her watch)
-- now six minutes!

VINCE
What's your point?

Vince smiles and we --

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Vince and Alice are at a bar. Behind them is an enormous AQUARIUM filled with exotic fish. Suddenly, behind Alice's head, Samantha swims into view. She's dressed as a MERMAID. Alice sees her, reacts in shock. Vince smiles and we --

WHIP PAN BACK TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Vince, Alice, and Gigi round a corner where Alice has collected a bunch of different sized SUITCASES. Through the following, Vince looks them over.

VINCE
(to Alice)
Is this all you could find?

ALICE
There is no way a woman --

VINCE
-- a mermaid.

ALICE
-- could stay submerged for that long!

VINCE
Of course not. That's why I brought the leg.

ALICE
The leg?

INT. HOTEL SUITE / BATHROOM - DAY

Dawson is on the floor, rocking back and forth. He peeks inside the bathroom, sees the leg dripping water on the tile. He shudders and resumes rocking.

We ZOOM OVERHEAD revealing the leg is a fake, suction-cupped to the side of the tub. Samantha, now in a bathrobe, is hiding behind the door.

Vince enters the suite with a medium-sized SUITCASE. Dawson looks at it and panics.

DAWSON
It's not big enough.

VINCE
It's all I could find. That's why I brought you this.

He opens the suitcase, takes out a HACK SAW, tosses it on the floor next to Dawson. Dawson's eyes open wide in horror. He looks at the leg dangling out of the tub.

DAWSON
I -- I can't.

VINCE
I'll do it.

Dawson is both surprised and relieved. Then --

VINCE
For another ten. Thirty grand total.

Dawson considers this, nods. He grabs a half-empty bottle of booze and crosses back to the bed.

Vince picks up the hack saw, enters the bathroom and closes the door behind him. He's alone with Samantha.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Samantha smiles. Vince pulls her into a passionate kiss.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

ON Alice as she listens over the comm to Vince mixing business with pleasure.

REVEAL Gigi is there, still waiting for something. Alice sighs, takes off her WIG. She's not a blonde. It was a disguise. She hands it to Gigi.

GIGI
You think I got nothin' better to do than to help you two? I got showgirls to prep.

Fluffing the wig, Gigi crosses off in a huff as we --

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - LATER

Alice, still dressed as a maid but now wearing latex gloves, cleans up. On the TV a woman NEWS REPORTER does a stand up from the desert. The CHYRON reads: "LAS VEGAS DEVELOPER DALE DAWSON ARRESTED."

NEWS REPORTER (ON TV)
When police found Dawson in the desert with a shovel, the K9 unit picked up a scent that lead them to human remains buried nearby. Authorities believe they could belong to Dawson's wife, who vanished nearly two years ago.

Vince enters from the bathroom with a now-clothed Samantha.

NEWS REPORTER (ON TV)
What Dawson was doing in the desert with a suitcase filled with bags of salt remains a mystery.

Vince smiles. Alice clicks it off. Samantha turns to them.

SAMANTHA
Is that what this was all about?

VINCE
The cops knew Dawson killed his wife for the insurance money but her body was never found so the DA had no case.

ALICE
A landmark study proved that criminals are creatures of habit. That means if you want to find out where a murderer disposed of a body, just give him another one and chances are he'll go back to the exact same location.

VINCE
This time. Let's see it work again before we start making bank on it.

Alice reacts to the dig. Vince takes out the stack of CASH he got from Dawson.

VINCE
Lucky for us, I managed to shake thirty grand off Mr. Dawson. Here's your take.

Vince peels off FIVE GRAND and hands it to Samantha. She kisses Vince again and exits. Alice turns to him.

ALICE
Yeah, you got us paid -- by putting all of us at risk. What if Dawson had spotted the fake leg in the bathtub?

VINCE
He didn't. Just like you didn't.

ALICE
Didn't what?

Vince points to the SMOCK of her maid uniform. She reaches into the front pocket and takes out the SALT SHAKER. How'd that get there? She can't help but smile a little. Then --

ALICE
Please stop putting stuff in my disguises. It makes it really hard to play my part.

VINCE
You mean Magda, the hotel maid from Moldova?

ALICE
Estonia.

VINCE
Right. That's from your "Magda character breakdown," right? What does her father do in Estonia?

ALICE
Motorcycle mechanic.

VINCE
You were bringing towels. How'd you think that was going to come up?

ALICE
Too many ways to count. My job is to worry about that.

Vince smiles. That's the book on Alice, right there.

ALICE
Which reminds me, are you prepared for our next target?

VINCE
Of course. Who is he again?

ALICE
Jonas Steele. International arms dealer. Scary dude. Just arrived in Vegas. Remember, he has to come to your show tomorrow night. Any idea how you're going to make that happen?

VINCE
In the works.

ALICE
If he doesn't, the whole thing falls apart.

Vince heads for the door then stops, looks at her. Alice notices.

ALICE
What?

VINCE
Nobody worries this much in Vegas. You need to have a little fun.

Vince exits. Off ALICE we --

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

Quick shots of the Vegas strip in all its neon glory.

INT. CASINO FLOOR - DAY

FIND JONAS STEELE, 50s, powerfully built, impeccably dressed, as he gets his shoes shined, tapping his foot. He's reading a newspaper.

Under the HOROSCOPE he sees an ad that has been circled in red.

“MR. STEELE, YOU HAVE BEEN INVITED. YOUR PHONE WILL RING AT 21:15 HOURS. ANSWER IT.”

Steele isn’t puzzled. He’s excited. He knows what this is.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Steele walks down the hallway. His phone RINGS. He answers.

MODULATED VOICE (OVER PHONE)
Look in your left sock.

He does and finds a CASINO CHIP. It starts to GLOW. One side says “V.I.P. GAMING, WEST ENTRANCE” and a KEY CODE. The other side says “PLAY ME.”

INT. CASINO FLOOR - NIGHT

Steele navigates the maze of the casino, finds the door with a keypad. He punches in the code. The door unlocks.

INT. EMPTY ROOM - NIGHT

An empty room with a single SLOT MACHINE in the center. Steele deposits the chip, pulls the lever. Clank! The door locks behind him and the room is plunged into total darkness.

Steele stumbles around, trying to get his bearings. Then, a hidden door opens to --

INT. MAGIC SHOW - NIGHT

-- a luxury, speak-easy type lounge. An audience of about fifty other impeccably dressed, impossibly RICH MEN AND WOMEN, stand, surrounding a circular area of light.

Enter Vincent Smith. No top hat. No sequins. He’s in a perfectly tailored Tom Ford suit. For the first time, we see Vince as he really is.

Performing in the round, Vince’s show is immersive, intimate, almost dangerous. ALL MAGIC IS PERFORMED LIVE. NO VFX. NO CUTS.

Vince selects a WEALTHY MATRON from the audience. She’s wearing expensive JEWELRY and a diamond-encrusted WATCH. A slow song plays.

VINCE
Don’t worry. I won’t bite. Not yet.

Vince takes the Wealthy Matron's hand. They begin to dance -- as he systematically removes every piece of her jewelry without her knowing it.

I-MAG cameras capture Vince's hands, displaying projected video on large ART FRAMES hanging around the room.

INT. MAGIC STOREROOM - NIGHT

We reveal the art frames displaying the video are actually two-way mirrors. Behind them, watching all this, is Alice and DAVID WYATT, late 40s, a world-weary ex-spy.

They are in Vincent Smith's spacious and magically-appointed backstage green room. This will be our HQ. Through the following, Alice takes notes on Steele's reactions.

ALICE
Why is he dancing with that woman? Are you sure he knows who the target is?

WYATT
It was in the file.

ALICE
You think he reads the file?

WYATT
Okay, I know Vince has a more... improvisational style than you. But in just three weeks together you two got the goods on two criminals. This is working.
(beat)
Right?

Alice takes a breath.

ALICE
Look, you had a great idea -- running stings on bad guys while they're partying in Vegas. Their guard is down, their appetite for risk is up. And Mr. Vincent Smith is perfect for the job. He knows everyone you could possibly need in Vegas to pull off a sting. Costumers! Mermaids!

WYATT
But he doesn't see where you fit in.

ALICE
To be honest David, I'm not sure I do either. I'm a forensic psychiatrist, not a showgirl.

WYATT
Who did a helluva job figuring out how to get Dale Dawson. Doesn't matter how Vince sees it.

ALICE
He and I approach cons differently. Illusion versus science. I get that. That's not the issue.

WYATT
What is it then?

ALICE
Trust. For this to work out, we have to trust each other. I don't even know why he agreed to do this. We're running these cons off the books. If we get caught, we go to jail. The idea that he's doing this because he "lives for the rush" -- I don't buy it.

Wyatt considers this for a moment.

WYATT
As the one who's keeping <u>both</u> your secrets, do you want me to tell him why you left the F.B.I.?
(off Alice's look)
Hey, I didn't mean--

ALICE
It's all right.

INT. MAGIC SHOW - NIGHT

Back to the show. Vince chooses six members of the audience and lines them up.

VINCE
A game is always measured by its stakes. That's the beauty of Russian Roulette. Only one bullet in a six chamber revolver.

Then, for the first time, Vince turns his attention to Steele, beckoning him to step forward.

VINCE
How about you. You up for a little wager?

Steele looks around at the crowd. He speaks with a South African accent.

STEELE
(smiling)
What's the bet?

VINCE
Let's say all the cash in your wallet.

There is a murmur in the crowd. These are high rollers. Steele is on the spot.

STEELE
Sure.

Vince gestures to the group of six he's lined up.

VINCE
Now, pick a number between one and six.

STEELE
That's it? Three.

Vince takes out an elegant BUTTERFLY KNIFE. Flips it open.

VINCE
Life is full of choices. The question is, do those choices belong to you?

INT. MAGIC STOREROOM - SAME TIME

Alice and Wyatt watch as Vince rears back and throws the knife directly at the Third Man in line! The crowd GASPS.

Then -- the knife DISAPPEARS in mid-air.

INT. MAGIC SHOW - SAME TIME

The knife's target, the Third Man, catches his breath. Vince turns to him.

VINCE
Check your inside jacket pocket.

The Third Man reaches in, very tentatively, and is surprised to find an elegant EEL-SKINNED WALLET.

THIRD MAN
It's not mine.

Steele steps forward.

STEELE
It's mine.

The Third Man gives the wallet to Vince to return to Steele. Vince takes the CASH out, hands the empty wallet to Steele.

VINCE
A bet's a bet. Now, check <u>your</u> inside pocket.

Steele does and reacts. He takes out the butterfly knife. The audience goes nuts.

INT. MAGIC STOREROOM - SAME TIME

Alice and Wyatt watching all of this on the screen.

ALICE
(re: Vince)
I'm going to figure him out, David.

WYATT
I'm sure you will. It's what you do. And it's why I picked you.

Wyatt smiles. ON STAGE we hear Vince finish his show to thunderous applause.

INT. MAGIC SHOW, OFFSTAGE - NIGHT

Vince steps offstage. Alone, he leans against the wall, drained. We see the physical toll the show takes on him, the first time we've seen Vince when he's not "on."

He takes out his SMARTPHONE. Powers it up. There is a buzz indicating an INCOMING MESSAGE.

We see the message projected ONSCREEN, "HOUSE OF CARDS" style. (NOTE: This is how we'll be doing text messages on the show).

"IT'S MICHAEL. HOW MUCH LONGER?"

Vince reads the message, a concerned look on his face. He considers replying, then pockets the phone.

INT. MAGIC STOREROOM - NIGHT

Alice and Wyatt are there. Alice is looking over her notebook. Vince enters, all smiles.

VINCE
Ye of little faith. Our mark showed just like I said. What's our next move?

They sit down at a long table. Wyatt slides Vince and Alice FILES. They open them to a surveillance photo of Steele.

WYATT
Our target is Jonas Steele. South African national. Ex-special forces. Sells weapons all over the world. Child soldiers in Africa. Terrorist cells. You name it.

At the mention of "terrorists," Alice reacts. Vince notices.

VINCE
What's he doing in Vegas? I mean, other than watching my show.
(leaning in to Alice)
What'd you think of the knife bit?

ALICE
Uh, David Copperfield. You mind focusing here?

VINCE
David Copperfield? Wow.
(then)
"Tell me about the lambs, Clarice."

A look from Wyatt. Vince and Alice stop.

WYATT
Steele is in Vegas to negotiate a deal with a new supplier, Ivan Rostov, a Russian gun maker.

ALICE
Must be huge. Guys in that world almost never meet face-to-face.

WYATT
It is. And they've both agreed to step out of the shadows as a sign of trust. Rostov arrives in two days and is here through the weekend. That's your clock.

VINCE
Quick question -- how do you know all this?

WYATT
The people I work for --

VINCE
-- You mean “The Bureau of Clandestine Magic-based Evidence Gathering”?
(off Wyatt’s look)
What, if it’s a secret, we should at least call it something.

ALICE
What is it with you and naming everything?

Before Vince can fire back, Wyatt cuts him off.

WYATT
My superiors need you two to find the secret off-shore account where Steele keeps his money. That’s the objective. Thoughts?

Alice opens her notebook.

ALICE
Here’s my psychological profile of Jonas Steele --

As Alice takes us through her psychological profiling, we FLASHBACK in LIGHTNING FAST CUTS:

INT. STEELE'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Alice, in her hotel maid disguise, slips inside.

ALICE (V.O.)
I started in his hotel room.

INT. STEELE'S HOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alice looks at his toiletries on the sink.

ALICE (V.O.)
Steroid cream, Rogaine -- Unwilling to accept his age, he tries to maintain a younger appearance.
(MORE)

ALICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
His razor, toothbrush, and comb were equally spaced and pointed in the same direction for use in his right hand. Very OCD.

INT. MAGIC SHOW - NIGHT

Steele at Vince's show. Vince singles him out in the crowd.

ALICE (V.O.)
At the show, Steele tried to keep a low profile and was visibly uncomfortable under the spotlight. The lack of variability in his speech frequency indicates a narrow-minded and dogmatic personality.

INT. MAGIC STOREROOM - NIGHT

Back to Alice at the briefing.

ALICE
Based on that, I've profiled Steele as a narcissistic introvert with obsessive compulsive tendencies. That means he's not going to be lured by a typical con. He's here to make an arms deal, that's it.

A beat as Wyatt and Alice look over at Vince. He doesn't appear to be listening.

Zing. Vince gets another text message. Again, we see it ONSCREEN:

"I DON'T WANT TO DIE IN HERE."

Vince reads it, shows no emotion. He pockets the phone, jumps up, buttons his jacket.

VINCE
I have the perfect con.

Vince rushes out of the room. Alice shoots Wyatt a look. Wyatt shrugs. Alice follows Vince out. Here we go...

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. VEGAS KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

A small stage surrounded by tables. A young, boisterous crowd. A real locals place. Vince enters, trailed by Alice. He ad libs greetings. Everyone knows him.

Vince and Alice take a seat at a booth. The WAITRESS hands them menus. (NOTE: Through the scene, karaoke singers are onstage murdering whatever pop tunes we can afford.)

VINCE
You're gonna love this place. All the show kids come here after work.

ALICE
"Show kids"?

VINCE
Like the "Cirque du Soleil" acrobats. The "Thunder Down Under" guys. You should sign up.

He gestures to the CLIPBOARD GUY.

ALICE
It's okay. Karaoke... I don't.

VINCE
Can't sing, huh?

ALICE
I can sing. I used to sing in a band. Anyway, tell me about this con.

VINCE
You were in a band. You. Show me a picture.

ALICE
It was high school. There's no picture. Why would there be a picture?

VINCE
It must be on your phone. Show it to me. Otherwise --

Vince gestures to the Clipboard Guy, points to Alice.

VINCE
She's next! Dolly Parton.
"Jolene"! Name's Alice!

Clipboard Guy gives Vince a thumbs up. Knows him too.

ALICE
Okay. Okay.

She waves the Clipboard Guy off and takes out her cell, frantically scrolling through her pictures. She hands it to Vince. He reacts.

VINCE
Frilly sleeves. Black nail polish.
(beat)
You were a Goth Girl? Huh. I guess that explains why you're so into the wigs.

ALICE
(grabbing phone back)
You said you had the perfect con.

Vince nods. He spots something on a plate that's being cleaned. It's a CHERRY.

Vince puts the cherry in his palm and shakes it. Boom. A RED DIE rolls on the table.

VINCE
"The Cherry Roulette."
(off Alice's blank stare)
It's a classic con first pulled off by the unsinkable Titanic Thompson in 1919. It's been a money move ever since.

ALICE
We don't need Steele's money. We need his secret account.

VINCE
Exactly. We need him to go into his account -- by giving him a guaranteed way to double his money.

ALICE
With cherries?

VINCE
No. A "cherry" means you have inside info. You know the winner before everyone else.

ALICE
Like a rigged horse race.

VINCE
Exactly. Only instead of horses, we're gonna use drones.

Alice is intrigued.

VINCE
We start with an empty floor in an office park --

As Vince explains the con in v.o., we see EXACTLY HOW IT WILL ALL PLAY OUT. CUE the JAZZY BASSLINE as we FLASH TO:

INT. EMPTY OFFICE FLOOR - DAY

An empty, n.d. office.

VINCE (V.O.)
-- Then, we fill it with desks and computers.

We see DESKS and COMPUTERS appear, one by one.

VINCE (V.O.)
Next come the fake Air Force drone pilots. I know a bunch of professional gamers. Literally, world class first person shooters.

Now, the GAMERS appear at the computers working joysticks. They look like skate punks stuffed into Air Force uniforms.

VINCE (V.O.)
We may have to shave their heads. I'll take care of it.

Now the Gamers' heads are shaved. Much better. They stare at their screens talking on HEADSETS and working JOYSTICKS.

VINCE (V.O.)
Then we let Steele find the place. He has to believe he discovered it on his own. That's key.

An elevator opens and Steele enters. He's wearing some kind of VISITOR BADGE.

VINCE (V.O.)
We'll need a big cast to sell this. And they have to be straight-laced.
(snaps)
(MORE)

VINCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Mormon missionaries. I know some great ones.

The office is now buzzing with about a dozen clean-cut Mormon types playing AIR FORCE PERSONNEL and SUPPORT STAFF, criss-crossing in front of Steele.

VINCE (V.O.)
You'll be perfect too.

Alice enters, in uniform, watching Steele carefully.

VINCE (V.O.)
Although now I really want to see you as a seventeenth century vampire.

INT. VEGAS KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Back to Vince and Alice in the booth.

ALICE
Wait. How will setting up a fake drone operations center give Steele a way to double his money?

Vince smiles.

VINCE
Every time there's a drone strike in the Middle East, what goes up?

ALICE
(getting it)
Oil prices.

VINCE
See the angle?

ALICE
The media gets the news of the drone strikes hours or even days later.

VINCE
If Steele knew about them before everyone else, he'd make a fortune in the market.

ALICE
And we would be monitoring Steele when he calls his bank to access his money.

Vince leans back.

ALICE
There's just one problem. Steele won't go for it.

VINCE
Why not?

ALICE
I told you, his personality is a narcissistic introvert with strong OCD tendencies. He's in Vegas for one reason -- to make an arms deal with Rostov. That's it.

VINCE
You can con anyone with the right game. All it takes is skill.

ALICE
If you don't know what makes someone tick, you'll never get them to bite.

VINCE
It's always a gamble. There's no such thing as a sure sting.

ALICE
But by profiling the target, I can at least boost our odds of success.

VINCE
Alice, psychology is... interesting. But this is the real world.

Alice looks at Vince for a beat.

ALICE
Vincent Smith. Father was an insurance salesman. Mother was a church bookkeeper. You grew up on a street with white picket fences. Saw your first magician at a birthday party when you were nine, and you were hooked. That's the story you tell everyone.

Vince just stares.

ALICE
Here's what I've seen. You hate conflict. You hate it so much, in fact, you'll do anything to make it "disappear." That's where the magic comes in. It's a way to instantly change the subject. That's a coping mechanism. Most likely triggered by some childhood trauma. The drive to know everyone in Las Vegas suggests you need recognition. But there's one problem. You shun the spotlight. There isn't one billboard in town with your face on it. That's a contradiction I haven't figured out yet. But I --

A beat as she squints, then realizes --

ALICE
Did you steal my glasses off my face?

He takes them out of his pocket, hands them to her.

ALICE
Look, I'm good at what I do, and I'm telling you "The Cherry Jubilee" --

VINCE
"Roulette." Who names a con after a dessert?

ALICE
-- isn't going to work on Jonas Steele.
(beat)
These cons we're running for Wyatt - - we have to pull them off. There's too much riding on it.

Vince considers this for a moment.

VINCE
Okay. How about we flip for it?

He takes out a silver dollar. Shows it to her. Heads. Tails.

ALICE
You expect me to gamble. With you?

VINCE
Real simple. You flip. Heads we start with my plan. If the guy doesn't bite, we'll do it your way. Tails we go with your plan from the get go. You win either way.

Alice considers this, then flips the coin. It's heads.

ALICE
Why am I not surprised.

Vince smiles, gets up from the table.

VINCE
We'll put the crew together in the morning.

Vince picks up the RED DIE on the table, pops it in his mouth, eats it. It's a cherry again. He exits as we --

Cue the JAZZY BASSLINE, it's time to recruit our team!

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Close on a hand of BLACKJACK. Reveal we're at a desk in a doctor's office. The dealer, GREG "THE HOP" KELLEY, 50s, weathered but with a charming smile, is bald with an IV in his arm.

He's playing against his ONCOLOGIST (40s, sweaty), in his lab coat, who has drawn a sixteen. As the dealer, Kelley has a four -- an odds on bust card for the dealer. The Oncologist stays. Kelley hits -- all the way to a twenty.

KELLEY
You played the percentages, doc. Wanna go double or nothing again?

His Oncologist is getting really sweaty now.

KELLEY
Or do you want to talk settlement?

ONCOLOGIST
I guess you mean this?

He holds up Kelley's BILL.

KELLEY
Chemo gets kinda expensive when you don't have insurance.

The Oncologist rips up the bill.

ONCOLOGIST
Call my office if you have any nausea. I do.

Kelley rolls his IV out the door and into the hallway where he finds Vince and Alice waiting.

INT. CLINIC HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They walk and talk down the hall.

ALICE
Can you do that for my student loans?

Kelley smiles.

VINCE
Greg “The Hop” Kelley, Alice Jones. Greg is the best bust-out dealer in Vegas.

KELLEY
That’s because my competition’s all in jail. Or dead.
(re: IV)
Although there may be an opening soon.

VINCE
Stop that. We’re running “The Cherry Roulette.”

KELLEY
If you need an old hand, you know I’m here for you.

Vince smiles.

VINCE
How are you doing? You need anything?

KELLEY
I’m fine.
(leaning in)
How’s Michael?

Vince picks up the pace, putting a few feet between them and Alice. They speak in hushed tones. She notices.

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. CASINO - DAY

Find RAY “TINKER” FONTENOT, 50s, long beard, sunglasses, and a hat, as he feeds a blank CARD tethered to a SMARTPHONE into a slot machine. Hundreds of dollars in credits appear on screen.

Tinker pulls the arm, loses, banks the credits, and moves on to the next machine. A high-tech scam is underway.

Vince and Alice appear. Vince leans in.

VINCE
That disguise isn’t fooling anyone, Tinker.

ALICE
Although figuring out how to win at slots by losing is kinda brilliant.

TINKER
(re: Alice)
Who’s the fed?

ALICE
Ex-fed. And casino security is scrambling right now.

Tinker smiles. Likes her. Vince hands him a sheet of PAPER.

VINCE
Can you get everything on the list?

TINKER
“The Cherry Roulette”? I haven’t run that since Macau.
(re: list)
I’ll let you know if I have any trouble.

Tinker yanks the card from the slot and fumbles to get his stuff together. Vince pulls Alice next to him to shield Tinker from SECURITY’S view as they emerge. Tinker is gone.

WHIP PAN TO:

INT. VEGAS SHOW BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Showgirl chaos. Scantily clad DANCERS come on and off stage ripping costumes off racks, robing and disrobing. A sea of FEATHER BOAS and RHINESTONES.

Gigi, our costumer from the opening, is talking into a SLEEVE MIC, like a Secret Service Agent.

GIGI
(to mic)
I have my Delilah. Where's my Samson? Go for Samson...

Vince and Alice navigate the narrow space. A passing Showgirl brushes Alice's face with her feather boa. She sneezes. Gigi reacts.

GIGI
(to Alice)
Tissue please.
(then, to Vince)
She need another wig?

VINCE
Maybe. It's kind of a thing with her. Can you get all this wardrobe?

He hands her a list. Alice reacts as Gigi reviews it.

GIGI
You're in luck. I did a general's birthday party. Got paid in Air Force uniforms.

VINCE
You're the best, Gigi.

Vince turns to go. Alice turns to Gigi.

ALICE
I don't have a "wig thing." I'm playing a character --

A shirtless BUFF GUY comes running between Alice and Gigi.

GIGI
Samson. Get the hell out there. Delilah looks like an idiot!

Gigi slaps him on the butt. He rushes on stage. Vince pulls Alice away.

WHIP PAN TO:

EXT. VEGAS STREET - NIGHT

Vince and Alice walk up the street.

ALICE
Okay, so we have our costumer, our dirty dealer --

VINCE
-- Bust-out dealer.

ALICE
And our gadget guy. What's this next guy's special skill? Race car driving? Lion taming?

VINCE
Women.

At this, Vince ducks under YELLOW CRIME SCENE TAPE. Alice follows him. Police car lights flash nearby.

ALICE
Ugh. Don't tell me he's one of those "seduction coaches" who charge losers fifteen hundred bucks to be their wingman.

VINCE
He's very persuasive.

Now they pass more COPS who react at the sight of two civilians -- then fall back when they see it's just Vince. He walks through with a smile and a string of upnods.

They approach the lead hostage negotiator, who is leaning against a police car with a BULLHORN. This is LT. DARREN NEWSOME, 30s, ruggedly handsome. This is his day job.

NEWSOME
(into bullhorn)
I've been there, Cyrus. We all have. Divorced. Underwater on your mortgage. Come out, and we'll sit down together and hash a --

He sees Vince, immediately drops the bullhorn and pulls him into a man-hug.

VINCE
Sorry to interrupt.

NEWSOME
I'm just showing the new cadets how it's done.
(then, to Alice extending his hand)
Darren Newsome. I thought I knew all the beautiful F.B.I. Agents in Vegas.

ALICE
Alice Jones. And that was super lame.

Newsome smiles. Never backs down from a challenge.

VINCE
We're running "The Cherry Roulette."

NEWSOME
You need me to play the Baxter?

VINCE
If you can. I know how busy you are.

NEWSOME
For you, I'll make time.

Vince smiles as he and Alice start to head out.

VINCE
That's our team.

ALICE
Your plan is going to be a lot harder once Rostov arrives.

VINCE
Then we'll set the hook before he gets here. Tomorrow night. I'll call you.

They split and we --

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We're in Alice's modest apartment. She hasn't had time to unpack. There are boxes everywhere -- many filled with books. Titles like ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY. SOCIAL INFLUENCE. DEVIANCE.

There are also signs of Alice's over-preparedness. An ESTONIA GUIDEBOOK. A trade journal for HOTEL MAIDS.

The only thing set up in the apartment is Alice's DESK. We find her there, dressed in F.B.I. Quantico sweats, working on her laptop and drinking tea.

ONSCREEN is a collage of surveillance photos of Steele, including video of him at Vince's show.

Among the links is NIGHT VISION footage of Steele in the room with the single slot machine when it's plunged into darkness. He's suddenly disoriented and begins to panic.

Alice takes out her notebook, writes: "BEHAVIORAL TRAITS: LOSS OF CONTROL CAN TRIGGER PANIC." Then she circles "PANIC."

She considers this for a moment. Then, her attention is drawn to another folder in a corner of her screen. It reads "VS." Torn, she clicks on it.

We see footage of Vince at his magic show. We realize, she's not studying Steele here. <u>She's studying Vince</u>.

She takes out her notebook, starts writing her observations. PERSONALITY TRAITS: HIGH ON OPENNESS, AGREEABLENESS, EXTRAVERSION. BEHAVIORAL TRAITS: FLIGHT OR FIGHT?

Alice's phone rings, shaking her out of it. It's Vince.

VINCE (OVER PHONE)
It's time.

She closes her laptop, exits.

EXT. VEGAS DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Vince, Alice, and Newsome (the Pick-up Artist) walk past the long line of WANNABE CLUB-GOERS. Vince and Newsome are in suits. Alice looks great -- albeit a bit uncomfortable -- in a sexy dress.

NEWSOME
(to Alice)
It's nice to work with someone else who shares a passion for my world.

ALICE
Excuse me?

NEWSOME
Psychology. It's the foundation of everything I do. Without it I could never bypass a woman's "logic brain" to gain access to her "seduction center."

Alice looks like she's about to be ill.

VINCE
I knew you two would have a lot to talk about.

They reach the front of the line. The bouncer, MARTY, a former NFL offensive lineman, lights up when he sees Vince.

VINCE
Marty. How's the NFL comeback going?

MARTY
Can you make the scar tissue in my knees disappear?

Vince gives him a sympathetic smile. Marty lifts the velvet rope, and they're in.

INT. VEGAS DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Laser lights. Rock star DJ. Dancers in cages. We're in one of the mega-clubs taking Vegas by storm. Vince, Alice, and Newsome walk and talk as they make their way to the bar.

VINCE
There's Steele.

ON Steele, sitting at a table with a group of three MALE EXECUTIVES. They're all in suits.

NEWSOME
Who's he with?

ALICE
Execs vying for his business. They're just appetizers. Rostov is going to be the main course.

NEWSOME
Makes them the perfect audience for his humiliation. What's my cover?

VINCE
You're a real estate developer here in Vegas who leases office space to the military.

Newsome nods.

NEWSOME
Give me the word and I'll go in.

Newsome peels off. Vince and Alice sit down at a table with a good vantage point of Steele. Alice takes out her notebook, reviews.

ALICE
Okay. Newsome is “The Baxter.” That’s a rival we create to get under Steele’s skin, right?

VINCE
(nodding)
Then Steele will go after him and “discover” the secret drone center.

ALICE
And we get his secret bank account.

VINCE
Easy peasy.

A handsome guy, DAN, 30s, approaches Alice.

DAN
Hey. Do you want to dance?

She shoots Vince an “are you messing with me” look. He shrugs. Nothing to do with him. She turns to Dan.

ALICE
What’s your name?

DAN
Dan.

They shake. Alice smiles, looks him over for a moment.

ALICE
Well Dan, since you saw me come in with two guys instead of one, you figure it’s a good bet I’m not with either of them. Score one for you. You’re right. The problem is -- you’re married.

VINCE
There’s no ring.

ALICE
No. Dan took care of that. Had a manicure today to work the indentation out of his finger. I smelled the oil when he shook my hand. It’s the shirt that gives him away.

VINCE
What about it?

ALICE
Brand new, right out of the package. See the wrinkle marks on the sleeve? That's because the last time Dan came to Vegas, his wife found stripper glitter all over his shirt. Made him sleep on the couch. He learned his lesson. This shirt's a burner.
(beat)
Call your wife, Dan. She texted you an hour ago.

Dan stares down at his shirt, completely floored. He's about to say something, then just slinks away, taking out his cell.

VINCE
Wow. That was... wow.

Before Alice can respond, Vince notices something. It's Steele and the Execs talking to three PARTY GIRLS.

VINCE
Looks like Steele is getting some play.

Vince looks over at Newsome in the corner, gives him a signal. He walks up to the Girls.

We can't hear what Newsome is saying, but it's making the three Girls laugh. In a few seconds, he's drawn them away from Steele.

As Newsome walks off, he has a parting shot for Steele. The Execs share a nervous laugh. Steele seethes.

ALICE
Ah. So Newsome lures the girls away and sticks it to Steele making him want revenge.

VINCE
Exactly. If Steele is on the hook, he'll call the waitress over to ask about Newsome. Right... now.

Sure enough, as the CLUB WAITRESS passes, Steele flags her down and has words with her.

She makes a beeline for Vince and Alice. Vince smiles. He peels off a hundred and discreetly pays her.

VINCE
Nice work.

CLUB WAITRESS
He didn't bite, Vince.

VINCE
What? I saw him talk to you.

CLUB WAITRESS
Yes. To reserve the same table for tomorrow night. He said he has something big planned.

VINCE
He didn't ask you anything about Newsome?

The Club Waitress shakes her head and crosses off. Vince and Alice look at Newsome and the Execs.

ALICE
Okay, now I have a prediction. Steele is going to check the time and say he has to bail.

A beat and Steele does just that. The other Execs get up to leave with him, but Steele gestures for them to stay.

ALICE
This was just a dry run for his night with Rostov tomorrow. That's the only thing he cares about.

Vince and Alice watch Steele as he walks out the door.

VINCE
"The Cherry Roulette" will work. I just need a new hook.

ALICE
That's not what we agreed.

VINCE
Alice...

ALICE
The deal was, if Steele doesn't bite, we do it my way.

VINCE
Do you really expect me to put my friends in harm's way based on some college kid's homework?

ALICE
I expect you to keep your word. If Steele makes this deal, he's going to arm some terrorist cell. Do you have any idea what that means?

A beat as this hangs in the air for a moment.

VINCE
Do you want to tell me?

ALICE
Do you want to tell me who Michael is?

Vince doesn't respond.

ALICE
I didn't think so.

Alice storms away. Off Vince we --

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Vince is playing darts against a hapless BAR GUY. He is missing a few to raise the bet, acting a little clumsy.

VINCE
She only believes things she reads in books. And what I do? Forget it. Just a bunch of tricks to her.

We reveal that Vince isn't talking to the Bar Guy. He's talking to Wyatt.

Vince throws the dart without looking. The Bar Guy is shocked to see it has somehow ended up in the bull's-eye. He shakes his head, walks off. Vince calls after him.

VINCE
I'll throw left handed! You can blindfold me!
(to Wyatt)
I'm better running things alone.

WYATT
It's not up to you.

VINCE
That's right. It's up to "them." The people you work for. What about my brother Michael? He's just supposed to rot in jail?

There's an edge to Vince we haven't seen.

WYATT
Pardons take time. There's a process.

VINCE
How do I know you can deliver?

WYATT
You don't.

VINCE
But if I walk away, he has no shot at all. That's what you're counting on.

WYATT
Hey, your brother's in jail for life. I didn't put him there and I'm not losing any sleep over it.

Vince considers this for a moment.

VINCE
When I was a kid, I had to wear these metal leg braces and big orthopedic shoes. On the way home from school, this kid, Eugene Evans, used to beat me up all the time. I couldn't run. I couldn't fight back. I was the perfect target. You know what my brother Michael did?

WYATT
I hope he kicked his ass.

Vince shakes his head. Takes out his SILVER DOLLAR.

VINCE
He taught me how to do this.

Vince does some rudimentary sleight-of-hand tricks.

VINCE
The first time I did this for Eugene, he stole my dollar. The second time, he said do it again. The third time he said teach me how.

Vince flips the coin in the air. It disappears.

VINCE
No one ever bothered me again.

Vince gestures to Wyatt's shoulder. The coin is there.

VINCE
What's in this for you, Wyatt?

Wyatt doesn't respond. He tosses the coin back to Vince.

WYATT
Make this work, and everyone gets what they need.

Wyatt exits. Off Vince we --

INT. BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Alice is at a familiar bar complaining to someone O.S. She's drinking a WHITE WINE. Probably more than a few.

ALICE
Then he says --
(mocking)
"I'm not putting my people in harm's way based on homework." Like some trick cooked up by riverboat gamblers a century ago is better than empirical evidence. But try to tell him that and he'll take your salt and put it somewhere. How does he do that, anyway?

We reveal that Alice is talking to Samantha, the Mermaid, who has just gotten off her shift and is still in costume. The giant fish tank is now visible in the b.g.

SAMANTHA
No idea.

ALICE
I'm sorry. I've only been here a few weeks. I didn't know who else to call. All that swimming. You must be exhausted.

ZING. Alice reacts to an incoming text on her cell. We see it ONSCREEN:

"IT'S VINCE. CAN U TALK?"

ZING. She replies: "SLEEPING. ZZZZZZZ."

ZING. He replies: "BETTER NOT BE DRIVING. THAT'S YOUR 3RD CHARDONNAY."

She looks at her empty WINE GLASS. Then spins. Vince is standing in the doorway.

VINCE
Pride comes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

ALICE
You sure quote the bible a lot. Is that your way of apologizing?

Vince smiles, nods.

VINCE
I called the crew. It's your game now.

Vince turns to the door, then stops, doubles back. He kisses Samantha and exits. She swoons. Alice fumes.

INT. MAGIC STOREROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Vince and the other members of the team are sitting at the table -- Gigi (the Costumer), Newsome (Pick-up Artist), Kelley (Bust-out Dealer), and Tinker (Gadget Guy). The four are chatting amongst themselves.

REVEAL Alice, standing around a corner out of earshot, looking over INDEX CARDS. She's nervous. Wyatt approaches, surprising her.

WYATT
Sorry.

ALICE
It's okay. Vince recruited this group for <u>his</u> con. We don't have time to get new people.
(re: index cards)
I have to make them all work for my plan.

WYATT
I'm confident you will. And I'm happy to lend a hand.

Alice smiles, turns to go into the room. Wyatt stops her.

WYATT
I read the case file. The bombing wasn't your fault.

ALICE
A confidential informant I was developing killed four people at a mall. Doesn't matter what the file says.

Alice turns and crosses into the room, where the rest of the crew are still talking. Wyatt follows her. Alice tries -- and fails -- to get their attention.

Vince blows up a balloon, sticks to the wall. He grabs a CARD, and with a flick of his wrist, FIRES it at the balloon. It POPS. All eyes are on him. Vince gestures to Alice.

ALICE
Okay. Jonas Steele. He's meeting Ivan Rostov tonight to make an arms deal. Based on Steele's personality profile, he'll want everything to go like clockwork. In fact, he's obsessed with it. See where I'm going with this?

Blank stares. They don't.

ALICE
We're going to make sure everything goes horribly wrong. Rostov will start to doubt Steele and threaten to pull out of the deal. That will force Steele to call up his offshore bank account to reestablish credibility.

VINCE
Giving us the information we need. The objective is the same. The approach is just more scientific.

Alice studies Vince, unsure if he's actually onboard.

ALICE
That's right. Research has proven that the only way to deviate a narcissistic introvert from their dominant tendencies for obsessive compulsion is to trigger --
(off their blank stares)
It's, uh, all in your packets.

Packets? The crew sees thick manila envelopes with their names on them. They open them tentatively.

WYATT
This is very... comprehensive.

Kelley takes out STAPLED PAGES. He raises his hand.

ALICE
Yes.

KELLEY
(re: papers)
What's this?

ALICE
It's the breakdown of your character.

KELLEY
My character is “the dealer.” This is ten pages long.

ALICE
You never know when you might get put on the spot.

TINKER
(reading)
Mine says I’m from Singapore.

ALICE
Nothing is written in stone. Just have fun with it.

Gigi raises her hand.

GIGI
Are you going to want another wig?

ALICE
It’s not important.
(then)
Yes.

Newsome raises his hand.

ALICE
Yes.

NEWSOME
I’m feeling an intense connection with you right now. Are you feeling it?

The Crew starts to talk over each other. Alice is losing the room. Wyatt is concerned. Vince slaps his hand on the table.

VINCE
Okay then. So let’s go run... “The Bull-in-a-China Shop”!

A beat and the crew cheers, on board. Vince turns to Alice.

VINCE
That’s why you have to give it a name.

Alice smiles and we --

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Steele enters the casino with IVAN ROSTOV, 40s, super-fit and gregarious.

STEELE
Here's our night. First, ringside seats to the Ochenko fight. Looks like your countryman will have his hands full with Fernando Rivas.

ROSTOV
In three rounds Rivas will be out.

STEELE
After that, a little poker in a V.I.P. room. Then a table at the hottest club in Vegas.

Rostov smiles.

STEELE
And sometime we'll talk business.

ROSTOV
Plenty of time for business later. I've been looking forward to this night for a long time.

He throws his arm around Steele. They approach the Concierge desk. She turns around, revealing it's Alice, in a BLONDE WIG, and a hotel uniform. Her name tag reads "TABITHA ROSS."

ALICE
Can I help you?

At this, a CELL PHONE buzzes with an incoming TEXT MESSAGE. Alice reacts, pats her jacket pocket, and tries to stifle a reaction as she takes out a phone with a HELLO KITTY shell.

ALICE
(to Steele)
Sorry about that.
(re: phone)
My daughter.

She looks at the phone that Vince obviously planted on her. We HEAR the incoming text sounds and SEE the messages ONSCREEN --

ZING. "A SINGLE PARENT. I LIKE IT."

ZING. "WHERE DID TABITHA GO TO HOTEL SCHOOL?"

ON VINCE, a short distance away, smiling as he texts. He's dressed in a conservative dark suit, white shirt, and tie.

BACK TO Alice at the front desk with Steele and Rostov. She pockets the phone. Through the following, Vince continues to mess with her as we see the messages ONSCREEN.

STEELE
I'm Jonas Steele. I called earlier to make sure all my reservations were in order.

ZING. "DID SHE GRADUATE WITH HONORS?"

Alice suppresses a reaction as she types on the computer.

ALICE
Looks like you're all set, Mr. Steele.

ZING. "DO YOU OWN THAT WIG NOW?"

ALICE
(handing Steele her card)
And if there is anything you need, anything at all, this is my private number.

ZING. "JUST KEEPING YOU ON YOUR TOES."

He takes the card. She smiles.

ROSTOV
It is going to be a good night.

Steele and Rostov head off for the fight. Alice waits until they're out of sight and grabs the HELLO KITTY phone.

ON Steele and Rostov as they squeeze through a tight cluster of MORMON MISSIONARIES. Vince, dressed as a Mormon, deftly lifts Steele's tickets and replaces them with fakes.

VINCE
(to comm)
Okay. Let's get ready to ruuuumble.

Alice texts Vince her reply. We see it ONSCREEN.

ZING. "BITE ME."

INT. FIGHT ARENA - NIGHT

The crowd is settling into their seats. And undercard bout is about to begin. Steele hands his tickets to the USHER who scans them then hands them back.

USHER
Sir, I'm afraid these tickets appear to be forgeries.

STEELE
That's impossible. Run it again.

He does, hands them back.

USHER
I'm sorry.

STEELE
I bought these at the box office. Get the head of security down here.

The Usher shrugs. The Russian quietly fumes.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CASINO - MINUTES LATER

Two beefy security guards hustle Steele and Rostov out of the arena. Steele turns to Rostov, in damage control mode.

STEELE
I'll call the concierge. She'll get this straightened out. In the meantime, how about we play a little poker, and we'll be back for the title fight, huh?

Rostov stares at Steele for a beat, then breaks into a smile.

ROSTOV
Three rounds. Rivas on the canvas.

Steele is relieved. They're back on the move. We reveal Vince watching.

VINCE
(to comm)
Deal 'em up, they're on their way.

INT. POKER ROOM - NIGHT

Steele and Rostov sit down at a table with three other players, including a WEALTHY MATRON. As the DEALER is about to begin, Wyatt enters and badges him.

WYATT
E.J. Figuroa, Nevada Gaming Commission. Can I have a word with you please?

The Dealer puts down the cards, follows Wyatt out. Seconds later, a new dealer takes his place. It's KELLEY. He starts shuffling the cards, a total pro. Steele is relieved.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. POKER ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Later at the poker game. The Russian is cleaned out but Steele has a big stack of chips in front of him. Kelley deals the River (final) card. It's a Queen.

Steele looks at his two hole cards. A pair of Queens. There are a pair of threes and now a Queen on the board. Steele has a full house.

The only player still in is the Matronly Woman. Steele smiles.

STEELE
All in.

The Matronly Woman looks at her hole cards once, twice. Considers.

MATRONLY WOMAN
Call.

She pushes in her chips. Steele shows his pocket Queens.

KELLEY
Full house, Queens over Threes.

Steele starts to reach for the pile. Then, the Matronly Woman shows her two cards -- a pair of threes.

KELLEY
Four threes takes the pot.

Steele can't believe it. He glares at Kelley. He shrugs. Steele rises, turns to Rostov.

STEELE
Let's go.

They cross off. The Wealthy Matron gathers the pot and kisses Kelley as she leaves. He blushes. We reveal <u>it's Gigi in disguise</u>. Kelley turns away.

KELLEY
(to comm)
He's runnin' on empty.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

We pick up Steele and Rostov as they're on the move through the casino.

STEELE
Once I get some cash we'll be back in business.

ROSTOV
We should get back to the fight.

STEELE
I'll call the Concierge again.

As Steele takes out his phone, he bumps into Tinker, the Gadget Guy. He's carrying a CAMERA with a LONG LENS.

STEELE
Watch where you're going.

TINKER
I am so sorry.

Tinker puts his hands on Steele, making sure he's all right. His camera brushes past Steele's pants. Tinker crosses off.

As Tinker walks past a WOMAN at a slot machine, her CAR KEYS suddenly FLY off the table and latch onto the camera lens. It's not a camera. It's a powerful ELECTROMAGNET.

With effort, Tinker returns the keys to the woman.

TINKER
(to comm)
He's heading for the nearest ATM.

INT. CASINO ATM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Now, Steele is at the ATM. It is spitting out his card as unreadable. Rostov is losing his patience.

ROSTOV
<u>None</u> of your cards are working?

STEELE
I don't understand. I used them an hour ago.

As Steele fumbles to try to explain himself we ZOOM across the casino floor to --

INT. CASINO BAR - SAME TIME

Vince and Alice eavesdrop on Steele from a nearby bar.

STEELE (O.S.)
I'll get us a line of credit.

VINCE
(to Alice)
You're up.

Alice's cell rings. She answers.

ALICE
(to phone)
This is Tabitha.

STEELE (OVER PHONE)
This is Jonas Steele. Look, I need those fight tickets right now and a line of credit. Say twenty thousand.

ALICE
(to phone)
Yes, I looked into the fight tickets. No can do, I'm afraid. Now, the casino would be happy to extend you a line of credit. You'll just need to put up collateral valued at a hundred thousand dollars.

STEELE (OVER PHONE)
What? That's outrageous. I --

ALICE
(to phone)
Please hold.

She puts him on hold. We hear horrible HOLD MUSIC.

VINCE
This guy was in special forces. You sure you want to make him listen to that?

ALICE
Frustration is this guy's Achilles' heel, remember? This is how we'll flush him out.

They listen to Steele and Rostov's overlapping argument.

VINCE
I'm impressed. You turned a science theory into a solid sting.

ALICE
Thank you.

VINCE
Now, what if I could predict exactly what the Russian is going to say right now, word-for-word?

ALICE
That's impossible.

Vince takes out a silver dollar.

VINCE
Care to make it interesting?

Vince flips the COIN in the air. Alice snatches it.

ALICE
You're on.

VINCE
(as Rostov)
I have buyers -- real buyers. People I trust, I've done business with in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines. Why should I trust you? You're a fraud.

ON ROSTOV, getting in Steele's face.

ROSTOV
I have buyers -- real buyers. People I trust, I've done business with in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines. Why should I trust you? You're a fraud.

BACK TO Vince and Alice at the bar.

ALICE
What? You mean, Ivan Rostov is in on this?

VINCE
Not exactly...

CUE the JAZZY BASSLINE as WE FLASH TO <u>WHAT REALLY HAPPENED TONIGHT</u> --

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

The Gadget Guy, Tinker, is at the airport, holding up a sign that says "IVAN ROSTOV." He picks up another RUSSIAN -- less fit, bad comb over.

VINCE (V.O.)
First, Tinker picked up the real Ivan Rostov at the airport --

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

"Real Rostov" gets out of Tinker's limo and is greeted by Newsome (the Pick-up Artist), dressed in an expensive suit.

VINCE (V.O.)
-- and brought him straight to our friend Newsome, who introduced himself as Jonas Steele --

INT. FIGHT ARENA - NIGHT

We see Newsome and the Real Rostov ringside, having a blast.

VINCE (V.O.)
-- and took the Real Rostov to the fight using the tickets I stole --

INT. POKER ROOM - NIGHT

Newsome and the Real Rostov sit in front of stacks of chips. The Real Rostov takes a huge pot as the other players throw their cards in disgust. Kelley, of course, is the dealer.

VINCE (V.O.)
-- and won the money Steele lost --

INT. VEGAS DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Newsome and the Real Rostov at the club surrounded by girls.

VINCE (V.O.)
-- which they are now blowing on girls at the club. Thanks to Newsome, the Real Rostov is having the night of his life.

INT. CASINO BAR - NIGHT

Back to Vince and Alice. She's furious.

ALICE
If that's not Rostov, then who the hell is he?

VINCE
Yuri Gradzinski. He's a Cirque du Soleil acrobat. He's been listening in on Newsome's night with the real Rostov so he can play the part.

ALICE
You conned me. Me. Your partner.

VINCE
I only did it to prove a point. You're using psychology to boost our odds of success, right? Well, I just did the same thing.

ALICE
By making sure the Russian said exactly what we wanted him to say.

VINCE
You're the one who said the two of them never met. It would be crazy for us not to do it. Am I right?

Alice nods. She can't help but agree.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Back to Steele and the Russian (Yuri).

STEELE
I have a sterling reputation. You can ask anyone.

YURI
Reputation? I want proof. How do I know you can make my deal? Show me the money. Right now.

Steele takes out his phone and starts to dial.

ON Vince and Alice at the bar watching. This is it.

ON Steele dialing his phone. Then --

Steele notices something very subtle. It's Rostov's eyeline. He is looking over Steele's shoulder. Steele looks in a mirror and tracks Rostov's eyeline to Vince and Alice watching from the bar.

Steele puts the phone down.

STEELE
Calling up my account won't prove anything. If you really wanted assurance you'd demand cash. Or diamonds. Unless you're lying.

The blood drains from Yuri's face. Steele moves towards him.

YURI
Me? You are the one who is --

Yuri holds up his hands in protest. In a flash, Steele grabs Yuri's hand and breaks his finger. Yuri collapses in pain.

INT. CASINO BAR - NIGHT

The sudden, violent act has its desired effect. Vince jumps out of his seat, revealing himself. They're blown.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Steele drops Yuri, starts to move through the crowded casino. His head is on a swivel, looking everywhere. He wants out.

Wyatt enters frame. He clocks Steele and starts to follow him at a discreet distance. He comms Vince and Alice.

WYATT
(to comm)
We can get him right now for assault.

ALICE (OVER COMM)
If we call the cops, our cover's blown.

WYATT
(to comm)
But if we let Steele go, we've lost.

A beat and suddenly, Vince and Alice rush past. Steele sees them and bolts.

Wyatt picks up Steele's trail and we're in an intense foot chase through the crowded casino. The gaming floor. A restaurant kitchen. Shark encounter at the Mandalay. You name it.

EXT. CASINO - NIGHT

Pushing through the crowd, Steele bursts onto the street. There's a line of people waiting for a line of taxi cabs.

As people on the line scream, Steele CUTS the line and jumps in the third taxi in the line.

STEELE
The airport. Now!

Alice runs into the street as the taxi pulls away.

ALICE
(to comm)
He's gone.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Inside the cab, Steele gathers himself. Then, he looks down at his cell. A beat and he dials. A woman answers. This is Steele's BANKER.

STEELE
(to phone)
This is Jonas Steele. Something has happened, and I need to check the balance of my account.

BANKER (OVER PHONE)
Of course. Your voice print is confirmed. What is the account number?

STEELE
Bravo seven, nine, four...

As Steele recites the number, we reveal the taxi driver is Vince. He smiles as he takes down every digit.

INT. VEGAS KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Later, at Vince's favorite all-night Karaoke Bar, Vince, Wyatt, Newsome, Tinker, and Kelley are at a table celebrating. Gigi is on stage, slaying Patsy Cline.

ON Alice crossing from the bar, carrying a glass of wine.

She pauses for a moment, watching the tableau. Vince is in the center, surrounded by his friends. Happy. She takes it in for a beat. Then -- Yuri enters with a cast on his finger.

ALICE
Are you all right?

YURI
Do you know how many times I break this finger?

At this, Yuri does a ONE HANDED HANDSTAND. The crowd in the bar applauds. Yuri and Alice sit with the group. Wyatt is finishing a call.

WYATT
Well, thanks to all of you, Steele's account is frozen and his plane is grounded.

VINCE
Already? What are they getting him on?

EXT. VEGAS AIRPORT TARMAC - NIGHT

An anxious Steele paces outside his G4. A car pulls up and two men in SUITS get out, approach him.

STEELE
Finally. I registered my flight plan weeks ago. Can you please --

The two Suits BADGE Steele.

SUIT NO. 1
Mr. Steele, we're with the Internal Revenue Service. You're under arrest for tax evasion.

They spin Steele around, cuff him.

STEELE
What? This is outrageous!

As Steele protests we --

CUT TO:

INT. VEGAS KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Back to Wyatt and the team celebrating.

WYATT
Okay, now I want some answers. How did it finally play out?

ALICE
Turns out, even with the Russian in our pocket, the adage is true. There's no such thing as a sure sting.

VINCE
So when it all went south we had to come up with something. And... we had a meeting of the minds.

Vince and Alice exchange a look, smile.

ALICE
My profile of Steele says he gets sloppy and cuts corners when he's frustrated, right?
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
Well, once he was onto us, I recognized his panic behaviors and I realized we could use that.

VINCE
If we couldn't frustrate him into making the call, we could scare him into doing it.

ALICE
Then it was just a matter of predicting which taxi he was going to get into.

WYATT
And how did you know that?

VINCE
He's superstitious. Reads the horoscopes. And I noticed three was his lucky number. He tapped his foot three times when he got his shoes shined. Grouped his toiletries in threes. I confirmed it at my show.

ALICE
So you profiled him.

VINCE
No. I provided an opportunity for him to deceive himself. Let's call it "the illusion of choice."

ALICE
Or we could call it "what Alice does dressed in a cape and a top hat."

VINCE
Hey, I gave props to your "methodology in criminal... whatever."

ALICE
After the "Cherry Orchard" crashed and burned.

VINCE
Okay, now you're just doing that on purpose.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. VEGAS KARAOKE BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Vince and Alice wave goodbye to Newsome -- the last of the Crew -- who has his arm around a Karaoke girl.

VINCE
That's the last of 'em. It's your turn now.

ALICE
My turn to what?

VINCE
Sing. C'mon, let's hear those pipes. Do us all a favor.

He gestures to the stage where a DRUNK COUPLE, still in CIRCUS COSTUMES, are singing "Total Eclipse of the Heart" really, really badly.

ALICE
I figured something out about you.

VINCE
And you say I'm the one always changing the subject.

ALICE
It's your contradiction. The "King of Vegas" who, inexplicably, doesn't want his face on any billboards. Who would do that?

VINCE
(thinks)
A modest showman?

ALICE
It's someone who isn't looking for adulation. Someone who's looking for something else.

VINCE
What's that?

ALICE
A family. That's what this is all about, isn't it?

Vince looks at her for a beat, smiles.

VINCE
Come on, not one song?

Alice shakes her head. Vince gets up.

VINCE
Need a lift?

ALICE
(holding up her cell)
Already called a cab.

Vince gets up, turns to go.

ALICE
Tomorrow is another day.

VINCE
And another lowlife who thought he got away with it.

ALICE
And won't know what hit him.

Vince smiles and exits. On Alice we --

CUT TO:

INT. VEGAS KARAOKE BAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

On the Clipboard Guy who cues up "Lips Like Sugar" by Echo and the Bunnymen. On the mic is former Goth Girl, Alice.

She sings -- really, really well. The crowd goes wild.

As Alice has just a little bit fun we --

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW *