

ATOMIC CITY, USA

Pilot

"Boom Town"

Written by

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OVER BLACK

RADIO STATIC, slowly intensifying. Then, a soothing VOICE --

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
Good morning, Las Vegas.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - MORNING

The rising sun peaks over the mountain ranges, gently lighting up the scorched Nevada desert.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
You're listening to KENO-FM.
It's Monday, April 21. For today's weather, expect a high of 77 degrees and a gentle southerly breeze.

A freeway divides the barren land in half. In the distance, a glistening city awaits --

EXT. LAS VEGAS BLVD - MORNING

A small spattering of hotels, casinos and saloons.

CHRYON: **LAS VEGAS, 1952**

There's only moderate foot and road traffic. This town's greatest days are still to come.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
The Atomic Energy Commission has announced that another a-bomb will be detonated at four o'clock tomorrow morning.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - MORNING

Not a mega-hotel typical of Las Vegas today. This is its forgotten predecessor. An eight story slice of paradise.

The toasty Nevada climate lends itself to the building's Spanish-inspired architecture. Stucco walls absorb the day's heat, emanating inside for the cool nights.

At the entrance, a light bulb marquee greets us:

WELCOME TO THE DAYBREAK HOTEL

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ALEXANDER'S OFFICE - MORNING

ALEXANDER WEISZ (32) listens to the radio at his desk. Though his office is too small for him to be the boss, the dark circles under his eyes say that he'd like to be one day.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)

Ground zero is at the Nevada
Proving Grounds, only sixty-five
miles northwest of here. Ladies and
gentlemen, set your alarms. This is
a spectacle not to be missed.

The radio segues into a JAZZ tune. Alexander stares out the window, taking in the sweeping view of Las Vegas shining against the desert backdrop --

ALEXANDER (PRE-LAP)

This hotel towers over every other
building in this town.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - NINO'S OFFICE - MORNING

Alexander sits opposite NINO WEISZ (38), who dons a three-piece suit, which might be too much for most this early in the morning, but not for him.

ALEXANDER

It'd be a wasted opportunity not to
offer people the best view of the
action for a price. The amount of
voyeurs I've seen pass through this
town, desperate just to get a
glimpse of this thing --

NINO

So you want to throw an atomic bomb
party?

ALEXANDER

Think about it. We'll set up the
rooftop with blackjack and craps
tables, leaving enough room for a
dance floor, of course. That'll
keep people entertained until the
bomb goes off at four --

NINO

Uh-huh. What else?

ALEXANDER

Tonight's line-up is our best yet.
Henry Malone, Valerie Hayes, Tom
Meyer --

NINO

And what else?

ALEXANDER

-- I'll get Vegas's best chorus
line to high-kick us into an atomic
sunrise.

Nino lights a cigarette. Thinks.

NINO

It could be fun.

ALEXANDER

There's no experience like this.
Anywhere. Except here. Where else
in America -- where else in the
world -- can you watch a mushroom
cloud light up the sky with a
cocktail in one hand and a pair of
dice in the other?

NINO

We would need New York's help to
pull this off.

ALEXANDER

That's not necessary.

NINO

Alex, most of the beds in this
hotel were empty last night. We're
barely keeping our heads above
water as is.

ALEXANDER

You promised me we wouldn't use
that money anymore.

NINO

What other option do we have? We've
bled all our investors dry.

ALEXANDER

I'm talking to a new bank that just
opened on Fremont --

NINO

No bank is going to loan to a casino. You know that.

ALEXANDER

I'm hoping they'll be more open-minded than their competitors.

NINO

And if they're not? How else are we supposed to pay for this?

ALEXANDER

I'll handle it. Trust me.

NINO

As your brother, I do. As your boss, I can't risk this hotel going belly-up because you're too proud to ask some old friends for a hand.

ALEXANDER

Nino. I said I'll handle it.

NINO

Am I taking orders from you now?

Alexander catches himself overstepping. He hesitates.

NINO (CONT'D)

(laughs)

I'm fucking with you. Make sure we have enough booze to fill the Hoover Dam and find enough guests to drink every last drop.

ALEXANDER

You got it.

As Alexander makes for the door --

NINO

One more thing.

ALEXANDER

Yeah?

NINO

Change that suit. I saw you in it yesterday.

Alexander nods. Undoes his tie.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ALEXANDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Alexander picks up the phone, dials, pulls a fresh blazer over his shoulders --

INT. BANK OF LAS VEGAS VALLEY - DAY

Old-fashioned. Marble counters and golden gates separate tellers from customers.

INT. BANK OF LAS VEGAS VALLEY - DAVID'S OFFICE - DAY

DAVID NELSON (34), top collar buttoned up so tight it could be a choking hazard, sifts through paperwork. His intercom buzzes.

SUSAN (ON INTERCOM)
Mr. Nelson? Alexander Weisz is
calling in.

David reluctantly picks up the line.

DAVID
Mr. Weisz.

ALEXANDER (ON THE PHONE)
David. How are you this morning?

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

DAVID
Good. I'm sorry for the delay.

ALEXANDER
No problem, as long as you have
good news for me.

DAVID
I'm afraid I can't approve this
loan.

ALEXANDER
What? What happened?

DAVID
I can't lend to a casino.

ALEXANDER
Why is this suddenly a problem?

DAVID

Look, this decision is bigger than me --

ALEXANDER

You said yourself that casino's are a legitimate business.

DAVID

Legitimacy isn't the issue, Mr. Weisz.

ALEXANDER

Then why shouldn't we be treated like any other business?

DAVID

How would this loan be repaid?

ALEXANDER

Casino's are Nevada's most profitable industry.

DAVID

Until they're not. Mr. Weisz, how can you, in confidence, guarantee me that my money will be secured by a Blackjack table? I need more stable collateral than that.

Alexander sighs. He should've known this would be a dead end.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I really am sorry.

ALEXANDER

Thank you for your time.

He hangs up. Defeated.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - US ROUTE 95 - DAY

A GREYHOUND BUS roars along the highway, puncturing the dead silence of the desert.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAWN

This bus is a microcosm of America: men and women of all ages, races and backgrounds.

Towards the back, OSCAR CORTEZ (33, Cuban) sits next to his daughter, GABRIELA CORTEZ (14, Cuban). Gabriela stares out the window, spots a road sign that reads:

LAS VEGAS

65 MILES

These two have been sitting in silence for a while. Oscar decides to bite:

OSCAR

We should have time to grab something to eat before my interview.

GABRIELA

I'm not hungry.

OSCAR

There's a couple of restaurants inside the hotel. They're meant to be good.

GABRIELA

I said I'm not hungry.

OSCAR

Fine. We can eat after.

GABRIELA

Just eat when we get there. I don't care.

A beat. Oscar can't hold his tongue any longer.

OSCAR

Gabriela, would you please stop making this more difficult than it needs to be?

GABRIELA

I'm making this difficult?

OSCAR

I don't need to remind you that it's only you and me now. The very least we can do is try and be pleasant to each another.

GABRIELA

You are the one who moved us to another country --

GABRIELA	OSCAR
-- Away from all our family. All our friends.	I wouldn't be doing this if I didn't think it was what's best for us.

GABRIELA (CONT'D)
You don't know what's best for me.

OSCAR
I'm your father.

GABRIELA
Why don't I get a say in what's
best for me?

OSCAR
Because right now, you don't know
that this will all be worth it --

GABRIELA
What? OSCAR
-- But you will one day.

GABRIELA
How? How will I know?

OSCAR
I am not having this argument with
you again.

GABRIELA
(you don't listen to me)
No me escuchas!

OSCAR
Gabriela. English.

She ignores him. This is another battle she can't win.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
Look, you're old enough for me to
be honest with you. I can't tell
you that this is going to be easy,
because that probably isn't true --

GABRIELA
Well, that makes me feel better.

OSCAR

Don't be sarcastic with me. What I can tell you is that if I get this job, if things go well in Las Vegas, one day your life is going to be so good that you won't be able to remember the time that it wasn't. That is when you'll know that this was all worth it.

Unconvinced, Gabriela returns her gaze to the window --

EXT. NEVADA DESERT - US ROUTE 95 - DAY

The Greyhound passes a series of MILITARY VEHICLES. They take a fork off the main drag, speeding past the following sign:

U.S. ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS

MERCURY, NEVADA

The vehicles beeline towards a secured area --

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (PRE-LAP)

I love working in the Nevada sun!

SOLDIERS (PRE-LAP)

I love working in the Nevada sun!

EXT. CAMP DESERT ROCK - DAY

A camp city. Large enough to house over 5,000 soldiers.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (40s) leads a running cadence with a group of YOUNG SOLDIERS.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Droppin' these nukes til the war is won!

SOLDIERS

Droppin' these nukes til the war is won!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

When I see a mushroom cloud rise to the sky --

SOLDIERS

When I see a mushroom cloud rise to
the sky --

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

I like to kiss them commies one
last goodbye!

SOLDIERS

I like to kiss them commies one
last goodbye!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

When I joined the army, my daddy
cried.

SOLDIERS

When I joined the army, my daddy
cried.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

I left behind a baby and a
beautiful bride.

SOLDIERS

I left behind a baby and a
beautiful bride.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

As I packed my bags, I said to my
mom:

SOLDIERS

As I packed my bags, I said to my
mom:

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

I ain't afraid of no atomic bomb!

SOLDIERS

I ain't afraid of no atomic bomb!

EXT. CAMP DESERT ROCK - OUTDOOR CAFETERIA - DAY

The soldiers line up. Get served potato and poultry. Sit and
eat under the cloudless Nevada sky.

FRANCIS JONES (21), confidence beyond the years of his baby-
face, joins OLLIE (18, Black), scrawny, skittish, and VINCENT
(23), handsome, charismatic.

VINCENT

They've got you with me in the trenches?

(laughs)

Shit, Ollie.

OLLIE

Wh-- what?

VINCENT

Well, let's just say when the shockwave hits ya, I'm afraid ya might snap in two.

OLLIE

Oh, gosh.

FRANCIS

Ollie, by tomorrow, you'll be one of only a handful of men who can say they've come face-to-face with a mushroom cloud and lived to tell the tale. Would you prefer to waste away with me in maintenance?

Ollie doesn't answer that.

VINCENT

Gentlemen, gentlemen. Let's not forget what's important here. Whether you're in the eye of the a-bomb, or...

(to Francis)

screwing in a lightbulb, there will still be a Greyhound waiting for you at the base to take you to Las Vegas every night.

OLLIE

That's -- that's true.

FRANCIS

Cheers to that.

VINCENT

Showgirls don't care what you do. The uniform speaks for itself, so neither of you have to.

Francis laughs. Ollie feigns a chuckle alongside him. Francis lights a cigarette.

FRANCIS

Ah, I can hear the show tunes
already.

Off his longing --

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - SHOW ROOM - DAY

A CHORUS LINE performs. Kicks high as the sky, claps loud as thunder. Feathered headpieces add an extra foot to their already generous heights. Alexander and Nino watch.

As the ladies take their finishing position, Alexander bursts into applause. Nino joins in, less enthusiastic.

ALEXANDER

Amazing, ladies. Amazing!

NINO

Yes. Good. Very good. There's just
one thing.

Nino points at ELLA O'LEARY (25), starry-eyed, pin-up good looks.

NINO

You.

ELLA

Me?

NINO

Yeah. How tall are you, sweetheart?

ELLA

Five-eight.

NINO

Are you sure?

ELLA

Yes.

NINO

I don't know. Though you certainly
make up for it elsewhere, you
appear to be lacking in stature.

ALEXANDER

Nino. What are you doing?

NINO

Excuse me?

Nino beckons the attention of a STAGEHAND --

NINO

Do you have a tape measure on you?

ALEXANDER

That's not necessary.

STAGEHAND

Um...

NINO

Do you or do you not?

STAGEHAND

Yeah.

He fishes the tape measure from his pocket, hands it to Nino.

NINO

Excuse me, ladies.

The showgirls part for Nino as he steps on stage, leaving Ella alone under the spotlight.

NINO

Your shoes.

ALEXANDER

Nino.

NINO

Your shoes.

Ella, currently eye-to-eye with Nino, steps out of her heels. Nino now towers over her. He pulls out the tape, measuring her from head-to-toe.

Alexander plants his face into his palm. Ella's eyes are glued to the ground. It's hard to say which one of them is more embarrassed.

NINO

Five-seven and a half. Sorry, shorty. You're not gonna cut it.

ALEXANDER

Nino. The show's not going to fall apart over a half-inch.

Nino steps off the stage, comes face-to-face with Alexander.

NINO

We can't afford to put a second-rate showgirl on stage.

ALEXANDER

Don't you think you're being a little harsh?

NINO

I hope so. Alex, if you want this hotel to survive, if you want to survive, you need to learn how to make hard decisions.

Without even looking at Ella:

NINO

Show her out.

Humiliated, Ella wipes away a few stray tears, picks up her heels. Barefoot, she follows Alexander backstage.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Once a safe distance away, Alexander stops walking. He opens his wallet, offers a couple of dollars to Ella.

ELLA

I don't want your money.

ALEXANDER

Buy a taller pair of heels and some new make-up. By the time you're on stage tonight, he'll be too many drinks in to recognize you.

Alexander puts the money in her palm, closes her fingers, then returns to the showroom. Ella smiles to herself. Pleasantly surprised.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - SHOW ROOM - DAY

NINO

Okay, up next, Ms. Valerie Hayes?

The showgirls clear the stage, making room for VALERIE HAYES (31, Black), who emanates a natural charisma. In head-to-toe Dior, she steps toward the microphone.

NINO

You come to us all the way from Chicago, I hear?

VALERIE

Mm-hmm, but I've played all over. I was at the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles last week.

NINO

Well, we're excited to have you here. Whenever you're ready.

As Valerie's backing track kicks in, she prepares to croon her opening note, but we'll have to wait a little longer to hear what she's got --

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - DAY

Out front, a PROMOTER with a megaphone commands passerby attention:

PROMOTER

Ladies and gentlemen, The Daybreak Hotel invites you to an evening of entertainment under the stars! There'll be drinks, dancing and performances, topped off by our grand finale: the atomic bomb! Folks, don't miss out. This is the greatest show in America!

The Greyhound pulls up out front, struggling to find an open space in the now busy valet area.

An eager mob disembarks. Bellhops swarm to assist with luggage. Oscar and Gabriela emerge from the back of the crowd. Oscar takes a moment to admire the hotel, then heads to the front doors --

He passes Valerie exiting from a side entrance. Cigarette hanging from her mouth. Ray-Bans perched on the bridge of her nose. She hails a cab.

EXT. LAS VEGAS BLVD - AFTERNOON

As we travel down Las Vegas Boulevard, the city begins to lose its shine as it shrinks into the distance. The cab turns off the road into:

EXT. THE WESTSIDE - AFTERNOON

A segregated town. Three and a half square miles of dwellings and businesses, separated by dirt streets.

EXT. BUCHANAN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The cab pulls up in front of a small boarding house. Valerie scrutinizes her surroundings from the back seat.

INT. BUCHANAN HOUSE - HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Not as decadent as The Daybreak Hotel, but the warm interior colors make Buchanan House a welcoming sight.

MABLE BUCHANAN (50, Black) walks Valerie down the hallway.

MABLE

On the right, you'll find our common area. It's empty now. The rest of my guests are still sleeping off last night's festivities. Come back in a few hours, it'll be rollicking.

VALERIE

Okay.

MABLE

Are you a light sleeper? The only room I have left shares a wall with the common area.

VALERIE

That's all right. I won't be staying long.

MABLE

I said the same thing five years ago. You should make the most of Las Vegas while you're hot.

VALERIE

Uh-huh.

MABLE

The money's almost enough to make you forget about everything else. My husband makes more building houses in this town than he would anywhere else.

Valerie doesn't care for this sales pitch:

VALERIE

I hate the desert heat.

MABLE

This is nothing. Stay until the dog days of August and you'll be gasping for air.

VALERIE

Like I said, I won't be staying long.

MABLE

Alright. Let me show you to your room.

Mable guides Valerie into --

INT. BUCHANAN HOUSE - VALERIE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

A quaint, simple bedroom. Bare essentials.

MABLE

It was good enough for Sammy Davis, so it's good enough for you.

VALERIE

How much?

MABLE

Six dollars a night.

VALERIE

Six dollars?!

MABLE

Same as The Daybreak.

VALERIE

This isn't The Daybreak.

MABLE

You hard up?

Valerie doesn't answer that. Mable knows she can afford it.

VALERIE

Okay. I'll take it. Thank you, Ms. Buchanan.

MABLE

It's Mable.

VALERIE

Mable. I appreciate you accommodating me last minute.

(MORE)

VALERIE (CONT'D)

I don't know where else I would have gone.

MABLE

That's the thing about this town. Most places, there's signs telling you where you can and can't be. There aren't any of those here. You'll get a look. Or a feeling. In Las Vegas, everybody's invited to the party, until someone tells you you're at the wrong address.

Valerie nods. Understands.

EXT. CAMP DESERT ROCK - AFTERNOON

The soldiers are seated in an outdoor, theater-style set up, listening to Sergeant Kirkman give a lecture from the stage.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Gentlemen, you are lucky enough to participate in our nation's most important practice warfare maneuver: the detonation of an a-bomb. The purpose of this exercise is to prepare you for an atomic battlefield. Those of you assigned to observe the blast will be positioned a safe distance from ground zero.

Ollie listens skeptically from the front row. Francis eyes him enviously.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

You will receive a small dose of radiation, but not enough to cause any harm. In fact, ninety seconds after the blast, there is no significant radioactivity present in the atmosphere at all.

This reassures the majority of the soldiers, but doubt crosses a few of their faces.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Now, I know young men like yourselves expend brain cells like casino chips, but the following instructions are simple enough for you to follow.

(MORE)

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Do exactly as I say and you will have no problems before, during, or after this test. Do I make myself clear?

SOLDIERS

Sir, yes, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

It is a privilege to witness what you will today. You are strictly forbidden to discuss what you do or see here with another soul. Do not brag to your buddies or bore your wives. Anybody who does will be arrested and tried for treason against the United States.

Well, *that* sufficiently scares the shit out of them.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Are there any questions?

Ollie looks around. Nothing. Well, if no one else is going to ask... He shoots his hand up.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Yes.

OLLIE

Sir, will uh, will the radiation make me sterile, sir?

Vincent and a few other soldiers laugh, but murmurs from the rest of the crowd reveal that they all had similar thoughts.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Quiet!

The soldiers quickly quieten.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Stand up, soldier.

OLLIE

Sir, yes, sir!

Ollie leaps out of his chair.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Are you married, soldier?

OLLIE

Sir, no, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Do you have a girlfriend?

OLLIE
Sir, no, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Well, if you ever find one, I hope
your children get her looks!

OLLIE
Sir, yes, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Shit, I need to put sunglasses on
before your ugly face burns my
retinas!

OLLIE
Sir, yes, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Sit down, soldier!

OLLIE
Sir, yes, sir!

Ollie throws himself back into his chair.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
The only danger you men face is
getting stung by a scorpion or
bitten by a snake. Do I make myself
clear?

SOLDIERS
Sir, yes, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
The sky is clear. The air is still.
Gentlemen, it's a perfect day to
drop an atomic bomb!

Francis rises to his feet. Kicks off a round of thunderous
APPLAUSE from the soldiers. Ollie claps along reluctantly.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Oscar sits on the lounge. He straightens his tie and smooths
the creases in his pants. Gabriela impatiently slouches by
his side.

OSCAR
Gabriela, sit up straight.

Grudgingly, she obliges.

ALEXANDER (O.S.)
Oscar Cortez?

Oscar jumps to his feet. Alexander appears. They shake hands.

OSCAR
Mr. Weisz, it's a pleasure to meet
you. This is my daughter, Gabriela.

ALEXANDER
Nice to meet you both. Sorry, I'm
late.

OSCAR
No, no. It's no problem at all.

ALEXANDER
Follow me. I'll show you to my
office.

OSCAR
Gabriela, can I trust you to wait
here?

GABRIELA
They won't let me into the casino
without you.

Alexander smirks. Maybe Gabriela belongs in Vegas after all.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ALEXANDER'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Alexander sits at his desk, Oscar opposite him.

ALEXANDER
You worked at The Tropicana in
Havana?

OSCAR
Mm-hmm. I was there from day one.
Cleaned toilets, waited tables,
counted coins, then dealt Blackjack
and craps. You been?

ALEXANDER
A few times.

OSCAR

I probably dealt you a hand at some point. There was rarely a night I wasn't there. Mostly because I had to be, but thankfully I loved it.

ALEXANDER

So why'd you leave?

OSCAR

There's more for me. And my daughter.

ALEXANDER

And you think you'll find that in Las Vegas?

OSCAR

I do.

ALEXANDER

Las Vegas is a city run by outlaws, pariahs and wolves. Men pushed so far to the edge of society that the only place that'll accept them is a small oasis in the middle of the desert.

OSCAR

And Las Vegas is the only city in the world where you can turn the wild west into a boom town.

Alexander smiles. He likes Oscar's attitude.

ALEXANDER

Well, it sounds like you've worked every hotel and casino job except this one. I've interviewed a dozen candidates and all of them have been an Operations Director before.

OSCAR

The best of those men ends on a piece of paper.

ALEXANDER

What makes you say that?

OSCAR

Why else would I be sitting here?

ALEXANDER

Good point.

OSCAR

Besides, why hire a Hilton guy who didn't have what it takes to get his boss's job, when you could hire someone who is more... of your world?

Alexander almost seems taken aback:

ALEXANDER

My world?

OSCAR

Sure. I've worked in every single department, I know how to run them. I can mingle with guests, I can manage belligerent maitre d's, I can deal with drunks losing their life savings at a craps table.

ALEXANDER

Right. Of course.
(a beat, then)
Does your daughter like it here?

OSCAR

It'll grow on her.

ALEXANDER

How old is she?

OSCAR

Fourteen.

ALEXANDER

My brother was the same age when we came over here.

OSCAR

That must have been tough.

ALEXANDER

I was a little younger, so I didn't really understand what was happening, but some of the earliest memories I have are from the voyage from Odessa to Ellis Island. None of them particularly pleasant.

OSCAR

I'm sorry.

ALEXANDER

Don't be. It wasn't for nothing.

That gives Oscar the reassurance he needs. He gets his head back in the game --

OSCAR

You've built this business from dirt. I want to help you turn it into an empire.

ALEXANDER

Yeah? Tell me how.

OSCAR

You have a vision already. Obviously. I'll help you make it clearer. For example, the a-bomb party. Your idea?

ALEXANDER

That depends who you ask.

OSCAR

I'm asking you.

ALEXANDER

Then, yes.

OSCAR

It's brilliant, but what do you do when you've gone a few weeks without a test? How do you keep people interested?

(beat, thinking)

Perhaps, a beauty pageant called... Miss Atomic Bomb. Or atomic-themed shows. Chorus lines in mushroom cloud dresses.

ALEXANDER

That's good.

OSCAR

Eventually, you won't need the a-bomb anymore. Word of how this is the best hotel in America will have already travelled east of the Mississippi. This town... it's unlike anywhere else, but at the same time, it's a snapshot of everything that makes this country what it is. Somewhere you could win everything just as fast as you could lose it all.

Boom. Oscar gets this place.

OSCAR

The Daybreak is not a hotel. Or a casino. It's an entire experience.

Alexander's face lights up. Oscar has inspired him.

ALEXANDER

Well, I think I have everything I need. Thank you for coming all this way, Oscar. I'll make a decision in the next couple of days.

They shake hands.

OSCAR

Thank you.

INT. BANK OF LAS VEGAS VALLEY - DAVID'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

David puts his hat on, preparing to call it a day, but before he can get a foot out the door --

SUSAN (ON INTERCOM)

Mr. Nelson? Alexander Weisz --

DAVID

Susan, tell him I've left for the day. I'll call him back tomorrow.

SUSAN (ON INTERCOM)

Oh, Mr. Nelson. He's actually --

Alexander enters.

ALEXANDER

Here. May I have a word with you?

David isn't really left with much of a choice. He sighs. Takes his hat off.

DAVID

You know, there are other banks in Nevada.

ALEXANDER

Sure, but most of them are controlled by a single holding company and have been around since the Jurassic era. Old school. Besides, I like you more.

Since it's obvious David won't offer him a seat, Alexander finds one for himself.

DAVID

Do you?

ALEXANDER

Yeah. I trust you like I'd trust my mother.

DAVID

Is that a compliment?

ALEXANDER

In this town, yeah.

David half-laughs. There's a sense of camaraderie between them that not even they are aware of yet.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

I need you to rethink the loan.

DAVID

Mr. Weisz --

ALEXANDER

Alex.

DAVID

I told you. I can't lend money to a casino.

ALEXANDER

Why would you leave the Rocky Mountains of Utah for Las Vegas if not for the chance at bigger business?

DAVID

I'm sorry, Mr. Weisz.

ALEXANDER

You're looking at this the wrong way. I want you to come with me and see The Daybreak for yourself.

DAVID

I don't gamble.

ALEXANDER

We prefer the term gaming, but that's not what I meant.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - DUSK

A WORKER perched atop a ladder places the final letter on the marquee out front, which now reads:

WELCOME TO THE DAYBREAK HOTEL

HOME OF THE ATOMIC BOMB PARTY

TONIGHT: HENRY MALONE, VALERIE HAYES, TOM MEYER

Underneath, Alexander leads David inside --

ALEXANDER

The Daybreak is more than a hotel,
and it's certainly more than a
casino.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - LOBBY - DUSK

Alexander takes David through the lobby, into the --

CASINO

The sun hasn't even set yet, but the casino is already filling up. Slot machines buzz. Squeals from a lucky dice throw drown out the groans from yet *another* bad hand.

ALEXANDER

You have to go through the casino
to get to any other part of the
hotel.

(glib)

Sorry about that.

Squeezing past the throngs of hopeful gamblers, they exit into --

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROTUNDA - DUSK

A rotunda of restaurants. An American diner, a Mexican eatery and an elegant bar adorned with chandeliers.

ALEXANDER

Either before or after rolling the
dice, guests can enjoy a bite at
one of our restaurants, or a drink
at our gorgeous bar. We've got
construction underway on a third
restaurant, but haven't quite
decided on the cuisine.

(MORE)

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

I'm thinking either Mediterranean
or Chinese.

DAVID

I like Chinese.

ALEXANDER

Chinese it is.

As they complete the loop of the rotunda, Alexander opens the door to --

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - SHOW ROOM - DUSK

An empty show room, a harsh spotlight illuminates the stage. Alexander strolls down the center aisle, David at his heels.

ALEXANDER

This is our show room. Seats three-
hundred and sixty-five. Has housed
performances from the world's best
comedians, singers and dancers, but
tonight, we'll be taking the
entertainment to the rooftop.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL HOTEL - ROTUNDA - DUSK

As the two exit the show room --

ALEXANDER

I'd take you up there, but our crew
is still getting ready. You'll have
to use your imagination.

Alexander loops half-way through the rotunda, heading towards
a set of doors, disappearing daylight peeking through them --

ALEXANDER

And finally, for our guests that
prefer day to night, there's no
shortage of things to do.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - POOL - DUSK

An enormous, oval-shaped pool. While most guests have cleared
out as the sun sets, there are still a few lingering on
floaties and poolside chairs.

ALEXANDER

Families especially love our pool
and spa.

(MORE)

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Though, the diving board is a popular attraction for bachelors trying to show-off.

The pool glimmers in the dusk light. Surrounded by palm trees. Further in the distance, there's Nevada's trademark desert, plus a man-made patch of green.

ALEXANDER

Over there, that's our golf course. Only ten holes at the moment, but we'd like to expand. Hopefully, with your help.

David takes it all in. He's impressed.

ALEXANDER

What do you say?

Off David, contemplating --

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - DINER - NIGHT

An all-American diner. Couples, families and friends enjoy hamburgers and milkshakes. It's almost a full house.

Alexander enters. Finds Nino eating with his wife, JEAN (33) and their two children, CONNIE (4) and JONAS (5), both playing with their food.

ALEXANDER

Nino.

NINO

Alex! Join us for dinner.

ALEXANDER

I can't, unfortunately. I just stopped by to give you an update --

NINO

Uh-huh. Do I need to call New York?

Jean eyes Nino and Alexander uncertainly.

JEAN

We'll excuse ourselves. Come on, you two.

As she and her children are about to stand --

ALEXANDER

That's not necessary.

JEAN
(to Nino, ignoring Alex)
Not around the children.

NINO
Honey, he said it's okay. What is
it, Alex?

ALEXANDER
We got approved for that loan.

NINO
We did? What'd you do to make that
happen?

ALEXANDER
I gave a good sales pitch.

NINO
That's all?

In other words, "no roughing up"?

ALEXANDER
That's all.

NINO
Great.

Jean shifts in her seat. Waiting for one of them to say a word too much in front of the kids, who are restless from the boring adult talk. Jonas grabs a handful of Mac 'n' Cheese and throws it at his sister.

CONNIE
Hey!

JEAN
Jonas!

Connie SLAPS her brother -- who loudly YELPS in pain.

NINO
Hey, both of you, cut it out! Just
because this is daddy's hotel
doesn't mean you can make a fuss.

ALEXANDER
You know, maybe I will stay for
dinner.

Alexander grabs the remainder of Jonas's Mac 'n' Cheese and helps himself.

JONAS

Dad!

NINO

Tough luck, son. Somebody's gotta eat that food if you won't.

As Alexander enjoys his "dinner", he ruffles Jonas's hair.

ALEXANDER

Your uncle's got a long night ahead. I need fuel.

Nino laughs. Jean half-smiles, still uneasy.

EXT. CAMP DESERT ROCK - NIGHT

Night has fallen on the Nevada desert. The soldiers are loading themselves into trucks.

Ollie follows a group to their vehicle, but gets distracted by --

CLUCK, CLUCK, CLUCK! BAAAAAAH!

-- a coup full of chickens and goats. Ollie approaches and pets a goat. It's adorable.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

(to Ollie)

Soldier! To your vehicle.

Ollie runs.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

All men in the trenches up front, those in the observation decks over here. The rest of you, up back.

Annoyed, Francis is en route to the back. Sergeant Kirkman is counting the trench men.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

I need another man to round out the trenches.

He immediately has Francis's attention.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Do I have a volunteer?

Francis leaps in front of him.

FRANCIS
Sir, yes, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Who the fuck are you?

FRANCIS
Sir, my name is Francis Jones, sir.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Why are you talking to me?! Get
your skinny ass on that truck!

As he sprints away --

FRANCIS
Sir, yes, sir!

Elated, Francis climbs onto the truck and sits next to Ollie. Ollie notices a soldier putting the chickens and goats into the next truck.

From the P.A. system:

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O)
Camp Desert Rock, please report to
your assigned positions
immediately. The time is t-minus
four hours until detonation.

Francis and Ollie soak up the excitement unfolding around them. Their truck pulls away, past a sign that reads:

IF YOU WOULDN'T TELL STALIN

DON'T TELL ANYONE

As Camp Desert Rock descends into a frenzy --

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The party begins to swell at The Daybreak Hotel.

A haze of cigarette smoke blankets the rooftop. Glasses clink. People dance. Mushroom cloud balloons float above everybody's heads. An American flag flies proudly.

MARLENE (21), a waitress, circles the casino and searches for patrons who need refills. A middle-aged CRAPS PLAYER flags her down.

CRAPS PLAYER

Sweetheart? Would you grab these boys another round? The way this game is going, they'll be needing it.

The frowns from the rest of the table tell us things aren't going well for them. She collects their empty glasses.

MARLENE

Right away.

Marlene weaves through the crowd, heads for the:

BAR

LARRY (40s), the bartender, is serving Alexander a peach-colored drink in a martini glass, garnished with an orange wedge.

LARRY

Here it is. The soon-to-be world famous "Atomic Cocktail."

Intrigued, Marlene watches as she grabs another round of Bud Lights from the fridge.

ALEXANDER

Larry. Did we make a huge mistake not calling this "The Nuclear Wasted"?

LARRY

Possibly.

Alexander takes a moment to taste the drink in his mouth.

ALEXANDER

What's in this?

LARRY

An ounce and a half of Vodka, an ounce and a half of Brandy, and a half ounce of Dry Sherry.

ALEXANDER

It's good.

LARRY

But?

ALEXANDER

Something's missing.

Marlene's eyes light up. She hesitates.

LARRY

I can add another garnish. Or
another splash of Brandy?

ALEXANDER

I don't know.

MARLENE

An ounce of champagne.

Surprised, Alexander and Larry sink their eyes into her.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

The bubbles... it -- it would give
the cocktail the extra spark it
needs.

A beat. Larry's not overly thrilled with the unsolicited
suggestion.

ALEXANDER

(to Larry)

You heard her.

Larry does as he's told and adds a dash of champagne to the
drink. Alexander samples it.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

That's it. That's the Atomic
Cocktail! Make the rest just like
that.

LARRY

Yes, sir.

Pleased with herself, Marlene walks a new round of Bud
Light's back to the craps table, then resumes working her way
through the crowd.

BLACKJACK TABLE

Marlene searches for a pair of hands without a drink to no
avail, even the DEALER has a cocktail in one hand,
distributing chips with the other.

Discretely, he slips a few chips into his pocket. Nobody
notices. Except Marlene.

She holds her gaze for a moment too long. His eyes meet hers.
Presumptuously, he WINKS. He's got the wrong idea.

Marlene moves on, noticing Oscar hovering around the table without a drink.

MARLENE

Can I get you anything, sir?

OSCAR

I'm okay, thank you.

MARLENE

You play?

OSCAR

Not tonight.

MARLENE

You don't play, you don't drink,
yet you're here. Are you a spy for
the Flamingo hotel or the Soviets?

Oscar laughs.

OSCAR

I'm in town looking for a job. I
interviewed here today, actually.

MARLENE

That's wonderful. This is a very
exciting place to work.

OSCAR

Yeah. I've never been to a party
quite like this before.

MARLENE

You mean, you've never jived to
your own doom?

OSCAR

Can't say I have.

MARLENE

Well, you owe it to yourself to
have a little fun.

Oscar sees her point.

OSCAR

I'll take your cheapest beer.
And... how about I throw a nickel
into the slots?

MARLENE

Don't do that. You'll be wasting your money. A table game is your best bet. Blackjack especially. The house has the smallest advantage over you.

OSCAR

You know your stuff.

MARLENE

I learned how to shuffle cards before I learned how to use a knife and fork.

OSCAR

You from here?

MARLENE

No. Arkansas.

OSCAR

You're far from home.

MARLENE

I like it here. Back home, everybody believes you can only play with the chips you've been given.

OSCAR

And what, you came here hoping to deal yourself another hand?

MARLENE

My husband is in the army. He's stationed at the test site.

Marlene pulls a small photo out of her pocket. A handsome, smiling soldier. We recognize him. It's Francis.

MARLENE (CONT'D)

They don't let us stay on the base, though. So, here I am.

Before Oscar can respond --

DEALER (O.S.)

Sir?

Oscar turns to the dealer.

DEALER (CONT'D)

Are you playing?

Why not? Marlene's right. This is Las Vegas, after all.

OSCAR

I'm in.

MARLENE

I'll be back with your beer.

Marlene pockets Francis's photo.

MARLENE

Good luck.

And she's gone.

EXT. YUCCA FLAT - NIGHT

A desert basin where the atomic blasts are conducted. A handful of craters from previous tests are etched into the terrain. This is nothing compared to how ravaged the land will be by the century's end, when over 700 tests will have taken place here.

At the edge of the basin, there's a rock formation known as --

EXT. NEWS NOB - NIGHT

-- where dozens of reporters and photographers have congregated to document the blast. A Walter Cronkite-type REPORTER conducts a live-cross:

REPORTER

We're coming to you live from News
Nob, the press's prime spot to
watch the a-bomb, going kaboom only
seven miles away from here!

He signals behind him, toward a barren slab of desert that will soon be obliterated by the blast.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

On a nearby dirt road, a truck transporting our atomic soldiers speeds toward news nob.

EXT. NEWS NOB - NIGHT

Distracted, laughing and chatting, the boys almost miss the enormous convergence of press. CAMERON (18), another baby-faced soldier, notices just in time.

CAMERON

Boys. Boys! Look! Over there!

A chorus of 'whoa' and 'cool' echoes through the vehicle.

FRANCIS

Oh, shit. We're gonna be on TV?!

Vincent stands up.

OLLIE

Careful.

VINCENT

(to the press)

HEY! Why don't you fella's put this
on TV?!

He turns around, yanks down his pants and bares his PALE ASS to some of the country's most esteemed journalists, who barely have time to react before the truck zips past them.

The soldiers ROAR with laughter. At the front, Sergeant Kirkman covers his left ear, while listening to a walkie-talkie with his right.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

(on walkie-talkie)

Copy that.

Hanging up, he turns his attention to his boisterous army.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

Soldiers. Soldiers! QUIET DOWN!

The boys slowly regain composure.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

This morning's test has been delayed.

VINCENT

What?!

FRANCIS

Come on.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

The wind conditions have changed and the atmosphere is currently unsuitable for detonation.

Concerned murmurs spread through the squadron --

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

There is no need to worry. This is not unusual.

(MORE)

SERGEANT KIRKMAN (CONT'D)

We will proceed as soon as it is safe. It shouldn't be more than a few hours.

Ollie tenses. Worried. He turns to Francis.

OLLIE

(quietly, avoiding attention)

How do they know the wind won't change again?

FRANCIS

What?

OLLIE

If the wind -- if the wind suddenly increases speed or -- or changes direction after they've already pulled the trigger --

FRANCIS

Ollie.

OLLIE

-- we could be hit with a gale filled with radiation.

FRANCIS

Ollie, these men -- they know what they're doing.

OLLIE

Yeah, but there are -- there are certain things that are beyond their control.

Ollie's worked himself up.

OLLIE (CONT'D)

(louder)

We don't know what could happen out there. *They* don't know.

A few heads turn towards them --

FRANCIS

Keep your voice down. Don't broadcast that shit to these guys.

That silences Ollie completely. He retreats into himself.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Ollie, why did you join the army?

OLLIE
I, uh -- to serve my country.

FRANCIS
To serve your country? A country
that has served you. Right?

OLLIE
Right.

FRANCIS
Then trust these men. With every
test, this country comes *this* much
closer to securing the peace of the
free world and everybody in it.
Your friends, your family and you.

Ollie nods. Reassured. They continue ahead. The VROOM of the
truck turns into --

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

-- GUITAR STRUMS.

HENRY MALONE (25), a rock 'n' roll heartthrob, is mid-
performance on stage. Bodies are packed against one another,
each note sending the increasingly rowdy crowd into HYSTERIA.

BLACKJACK TABLE

The table has played multiple rounds. The dealer finishes
distributing a fresh pair of cards to all FIVE PLAYERS. A
CHORUS GIRL, a BUSINESSMAN and a TOURIST choose to stand.

Oscar has a sizable stack of chips sitting in front of him,
but a COWBOY next to him is down to his last bet.

COWBOY
Double down.

Oscar concentrates. He rests his hand across his eyebrows,
shielding his eyes, which dart between all the played cards.
Oscar has a FIVE DIAMONDS and FIVE HEARTS.

DEALER
Tell me.

STAGE

Henry is hitting his final crescendo --

BLACKJACK TABLE

OSCAR

Hit me.

The dealer fans out their third cards: the cowboy and dealer both bust, while Oscar reaches twenty, the highest score at the table.

COWBOY

DAMMIT!

OSCAR

YES!

The growing crowd of onlookers CHEER, almost in sync with the rest of the rooftop APPLAUDING Henry's performance.

The cowboy SLAMS his fists against the table. Yet another sore loser. The cowboy gets up, barely out of his chair before another EAGER GAMBLER quickly takes his place.

NEARBY

Nino, chatting up a CHORUS GIRL, overhears the hollering from the Blackjack table. He spots Oscar stacking his growing pile of chips. Nino's face sours. He downs his drink.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - DRESSING ROOM - DAWN

Crew frantically bustle about, pushing clothing racks and rallying personnel. A STAGE MANAGER begins the countdown --

STAGE MANAGER

Twenty seconds.

Valerie, an image of composure, is talking to Alexander while getting final touches on hair and make-up.

ALEXANDER

I appreciate you coming in later,
Ms. Hayes.

VALERIE

You know, I've performed plenty of
sunsets, but never a sunrise.

ALEXANDER

(laughs)

Well, thank you for helping us keep
everyone entertained until the
early hours. The last time the bomb
got delayed, it didn't go off until
nine-thirty in the morning.

STAGE MANAGER
Ten seconds!

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - DAWN

The sky turns blood orange as the sun begins to rise. A flamboyant EMCEE waltzes out on stage, sporting a small mushroom cloud in his pocket instead of a square.

EMCEE
Ladies and gentlemen, our next performer this evening comes to you all the way from Chicago, Illinois, please give a warm Las Vegas welcome to Valerie Hayes!

Valerie walks out. Everybody ROARS. She puts her mouth to the microphone. The crowd quietens. Taking a moment, she lets the anticipation build, and then -- Valerie croons the opening lyric. She sounds unbelievable. She sings a smooth, jazz tune that draws every pair of eyes towards her.

Marlene is entranced by her voice. Oscar is swept up in the music. Nino has stopped chatting up the chorus girl to give Valerie his full attention. Next to him, Alexander is rapt: he knows he's witnessing the birth of Vegas's next big star.

All these people from different places, different backgrounds, but just for a moment, those differences seem to vanish as they come together in this crazy place called Las Vegas.

As Valerie finishes her song, the crowd ERUPTS INTO APPLAUSE.

Alexander turns to Nino.

ALEXANDER
Let's find a way to keep her on our payroll. She's incredible.

Nino nods in agreement.

On stage, relief falls across Valerie's face as the audience cheers. The noise carries us over to --

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - MORNING

A taxi waiting outside. Valerie hops in. As the car pulls away, the applause slowly fades to silence.

Valerie gazes out the rear window, watching the hotel marquee emblazoned with her name disappear into the distance.

EXT. NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS - TRENCHES - MORNING

The rising sun lights up the desert. A series of TRENCHES are etched into the barren landscape. At only six feet deep, they hardly look robust enough for what's about to happen.

A parade of military vehicles SPEED through the dirt. Dozens of soldiers wielding rifles disembark their trucks and sprawl across the desert.

Sergeant Kirkman leads a group of EIGHT SOLDIERS to their trench. Francis and Vincent eagerly follow him at the front, while Ollie dawdles at the back.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Come on, boy. Move your ass.

Reluctantly, Ollie picks up his pace.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Let's go, let's go, let's go!

FRANCIS
Which trench, sir?

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Keep going.

The soldiers continue onward, walking until they finally reach the final trench up front. Of the dozens of soldiers in this exercise, they will be closest to the blast.

One by one, they come to a halt, taking a moment to absorb the infinite desert ahead of them.

Eerily, there's nothing in sight for miles.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
I know, it doesn't look like much now, but wait until you see what's next. I promise you, you have never seen anything so beautiful. This sucker is twice as big as the ones we dropped on Japan and you boys are lucky enough to have front row seats.

Shit. The gravity of that sinks in.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN
Gentlemen, take your positions.

Rapid-fire, the soldiers jump into the trench.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Before the blast, all of you must crouch down, put on your dark glasses and cover your eyes. Once the bomb detonates, count to ten, then rise to look at the cloud. When instructed, you will then march towards ground zero.

Ollie's face sinks. Francis's excitement builds.

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

You'll see for yourself that the immediate blast area is not deadly. If you ever find yourself in an atomic battlefield, you can still advance to attack an enemy without causing yourself any harm. Do I make myself clear?

SOLDIERS

Sir, yes, sir!

SERGEANT KIRKMAN

Very good. I look forward to hearing your evaluations after the test is complete.

Suddenly, a BOOMING VOICE sounds over the P.A. system --

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.)

Attention all personnel. There is t-minus thirty minutes until detonation. I repeat, t-minus thirty minutes until detonation.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - MORNING

An exhausted Alexander wades through the crowd, which has mellowed in the morning sun. Ella, who has now changed out of her chorus line outfit, spots him. She excuses herself from another conversation and approaches.

ELLA

Mr. Weisz. Hello.

ALEXANDER

Alex. Hi. I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.

ELLA

Ella. Ella O'Leary.

ALEXANDER

You put on a great show, Ella.

ELLA

Oh, that's very kind of you, but I didn't come up to you for a compliment. I actually wanted to thank you for earlier.

ALEXANDER

Don't worry about it.

ELLA

No. When a total stranger with nothing to gain does something nice for you, you should always say thank you.

As Alexander smiles, a slight YAWN escapes from his mouth --

ALEXANDER

That's good of you.

ELLA

(teasing)

Am I boring you?

ALEXANDER

(laughs)

No, not at all.

ELLA

A lot of men find me underwhelming out of costume.

ALEXANDER

I find you very charming either way. It's just been a long day, but perhaps another drink would do the trick. Could I tempt you?

ELLA

Martini. A coffee for you. I'd like to keep you awake a little longer.

Flirtatious, Ella leads the way to the bar.

BLACKJACK TABLE

Of the FIVE PLAYERS at the table, only Oscar and a CHORUS GIRL are still in the game for this hand. Oscar's pile of chips has grown so high that a sudden breeze would take them down. Onlookers eagerly watch on.

CHORUS GIRL

Stand.

The dealer looks at Oscar, whose eyes are very closely trained on his two cards: a FIVE SPADES and SIX CLUBS. Marlene notices how hard he's concentrating.

DEALER

Tell me.

Oscar takes another moment.

OSCAR

Double down.

The crowd gawking over his shoulder erupt into applause.

DEALER

Double down?

A risky move. Oscar nods. The dealer reveals his third card: a TEN DIAMONDS.

OSCAR

WOOHOO!

That's Blackjack. An unbeatable hand. The crowd goes BALLISTIC.

DEALER

Lucky man.

NEARBY

Nino glares at Oscar collecting more winnings. He finishes off *another* drink, bulldozes through the crowd towards the --

BLACKJACK TABLE

Nino taps Oscar on the shoulder --

NINO

Quite a night you're having.

BAR

Alexander is chatting to Ella. In the corner of his eye, he spots Nino talking to Oscar --

BLACKJACK TABLE

Nino crouches, coming eyeball-to-eyeball with Oscar. He does his best not to escalate the conversation above a whisper, avoiding the attention of other patrons --

NINO
I don't know how you're doing this,
but this isn't a fucking bank.

Oscar can smell the booze on Nino's breath.

OSCAR
Excuse me?

The liquor begins slurring Nino's words --

NINO
Your bets -- your bets have bounced
around from \$5 to \$50.

OSCAR
Is that a problem?

NINO
There's no sense to your game.
Unless you know something that
every other person at this table
doesn't.

OSCAR
I know how to play.

BAR

Alexander stops listening to Ella, zeroing all his attention
in on Nino, whose temper is bubbling to the surface --

BLACKJACK TABLE

NINO
I need you to leave.

OSCAR
What? Why?

NINO
This is my hotel. I don't need to
give you a reason.

Perhaps it's best Oscar doesn't test him. At least not
publicly.

OSCAR
Fine. I'll cash out.

NINO
Either you get up and walk yourself
out right now, or I'll have these
men throw you off this roof.

Nino points to a couple of BIG, SUITED GUYS watching from close by. Yeah, it would be unwise to disobey Nino. Oscar slowly rises from his chair.

BAR

Alexander sees Nino herd Oscar towards the stairwell exit. Ella is mid-sentence --

ALEXANDER
Would you excuse me?

Disappointed, she watches him go.

STAIRWELL

OSCAR
You know, this is not how casino's operate. You have to take the winners with the suckers. A man in your position should know that.

BAM! Nino SUCKER PUNCHES Oscar in the jaw, busting his lower lip open and sending him to the floor --

NINO
Who the fuck do you think you are?!

The stairwell door flies open -- it's Alexander.

ALEXANDER
Nino, what are you doing?!

NINO
Running a business, is all.

ALEXANDER
You can't keep doing this.

NINO
Doing what? Stopping the roof of this place from caving in?

ALEXANDER
You can't kick people out every time they get a little lucky. Do you want everybody to think we only let losers play here?

Oscar picks himself up off the floor. Unrattled.

OSCAR
It's okay, this is nothing that can't be sorted out.

ALEXANDER
You're right. Every dime you won
belongs to you, Oscar.

NINO
Alex, you know this guy?

ALEXANDER
Of course. Nino, meet Oscar Cortez.
Our new Operations Director.

Oscar's eyes widen. Surprised. He'd like to jump for joy, but
he keeps his cool.

NINO
What?

Oscar offers his hand.

OSCAR
It's nice to meet you.

Nino turns to Alex. Pretending Oscar isn't even there.

NINO
You hired someone? Alex, I told
you, I can bring in one of my guys
from back east for you.

ALEXANDER
I don't want your guy. I want my
guy.

NINO
Why didn't you consult me about
this?

ALEXANDER
I just decided now.

NINO
Uh-huh.

Nino has a lot more he'd like to say, but for the first time
today, he shows some restraint.

NINO
Oscar, was it?

OSCAR
Yes, sir.

NINO

I suppose we'll be getting to know
each other very well then, Oscar.

OSCAR

I look forward to it.

Nino nods. Accepts defeat. For now.

He takes one last look at his brother. Then returns to the
party. Once he's gone --

OSCAR

Thank you.

ALEXANDER

Are you okay?

OSCAR

I meant for the job.

ALEXANDER

You're welcome for that, too

OSCAR

Sorry for causing any trouble
between you and your brother. I
didn't (mean to) --

ALEXANDER

Are you kidding? That's why I hired
you.

Oscar laughs.

ALEXANDER

However, a man's luck has to run
out eventually.

OSCAR

I'll call it a night.

ALEXANDER

Cash out first, but going forward,
I'd consider it unwise to play
against the house.

Oscar nods. As Alexander lets himself out --

ALEXANDER

Oh, one last thing. Do me a favor.
Clean yourself up before you go
back out there.

Oscar gets it. Mops up his bloodied lip with a handkerchief.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - MORNING

A CASHIER fills an envelope with cash. Hands it to Oscar.

OSCAR

Thank you.

Oscar tucks his winnings into his jacket. Makes for the exit. Marlene intercepts him.

MARLENE

I've only seen a handful of people
pull that off.

OSCAR

Excuse me?

MARLENE

You were playing for so long, I
thought you'd lose count
eventually, but you didn't slip up.
Not once.

Ah-ha. She knows he was counting cards.

MARLENE

How did you learn to do that?

OSCAR

I could ask you the same thing.

...And he walks away. Fascinated, Marlene steals another look at him before he disappears into the crowd.

STAGE

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen! The sun is
up, but keep those drinks flowing.
We are only minutes away from the a-
bomb!

The crowd disperse to find the best bomb-watching spots. The energy is electrifying.

Oscar pushes against the flow of foot traffic, passing Nino and Alexander. They're in a stand off. Nino eyes Oscar on his way out.

NINO

You wanted your own guy, huh?

ALEXANDER
Don't take it personally.

NINO
Where's he from, anyway?

ALEXANDER
Don't be like that.

Nino pauses. Taken aback. His little brother is not usually so combative.

NINO
Are you unhappy here, Alex?

The crowd balloons around them. It's suffocating. Alexander pulls Nino away from the masses. Somewhere more private.

ALEXANDER
Nino, this hotel could be our last chance --

NINO	ALEXANDER
Oh, don't start with this.	-- to make an honest living for ourselves.

NINO
I know you'd prefer to forget how the the floors you're walking on were built, but it's not that simple.

ALEXANDER
I haven't forgotten. Just because our doors opened with dirty money doesn't mean you still have to do business that way.

NINO
Would you rather be back in Crown Heights? Shining shoes for a penny?

ALEXANDER
It's possible for this place to thrive without the cops landing on our doorstep. Or worse. I mean, shit, Nino. Humiliating a beauty queen is one thing, but if you keep roughing people up just because you feel like it, one day, you're going to fuck with the wrong guy.

NINO

Alex, every decision I make,
especially the difficult ones, are
for the good of this hotel.

ALEXANDER

Nino, your wife calls me in a panic
when you're not home in time for
dinner with your children. Afraid
that you're face down somewhere in
a pool of your own blood.

NINO

My wife? She has a roof over her
head. Clothes in her closet.
Diamonds around her neck. And my
children? My children had food on
their plates tonight. They'll have
food waiting for them when they
wake up. And they have a bright
future in America ahead of them.
Things neither you or I had at
their age, so don't you fucking
dare talk to me about my family.

ALEXANDER

Is it worth putting all that at
risk?

NINO

Risk bought me this kingdom.

ALEXANDER

Kingdoms rise and fall, Nino. And
they're impossible to rebuild.
We've watched it happen time and
time again. I can't watch it happen
to you.

Nino takes a moment. Lights a cigarette. Inhales.

NINO

You worry too much, little brother.
Get your fucking shoulders out of
your ears and have a little fun.
This is a party, after all.

And on that note, Nino leaves Alexander to rejoin the party.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - OSCAR AND GABRIELA'S ROOM - MORNING

Oscar quietly unlocks the door. Gabriela is fast asleep. He
sits on the bed. She feels his presence, slowly wakes up.

OSCAR

Morning.

Half-asleep, she gives him a faint smile.

OSCAR (CONT'D)

I got the job.

GABRIELA

You did?

Oscar nods.

GABRIELA (CONT'D)

We don't know anybody here.

OSCAR

That doesn't matter.

GABRIELA

I don't have any friends.

OSCAR

You'll start school at the end of the summer. You'll make friends.

GABRIELA

Everyone will already know each other.

OSCAR

All those kids probably moved here from somewhere else, too. They found their place. So will you.

GABRIELA

This town is weird.

OSCAR

You know, it's not all that different from back home. Las Vegas is run by a lot of the same people who run Havana. But here, nobody knows our names. And one day, you're going to realize that's a good thing. We can be whoever we want to be. Do anything we want to do.

GABRIELA

Whatever makes you feel better, papa.

Gabriela flops back down onto the bed. Turns her back towards her father.

OSCAR

Come on. Get up. It's almost time.

EXT. NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS - TRENCHES - MORNING

The desert is dead silent. It's unsettling. The soldiers wait in their trenches.

Ollie stares into the horizon. Anxious of what's to come. Next to him, Francis and Vincent play Poker. A pile of pennies up for grabs.

Vincent cockily displays his hand. Four of a kind. But Francis one-ups him. A straight flush.

VINCENT

Jesus. Lucky bastard.

FRANCIS

Nope. I'm just good.

VINCENT

Rematch after we're done out here.
If we survive.

Francis laughs.

OLLIE

I'm glad you two find this amusing.

Vincent rolls his eyes. Francis follows Ollie's gaze, his eyes focusing on the barren landscape --

FRANCIS

Y'know, this place used to be paradise. Rivers once flowed where the land is now parched, but the weather turned wild and only the mighty survived out here. So, be a man, Ollie. Be a soldier.

Suddenly, a RUMBLE from the skies. Steadily building in intensity. The soldiers look up. A FIGHTER JET approaches.

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.)

Attention. Please take your positions. There is t-minus sixty seconds until detonation.

(MORE)

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I repeat, t-minus sixty seconds
 until detonation. Fifty-nine, fifty-
 eight...

Countdown is on. Frantic, the soldiers scramble into position. They kneel. Put their dark glasses on. Place their forearms over their eyes.

Ollie begins heaving. He clutches the trench walls. Stabilizing himself.

The jet SOARS closer -- closer -- and SCREAMS overhead -- VROOOOOOOOOM! The soldiers duck, the force almost YANKING their helmets off their heads.

VINCENT
 Holy shit!

FRANCIS
 How close was that?

Ollie's breathing gets more erratic -- his hands shaking.

FRANCIS
 Ollie?

INT. BUCHANAN HOUSE - VALERIE'S ROOM - MORNING

Valerie sleeps. Or at least tries to. There's commotion from the hallway --

MABLE (O.S.)
 It's time, everybody!

Curious, Valerie gets up, pokes her head out the door. Some residents are clambering out of bed, while others forfeited sleep all together to party through the night.

Mable spots Valerie.

MABLE
 Come on. You can't miss this.

Somewhat hesitant, Valerie follows everybody outside.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - MORNING

Everyone has their eyes trained on the horizon. All glasses have been re-filled to the brim. From the stage:

EMCEE
 Forty-five seconds!

Marlene is at the back of the crowd, collecting glasses, cautious about joining all the voyeurs.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - OSCAR'S ROOM - MORNING

Oscar opens the curtains, revealing Las Vegas shining against the desert wasteland. Gabriela stands next to him.

INT. DAVID'S CAR - MORNING

David drives. Listens to the radio.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)
Folks, we are only thirty seconds
away from the a-bomb. If you
haven't already, turn yourselves
north-west to get a glimpse of this
magnificent --

David turns the radio off. Enough of that.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

David drives into a church parking lot.

EXT. NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS - TRENCHES - MORNING

Ollie is a nervous wreck. Shaking uncontrollably.

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.)
Twenty-five, twenty-four, twenty-
three...

OLLIE
I can't do this.

Suddenly, he tries to JUMP out of the trench --

FRANCIS
What the hell are you doing?!

Ollie struggles to get a grip on the trench wall --

FRANCIS
Get down! Get the fuck down!

He doesn't listen. As soon as he manages to get a leg out, Francis pulls him back down.

FRANCIS
Have you lost your goddamn mind?
Come on. Kneel down. Cover your
eyes. Now!

Helpless, Ollie does as he's told.

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.)
Ten, nine, eight...

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - MORNING

The rooftop has a countdown of their own --

ROOFTOP
Seven, six, five, four...

EXT. NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS - TRENCHES - MORNING

Ahead, the fighter jet releases the NUKE into the air --

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.)
Three, two, one...

Silence. For a moment. Until --

A DEAFENING BANG.

Followed by a **BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT** -- so bright it
illuminates the SKELETONS of the soldiers.

EXT. BUCHANAN HOUSE - MORNING

Residents are gathered on the porch. All have their eyes
closed. Waiting for the light to pass.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - OSCAR'S ROOM - MORNING

Oscar is turned away from the window. His hand covers
Gabriela's eyes.

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - MORNING

Again, everybody's eyes are shut. Up front and center, Nino
slowly opens one eye to get the first look...

EXT. NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS - TRENCHES - MORNING

A thunderous ROAR -- accompanied by a WAVE OF DUST that blows the soldiers backwards -- the wind quickly reverses direction -- THROWING the soldiers forward in a violent vacuum effect.

Multiple trenches collapse, burying men under piles of dirt. There's COUGHING, WHEEZING, mixed with terrified SCREAMING.

Francis CLAMBERS to his feet. He RIPS off his dark glasses, turns around, becoming the first to get a glimpse of --

THE MUSHROOM CLOUD.

And it is breathtaking. A kaleidoscope of colors, rising up high into the sky.

Ollie and Vincent find their feet. They stand on either side of Francis. Speechless.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING

From the church steps, a small crowd gawk at the mushroom cloud on the horizon.

David strolls past, briefly turning his head to take a look, but mostly unfazed by the attraction. He enters the church, walking past a sign that reads --

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

EXT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - ROOFTOP - MORNING

Total silence. Everybody is in a state of awe. A slight smile crawls onto Nino's face. Impressed. Alexander's face is a mix of intrigue and dread. Marlene is visibly uneasy.

INT. THE DAYBREAK HOTEL - OSCAR'S ROOM - MORNING

Oscar watches with fascination. Gabriela looks to her father, anxious about what she's seeing. He wraps his arm around her.

EXT. BUCHANAN HOUSE - MORNING

A spectrum of reactions. Some are inspired. Others are afraid. Valerie is somewhere in between.

The mushroom cloud is beautiful, stirring and terrifying. All at once.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Though modest in size, this Mormon church is lavish in design, adorned by a chandelier and a gold color palette. David kneels on the floor. Bows his head in prayer.

DAVID

Father in Heaven, today, I ask for
your forgiveness.

EXT. NEVADA PROVING GROUNDS - TRENCHES - MORNING

Uniformly, the entire army stares up, mouths agape, watching the cloud reach its highest point.

Francis senses something by his right ear. He sweeps his hand over his lobe --

Blood.

He looks down at his hand. Blood drips from his nose.

P.A. SPEAKER (V.O.)

Attention. All personnel may now
approach the cloud. I repeat, all
personnel approach the cloud.

Francis quickly wipes the blood off his face. He climbs out of the trench, joining the HUNDREDS of men marching towards the spectacular fireball.

As they walk closer -- and CLOSER -- the cloud slowly begins to lose its mushroom shape, but remains just as imposing.

Ollie and Francis hear a faint moan. They look around, trying to locate the sound. Francis stops. He's found the source. Ollie turns in the same direction --

A GOAT. Fur seared by the blast. Legs buckling. Other farm animals are scattered around it.

Ollie whips his head back around. Unable to bear the image for more than a second. He falls to his knees. Trying to catch his breath.

FRANCIS

Come on. We're almost there.

Francis pulls Ollie to his feet and ushers him along.

The two, along with the hundreds of other men, continue their voyage ahead into the terrifying unknown...

A RADIO CRACKLES. The same voice that brought us into this world closes us out (for now) --

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Las Vegas, what an incredible show
to wake up to, huh? We've got a
fine day ahead of us today, looking
at a high of 79 degrees. Folks,
enjoy this temperate weather while
you can, because it won't last
long.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT