

BURT WONDERSTONE

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FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

We SWOOP in from the dark desert, gradually picking up sparkling, colored lights in the distance. As we get closer, we can make out individual landmarks: towering hotels, glimmering signs, until there's no mistaking this is

EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - NIGHT

We fly in over the Aztec Resort and Casino, shaped liked a giant Aztec temple.

The illuminated four-story sign out front proudly advertises "THE INCREDIBLE BURT & ANTON -- A MAGICAL FRIENDSHIP!" above an image of the two magicians with their arms crossed, leaning against each other's backs. A ticker boasts, "VEGAS'S BEST MAGIC SHOW!" Below that is a quote from Vegas Magazine: "Abraca-mazing! Now you see it... now you see it again!"

The camera flies down to street level as we enter the lavish casino.

INT. AZTEC CASINO - CONTINUOUS

We pass posters showing BURT and ANTON in various frighteningly intense poses from their magic act. There's a row of "Burt and Anton slot machines" featuring the magician's famous faces on the wheels. Even the chips have Burt and Anton on them.

INT. BURT AND ANTON GIFT SHOP - CONTINUOUS

We move through a brightly lit souvenir store packed with chatchkis celebrating Burt and Anton: sno-globes, magic wands, bobble-heads, etc.

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER - CONTINUOUS

We continue into the packed theater just as the house lights dim. A HUSH falls over the crowd. An enormous PROJECTION SCREEN lowers above the stage and on it we see:

INT. BURT'S SUITE/INT. ANTON'S SUITE - MORNING

In a SPLIT-SCREEN we see BURT WONDERSTONE and ANTON LOVECRAFT, 30's, being woken up by alarm clocks in their separate, but equally luxurious bedrooms. Burt glares at his clock and with a gesture, makes its hand run backward a few hours. Anton grimaces at his clock and with a similar gesture, turns it into a bunny rabbit which hops away. Anton grins at the camera playfully.

INT. BURT'S BATHROOM/INT. ANTON'S BATHROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Anton is in the shower, lathering up when he drops the bar of soap. He holds out his hand and the soap "magically" levitates back into his hand. Burt steps up to his mirror to shave. He is about to apply shaving cream but thinks better of it. He nods at himself and his stubble instantly disappears. Tiny flecks of blood appear on his cheeks. He nods again and they are instantly covered with bits of toilet paper. Burt winks at the camera.

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

We see two doors across from each other, one labeled "BURT" and the other "ANTON." Both doors open simultaneously and Burt nods to Anton as the latter crosses into Burt's suite. Both are wearing bathrobes.

INT. BURT'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Burt stands at the counter while Anton sits at a table. Burt cracks an egg over a plate and fully cooked scrambled eggs pour out of the egg shell. He cracks another egg and strips of bacon fall out. He holds a third egg over a coffee mug and coffee pours out.

He hands the plate and mug to Anton who picks up a tiny egg from a bowl on the table and cracks it over his coffee. Cream pours out. Then a second tiny egg produces sugar.

INT. BURT'S LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Burt and Anton remove their robes, revealing their stage costumes. They smile to each other purposefully, then grasp hands and RUN toward the plate glass window which overlooks the entire Strip. Are they committing suicide?

They SMASH through the glass as the screen over the audience goes BLACK.

CUT TO:

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER - CONTINUOUS

MUSIC CUE: "The Reflex" by Duran Duran

As the music comes BOOMING out, Burt and Anton appear on wires overhead, holding hands as they fly in over the audience and alight on the stage.

We notice that Burt has gained some weight since the intro film was shot. In fact, he looks about ten years older.

Burt and Anton LEAP/DANCE around the stage. Then Burt turns to the cheering crowd.

BURT

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. I'm Burt Wonderstone.

ANTON

And I'm Anton Lovecraft.

BURT

But then, you already knew that.

The music segues into Elmer Bernstein's nostalgic theme from "To Kill a Mockingbird."

ANTON

What you may not know is that Burt and I have been magical friends and partners since we were young boys.

BURT

That's right. We've always known that there was something a little bit different about our friendship.

ANTON

When we were alone in Burt's bedroom, we did things no normal boys would dare.

BURT

In fact, when we were together, we would break the very laws of nature.

ANTON

Remember our games of "hangman," Burt?

BURT

I sure do, Anton. But we didn't play it quite the way other kids did.

"The Reflex" resumes playing as two STAGEHANDS roll in a large HANGMAN'S SCAFFOLD. Burt and Anton's longtime assistant, NICOLE, early-30's, enters.

ANTON

Ladies and gentlemen, our beautiful assistant, Nicole!

The two men grind "sexily" against Nicole to the driving beat of the music. She reacts with MOCK FEAR at the sight of the scaffold as Burt and Anton lead her up the stairs to the waiting noose, still grinding against her as they go.

Her "protests" grow more strenuous as Burt ties her hands and Anton places the noose around her neck, all the while rubbing their bodies against hers.

ANGLE ON the AUDIENCE, smiling ear to ear with anticipation.

Anton places a hood over Nicole's head as the music swells. Suddenly, Burt pulls a lever and Nicole falls through the trapdoor. The music stops abruptly. The crowd GASPS as the hooded body swings then stiffens. Burt hurries down the stairs and with a flourish, pulls off the hood, revealing a grinning and very much alive Anton! The crowd explodes with applause.

The music resumes as Nicole runs onstage, waving. Anton is lowered to the stage, the noose is removed and he and Burt grind against Nicole one more time. They give each other an enthusiastic high-five, then turn to the audience and bow.

BURT

And that's why we call it...

BURT/ANTON

...a magical friendship!

The entire stage rotates around as another set of props is moved into position. The moment Burt and Anton are out of sight of the audience, the two men move apart, their smiles disappear-- *and we see what their relationship has actually become.*

Burt violently yanks the wire out of his body mic so they can't be heard.

BURT

Why the fuck are you wearing my lip gloss?!

ANTON

(disconnecting his own mic)
I'm not wearing your lip gloss, Burt.
My lips are just naturally shiny.

BURT

Yeah, right. You're always trying to steal my look.

ANTON

I didn't realize "crazy and angry" was a look.

BURT

Suck my ass.

Nicole has been watching this wearily from a few feet away.

NICOLE

Guys? You're on.

Instantly, their false smiles return as they plug back in their mics and step on stage.

ANTON

You know, folks, it wasn't always easy growing up as magicians.

BURT

Sure, the girls loved us. What woman can resist a magician? Trouble was, some of those girls had boyfriends.

ANTON

And let's just say, they weren't our biggest fans.

The LIGHTS and MUSIC change as NICOLE steps out on stage in a "sexy cheerleader" outfit. A stagehand throws Anton a letterman jacket which he puts on. Playing "the jock," he approaches Nicole and they pantomime laughter: a "couple."

Burt watches her from afar, longingly: "The Outcast."

Then the MUSIC ratchets up the tension as Nicole turns to Burt, suddenly overcome by "passion." Burt SWOOPS in, PULLS her away and lays her inside a big shiny box which has inexplicably been wheeled onstage.

Burt gives her a "seductive" look, then gets in and lies down on top of her as he dramatically PULLS the box closed.

Anton, "the jock," looks furious. A LARGE SWORD is tossed to him from the wings. He catches it and DRIVES it through a slot in the box.

INT. BOX - CONTINUOUS

Burt and Nicole are pressed together in this small space, twisted into a very odd contortion around the blade that just came through the box.

BURT

He is wearing my lip gloss. You saw it, right?

NICOLE

What does it matter, Burt?

BURT

It matters.
(then, calming down)
Anyway, I finally got that new bed I ordered.

NICOLE

(uninterested)
Oh, yeah?

Nicole casually leans back just as another long sword is slid through the box. They've obviously done this a million times.

BURT

It's a double-king. Biggest bed in Vegas. Two people can sleep head-to-toe across it. If the phone rings and I'm on the other side, I can't get there in time. There's no way.

Burt bends at the waist and Nicole awkwardly straddles his neck as another blade slides in, just missing them.

NICOLE

That's great.

BURT

It's not great, it's awesome. When I'm lying on it, it's like I'm the sole inhabitant of a planet where the ground is made of bed.

NICOLE

Sounds like a lonely planet.

BURT

Trust me. There's a lot of girls on the bed planet.

NICOLE

Why did you say you were the sole inhabitant?

BURT

(irritated)

I didn't.

Burt rolls her over and flattens himself on top of her to avoid another sword, this one ON FIRE, as it slides in. We can hear gasps from the audience outside.

NICOLE

Maybe someday I'll see it for myself.

BURT

(surprised)

Really?

NICOLE

No!

BURT

Are you a lesbian, Nicole?

NICOLE

Is every woman who doesn't sleep with you a lesbian?

BURT

No. I've slept with plenty of lesbians. That's why I don't get you.

NICOLE

Let's just agree not to get each other.

She inexplicably leans in and KISSES Burt all over his face. The swords slide out and Anton swings open the lid, revealing Burt and Nicole. Burt's cheeks are covered in lipstick kisses.

BURT

(smiling coyly, to Anton)

Looks like I'm the one who scored this time, ya dumb jock.

The audience roars. Anton shakes his fist, feigning rage. Burt "gallantly" helps Nicole out of the box.

INTERNAL DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER - LATER

It's nearly the end of the show. The audience is thoroughly enraptured.

BURT

Before we let you go tonight, we've got one last treat for you.

ANTON

You see, growing up together, Burt and I enjoyed a practical joke as much as the next fellow.

BURT

(chuckling)

That's right. Remember how we'd steal your sister's Barbie doll, and replace her head with G.I. Joe's head?

ANTON

Boy, did that drive her crazy.

BURT

As we got older and our powers grew stronger, we wondered what if we could take a man's head and put it on a sexy, lady body -- only this time for real?

ANTON

Ladies and gentlemen, our most famous illusion. One we call... "Man Head/Lady Body."

An excited MURMUR comes from the audience -- this is their world-famous signature trick.

BURT

In order to accomplish this impossible feat of impossibility, I will need a female volunteer from the audience. Are there any volunteers?

Dozens of hands go up in the crowd. Burt scans the faces: an OLD LADY, a LITTLE GIRL, a CRAZY-HOT CHICK, a MIDDLE-AGED HOUSEWIFE... back to the crazy-hot chick.

BURT (CONT'D)

Young lady.

(pointing)

I think you'll do just fine.

The thrilled hot chick jumps to her feet revealing a plus-size rear-end. Burt quickly moves his finger down the row to another, HOTTER CHICK.

BURT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I was actually pointing at this lady.

The first girl sits down as the other girl, MIRANDA, 20's, happily gets to her feet.

Miranda comes to the stage as a futuristic "laser cannon" and a wall with wrist and ankle straps lower from the ceiling.

Burt leads Miranda to the wall and secures her in place. Then Anton and Nicole strap Burt beside her. The laser cannon begins to glow and a beam of laser light suddenly shoots out.

ANTON

Now, it's essential that you remain absolutely still as I cut your head off.

Anton slowly aims the gun closer to Burt and Miranda. The laser appears to burn right through the wall, cutting a line as it nears Burt and Miranda's throats. All at once, the laser seems to slice both their necks and their heads fall to the stage.

Anton quickly picks up Burt's severed head. He places it on Miranda's neck as Nicole hands him a glue gun. Anton "glues" Burt's head onto the lady's body as Nicole undoes the restraints. To the amazement of the audience, Miranda's body steps away from the wall with Burt's head firmly attached.

BURT

Now here's a girl with a good head on her shoulders.

The crowd laughs. Burt grabs "his" lady-breast and grins. Miranda's other hand comes up and slaps him across the face. Burt winks.

ANTON

I guess that's one way to get ahead!

There's a puff of smoke and when it clears Miranda's and Burt's heads are back on their proper bodies. A STAGEHAND escorts Miranda into the wings. The audience gets to its feet for a standing ovation.

Burt puts his arm over Anton's shoulders, gives him a kiss on the cheek and the two men bow.

The curtain falls and Burt can't get off stage quickly enough.

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER, BACKSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Burt heads back to his dressing room. He is stopped by a MIDDLE-AGED MAN, WILLY CARANO, his WIFE and TWO KIDS.

WILLY

Mr. Wonderstone?

BURT

Yes?

WILLY

I don't know if you remember me, but we went to elementary school together?

(off Burt's blank look)

Bill Carano. Well, back then I was Willy...

Burt's face momentarily registers a combination of nostalgia and fear. He remembers Willy all right...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Music Cue: "Turn to Stone" by Electric Light Orchestra

CHYRON: "Thirty Years Earlier"

Dorky, runty 12 year-old ALBERT (BURT) WEINSELSTEIN runs full-speed down the sidewalk in sheer terror. A dozen yards behind, WILLY CARANO, 12, a born bully, chases after him.

WILLY

I'm gonna kill you, Weinselstein!

At last, Willy catches up to Burt and shoves him up against a tree.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Got you! You're such a pussy for running away.

BURT

(out of breath)

I wasn't... running away, Willy... I was jogging...

WILLY

Yeah, right. Guess what happens now? It's time to eat some bark.

BURT

That's okay. I was gonna eat bark anyway.

WILLY

No, you weren't.

Burt peels some bark from the tree, sticks it in his mouth and starts to chew.

BURT

(grimacing)

Mmm, that's good. See, everything you were gonna do to me, I was already planning to do.

Willy punches him hard in the stomach. Burt doubles over, dry heaving.

BURT (CONT'D)

(gasping)

I was gonna do that.

Seeing Willy's pissed off look, Burt takes off running again.

INT. BURT'S HOUSE - SHORT TIME LATER

Panting, Burt stumbles inside, locking the door.

BURT

Mom, I'm home! Are you ready to celebrate my--

He stops when he sees a note and a wrapped gift on the table in the foyer. He picks up the note.

BURT'S MOM (V.O.)

Happy birthday, little man. I had to work a double shift again but I love you very much. Mom.

(then)

P.S. Dinner is in the fridge. Pre-heat the oven to 350, take off the tin foil and let it warm up for fifteen minutes. Use the oven mitts in the drawer next to the fridge. For dessert...

(Burt turns the page)

you have a choice of cookies or cobbler. To bake the cookies, you'll need two cups of flour, sifted--

Burt sets the note down and picks up the gift. He tears open the wrapping to reveal a beginner's MAGIC SET including an instructional videotape by the esteemed Las Vegas magician team, HANSON AND MUNSON, 40's.

INT. BURT'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Burt munches on fresh-baked cookies as he watches the video that came with the magic set. ON THE TELEVISION we see RANCE HANSON and his silent Teller-like partner, MUNSON, "magically appear", thanks to a clunky bit of editing. They wear the top hat, cape and tuxedos of the classic stage magician.

RANCE

Hello there, little buddy or girl. I'm Rance Hanson and this is my partner, Munson. Say hello, Munson.

Munson smiles and nods.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Together we're Hanson and Munson. You've probably seen us on "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson" or live on stage at the fabulous Aztec Casino in Las Vegas. That's where we perform such tricks as "Skateboarding Ghost," the amazing "Cordless Telephone," and our famous "Mouth Birds" illusion.

Moving with the ease and timing only longtime partners have, Rance holds up an egg as Munson opens his mouth. Rance pops the egg in and Munson appears to swallow it whole, then after a moment a half dozen Doves fly out of his mouth!

Burt's jaw drops.

BURT

Wow.

RANCE

Did you like that? Of course you did. We're here to welcome you to the amazing world of magic. It's a world where you can be anyone you want to be.

Burt's eyes narrow as the camera zooms in on Rance.

RANCE (CONT'D)

A world which you control. Because a magician is like a god. And if you follow our instructions and practice very hard, you can be a god too.

Burt is transfixed.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Now let's begin by pulling pennies out of our nose.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Burt sits alone at a table in the bustling cafeteria. He stuffs a colored handkerchief into his fist, then opens his hand revealing the handkerchief has disappeared. He then makes the handkerchief reappear.

ANTON (O.S.)

How do you do that?

Burt looks up to see ANTHONY (ANTON) LUFKIN, 12, a somewhat sickly kid almost as nerdy and friendless as himself.

BURT

A magician never tells his secrets.

ANTON

Oh. Okay.

BURT

It's a rubber thumb.

Burt demonstrates the trick slowly for Anton then hands him the false thumb.

ANTON

Awesome! I'm Anthony Lufkin.

BURT

Albert Weinselstein. You're that kid who's always in the nurse's office, right?

ANTON

Not always.

Anton sits across from Burt and begins lining up an array of prescription pill bottles.

BURT

What are all those for?

ANTON

This one's for my allergies, this is for my arthritis, and this is testosterone. My doctor says I'm dangerously close to being a girl.

(then)

Do you know any other tricks?

BURT

I've got a whole magic kit at home.

There's an uncomfortable moment between these two socially awkward boys. Then,

ANTON/BURT

Can I--/Do you want to--

ANTON

You go first.

BURT

Do you want to come over to my house?

ANTON

Sure. Wait, is it far from school?

BURT

Not really.

ANTON

Oh good. If I walk more than five blocks my feet will blister.

INT. BURT'S BEDROOM - THAT EVENING

Burt is demonstrating tricks to Anton.

BURT

Now behold.

Burt unfolds a collapsible top hat. He shakes it to show it's empty.

BURT (CONT'D)

An empty top hat. Perfectly normal...

He flips it over and waves his hand over it.

BURT (CONT'D)

Alacazam!

This time when he turns the hat over again confetti pours out.

ANTON

Wow! You're like a boy-witch!

(then)

Hey, what if you put a plastic bag of water in the hidden compartment?

BURT

(excited)

That's genius! Then water would come out instead of confetti!

ANTON

You could also drink the water from the hat, then spit out confetti so it looked like the water turned into confetti.

BURT

(impressed)

You've got a lot of good ideas.

ANTON

Thanks.

Burt looks at his new pal for a beat and we see an idea strike him.

BURT

Hey, Anthony?

ANTON

Yeah?

BURT

Do you want to be my partner?

Anton's face lights up.

ANTON

You mean it, Albert?

BURT

Sure. I think we'd make a good team.

Anton smiles from ear to ear as he holds out his hand.

ANTON

I think we'd make a great team.
Partner.

They shake.

BURT

All right. Maybe we should start
writing down our trick ideas. Like in
a notebook.

ANTON

Right! An enchanted notebook! With
leather and buckles!

BURT

(holding up a composition
book)

All I have is a regular notebook.

ANTON

Hmm, seems less enchanted without
leather or buckles, but I guess it'll
work.

(then)

Hey, Albert, what if we did a magic
show on the playground tomorrow?

BURT

You think we're ready for that?

ANTON

Definitely. But I think we might need
cooler magician names than Albert
Weinselstein and Anthony Lufkin.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - NEXT DAY

CLOSE ON a handmade sign that reads "The Incredible
Albert Weinselstein & Anthony Lufkin!" PULL BACK to see
a group of KIDS surround Burt and Anton as they do their
first public show.

Anton turns over the top hat, pouring water into a glass
that Burt holds.

ANTON

Alacazam!

The kids applaud. Suddenly, they are interrupted by Willy Carano pushing his way through.

WILLY

What's going on here? A retard show?

ANTON

(regal "magician" voice)

There's no such thing, my good man.
Retards don't do shows.

BURT

It's a magic show.

WILLY

Aw, look. The two biggest nerds in school have made friends. It's so touching.

The other kids snicker.

WILLY (CONT'D)

Why don't you homos show me one of your tricks?

BURT

Very well. Could everyone please take a step back? Anthony.

Anton produces a black velvet cloak.

ANTON

I shall now make Albert disappear before your very eyes.

Anton throws the cloak over Burt who stands there. He doesn't seem to be disappearing. Kids start to laugh.

WILLY

(sarcastic)

Wow. How do they do it? I've got a trick for you guys. I'm gonna make my fist disappear. Into Albert's face.

Willy punches the cloaked figure repeatedly. He goes down hard and Willy begins to kick him in the side.

BURT (O.S.)

That's no way to treat a magician, Willy!

Everyone turns and GASPS when they see Burt standing behind Willy, uninjured.

WILLY

(mouth falling open)

How did you--? Then who am I beating?

With a flourish, Burt pulls the cloak away revealing a bruised and battered Anton! The crowd of kids applaud. Burt smiles broadly as he helps a dazed Anton to his feet. Whispering to each other--

BURT

Sorry I didn't stop him sooner.

ANTON

(giddy)

That would have ruined the trick.

(re: the crowd)

Look at them, they love us!

BURT

(taking in the excited faces)

They really do.

A very CUTE GIRL steps up to them.

CUTE GIRL

That was far out.

They stare at her, thunderstruck. Maybe the first time a girl has ever spoken a kind word to them.

BURT

(barely audible)

Thanks.

The girl smiles and walks away. After a moment,

ANTON

Magic is awesome.

BURT

I know.

Burt pats his friend on the back. As he does, a trickle of blood comes out of Anton's nostril.

BURT (CONT'D)

We should get you to the nurse.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BURT'S BEDROOM - DAY

We see a rapid TIME LAPSE series of shots as Burt and Anton practice a variety of tricks. Throughout, we see the pages of their "enchanted" notebook filling up with sketches and descriptions of ideas for elaborate illusions. We hear passing snippets of their childish voices excitedly discussing tricks:

BURT (V.O.)

We could pull a rabbit out of a hat.

ANTON (V.O.)

Or pull a hat out of a rabbit!

BURT (V.O.)

Or turn ice into water!

(realizing)

Wait, forget that one.

As the boys grow a couple years older, Burt's room morphs into a veritable magic salon complete with rabbits, doves and other paraphernalia. A poster of Doug Henning is replaced by a poster of David Copperfield.

They have set up a miniature theater using Legos. Two Lego "magicians" stand on stage before an audience of Lego men.

BURT (CONT'D)

(demonstrating with the
Legos)

What if we disappear and then reappear
in the audience?

ANTON

Everyone does that.

BURT

Yeah, you're right.

(beat)

What if we made the audience disappear?

Burt swipes away the entire Lego crowd with his arm.

ANTON

That'd be amazing. But how?

BURT

I don't know. There's got to be way...

We see evolving sketches in the notebook of various ways of making an audience disappear with X's through them-- they won't work.

In one shot, Anton and Burt, now around 16, try on their new magician costumes. They regard their childish sign with their names "Albert Weinselstein & Anthony Lufkin" and exchange a dubious look.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SYNAGOGUE FUNCTION ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON a new professionally-made sign reading, "The Incredible Burt Wonderstone & Anton Lovecraft." We pull back to see a lavish bar mitzvah party is in progress. All eyes are on the entertainment, Burt and Anton, now 20. Burt wears a top hat with a yarmulke perched on it. The crowd applauds for their last trick.

BURT

Ladies and gentleman, thank you.
You've all been mensches.

ANTON

And mazel tov to Aaron. For our final illusion today, it is our honor to present you with this beautiful lunch.

Anton dramatically lifts the lid from a silver tray revealing an enormous honey-baked ham. The crowd GASPS and RECOILS in disgust.

BURT

Oy vey. This can't be right. Anton, is this your doing?

ANTON

Not me, Burt. The caterer must be a goy.

Burt places the cover back on the tray.

BURT

Okay, everybody stay calm. There's an old Jewish saying: "when life gives you ham, turn it into..."

He yanks off the lid to reveal the ham is now a brisket.

BURT (CONT'D)

...brisket!"

The crowd cheers as they advance hungrily on the meat.

BURT (CONT'D)
I'm Burt Wonderstone!

ANTON
And I'm Anton Lovecraft!

BURT
Together, we're "The Incredible Burt
and Anton"!

In the back of the room, we see a MAN in a suit nod approvingly.

RISE TO FAME MONTAGE

MUSIC CUE: "(Oh, Oh, It's) Magic" by Pilot

INT. AGENCY OFFICE - DAY

Burt and Anton sit across a desk from the man from the bar mitzvah. They shake hands with him. They've got their first agent.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Burt and Anton pore over blueprints and sketches of elaborate contraptions to be used in future tricks.

Then, a DELIVERY GUY wheels in--

ANTON
(awestruck)
Our first Plexiglass box.

They exchange looks-- they've arrived.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

Burt and Anton sit at a table on stage auditioning potential assistants. In QUICK CUTS we see a half dozen enormously SKANKY WOMEN of various ages, dressed in unfortunately form-fitting sequined outfits performing hand gestures and arm motions meant to convey "voilà!"

From Burt and Anton's expressions, it's clear they haven't found their girl yet. Just then, an attractive, down-to-earth looking WOMAN, 20's, in a PIZZA DELIVERY OUTFIT arrives with their lunch.

With an EFFORTLESS FLOURISH, she sets down the pizza box and GRACEFULLY OPENS it for them.

NICOLE

Gentlemen, on the left is your mushroom and olive, and...

(her hand sweeps across the pie)

...on the right, ham and pineapple. Please enjoy.

Burt and Anton are blown away by her charisma and gracefulness. They exchange a look, as we

CUT TO:

INT. GOLDEN NUGGET CASINO - NIGHT

Burt and Anton, now assisted by the pizza girl, Nicole, perform their first headlining gig at this downtown Vegas casino. Anton stands on stage. After a moment, we see something moving beneath his shirt. Nicole unbuttons it and suddenly BURT'S HEAD EMERGES from Anton's chest. Slowly, Burt's entire body climbs out of Anton.

ANTON

I always said, Burt can really get under my skin!

The crowd goes wild.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Anton sits alone poring over plans for large-scale illusions. He looks at his watch just as Burt arrives wearing a silk shirt and sunglasses. He shrugs apologetically as he joins Anton at the table.

INT. "THE LATE SHOW" STAGE - NIGHT

It's a couple years later and Burt, Anton and Nicole are performing for DAVID LETTERMAN and the studio audience.

Anton steps into a metal cage which Burt makes a big show of chaining and padlocking. They cover the cage and Burt points to the rear of the audience. Everyone turns to see Anton, sitting casually in a seat, eating from a box of popcorn. He pulls a face that says, "who, me?"

The crowd cheers. Letterman nods approvingly.

EXT. BERLIN STREET - DAY

Burt and Anton are in the midst of a live television special (both have moustaches -- the Moustache Period). Surrounded by cameras, they perform on a site where the Berlin Wall used to stand.

BURT

And now ladies and gentlemen...

ANTON

...meine Damen und Herren...

BURT

We give you, the Berlin Wall... again!

He waves his arm and the Berlin Wall magically appears behind them. The crowd applauds, then gradually realizes the Berlin Wall is back and starts to grumble.

CUT TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Once again, Anton waits impatiently for Burt to arrive to rehearse. Finally, Burt enters with TWO scantily clad BIMBOS. One of the girls drunkenly knocks over a large prop champagne glass. The three of them LAUGH like it's the funniest thing in the world. Anton sighs.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: A *VARIETY* headline above a smiling photo of Burt and Anton reads "TAH DAH! PAIR TO HEADLINE AT AZTEC CASINO." Below that in smaller type: "Tricksters Ink Five Year Multi-Million \$\$ Pact."

EXT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

A crowd of PEOPLE applaud as Anton cuts the ribbon on a new wing of the hospital labeled "The Anton Lovecraft Research Wing." A group of KIDS hug him as their PARENTS watch tearfully.

EXT. WONDERSTONE ISLAND - DAY

Some BUSINESSMEN applaud as Burt, in a hard hat, cuts the ribbon on a condominium construction site on the beach of the tropical island he has purchased.

Burt smiles and gestures toward a sign that reads "Wonderstone Island: Paradise That's No Illusion. Luxury condos starting in the low \$7 millions."

PULL BACK to reveal an ominous, GIANT VOLCANO SMOKES in the background.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Anton sits by himself building a contraption for a trick. He sadly looks at the door. Burt clearly isn't coming.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER, BACKSTAGE - PRESENT DAY

We return to the present where Burt stands opposite adult Willy Carano and his family.

BURT

I'm sorry. I meet a lot of people.

WILLY'S WIFE

(to Willy)

I told you he wouldn't remember you. He's the biggest magician in the world, dummy!

WILLY

Well, sorry to bother you, Mr. Wonderstone.

BURT

(distracted)

Hmm? Oh, not a problem. Hope you enjoyed the show.

The Caranos head off as Anton approaches Burt.

ANTON

Hey, was that Willy Carano from school?!

BURT
(abruptly)
No. Just some fan.

He walks off, leaving a perplexed Anton. Burt passes the stagehand we saw earlier.

BURT (CONT'D)
Is she over here?

The stagehand nods. Burt spots Miranda, the volunteer from "Man Head/Lady Body," he immediately morphs back into his congenial stage persona.

BURT (CONT'D)
Hi. Thank you for waiting. Did you enjoy the show?

MIRANDA
It was so killer.

BURT
That's sweet of you. Tell me your name?

MIRANDA
Miranda.

BURT
Miranda, if you will give me just ten minutes to change and take off this makeup, I would love to continue this conversation.

MIRANDA
That would be so killer.

BURT
Perfect.
(calling to stagehand)
Jeff. Can we get Miranda some Fiji water, please?

And he goes.

INT. SMALL ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt, now in casual, expensive clothes, sits with Miranda on a sofa making out. There's a small bar against one wall and a flat screen TV on another.

MIRANDA

I can't believe I'm really making out
with Burt Wonderstone.

BURT

Neither can I.

MIRANDA

It's so cool to see your place.

BURT

This isn't my place.

SFX: DING

Suddenly, one entire wall of the room slides open
revealing a palatial penthouse hotel suite. The room
they've been in was just the elevator.

They step out into--

INT. BURT'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

BURT

This is my place.

Miranda takes in the ornate decor and breathtaking view
up the Strip.

MIRANDA

It's beautiful.

BURT

I know. And I don't even pay for it.

(then)

Okay, let's get started. If I could
have you stand over here for a moment.

Burt guides Miranda over to a green screen set up on one
wall of the room. A camera on a tripod sits across from
it-- and behind it sits the stagehand from backstage,
Jeff. She's startled to see him.

Burt puts his arm around Miranda and extends his other
arm in an odd pose.

BURT (CONT'D)

Say "presto"!

MIRANDA

Presto.

The camera flashes.

BURT

Thank you, Jeff. Goodnight.

Jeff exits as Burt moves to a small window shade-type screen.

BURT (CONT'D)

Okay, now pick a number between one and twenty.

MIRANDA

Uh... 14?

BURT

"14" you say.

He pulls down the shade revealing the number "14" written on it.

MIRANDA

(amazed)

How did you--

Burt holds a finger up to his lips.

BURT

Now, let's do this.

MIRANDA

Do what?

BURT

(starting to undress)

Have sex.

Though a little disappointed, Miranda shrugs and begins taking off her clothes.

BURT (CONT'D)

Just so you know, there's no scratching, hickies, nothing that'll leave a mark.

He hands her a clipboard.

BURT (CONT'D)

And this just acknowledges that you are over 18 and freely consenting to the sex acts we're about to commit.

MIRANDA

(increasingly regretful, she signs)

Okay.

BURT

Super. Let's make some magic.

Now naked, Burt walks into his bedroom. Miranda sighs then follows.

INT. BURT'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Miranda awakens in Burt's bed. Burt is nowhere to be seen. Her clothes are pressed and hung neatly from a hanger. On a tray is an envelope. She tears it open to find the photograph taken the night before, now photo-shopped so it appears she is flying over Las Vegas in Burt's arms. The photo is signed "*Best wishes, Burt Wonderstone.*"

INT. PEPPERMILL LOUNGE - LATER THAT DAY

The cheesy purple and pink dive on the north end of the Strip is bustling with gamblers, tourists and showbiz folk. At the bar, Anton sits with fellow MAGICIANS, RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE, 30's, a squirrely-looking "comedy" magician with a nervous grin, and LUCIUS BELVEDERE, 40's, a silver-haired "big cat magician" with a mustache.

Rick turns to the world-weary bartender, JIM.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

Hey, Jimbo. You've been doing such good work today, I'd like you to have this hundred dollar bill.

Rick holds out a hundred. Jim looks at it skeptically, while Lucius snickers mischievously.

JIM

You're just gonna turn it into a one dollar bill when I take it.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

What? I don't even know where that's coming from. I'm trying to help you out here, Jim.

JIM

You do this to me every day, Rick.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

If by "do this" you mean "appreciate your good service," then yes, I do.

ANTON
(shaking his head)
Give the guy a break, Rick.

LUCIUS
(grinning)
Just take the hundred, Jim.

Jim takes the bill. Sure enough, it has become a one dollar note. The two magicians fall over laughing.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
You never learn! He never learns!

Jim sighs. As Rick and Lucius continue to cackle, Anton leans in to Jim.

ANTON
(quietly)
Hey, Jim, I think you've got something behind your ear.

Anton effortlessly produces a HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL from behind the bartender's ear and hands it to him.

JIM
(sincere)
Thanks, Mr. Lovecraft.

LUCIUS
(noticing)
Hey, look who's here!

Burt joins them at the bar.

BURT
Anton.

ANTON
Burt.

BURT
And if it isn't Lucius Belvedere and Rick the Implausible.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
The guys who put the "ick" in "magic."

No reaction from Burt, Anton or Lucius.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
(CONT'D)
(to himself)
Okay, cross that one off.

LUCIUS

(to Burt)

This is a rare treat. You never come out with us anymore.

BURT

They canceled my underwater spinning class across the street, so I figured I'd stop in.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

(to Burt and Anton)

Boy, I can't remember the last time I saw you two together offstage.

Anton and Burt exchange a look. Rick has hit on a sad truth.

BURT

(to Rick)

So, how's your show?

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

Not so great. They got me doing the two PM slot Monday through Tuesday, so I've been doing a lot of webisodes--

BURT

What's a webisode?

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

It's a show on the internet. It's exactly like doing it on stage or on TV. Except nobody sees it.

Anton notices a large bandage on Lucius' arm.

ANTON

Hey, what happened to your arm?

LUCIUS

(glumly)

Oh, one of my Bengals has been getting a little bitey lately.

BURT

Good lord.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

See, this is why I chose to be a comedy magician and not a big cat magician. I'd rather kill on stage than be killed!

(MORE)

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
(off their muted reactions)
Cross that one off.

LUCIUS
(dead serious)
It's really hard, guys. If I spend
more than an hour away from my cats
they forget who I am and try to eat me.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
Sounds like my wife and kids!
(laughs again, then quietly)
If I had a wife and kids.

Suddenly, they hear loud APPLAUSE coming from outside
the bar. Curious PATRONS hurry past them toward the
entrance.

BURT
What's going on out there?

EXT. PEPPERMILL LOUNGE - MOMENTS LATER

Burt, Anton and their friends exit the bar to find a
crowd of SPECTATORS has formed on the street.

Our guys push past the crowd to see a TELEVISION CAMERA
CREW, their cameras focused on STEVE HAINES, 30's, a
fairly nondescript looking man with a dull, bored
expression. He wears a black T-shirt and cargo pants
and stands with his hands in his pockets, waiting for
the applause to die down.

BURT
(to Anton)
Who is that guy?

An ONLOOKER pipes in.

ONLOOKER 1
("duh")
Steve Haines.
(no response)
The street magician.

BURT
That guy's a magician? He doesn't even
have a costume.

HAINES
(to the crowd, painfully low-
key)
All right, guys.
(MORE)

HAINES (CONT'D)

You wanna see something else?

(more applause)

I'm going to need a volunteer for this one... or whatever.

Hands shoot up in the crowd. Haines points at a hulking, MUSCULAR MAN.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Okay, you.

As the man steps up to Haines, Burt turns back to Onlooker 1.

BURT

What's with the cameras?

ONLOOKER 1

He's shooting his Spike TV show, "Steve Haines: Brain Rapist." Do you live in a bubble or something?

BURT

(defensive)

No. I live in a casino.

Haines fans out a deck of cards for the Muscular Man.

HAINES

Pick a card. Memorize it and put it anywhere back in the deck, okay?

The man does just that.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Good. Now I want you to punch me in the face as hard as you can.

The crowd gasps. The Muscular Man looks confused.

MUSCULAR MAN

What?

HAINES

You heard me. Punch me in the face. With everything you have.

BURT

(to Rick)

What's he trying to pull?

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

The guy must be a plant. It can't be real.

The Muscular Man shrugs, winds up and SLUGS Haines, who stumbles back a step from the impact. People in the audience GASP as a large red welt begins to form on Haines's right cheek.

ANTON

Jesus.

HAINES

(clearly pained but still low-key)

Okay... ow... thanks. Now, everybody watch this. Just watch this.

Haines takes a small pocketknife from his pocket, opens it and as the crowd reacts with shock, he makes a small incision down the length of the newly formed bruise.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Okay, one second... watch this.

With two fingers, Haines reaches inside the welt... and pulls out a folded up, slightly bloody playing card. He unfolds it and shows it to the Muscular Man.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Is this your card?

MUSCULAR MAN

Oh my god, it is!

The crowd on the sidewalk goes crazy, applauding and hooting with amazement.

HAINES

Thanks. I guess.

Burt is impressed, and a bit threatened.

The camera crew turns off their lights and as Haines is ushered to a waiting van, Burt steps up to him.

BURT

That was pretty good. Disgusting. But good.

HAINES

(blasé)

Thanks.

BURT

You know who I am, right?

HAINES
(still blasé)
Uh huh. Can you sign something for me?

BURT
(pleased)
I don't usually do autographs, but I'm sure it means a lot to you.

Haines hands Burt a sheet of paper and a pen.

HAINES
That's a release form in case the cameras caught you in the background.

BURT
Oh.

HAINES
See you around, Wonderstone.

Burt watches the strange figure rejoin his crew and leave. We can tell the encounter has left him uneasy. Anton steps up to Burt.

BURT
What a douchebag.

ANTON
He knows how to pull in a crowd, though, huh?

BURT
So does a car accident. Doesn't mean that guy's any good.

ANTON
Hey, at least his material is fresh. Which is more than we can say.

BURT
What's that supposed to mean?

ANTON
Come on, Burt. We've been doing the same show for nine years.

BURT
Right. Because it works.
(then)
I can't believe you're comparing us to some weirdo street performer.

ANTON

All I'm saying is, it wouldn't hurt for us to try and come up with a few new tricks. Remember how much fun we used to have? I actually found our old "enchanted notebook" and there's some cool ideas in there, like the "Disappearing Audience"--

BURT

(impatient)

We're the number one magic show in Vegas. You don't mess with success, Anton. And you certainly don't do it just because you saw some loser pull a card out of his bruise.

Burt heads back inside the bar leaving a skeptical Anton.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SCENES:

MUSIC CUE: "Magic" by Olivia Newton-John

INT. BURT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Burt, wearing a towel around his waist, lies on his stomach on one side of his colossal bed as a Teutonic masseur works on his back. His plasma TV is on.

ON SCREEN Steve Haines's "Brain Rapist" show comes on. Haines is setting up a stunt.

HAINES (ON TV)

Anyone can spend three days sealed inside a block of frozen honey...

Burt looks up.

BURT

What the--?

HAINES (ON TV)

But I'm going to do it with my pockets filled with hungry bees.

The crowd of BYSTANDERS applauds. Burt shakes his head in disgust.

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER - NIGHT

As usual, Burt and Anton fly in over the audience holding hands and alight on the stage.

BURT
Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. I'm
Burt.

Burt looks out at the audience and his stage smile falters as he notices blocks of empty seats scattered around the normally sold out theater.

INT. DINER - DAY

A CROWD watches and the camera crew films Haines as he dumps a scalding pot of hot coffee over his head.

HAINES
Aaaaaaahhhhhhhh!
(then)
Give me another one.

A WAITRESS hands him another full pot of coffee which he also dumps over his head.

HAINES (CONT'D)
Aaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!
(then)
Give me another one.

INT. AZTEC CASINO - DAY

Burt walks through the casino. He stops when he notices a new sticker has been added to the poster for his show that reads "Two-for-one ticket special with any adult buffet purchase! Come for the crab legs, stay for the magic!" Burt frowns.

EXT. PUBLIC PARK - DAY

Haines, surrounded by his crew and the usual gaggle of FANS, is shooting his show. He sits on a park bench with his pants around his ankles. He holds a scalpel.

HAINES
(as unexcited as ever)
Okay, so now, I guess I just need to
cut here and that should finish my
circumcision...

As he reaches down to his blurred-out genitals, we ANGLE ON the spectators wincing. We hear Haines grunt in pain.

SPECTATOR

Oh snap! Boy cut up his dick!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BURT AND ANTON THEATER - NIGHT

A few months have gone by. Burt and Anton are mid-show. Nicole is at her usual spot on stage.

ANTON

And now, ladies and gentlemen, our most famous illusion. One we call... "Man Head/Lady Body."

As always, the crowd murmurs at the mention of the famous trick but when we reverse angle to see the audience, it's clear attendance has fallen quite a bit.

BURT

In order to accomplish this impossible feat of impossibility, I will need a female volunteer from the audience. Are there any volunteers?

Once again, dozens of hands go up in the crowd. Burt scans the faces: an OLD LADY, an OLDER LADY, a DRUNK MAN, an OBESE OLD LADY, and so on.

BURT (CONT'D)

(frowning)

Anyone a little less... old?

But the young, hip audience members are nowhere to be found. Burt sighs and points to a WRINKLED LADY wearing a yellow muu muu.

BURT (CONT'D)

Okay. You.

The Wrinkled Lady slowly gets to her feet and heads for the stage at a glacial pace. While they wait, Nicole turns to Burt.

NICOLE

That is going to be one interesting Lady Body.

Burt is not amused.

INT. BURT'S PRIVATE ELEVATOR - LATER

Burt, looking less than thrilled, sits on the sofa in his elevator beside the Wrinkled Lady as they head up to his suite.

INT. DOUG MUNNY'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Burt and Anton, in street clothes, enter the gigantic office of their boss, the casino owner, DOUG MUNNY, 50's, a "Vegas classy", well put-together billionaire. The walls of his office are covered with an insane art collection: Picasso's *Guernica*, Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, Monet's *Water Lillies*, etc.

Munny is finishing a phone call. He gestures for them to come in.

MUNNY

(on phone)

Two. Two point five. No? Not even for two point five? Well, Mr. Kinney, you must love your wife very much. If you two change your minds, the offer stands.

(hanging up, to Burt and Anton)

Sorry about that, fellas. Have a seat.

Anton notices a framed class photo of a young boy, JUDAH MUNNY, on Munny's desk.

ANTON

Wow. Look how big Judah's gotten.

MUNNY

He's gonna be ten soon. I tell you, that kid is your biggest fan. Unfortunately, I'm starting to think he's your only fan.

BURT

What?

MUNNY

This is why I called you in. Your ticket sales suck.

BURT

We know. It's like something's happened to our audience. They've grown old.

(MORE)

BURT (CONT'D)

But in just a few months, rather than over the course of their lives.

MUNNY

That's because tastes are changing. A lot of people are staying home and watching magic on TV and the internet now. You know about this Steve Haines kid?

BURT

Oh come on, that guy? All he does is mumble and cut himself. Anyone can do that. My niece does that.

MUNNY

Well, he's getting a national following. They're calling him "the future of magic." Have you heard about his latest stunt?

ANTON

No.

MUNNY

Look at this.

Doug crosses to his desktop computer, pulls up a clip on YouTube and spins the monitor around so Burt and Anton can see:

SFX: HEARTBEAT

ON SCREEN we see various DRAMATIC SHOTS of Haines: standing with his legs crossed, sitting in a chair and clutching his groin, writhing around on the floor, etc.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

(gravelly voice)

For twelve long days he's held his urine. This Friday, be here for the final hour of Steve Haines's incredible stunt, "Holding It In," live on NBC.

We then see a MALE DOCTOR on screen wearing a stethoscope. A CHYRON reads: "Doctor"

MALE DOCTOR

He should be dead. By now he's got more urine than blood.

ANGLE ON a ticking clock, its hands spinning faster and faster.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
He's made it this far, but will...
(droplet noise)
...he...
(droplet noise)
...last?

We CUT TO a previously recorded snippet of BRIAN WILLIAMS sitting across from Steve Haines, who squirms uncomfortably.

BRIAN WILLIAMS
What's going through your mind right now?

Haines takes a second to consider this.

HAINES
I really have to pee, Brian.

BACK ON Burt and Anton.

BURT
What a jackass. How is that magic?

MUNNY
Doesn't matter. It's what people want. And trust me, I know what people want. They don't call me "Mr. Vegas" for nothing.

ANTON
I thought Wayne Newton was "Mr. Vegas"?

MUNNY
No, he's "Mr. Las Vegas." I'm "Mr. Vegas" and I'm telling you, you need to update your act. You've been doing the same shit since I hired you.

ANTON
I agree. There's no reason we can't be as hip and edgy as when we started out.

Burt rolls his eyes.

MUNNY
You guys should come up with something like Haines is doing. Something big, headline grabbing.

BURT
I'm not holding my piss.

MUNNY

Too late. Haines already did that. That's *his* now. You need something fresh. Something simple but compelling.

They sit and contemplate this for a beat.

ANTON

Hey, we've got that big Plexiglass box. How about we sit inside that without food for, like two weeks?

BURT

Bor-ing.

MUNNY

Actually, I like that. We could hang the box from a crane in front of the Aztec. It'd be great publicity. What do you say, Burt?

BURT

(sighs)

Well, if you both think this is the way to go... then you're stupid. But I'll do it.

EXT. AZTEC CASINO - ONE WEEK LATER

A large CROWD of onlookers and local NEWS CREWS have gathered to witness the start of Burt and Anton's very public stunt: The Hot Box.

A large Plexiglass box rests in the Aztec parking lot as STAGEHANDS attach tethers from the box to a crane.

ANGLE ON Burt, Anton and Nicole. The guys wear matching "hipper" outfits, V-neck T-shirts and jeans-- but still quite a bit of makeup and hair spray. The overall effect is not really very hip.

NICOLE

How are you guys feeling?

BURT

Like an idiot. What kind of magicians wear jeans and T-shirts?

ANTON

It's part of our new vibe. We're just regular guys who do amazing things.

Munny and his 9 year-old son, JUDAH, approach.

MUNNY

Now, this is what I'm talking about!
Look at this crowd.

BURT

Yeah. Imagine how empty these people's
lives must be.

ANTON

Come on, man. Try to stay positive.

MUNNY

You remember my son, Judah.

ANTON

Hi there, Judah!

BURT

(mock enthusiasm)
You ready to watch us sit in a box for
two weeks?!

JUDAH

(excited)
I sure am! I wish I could come up
there with you.

MUNNY

You don't want to do that, son. It's
gonna stink in there.

NICOLE

Guys? They're ready.

Nicole opens a side of the box and the two men wave to
the crowd then squat down and climb inside.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Good luck. Try not to kill each other.

The box is sealed and the crane begins to hoist them
into the air.

MUSIC suddenly blasts from speakers: Duran Duran's "The
Reflex."

INT. HOT BOX - CONTINUOUS

BURT

I just realized I'm not going to have
sex for two weeks.

(MORE)

BURT (CONT'D)

(beat)

I guess I can masturbate.

Anton closes his eyes and begins breathing slowly in and out.

BURT (CONT'D)

What is that? What are you doing?

ANTON

Breathing exercises. I've been doing them all week.

BURT

Come on. People can see you. Cut it out.

Anton ignores him. The box continues to rise until it is a hundred feet off the ground.

BURT (CONT'D)

Nice view.

(beat)

What do you feel like doing?

ANTON

(eyes still closed)

I'm just trying to center myself.

BURT

Ugh. This is going to be fun.

(looking around)

Boy, I didn't realize how small it was going to be in here.

ANTON

If you had come to even one rehearsal, you'd know how small it was.

BURT

Maybe you need to "rehearse" for sitting in a box. Not this guy.

CUT TO:

INT. HOT BOX - LATER

CHYRON: "Twenty minutes later"

Burt has stripped down to his underwear and is rocking back and forth like a crazy person. He's drenched in sweat and moaning loudly.

BURT
I don't like the box. Boooooooo. I
want a sandwich! Get me out of here.

ANTON
(calmly)
Breathe, Burt. You can do this. It's
only been twenty minutes.

BURT
Stop screaming at me!

ANTON
Burt. Look at me. Shh. Shhh. Easy.

Burt's wildly darting eyes focus on Anton's.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Good. That's good. Now say this with
me: "I can do this."

BURT
I want a sandwich.

ANTON
No. "I can do this."

BURT
I can sandwich.

ANTON
Good. You're going to be just fine.

Burt leans forward, resting his head on Anton's chest
and softly crying. Anton hands him the tube from their
water source.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Have some electrolytes.

Burt suckles at the tube like a demented baby.

ANTON (CONT'D)
Atta boy.

CUT TO:

INT. HOT BOX - LATER

CHYRON: "Two minutes later"

Anton watches in horror as Burt repeatedly throws himself against one wall of the cube. The box swings dangerously from its tether.

BURT
(screaming)
AAAAHHHH! AAHH! Let me out! Let me out!

ANTON
Burt, please!

BURT
My skin is all over me!

ANTON
You're going to break the box!

BURT
No, you're going to break the box!

Burt again hurls himself against the Plexiglass. Suddenly, that wall separates from the others and plummets to the ground below. The cables connecting that side of the box to the crane spring loose.

ANTON
Oh no.

As Nicole and Munny watch in horror and the crowd below GASPS, the entire box TILTS downward toward the open side. Burt and Anton slide toward the opening.

BURT
Ahhhh!

Anton's fingers manage to grasp the air holes on what was the floor of the box. Burt is not so lucky. He slides to the edge of the opening, grabbing Anton around the waist. He dangles perilously above the earth.

ANTON
Burt!

BURT
I'm slipping! Help me!

While the CRANE OPERATOR slowly lowers the box, Burt begins SLIPPING down Anton's body, yanking his partner's pants to his ankles as he does so.

ANTON
What are you doing?!

BURT
I'm trying to hold on!

Judah Munny watches raptly.

JUDAH
This is the best trick ever!

As Anton struggles to keep his grip, Burt begins to clamber back up his legs. He manages to hoist himself into the box but in so doing, uses Anton's face as a foothold.

ANTON
(muffled)
Burt... Ow! Stop it... you're--

But it's too late, Anton FALLS the remaining 20 feet to the ground. He CRIES OUT in pain as he lands with a cracking sound.

BURT
Anton!

Now Burt loses his grip and falls 10 feet directly on top of Anton who SCREAMS again in pain.

BURT (CONT'D)
I think I twisted something.

ANTON
(pained)
My ankles are broken.

BURT
(rubbing his knee)
Yeah, and your face got me right in the knee.

PARAMEDICS rush to their aid and begin tending to Anton.

BURT (CONT'D)
I told you this was a bad idea.

ANTON
(furious)
That's because you didn't--
(composing himself)
That's it, Burt. I quit.

BURT
What? Just because you broke a couple ankles?

PARAMEDIC

Some of his ribs are also broken.

ANTON

(to Burt)

You've become the most selfish, egotistical and lazy person I've ever known. I can't believe I put up with you for so many years.

BURT

Oh, I see. Well, you know what? I'm better off without you. No one comes to see you anyway. That's why we're called "The Incredible Burt and Anton," not "The Incredible Burt and the Incredible Anton."

ANTON

The "incredible" applies to both of us, you jackass. But whatever, you're welcome to it.

Nicole pushes through the onlookers.

NICOLE

Anton, are you all right?

ANTON

I'll be fine.

PARAMEDIC

Well...

The paramedics lift Anton into a waiting ambulance.

ANTON

See you around, Burt.

BURT

Yeah, screw you too.

The ambulance doors shut and the vehicle pulls away.

Burt looks at Nicole and for a split-second his expression is one of panic, as if he's nerdy 12 year-old Albert again.

NICOLE

Burt...?

He steels himself and when he turns back to the bank of cameras and reporters, it's the old, confident Burt Wonderstone.

BURT
Ladies and gentlemen...
(with a flourish)
...the Hot Box!

The crowd stares back dumbfounded... except for Judah Munny who CLAPS WILDLY.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BURT'S SUITE - A FEW DAYS LATER

Nicole enters. In street clothes we see that unlike her boss, she's actually a regular human being in her off-time. And an attractive one at that.

NICOLE
Burt? Are you here?

BURT (O.S.)
(slightly slurred)
I'm in the bath.

NICOLE
I'll wait till you're out.

BURT (O.S.)
Don't worry, it's a bubble bath. You can't see anything.

INT. BURT'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nicole walks in to find Burt lying in the tub clutching a glass of bourbon. There are a few scattered patches of bubbles, but his entire midsection and genitals are perfectly visible beneath the water.

NICOLE
(shielding her eyes)
Awwww. Come on!

BURT
(looking down)
Oh, yeah. I guess they've kind of dissipated. Hang on.

He gathers the remaining bubbles and pulls them over his privates.

BURT (CONT'D)
What's up?

NICOLE

We need to talk.

BURT

Can you hand me that pumice stone?

He points to a stone sitting on the sink. She gives it to him.

BURT (CONT'D)

Thanks. What's up?

During the following, Burt proceeds to drunkenly pumice the soles of his feet.

NICOLE

Well, it's just... what happens now?

BURT

What do you mean? The show must go on.

NICOLE

But the show's called "Burt and Anton: A Magical Friendship."

BURT

Um-hmm?

NICOLE

Anton left the show. He left Vegas.

BURT

So?

NICOLE

So, how do we do the show without him? It doesn't work without a partner.

BURT

I don't need a partner! I never did. It'll be better without him.

He downs the rest of his drink-- a big one.

NICOLE

Look, Burt. You gave me my first break. You took a chance on me and I'll always be grateful for that--

BURT
(nearly submerged in the
bath)
You're welcome.

NICOLE
That's why I can't just stand by and
let you do something that I think is a
big mistake.

BURT
(slurred)
Nicole, you're a good girl. But you
gotta trust me on this. I'm going to
do the same show, only without Anton.
It's gonna be great.

Before Nicole can respond, Burt stands and steps out of
the tub not bothering to grab a towel as he passes her.

EXT. AZTEC CASINO - NIGHT

The four-story sign out front has been changed to read
"THE INCREDIBLE BURT -- A MAGICAL FRIENDSHIP!" The
image of Burt leaning against Anton's back has been
doctored so it now shows Burt leaning against *his own*
back.

INT. BURT THEATER (FORMERLY "THE BURT AND ANTON THEATER")
- CONTINUOUS

Burt has just begun the act. Elmer Bernstein's theme
from "To Kill a Mockingbird" plays.

BURT
What you may not know is that I have
been magical friends and partners since
I was a young boy.

Nicole stands by looking uncomfortable.

BURT (CONT'D)
That's right, Burt. And since that
time I've known that there was
something a little bit different about
my friendship... with myself. In fact,
when I was together, I would break the
very laws of nature. Remember our
games of "hangman"?

The audience looks confused. Is he talking to us?

BURT (CONT'D)
I sure do. But we didn't play it quite
the way other kids did...

INTERNAL DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BURT THEATER - LATER

The laser cannon and wall of restraints are on stage in preparation for Burt's signature trick.

BURT
Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for my
most famous illusion. One we call...
"Lady Head/Lady Body."

Uncertain murmurs come from the audience. In the rear of the theater, we see Doug Munny has come in to observe the new act.

BURT (CONT'D)
No, I didn't misspeak. You see,
there's so many hot ladies out there,
how can you pick just one? So then I
thought, what if I could cut off the
head of the prettiest girl and attach
it to the chick with the sweetest bod?

In the crowd, we see several people, mostly women, look offended.

BURT (CONT'D)
Take my assistant, Nicole. Pretty
face, but her body could be better,
right?

Nicole looks horrified.

BURT (CONT'D)
So, can I get a volunteer, please?
Doesn't matter how ugly your face is.
We won't be using it. Anyone? Hot
body?

A number of people in the crowd stand and make their way to the exit. Munny shakes his head-- so sad.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Burt is celebrating alone. He pops a bottle of champagne as Nicole enters looking shell-shocked.

BURT
Nailed it! Here, have some
champagne...

She doesn't take it. Munny enters.

BURT (CONT'D)
How ya' like me now?!

MUNNY
Burt, it's over. I'm pulling the plug.

BURT
What are you talking about?

MUNNY
That was a train wreck. You said you
were going to do a new show. This is
the same show, just without Anton.
You can't be magical friends with
yourself. It's confusing. It's worse
than confusing. It's depressing!

BURT
I'm still working out the kinks.

MUNNY
Kinks? It was all kinks. You're done
here at the Aztec, Burt.

BURT
Wait. What if I replace Nicole?

NICOLE
Don't bother, I quit.

BURT
(hurt)
Wow. So much for loyalty.
(then, to Munny)
Fine! I don't need this! I don't need
you! Any casino in town would kill to
have Burt Wonderstone! And besides,
I've put away a ton of money.

INT. ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Burt sits across from his business manager, DOM, 40's.

DOM
You've put away precisely nothing.

BURT

That's impossible. What about all my investments?

DOM

Well, that's why they call them investments. Ninety percent of the time, you lose that money.

BURT

But I had millions.

DOM

Okay, let's take a look here.

He opens a file folder and puts on reading glasses.

DOM (CONT'D)

There was your imported Mexican spring water, *Agua de Leche*.

BURT

Okay, that was poorly thought out.

DOM

You sank a bundle into your earthquake-themed restaurant, Shakey McEarthquakes.

BURT

This is what I don't get. People love theme restaurants.

DOM

People don't want their restaurant to shake every fifteen minutes.

BURT

It was fun! The waiters were dressed like Red Cross workers. The spiciness of the food was measured with the Richter scale. There was free *Agua de Leche*--

DOM

I know. My wife and I ate there as much as we could. Ultimately, a 6.0 earthquake and a 5.4 chicken diablo do not make for a comfortable evening.

(turning a page)

Which brings us to Wonderstone Island, your largest investment.

(MORE)

DOM (CONT'D)

As I cautioned you, very few people are willing to spend seven million dollars to live on a volcano.

BURT

You told me it was an inactive volcano.

DOM

I said it was an active volcano. There's lava everywhere. It stinks of sulfur. Even the animals swam away.

BURT

So, what? Are you telling me I have no money?

DOM

Of course not. You still have this savings bond.

Dom slides a yellowed piece of paper toward Burt.

BURT

From Nana for my high school graduation. Two hundred dollars.

DOM

Not so fast. Two hundred dollars in 1985. Today that bond is worth...

He types on a calculator.

DOM (CONT'D)

Two hundred thirty-two dollars.

BURT

You're fired, Dom.

DOM

That's fair. I still have to bill you for this month, though. So...

Dom reaches out and slides the savings bond back toward himself.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Nicole is riding a stationary exercise bike.

SFX: Telephone rings

She dismounts and picks up the phone.

NICOLE

Hello?

BURT (ON PHONE)

Munny took my suite.

NICOLE

Burt?

BURT (ON PHONE)

You think I might be able to crash at your place for a couple nights?

NICOLE

Uh, I don't know--

BURT (ON PHONE)

I haven't eaten in 24 hours. Room service won't deliver outside the hotel.

She thinks about it. Then, despite herself...

NICOLE

All right, look. You can stay for a night or two. Do you know where I live?

BURT (ON PHONE)

Is it 77 Duchess Avenue?

NICOLE

Apartment four.

SFX: The doorbell rings

Confused, Nicole opens the front door to see

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Burt, standing pathetically in the hall, surrounded by moving boxes and cages full of live BUNNIES and DOVES. Beside him stands a LIFE-SIZE CARDBOARD CUTOUT OF HIMSELF in a dramatic Burt Wonderstone pose.

BURT

Do you have lettuce and birdseed?

INT. NICOLE'S DINING ROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Nicole watches as Burt wolfs down the last of his dinner.

NICOLE

Wow, you really were hungry.

BURT

I almost ate one of the rabbits. But they're riddled with lice.

Nicole looks over at the half dozen rabbits walking around her apartment.

BURT (CONT'D)

Look at me. Can you believe that this is the same Burt Wonderstone? The biggest magician in the world. The guy who made the Berlin Wall reappear? And now I'm sitting in this tiny, ugly apartment eating-- what are these-- green beans? Pathetic.

Nicole grits her teeth as she starts to clear the plates from the table.

BURT (CONT'D)

(re: plates)

Here, let me get those.

Burt stands and takes the plates from Nicole, but instead of going into the kitchen, he opens her front door and places them out in the hallway.

NICOLE

(flat)

Thanks.

BURT

Listen, I didn't just come here to eat your food and crash for a few weeks--

NICOLE

What?!

BURT

I came here to give you the good news. I'm keeping you on as my assistant.

NICOLE

You don't have a show.

BURT

True. And I can't pay you anything. Unless I borrow some money from you.

He looks at her hopefully. She frowns.

BURT (CONT'D)

Look, I'm going out tomorrow to find a new casino gig. We both know I'll be back on my feet real soon. All I'm asking is that you wait and not do anything else until then.

NICOLE

I already took another job, Burt.

BURT

What?!

NICOLE

Steve Haines called me after you were dropped by the Aztec. I'm working on "Brain Rapist"

BURT

I can't believe this.

NICOLE

I'm a magician's assistant. That's the only thing I'm qualified for. And it's not like there's a million jobs out there. I have to pay rent, my car loan, my grandmother's medical bills...
(looks at watch)
I actually need to go to work.

BURT

Fine. You know what? This is your loss, not mine.

NICOLE

Lock up if you leave.

She grabs her bag and heads out of the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Burt follows her out of the apartment, leaving the door wide open.

BURT

If you walk away from this, there's no coming back.

NICOLE

Got it.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole climbs into her car and starts the engine. Burt appears at her window.

BURT
Last chance.

NICOLE
Goodbye, Burt.

She drives off leaving Burt in a cloud of dust.

INT. STEVE HAINES'S WAREHOUSE - SHORT TIME LATER

A large space filled with Steve Haines's bizarre stunt props. Haines, wearing his trademark black t-shirt and jeans, goes over Nicole's responsibilities with her.

HAINES
(as low-key as ever)
Okay, so sometimes during a stunt, I may look like I'm in pain or I need help. But the reality is, I am in pain and that's when you need to help me--

Suddenly, the door opens and Burt enters.

BURT
Okay, this is it, last chance.

NICOLE
Burt!

BURT
You don't have to work for this weirdo.

HAINES
What are you doing here, Wonderstone?

BURT
I came for my assistant. She deserves to work for a real magician.

HAINES
What, like you? I've got news for you. It's not about pulling a rabbit out of your hat anymore. It's about pulling your heart out of your chest.

BURT
You don't even do tricks, Haines.

HAINES

That's right. I take people's nightmares and turn them into dream realities.

BURT

What the hell does that mean?

HAINES

Think about it.

BURT

I'm not going to think about it because it's stupid!

(then)

Come on, Nicole. Let's go.

NICOLE

Burt, this is my job! Get out!

BURT

Fine. But so we're clear? I'm moving out of our place. I can't even imagine sleeping beside you now.

NICOLE

You were going to sleep on the couch-- Just go, Burt!

Burt shakes his head and exits.

HAINES

You two live together?

NICOLE

No, no. I was just letting him stay at my place for a night or two while he got back on his feet.

Haines sidles up uncomfortably close to Nicole.

HAINES

You're a good person. A kind person.

NICOLE

(uneasy)

...thanks.

Is he going to kiss her?

HAINES
(almost whispering)
We'll start the show with "Face Hammer"
tonight and then segue into "Bleach
Swallow."

INT. STEVE WYNN'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Burt sits across from STEVE WYNN.

STEVE WYNN
Sorry, Burt. We just don't have room
for a magician.

BURT
You have fourteen theaters.

STEVE WYNN
Fifteen.

There's an awkward silence.

INT. DONALD TRUMP'S OFFICE - DAY

Burt sits across from DONALD TRUMP.

DONALD TRUMP
No.

EXT. THE EXCALIBUR HOTEL - DAY

Burt exits the resort looking dejected.

EXT. THE FLAMINGO HOTEL - DAY

Burt exits the resort looking more dejected.

EXT. BINION'S HOTEL - EVENING

Burt exits the aging downtown Vegas hotel looking really
dejected.

EXT. DECREPIT HOTEL - NIGHT

Burt stands outside the most depressing casino in town. He takes a deep breath and is about to approach it when suddenly there's an explosion and the whole place IMPLODES in a controlled demolition. Burt hurries away.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAL-MART - DAY

A banner has been hung over the entrance reading, "Grand Opening! Come See Famous Magician Burt Wonderstone!"

INT. WAL-MART - CONTINUOUS

A small crowd of SHOPPERS stand in an aisle watching as an utterly miserable Burt makes a flower vanish. They applaud as they continue with their shopping.

BURT

Thank you. I can make a lot of things disappear, but nothing makes spills disappear better than Bounty, the quicker picker-upper.

(he points to the shelf
beside him)

Three rolls for only \$3.99. You're not gonna beat that--

A STORE MANAGER approaches.

STORE MANAGER

Hey, Burt. We need you in the loading bay.

BURT

To do magic?

CUT TO:

INT. WAL-MART LOADING BAY - MINUTES LATER

Burt helps two WORKERS unload boxes from a truck. He looks like he's about to cry.

EXT. HOT SANDS MOTEL - NIGHT

A depressing neon motel, miles off the Strip.

INT. BURT'S MOTEL BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Strewn on the floor are Burt's magician clothes, grimy with sweat and dirt from the loading bay.

Burt stands in the shower under a pathetic trickle of water. He looks down for soap and finds one tiny bottle. The label reads "Luxury Shampoo/Conditioner/Bodywash." He sighs, opens the bottle and squeezes the entire contents onto his hair. The quarter-sized blob is woefully inadequate to clean his whole body but he tries anyway.

CUT TO:

INT. BURT'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Burt enters from the bathroom wearing a robe with the "Aztec Casino" logo on it. He walks past his moving boxes and the life-size cutout of himself and flops on his bed, exhausted. He opens the local newspaper to the job listings. His eye is caught by an ad titled "ENTERTAINER WANTED" for the Desert Oasis. A photograph shows what appears to be a pleasant looking hotel surrounded by lush gardens.

Intrigued, Burt tears out the ad.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT OASIS RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - LATER

Burt lowers the photo to reveal a dilapidated rest home along a lonely, searing highway. The lush gardens are long dead. A neon "No Vacancy" sign buzzes out front. An ambulance pulls away from the building and the "No" in "No Vacancy" switches off.

INT. DESERT OASIS COMMON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Burt is led into the joyless room by HAROLD, a large African-American orderly. Ancient RESIDENTS sit on worn sofas and wheelchairs, playing cards, etc.

HAROLD

This is our common room. This is where you'll be doing the majority of your shit.

An OLD MAN grabs onto Harold's shirt.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
(brushing him away)
Get off of me, Eli!
(then)
Most of these people were performers on
the Strip. Lounge singers, strippers,
celebrity impersonators...

Burt looks around and notices a table of THREE FRANK
SINATRA IMPERSONATORS and a DON RICKLES LOOK-ALIKE.

BURT
Wow. That one looks just like Don
Rickles.

HAROLD
That one is Don Rickles.

BURT
So this is where old entertainers come
to die, huh?

HAROLD
(looking Burt over)
And some not so old.
(then)
Good luck. Don't let 'em steal your
soul. They've got a way of doing that.

Harold exits, leaving Burt standing amidst a sea of grey
hair and wrinkles. He steels himself and crosses to a
kindly looking old lady, GRACE.

BURT
Hi there. What's your name?

GRACE
Grace.

BURT
Hi, Grace. I'm Burt. Would you like
to see a magic trick?

GRACE
All right.

BURT
Great. That's a lovely bracelet you
have. Do you think I could see it for
a minute?

Grace slowly removes the bracelet and hands it to Burt.

BURT (CONT'D)

Okay, now watch very carefully.

With a flourish, Burt makes the bracelet seem to disappear into thin air.

BURT (CONT'D)

Where did it go?

Grace looks shocked. Then her shock turns to dismay as she begins to tear up.

GRACE

(quietly weeping)

My granddaughter gave that to me...
What have you done?

BURT

(quickly producing the
bracelet)

No, Grace, wait. It's right here. I'm
sorry. Don't cry.

She grabs the bracelet from him and glares at him.

GRACE

Devil.

Burt backs away from her.

INT. COMMON ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt does a card trick for a withered Dean Martin look-alike.

BURT

Now watch closely, Mr. DiRiggi as I
sprinkle some invisible magic dust on
the cards and...

A single card rises from the middle of the deck.

BURT (CONT'D)

Is that your card?

MR. DIRIGGI

I... I don't remember.

Burt's face falls.

EXT. COMMON ROOM TERRACE - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt performs another card trick for a disinterested OLD MAN who smokes a cigar and wears oversized sunglasses.

BURT

Now you may not know this, but the card you chose is the heaviest one in the deck. It has a tendency to sink from the top of the deck where I placed it, all the way to the bottom!

He shows the man's card, a four of diamonds, on the bottom of the deck.

BURT (CONT'D)

But the four of diamonds is also a shy one. He likes to hide in the middle of the deck.

Burt shows the card has moved to the middle of the deck.

BURT (CONT'D)

And sometimes, after a couple drinks, he convinces himself that he's a member of the royal family.

Burt shows the four has now moved to the middle of all face cards. He bows slightly, expecting the old man to be impressed.

OLD MAN

Wow. That was really... pathetic.

BURT

Excuse me?

OLD MAN

That was terrible. Your Zarrow Shuffle was sloppy. Your lips move when you do your Elmsley Count. And your patter is stale. "Member of the royal family." Give me those!

He reaches out for the deck. Burt hands them over, uncertain.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

You're trying to dazzle people, not put them to sleep.

The Old Man shuffles the deck, then effortlessly produces the four of diamonds from the middle.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

People want to think what they're
seeing is magic. Not a magic show.

He fans out the cards for Burt to pick one. Burt does.
He looks down and is shocked to see it's the four of
diamonds.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

If you don't believe what you're doing
is amazing, how are they supposed to?

He shuffles the cards again and reveals that the four of
diamonds is now facing the opposite way in the deck.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

A magician is like a god. You? You're
no better than that card you're
holding.

Confused, Burt looks down and sees the card he had in
his hand has now become a JOKER.

The Old Man stands up and with one hand squeezes the
deck, sending all the cards flying. All the cards but
one: the four of diamonds. He tosses it on the table in
front of Burt and walks inside.

BURT

(to himself, trying to
remember)

"A magician is like a god."
(realizing, calling after
him)

Wait!

Burt hurries inside.

INT. COMMON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Burt enters and looks around but doesn't see the Old
Man.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Burt spots the Old Man going into the cafeteria. He
follows.

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

The Old Man gets a cup of coffee from an urn and heads to a table as Burt enters and approaches him.

BURT
You're Rance Hanson of Hanson and
Munson, aren't you?

RANCE
(removing his sunglasses)
Who cares?

BURT
I do. I had your magic kit. You're
the reason I became a magician.

RANCE
Sorry to hear that.

BURT
You guys were the greatest. What are
you doing in this place?

RANCE
Same as the rest of them. Waiting to
die.

BURT
But what happened to you? One day you
were at the Aztec and the next you
disappeared.

RANCE
It wasn't me that disappeared. It was
Munson.

BURT
What do you mean?

RANCE
We were doing the ten o'clock show...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AZTEC THEATER - NIGHT

A considerably younger Rance stands on stage in front of
a full house. Munson is beside him.

RANCE (V.O.)
We'd always open with the Vanishing
Steamer Trunk effect.

Rance opens the lid on a large trunk and Munson steps inside.

RANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was all going along fine. Munson gets in the trunk as usual...

Rance closes the lid.

RANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I stick some swords through it.

Rance dramatically impales the trunk with steel swords, then removes them.

RANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I turn the thing around and bam! The trunk's empty. Where's Munson?

Rance opens the door and Munson is gone. The audience applauds. Rance shuts the door and spins the cabinet.

RANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
So, then I give the closet a spin, open the door and voilà, Munson's back.

We see Rance open the door. But there is no sign of his partner.

RANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Except that Munson's not back.

Confused, Rance closes the door then opens it again. Still nothing.

RANCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Munson is gone. And I have no idea where he went.

INT. AZTEC THEATER - LATER

Two POLICE OFFICERS examine the box in the now empty theater. Rance shows them how it's supposed to work.

RANCE (V.O.)
The Aztec dropped me. No one wanted to hire a magician who actually made people disappear.

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Rance and Burt are as we left them.

BURT

Did he ever turn up?

RANCE

No. We never heard from him again.

BURT

So the trunk was actually magical?

RANCE

No, moron. Munson took off.

BURT

Why would he do that?

RANCE

Some say he owed money to the mob. Some think he had a sweetheart and wanted to ditch his wife. We'll never know for sure. Doesn't really matter now, does it, Burt?

BURT

You know who I am?

RANCE

Everyone knows who you are. The question is, do you?

BURT

What do you mean?

RANCE

Let me guess. You did magic as a kid to be popular, right?

Burt nods.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Then you did it to get laid.

He nods again.

RANCE (CONT'D)

Then you did it to get rich.

BURT

And laid.

RANCE

Can you even remember why you got into magic in the first place?

BURT
I don't understand.

RANCE
(pointing to a shaker)
Pass the salt.

BURT
You put salt in your coffee?

RANCE
Just give me the damn salt.

Burt shrugs and slides the shaker to Rance. In one motion, Rance unscrews the cap and a WHITE DOVE flies out of the shaker. Burt nearly falls off his chair.

BURT
How did you--?!

RANCE
Magic.
(off Burt's disbelief)
This moment. Right now. When your brain is telling your eyes not to believe what they just saw. That's why you got into magic. If you remembered that, you might still be on top.

Burt takes this in. Then,

BURT
Okay, seriously. How did you do that with the bird?

RANCE
(leaning in)
Partially deboned.

Just then, the dove flies clumsily past them and SLAMS into a window. It slides to the floor and hobbles away, clearly missing a few bones.

INT. HOT SANDS MOTEL - THAT EVENING

Burt lies on his bed, channel surfing. A news program comes on.

CHARLIE GIBSON (ON TV)
Finally tonight, our person of the week.

(MORE)

CHARLIE GIBSON (ON TV)

He's a man who left behind the glitz and glamor of Las Vegas stardom to bring his unique brand of magic to those who need it most. Tonight's person of the week: Anton Lovecraft.

Burt sits up. ON THE TV we see Anton being interviewed in a Cambodian village.

ANTON

I started "Operation Presto!" because I saw how much suffering there was in the world. I go to places where the children have neither food nor clean water. And I give them magic.

We see Anton performing a simple "cup and ball" illusion for a group of young CHILDREN. Another shot shows him handing out magic kits to eager FAMILIES who seem a little disappointed when they open them.

REPORTER

And do you also give them food and water?

ANTON

(confused)

Well, no. I'm a magician. I bring magic.

Anton gives a rabbit and top hat to a TINY BOY. As the boy walks off, we see him throw away the top hat and pull a knife out of his pocket.

REPORTER

(changing the subject)

How did you discover magic?

A wistful look crosses Anton's face.

ANTON

My best friend introduced me to it. Burt Wonderstone.

ANGLE ON: Burt watching intently.

REPORTER

You and Burt recently had a falling out.

ANTON

We chose different paths. But I'll always be grateful to Burt for showing me that first trick.

REPORTER

Do you remember what that trick was?

ANTON

(smiles)

A disappearing handkerchief.

Burt crosses to his boxes, digs around one and pulls out the yellowed handkerchief and the cracked rubber thumb from their youth.

When he looks up he sees the lifesize cutout of himself grinning stupidly back at him from the corner of the room.

EXT. HOT SANDS MOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Burt lifts the lid on a dumpster and stuffs the cutout inside. The lid slams shut on the famous phony Wonderstone smile.

SFX: Burt's cell phone rings

BURT

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DOUG MUNNY'S ESTATE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Munny is getting a straight razor shave from a STUNNING FEMALE BARBER while he talks on the speaker phone.

MUNNY

Burt, it's Doug Munny.

BURT

Oh. Uh, hi Doug.

MUNNY

How you doing? Keeping busy?

BURT

Very busy. Lot of opportunities--

MUNNY

Good, good. Listen Burt, my son, Judah, is turning ten this weekend and we're having a little party for him at the house. When I asked him who he'd like to perform at the party, he told me he wanted you.

BURT

Really?

MUNNY

I know. I didn't believe it either. I offered him Justin Bieber, Miley Cyrus, Mandy Patinkin. But all he wanted was Burt Wonderstone.

BURT

That's very flattering, but I'm not sure I can--

MUNNY

I'll pay you three hundred bucks.

BURT

I'll do it.

MUNNY

Now, listen to me, Burt. I want a magic show for little kids. No "lady head/lady bodies." No broken ankles. No magical friendship with yourself. Just magic tricks. Disappearing coins, pulling shit out of hats. You got it?

BURT

Pull shit out of hats. Got it. Any way I could also get lunch--?

But Munny has already hung up.

INT. STEVE HAINES'S WAREHOUSE - EVENING

Nicole stands at a table loading mice into an antique musket as Haines enters.

HAINES

When you finish that I need you to fill the syringes with Dr. Pepper.

(then)

Listen, Nicole. Do you like Italian food or French food or vegetables?

NICOLE

Uh... I guess.

HAINES

I knew it. Me too. There's obviously chemistry between us. We're both feeling it.

NICOLE

Are we?

HAINES

I want us to take things to the next level. But I have to warn you, I'm into some crazy shit.

NICOLE

Wait, Steve--

HAINES

Have you ever made love with music playing in the background? 'Cause I'll put on music. I'll take off all my clothes and I will kiss you on the neck. Hell, I'll kiss you on the mouth. So you better decide right now, can you embrace the forbidden? Can you handle this?

NICOLE

(instantly)

No, I can't handle it.

HAINES

(backtracking)

I don't have to put on music.

NICOLE

I think we should just keep things professional.

HAINES

I'm disappointed. In you.

INT. RANCE'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

Burt knocks and enters to find Rance lying face up with his eyes open. The heart monitor beside him is FLATLINING.

SFX: BEEEEEEEEEP

BURT

Oh my god.

NURSE (O.S.)

Here's the problem.

The monitor comes to life. A NURSE stands up from the far side of Rance's bed as Rance turns to Burt.

NURSE (CONT'D)

The wire came loose.

Burt looks relieved. The Nurse exits.

BURT

(to Rance)

I was thinking about what you said yesterday and it made a lot of sense. I've got to get back to doing magic for the audience.

RANCE

Good for you.

BURT

I got a call from Doug Munny last night. He wants me to entertain at his kid's birthday.

RANCE

The nerve of that guy.

BURT

No, I want to do it. Everyone who's anyone will be at that party. This is a chance to show them that Burt Wonderstone and Rance Hanson are still the finest magicians in Vegas.

RANCE

Me? What do I have to do with this?

BURT

I'd be honored if you would be my partner for this show.

RANCE

I'm retired, Burt--

BURT

I saw you yesterday. When you were doing those tricks for me, your eyes lit up. It was like you were 55 again. Don't turn your back on the world, Rance. Do this with me.

We see Rance is tempted but reluctant.

RANCE

It would be something. The two outcasts of magic working together. But I don't know. I'm pretty happy the way things are--

BURT

I'll pay you a hundred bucks.

RANCE

I'll do it.

INT. COMMON ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt and Rance stand beside a table piled with various magical props. RESIDENTS putter around or stare into space, not paying attention to them.

BURT

You ready?

RANCE

Let's try it.

From thin air, Burt produces a GOLF BALL. He tosses it to Rance, but by the time Rance catches it, it has become a TENNIS BALL. Rance throws that back and it transforms into a FOOTBALL. Then a BASKETBALL which Rance throws back to Burt. Suddenly, Burt is holding a basketball HOOP. Rance's shot goes in.

BURT

Beautiful. And then I'll say, "it takes a lot of balls to be a magician!"

RANCE

Clever. But remember we're performing for kids.

BURT

Right.

(thinks, then)

"Hope everyone's having a ball!"

RANCE

Yes! Nailed it!

By now, a few residents have begun to notice the impromptu magic show in their midst.

INTERNAL DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMON ROOM - LATER

A crowd of old folks and even some STAFF MEMBERS has gathered to watch as Rance effortlessly demonstrates a coin trick where he quickly and expertly makes a coin move across his fingers, appearing and disappearing with amazing speed.

Burt tries to keep up with him, making a valiant effort with his own coin, but Rance is just too good. Finally, Burt sits and watches, awestruck, along with the crowd. When Rance finishes, Burt stands and APPLAUDS before anyone else. Rance bows, clearly proud.

INTERNAL DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COMMON ROOM - LATER

By now, nearly all the residents and staff surround Burt and Rance who stand on opposite sides of Grace, the old lady who Burt frightened earlier. Each magician holds an end of a colored silk that appears to run THROUGH one of Grace's EARS and out the other. Burt and Rance play tug-of-war with the scarf and unlike before, Grace is now thoroughly tickled to be part of the show.

BURT

I told you, Rance, it's my handkerchief!

RANCE

No, Burt, it's mine!

GRACE

(giggling)
Oh dear!

Unseen by either of them, Nicole has entered the room. She reacts with surprise at the sight of Burt.

At last, Burt yanks the scarf away from Rance, "through" Grace's head and holds it up.

BURT

I win!
(off scarf, grimacing)
Hmmm... on second thought, you can keep it, Rance.

The crowd LAUGHS uproariously. Grace claps happily.

NICOLE

Burt?

BURT

Nicole?! What are you doing here?

NICOLE

(re: Grace)
Visiting my grandmother.

BURT

Grace is your grandmother?!

NICOLE

Yes. Why are you here?

BURT

I was hired to entertain the residents.

NICOLE

Well, you seem to be doing a great job. I haven't seen my grandmother this happy in ages.

BURT

She's a sweetheart. Once she stops thinking you're the devil.

(then)

This is Rance Hanson. He's the reason I became a magician.

RANCE

(shaking her hand)

How do you do?

NICOLE

Nice to meet you, Rance.

(then, to Burt)

I was going to take Grandma into the cafeteria for some lunch. Do you want to join us?

BURT

Lunch with two beautiful women? How can I say no?

NICOLE

What about you, Rance?

RANCE

Oh, that's all right--

Suddenly Rance is seized by a violent COUGHING fit. He covers his mouth with his handkerchief. He looks down and sees specks of blood.

BURT

Are you okay?

Before they can see it, Rance makes the handkerchief disappear with a single motion.

RANCE

Yeah, you go on. I'm not hungry.

BURT

Okay.

(then)

We're going to give that kid one heck
of a show this weekend.

RANCE

(smiling)

The little shit won't know what hit
him.

INT. DESERT OASIS CAFETERIA - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt and Nicole sit with trays of bland-looking
cafeteria food. Grace sits beside them, trying
unsuccessfully to bring forkfuls of salad to her mouth.

BURT

So, how are things going with Haines?

NICOLE

I don't really get him. He's a pretty
weird dude.

BURT

Yeah, I kind of picked up on that.

NICOLE

The stuff he does isn't really magic.
His latest "trick" is eating a bicycle
while riding it. Sometimes I miss
being a normal magician's assistant.

BURT

Well, you know, Rance and I are going
to be performing at Judah Munny's party
this weekend. We could really use an
assistant if you're free...

NICOLE

I don't know if that's such a good
idea, Burt.

BURT

I get it. Why would you want to after
I spent fifteen years treating you like
a piece of meat? When I should've been
treating you like a piece of meat with
a brain and a heart. I'm sorry I've
been such an ass, Nicole.

Nicole doesn't know what to say. This is a whole new
side of Burt.

BURT (CONT'D)

Anyway, it was great to see you. I'm going to go check on Rance. Bye, Grace.

He gives Grace a peck on the cheek and heads for the exit.

NICOLE

Burt?

He turns.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

What time is that party?

Off Burt's grin,

EXT. MUNNY'S BACKYARD - DAY

A lavish birthday party is in full swing on Munny's enormous grounds. A BANNER reads: "Happy Birthday, Judah!" Dozens of KIDS, PARENTS and various recognizable VEGAS VIP's mill about. A lifesize, nearly nude ice sculpture of the birthday boy is the centerpiece of a vast buffet table. A small orchestra plays top-40 pop songs.

ANGLE ON a small stage where Nicole is helping Burt set up his props. There's no sign of Rance.

BURT

Where is he? He was supposed to be here an hour ago.

NICOLE

Did you try calling him?

BURT

It goes right to voicemail. Do you think he changed his mind?

NICOLE

Maybe he forgot. He's an old man.

BURT

Well, we've got to cancel. I can't do this without Rance.

NICOLE

Of course you can. You're going to put on a great show either way.

BURT

The whole town is here. If I mess this up--

NICOLE

You won't. You're Burt Wonderstone and you're an amazing magician.

Doug Munny addresses the crowd.

MUNNY

Everyone? I'd like to thank you all for helping me celebrate my son's tenth birthday! Happy birthday, Judah!

JUDAH

Thanks, Dad!

MUNNY

Of course, Judah's birthday isn't the real reason I invited you here today...

Judah looks disappointed.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

It's my pleasure to announce that in a few weeks, I will be hosting a showcase of Vegas's hottest acts in our newly renovated theater at the Aztec Casino.

The crowd applauds.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

And whichever entertainer dazzles me the most, will get a five year contract as headliner!

(the crowd "oohs" and "ahhs")

And as it happens, we're lucky enough to have one of those entertainers -- a world-famous magician -- here with us today.

Burt's ears perk up. This must be Munny's introduction to his show.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

Say hello to Steve Haines!

We see Haines standing in the crowd. He waves indifferently as the crowd claps.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming, Steve. And now to entertain the children: Burt Wonderstone.

All eyes turn to Burt. He stands frozen like a deer in headlights.

NICOLE

(sotto)

Burt, you're on.

BURT

But, Rance--?

NICOLE

Forget Rance. This is your time to shine.

Nicole pushes "play" on a boom box and we hear

MUSIC CUE: "The Reflex" by Duran Duran

A bit awkwardly on the small platform, Burt moves around dramatically as he executes his first tricks: Nicole hands him a long strand of colored scarves which Burt tucks into one ear.

BURT

Do you ever get tired of your mom and dad telling you to floss all the time? I know I sure did when I was a kid. But let me tell you, they were right! I floss every day...

As he did with Grace, he pulls the scarves out from his other ear and moves it back and forth, as if "flossing" his head.

BURT (CONT'D)

My brain, that is!

Judah and his friends laugh and cheer. Munny smiles approvingly.

Burt's confidence slowly grows as he steps off the platform and moves among the kids, pulling coins from behind each of their ears and plunking them into a metal cup Nicole carries.

BURT (CONT'D)

Looks like a lot of you forgot to wash behind your ears. Well, it's time for that to change.

Nicole hands him the now full cup of coins. Burt shakes it, then turns it over and pulls out one OVERSIZED prop coin. The kids clap wildly. Then,

HAINES (O.S.)
(dripping with lethargic
sarcasm)
He turned little coins into a big coin.
Let's hear it for him.

Everyone turns to see Steve Haines walking toward Burt, gently shoving children out of his way as he goes.

HAINES (CONT'D)
You guys want to see some real magic?

The kids cheer.

NICOLE
(sotto)
Steve, what are you doing?

HAINES
Giving the people what they want.
(then, to the crowd)
Okay, watch this.

Haines turns to a nearby table where Judah's birthday cake sits. He takes out a lighter and lights the ten candles.

HAINES (CONT'D)
Okay, ready? Just watch. Watch
this...

He pulls up the sleeve of his leather jacket and holds his forearm directly above the candle flames. The kids and their parents watch with a mix of fascination and horror as he we hear the sound of skin CRACKLING in fire. A couple children start to CRY.

HAINES (CONT'D)
(wincing)
See what I'm doing? Okay? Now look.
Look.

He turns his arm over and shows the audience that burned into his flesh are the words: "HAPPY BIRTHDAY JUDAH"

The crowd gasps and applauds.

BURT
That's a terrible trick to do for kids.
What if they copy you?

HAINES

They'll burn their arms. Think you can do better?

BURT

Yes, I do.
(to Nicole)
Balloon, please.

Nicole hands him a long "twisty balloon."

HAINES

Really? Balloon animals?

BURT

Stand back.
(to the birthday boy)
Now, Judah, what would you say your favorite animal is? It could be anything. A mole? A sloth? A puppy?

JUDAH

A puppy!

BURT

He chose a puppy.
(blowing it up)
Let's see if we can make a puppy for Judah's birthday present.

Burt ties off the balloon and quickly sculpts the familiar balloon dog.

BURT (CONT'D)

And there it is!

The crowd is not impressed.

BURT (CONT'D)

Hmm. You know this puppy needs something. It's not quite cuddly enough. Maybe I'll start over.

Burt takes out a pin and POPS the balloon dog. Instantly, in its place we see a live PUPPY appear in his hand. The kids cheer excitedly. Burt hands the dog to Nicole who gives it to Judah.

BURT (CONT'D)

Happy birthday.

JUDAH

Wow! Thanks, Mr. Wonderstone. Thanks, Nicole. I'm going to call him Scamp.

Haines steps up to Judah.

HAINES

Can I see Scamp for a second?

JUDAH

(uncertain)

Uh, I guess--

Haines takes the puppy from him.

HAINES

Okay, watch this. You watching?

Haines places one hand on top of the puppy and begins to SQUEEZE it between his palms.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Can everyone see this? Look what I'm doing to Scamp.

As the children, parents, Munny, Burt and Nicole watch in frozen disbelief, Haines appears to crush the puppy in his hands. We hear small SQUEALS from the animal as it compresses into nothing. At last, Haines opens his hands to reveal the dog has disappeared.

There's a silence.

JUDAH

Daddy! He crushed my dog!

HAINES

(calmly)

Hang on. Just... look. Over here.

Haines crosses to a table holding Judah's birthday presents. He picks up one gift wrapped box and hands it to Judah.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Here. Open this.

Judah, still sniffing, reluctantly takes the box and unwraps it. The crowd GASPS as the box opens to reveal an unharmed puppy inside.

JUDAH

Scamp! You're okay!

Everyone applauds. Burt steps up to Haines.

BURT

(sotto)

That's a different puppy, you sick
bastard!

HAINES

(uncomfortably close to
Burt's ear)

Shhh.

Munny gives Haines a thumbs-up.

HAINES (CONT'D)

(softly to Burt)

Looks like the "Burt and Anton Theater"
is about to become the "Steve Haines
Theater."

Now the crowd turns to Burt, clearly waiting for him to
top Haines's feat, but Burt has nothing. He looks to
Nicole, scared and vulnerable. There's an uncomfortable
beat, then

BURT

Thank you very much.

He pushes Haines out of his way as he quickly exits the
stage, leaving a disappointed crowd. Nicole steps up to
Haines.

NICOLE

Why did you have to do that?!

HAINES

Because I'm this close to locking down
the Aztec gig. That's the hottest job
in Vegas. Wonderstone was just
collateral damage.

NICOLE

You know what, Steve? You're a bad
person. And what's worse: you're a bad
magician. I quit.

HAINES

This is about your sexual obsession
with me, isn't it?

NICOLE

Ugh.

She storms off to find Burt. Haines turns to Judah.

HAINES

She'll be back.

Judah smiles and nods, confused.

INT. NICOLE'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Nicole enters. Burt sits in the passenger seat looking shell-shocked and dejected.

NICOLE

Are you okay?

BURT

Yeah, I'm fine. I mean, I'm done with magic and I'll never perform again. But that's probably for the best.

NICOLE

That's bull. You were doing great until Haines butted in. That guy would throw anyone off their game.

SFX: Burt's cell phone rings

BURT

(into phone)

Hello? What?

As he listens, his expression turns grim.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt and Nicole hurry to a room.

NICOLE

I'll wait here.

BURT

Thanks for coming with me.

NICOLE

Of course.

INT. RANCE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Burt hurries in to find a pale Rance in bed, hooked up to an IV bag and various machines.

BURT

Rance?

RANCE

(weakly)

Oh, hey. Sorry I missed the show.

BURT

Don't worry about that. How are you doing?

RANCE

My doctors are under the impression that I'm dying. I'd hate to disappoint them.

(then)

I want to thank you, Burt.

BURT

For what?

RANCE

For letting me work with you this week. It felt good to be back in the game. You reminded me what I missed most about doing magic.

BURT

I should be thanking you. You know, my dad wasn't around when I was a kid. And your tapes kept me company. It was almost like you and Munson were my dads. Except they were dads you had to rewind every half hour and after a while your voices got weird and warbly...

RANCE

Burt... I've never told anyone why my partner disappeared.

BURT

You said nobody knew.

RANCE

I knew. You see, when Munson and I started out, he wasn't silent. He spoke as much as I did. But as time passed and we got more famous, my ego got the better of me. I started hogging the spotlight, stealing his lines, taking over the act. Munson was a pussycat. He wasn't going to fight with me about it. He just kept his mouth shut until that became his trademark. A shame really. Man had the voice of an angel.

(MORE)

RANCE (CONT'D)
(sniffing)
And then came that night at the Aztec.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. AZTEC THEATER - NIGHT

A younger Rance stands on stage in front of a full house. The closed trunk is beside him.

RANCE (V.O.)
Before he even got in that trunk,
Munson knew it was his last show. He'd
had just about all of me he could take.

Rance opens the trunk and finds it empty save for a handwritten note taped to the inside that reads "FUCK YOU, RANCE."

Momentarily shocked, Rance quickly palms the note so no one sees it.

BACK TO:

INT. RANCE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

RANCE
When you're on top, you can get away
with burning almost any bridge. Except
for the one that leads to your partner.
It's not too late for you.

Burt nods solemnly. This has hit home with him.

RANCE (CONT'D)
Well, looks like it's time to do my
final vanishing act. Goodbye, Burt and
good luck.

Suddenly, Rance tosses a pellet to the floor and a CLOUD OF SMOKE erupts between the two men. When it clears, Burt sees that Rance is GONE. Nicole enters.

NICOLE
Where did he go?

BURT
(smiling to himself)
To a better place. Goodbye, Rance.

Nicole hugs him. Over Burt's shoulder, through a window she notices Rance STUMBLING weakly across the parking lot in his hospital gown, dragging his IV stand after him. He COLLAPSES in a heap on the ground. As NURSES rush to Rance's aid, an oblivious Burt puts an arm around a disturbed Nicole and they exit.

INT. AIRPLANE - TWO DAYS LATER

Burt sits in the cramped coach section of a Royal Khmer airlines jet. He is the only tall, white person among the entirely Asian PASSENGERS.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT hands him what looks like a hot towel. Burt unrolls it and drapes it over his face. The PEOPLE to his left and right look at him strangely as they begin to eat their rolled mu-shu pancakes.

EXT. CAMBODIAN VILLAGE - DAY

A food aid truck marked "UNICEF" comes to a stop on a narrow, rutted road. As the DRIVER honks his horn we pan to reveal his path is blocked by another truck. This one labeled "Operation Presto!"

From the rear of the "Operation Presto!" truck, Anton hands out magic kits to a line of VILLAGERS. Annoyed, he waves off the UNICEF truck.

ANTON

Go around!

(then, handing kit to a
Villager)

Here you go, friend. That's got the
linking rings and the spongeballs.

The next person in line moves up to Anton. It's Burt.

BURT

Think I could have some of those
spongeballs?

ANTON

(shocked)

Burt?!

EXT. ANTON'S HUT - SHORT TIME LATER

Burt and Anton sit on grass mats on the porch sipping tea. Anton hands Burt what looks like a hot towel.

BURT
(re: towel)
I'm not going to make that mistake
twice.

He starts trying to bite a piece off the towel with his
teeth.

ANTON
What are you doing? That's a hot
towel.

Burt casually removes the towel from his mouth and
begins wiping his face. He notices several LOCAL MEN
arrayed on the ground, their eyes glazed over or rolled
back in their heads, as if sedated.

BURT
What's with those guys?

ANTON
They're high on kratom leaf. It's a
local narcotic herb they chew. Knocks
them right out. I'm trying to get them
off the kratom and hooked on magic
instead.

BURT
How's that going?

ANGLE ON a VILLAGER as he takes a tiny nibble from a
kratom leaf and almost instantly FLOPS OVER,
unconscious.

ANTON
They still prefer the kratom.
(then)
I'm assuming you didn't travel 8,000
miles for a cup of tea.

BURT
15,000. I had to change planes in
Amsterdam, then Miami, then Amsterdam
again. I couldn't afford a direct
flight.

ANTON
So you came to borrow money?

BURT
I came to apologize. It's taken me
almost thirty years, but I've realized
that without you, there's no us.
(MORE)

BURT (CONT'D)

And if there's no us, it's just me.
And me needs us. Me needs us real bad.

ANTON

Why are you talking like the Incredible Hulk?

BURT

You've always been better than me at patter. You're better than me in most ways. You're my only friend, Anton. But more than that? You're my best friend, and I love you. I'm sorry it took me so long to say it.

ANTON

(touched)

I appreciate that, Burt.

They shake hands. It turns into a hug.

BURT

Now, let's get the hell out of here.

ANTON

What?

BURT

We've only got a week until Munny's big showcase. The best performer gets the Aztec. So we need to put together a new trick, get in that showcase and beat Haines for the headliner gig--

ANTON

Whoa, whoa. I can't just give this up. These people need my magic. And next week I'm visiting Chad and Mali.

BURT

Who are Chad and Molly?

ANTON

No, the countries, Chad and Mali.

BURT

I don't know who those people are, but I do know I can't do this without you. On my best days, I'm just one half of Burt and Anton. And that's really all I want to be.

Anton considers this.

BURT (CONT'D)

Come on. It'll be just like when we
were kids. Dreaming up tricks.
Working together as a team.

Anton appears nearly convinced. But before he can
answer, a small Cambodian BOY approaches the hut and
points to his open mouth.

ANTON

They're asking for more magic. I
should go. I'm sorry, Burt.

Burt nods and goes, disappointed but stoic. Anton looks
up to see that the UNICEF truck has finally made its way
around his own "Operation Presto!" truck. It HONKS its
horn and all at once, the VILLAGERS drop their magic
kits on the ground and run toward the food relief truck.

Watching this, Anton has a realization.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

Burt's plane touches down in the brightly lit city.

INT. MCCARRAN AIRPORT - MINUTES LATER

Burt glumly exits his plane wheeling his luggage behind
him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, Weinselstein.

Burt looks up and gasps when he sees Anton waiting for
him.

BURT

(thrilled)
You came back! How did you get here
before me?!

ANTON

I took the "Operation Presto!" jet.

BURT

You have a jet?

ANTON

I'm still a multi-millionaire, Burt. I
didn't invest in a volcano.

BURT

What about Chad and Molly and the rest of them?

ANTON

Yeah, they didn't actually want magic. They wanted food and clean water.

BURT

So narrow-minded.

ANTON

And if you meant what you said about us working together again, well, that's all I've ever wanted.

Burt smiles and puts an arm around Anton's shoulders.

BURT

Let's go, partner. We've got a world to dazzle.

EXT. DOUG MUNNY'S ESTATE/POOL - NEXT DAY

Burt and Anton stand before Doug Munny, who lounges poolside at his lavish estate. A stunning female MANICURIST busily polishes Doug's fingernails.

MUNNY

Congratulations. It's fantastic that you two are back together.

BURT

Thanks, Doug.

ANTON

We can't wait to get back onstage with a whole new show.

There's an awkward pause as Munny stares at them.

MUNNY

Good luck with that.

BURT

Actually, we were kind of hoping for a slot in your showcase.

ANTON

We think it's the perfect way to reintroduce ourselves to the town.

MUNNY

Ooh. I don't know, guys. We've been down this road and I don't think--

Suddenly, he notices a small FIGURE running madly across the lawn toward them from the house. It's Judah Munny, decked out in a top hat and cape.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

Oh, crap.

After a few moments, Judah reaches them, panting and giddy with excitement.

JUDAH

Burt and Anton?! Somebody pinch me!

BURT

Hey, little guy. How's it going?

JUDAH

Does this mean you're back together again?

ANTON

It sure does, Judah.

JUDAH

And Daddy's putting you in his big show?!

Burt and Anton turn to Munny. Munny sighs.

MUNNY

(resigned)

Of course I am, son.

Burt and Anton enjoy a quiet moment of victory.

JUDAH

Yay!

Judah hugs his dad.

MUNNY

Okay. That's enough. You go back inside now.

JUDAH

I love you, Daddy! Bye, Mr. Wonderstone! Bye, Mr. Lovecraft!

Judah trots off back to the house.

ANTON

Your son must mean a lot to you.

MUNNY

Well, thanks to you two, he did stop dressing up as a girl and started dressing up as a magician. It's a small, sad step, but it's a step.

BURT

You won't regret this, Doug.

MUNNY

I'm pretty sure I will.

EXT. HOT SANDS MOTEL - NEXT DAY

A HOOKER hitchhikes in front of Burt's ratty motel.

BURT (O.S.)

Nicole's on her way over.

ANTON (O.S.)

Great.

INT. BURT'S MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Burt and Anton are sitting cross-legged on the floor, huddled over their "enchanted" notebook like a couple of kids. Just like in Burt's childhood bedroom, this room is full of dove cages and magical paraphernalia.

BURT

I can't believe you found the "Enchanted Notebook."

ANTON

I've always kept it with me. There's some great ideas in here.

(flipping a page)

What about "Raisin Storm"?

BURT

We did that on Arsenio in '91.

(flips another page)

How about "Sally Six-Fingers"?

ANTON

That's really hard on my back.

BURT

Right. What if we combined "Skin Window" with "Cobra Candle"?

ANTON

You mean use a flash-bang and then drop-vanish the raven?

BURT

Maybe. Might be simpler if we just outjog a dove pan.

ANTON

(impressed)

That's good. But is it big enough for the showcase?

Nicole knocks and enters.

NICOLE

Hey guys.

Anton and Burt ad lib greetings as they hug her.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Did you decide on a trick yet?

BURT

No. I mean, we've got some fantastic illusions here but nothing seems grand enough.

Nicole picks up the notebook which flips open to the last page.

NICOLE

What's the "Disappearing Audience"?

ANTON

Oh, that was the one trick we could never crack.

BURT

Yeah, I mean how could you make an entire audience suddenly vanish without them being in on it?

ANTON

You'd have to knock them all out or something.

There's a beat, then Anton and Burt suddenly look at each other.

ANTON/BURT

Kratom!/That herb thing!

NICOLE

Huh?

ANTON

Kratom. A leaf they chew in Cambodia. It knocks them out and when they wake up they have no memory of even going under.

BURT

So we would be drugging a thousand people without their consent?

ANTON

Yes.

There's a moment as Burt considers this. Then,

BURT

It's foolproof.

NICOLE

Are you guys joking?

BURT

(to Anton)

But how do we get them all to chew it? Shove it in their mouths?

ANTON

That won't work. We'd have to find some other delivery system.

BURT

How about a syringe hidden in each seat cushion?

NICOLE

A syringe?!

ANTON

Yeah, Nicole's right. They'd notice it when it pierced the flesh of their buttocks.

BURT

What if we converted the kratom to a gas...

ANTON

And put it in a fog machine!

BURT

Brilliant!

NICOLE

Guys! You can't be serious. What you're talking about is illegal and dangerous.

ANTON

She has a point.

BURT

Yeah. I guess we'll have to test it first.

CUT TO:

INT. HOT SANDS MOTEL OFFICE - NIGHT

The half-awake MOTEL MANAGER glances up from his TV just in time to see Burt and Anton shake hands with a shady Asian MAN then lift a large plastic-wrapped cube of green leaves from the trunk of his car.

Unfazed, the manager turns back to his TV.

INT. BURT'S MOTEL ROOM - NEXT DAY

Burt and Anton stand in the kitchenette which is now decked out like a meth lab with beakers, pots of boiling liquid, piles of kratom leaves, etc.

BURT

You think this batch is ready?

ANTON

I don't know. Check it.

Burt lifts the lid off a pot and as a small cloud of greenish smoke wafts out, we

CUT TO:

INT. BURT'S MOTEL ROOM - HOURS LATER

Burt and Anton open their eyes. They're lying on the floor in unnatural positions, having collapsed from the gas. After a confused beat they get to their feet. Burt spots the pot still on the stove.

BURT

You think this batch is ready?

ANTON

I don't know. Check it.

Burt lifts the lid off the pot and they immediately fall to the floor again.

INT. BURT'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Burt, Anton and Nicole are going over last minute details of the show.

BURT

Let's remember to tell the stagehands to set back the audience's watches by thirty minutes. It has to seem like only a moment has gone by.

ANTON

Right. Let's see how the gas masks look.

The three of them reach down and put on gas masks. From the front, they've been modified with latex and paint to replicate each of their faces. It's convincing, if slightly creepy and Michael Meyers-ish.

NICOLE

(muffled)

I just want to say, this last week, getting to see you guys working together again like the old days... well, I've never been prouder to be a magician's assistant.

ANGLE ON Burt and Anton, nodding at her with their lifeless rubber faces.

The three remove their gas masks.

ANTON

I should probably get going. Big day tomorrow.

He hugs Nicole and turns to Burt.

BURT

I'm glad you came back.

ANTON

I'm glad you came back.

They hug and Anton goes. Burt and Nicole are left alone for the first time in days. They look at each other uncertainly.

NICOLE

Well... I guess I better head home too.

BURT

Yeah. That's probably for the best.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BURT'S MOTEL ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Burt and Nicole fall onto his bed, kissing passionately. After a moment, Burt holds up Nicole's BRASSIERE.

BURT

I believe this is yours.

NICOLE

(feeling her chest)

How did you--?

He winks at her. They continue to writhe around. Suddenly, Nicole holds up Burt's boxer shorts.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I believe this is yours.

BURT

Where did you learn that?

NICOLE

It was lying on the bed.

BURT

Oh. Right.

They dive under the covers.

BURT (CONT'D)

You've got something behind your ear.

He reaches up and produces a condom.

BURT (CONT'D)

Actually, that probably won't work...

He takes the condom, passes it through his hand and it becomes a Magnum condom.

NICOLE

Ooh. Really?

BURT

No. That was just for the trick.

He transforms the condom back to the regular size one, tears it open and shows her the package is empty.

BURT (CONT'D)

(acting)

Huh. That's strange. I wonder where it went...

He lifts the covers to show her.

NICOLE

It's already on? How did you...

BURT

Shhhh.

They begin to kiss. She breaks the kiss.

NICOLE

Were you wearing it all day?

BURT

Shhhh.

They resume magical lovemaking.

EXT. AZTEC RESORT AND CASINO - NEXT EVENING

Klieg lights illuminate the sky as limousines pull up and disgorge GUESTS at the front doors of the casino.

INT. AZTEC THEATER - CONTINUOUS

A thousand AUDIENCE MEMBERS sit watching a Cirque du Soleil-style show. Several giant hamster balls propelled by LITTLE PEOPLE dressed as businessmen inside them roll from the stage and out over the giddy crowd. On stage, two enormous WOMEN with antlers dramatically argue in French as they chase each other on unicycles.

BACKSTAGE we see Burt, Anton and Nicole waiting tensely.

NICOLE

You guys ready?

BURT

Ready as we're gonna be.

Then, from behind them:

HAINES

(softly)

Not as ready as me.

They turn, startled.

BURT

Haines.

HAINES

It's nice of Munny to let you do your
farewell show here.

NICOLE

Get lost, Steve.

Trying to be polite, Anton extends his hand to Haines.

ANTON

I don't think we've met. Anton Love--

HAINES

(ignoring his hand)

I know who you are.

ANTON

Well, I figured, but we haven't
actually met, so I was introducing
myself.

HAINES

Whatever. That's not how I roll.

ANTON

We're not "rolling." I'm just being
polite.

HAINES

Yeah, right.

ANTON

Why would I lie about--?

BURT

Forget it, Anton. He's crazy.

STAGEHAND

Two minutes, Mr. Haines.

HAINES

(to Burt)

You're about to see just how crazy I am. Check this shit out.

Burt and Anton are a little spooked by his cockiness.

ON STAGE-- MOMENTS LATER

Doug Munny takes the stage as the acrobats exit.

MUNNY

Let's hear it for *Les Enfants Mutilée* all the way from Montreal! Next up, and I'm guessing the reason many of you came tonight, a man at the cutting edge of magic... and the gouging edge, and the burning edge...

The audience laughs.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

You may know him from his Spike TV program, "Brain Rapist." And right now we're all about to have our brains raped. Ladies and gentlemen, Steve Haines!

The crowd explodes with applause as Haines walks casually on stage and Munny exits.

HAINES

Okay. Thanks. Shhh. Stop, please. Okay.

The crowd falls silent.

HAINES (CONT'D)

I'm not going to be doing any magic tonight. Instead, I'll be doing something I call "Shooting Myself in the Head with a Gun."

The crowd gasps as Haines removes a revolver from his jacket pocket.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Okay, this is the gun. So, I did some research and I found out there's one narrow angle where you can shoot yourself in the head and you'll miss all the important parts of the brain. My medical advisors tell me I might still lose one of my senses.

(MORE)

HAINES (CONT'D)

They don't know which. I'm hoping it's taste.

Haines carefully places the gun to his temple.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Let me just get the angle right. Okay.

In the wings, Burt and Anton exchange an incredulous look.

HAINES (CONT'D)

Okay, here it goes. It's going to be loud, so you might want to... I don't know, whatever. Okay, I'm just gonna pull the--

BANG! Haines fires the gun and instantly falls to the stage, bleeding profusely from both sides of his head.

The audience is frozen with horror, not sure how to react to what they've just witnessed. Several people get to their feet for a better view of the motionless Haines.

ANGLE ON Burt's friends, Rick the Implausible and Lucius Belvedere sitting in the audience.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

I guess Burt and Anton win!

Then, incredibly, Haines stirs, sits up, and clambers to his feet unsteadily.

HAINES

Everybody, thtay calm... ith juth a little bluh.

Haines has done it. The crowd ROARS like we've never heard them. Two PARAMEDICS hurry over to place Haines on a gurney and patch his bleeding head-holes. It appears the night belongs to Steve Haines.

As Haines is wheeled off-stage, he passes an obviously freaked out Burt and Anton.

HAINES (CONT'D)

(grinning)

You're on guyth. Hab a gweat thow.

PARAMEDIC

Don't talk.

On stage Munny has taken the mic.

MUNNY

Wow! That's why he's a star, folks. I feel bad for anyone who has to follow that act. And now, to follow that act, a couple of former Vegas legends, back together again for the first time since their mortifying public humiliation. Ladies and gentlemen, Burt Wonderstone and Anton Lovecraft!

The crowd applauds a bit tentatively, some ironically, as Burt and Anton walk on stage.

ANTON

Thank you! Thanks a lot!

BURT

For the last fifteen years, we've been doing a show on this very stage, called "Burt and Anton: A Magical Friendship." But as some of you may know, recently we had a falling out.

ANTON

Yeah. We fell right out of the Hot Box.

The crowd chuckles.

BURT

So, you're probably wondering what we're doing here tonight.

ANTON

I know I am.

The audience laughs again.

ANTON (CONT'D)

I'm just kidding. We're here to tell you folks a story. A story about us.

BURT

But this time, we're going to tell you the real story. You see, before we were Burt Wonderstone and Anton Lovecraft...

ANTON

We were Albert Weinselstein and Tony Lufkin. Two of the biggest nerds on earth.

There is a FLASH OF LIGHT and suddenly Burt and Anton are dressed like NERDY 1970'S KIDS. The audience laughs appreciatively.

On Rick the Implausible.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
So far, this is terrible.

LUCIUS
Shh.

ANTON
Not surprisingly, we used to get beaten up a lot by the tough kid in our class.

BURT
But then again, everybody was a tough kid to us.

The audience groans and laughs sympathetically.

BURT (CONT'D)
So what do you do when you're 12 year-old super-geeks without any other friends?

ANTON
That's right. We became magicians!

All at once, Anton and Burt are wearing capes and top hats.

BURT
We started off with pretty simple stuff...

Burt produces a little silk scarf like the one from the opening.

ANTON
Making a scarf disappear...

He does.

On Rick and Lucius.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE
If we leave now we can beat the crowd.

LUCIUS
Just hang on.

Anton takes off his top hat and flips it over.

ANTON

Pouring water from a top hat...

He does.

BURT

(ironic)

Yep. That was a show-stopper.

As he speaks, he continues to do various gags with the scarf, incorporating Anton. It disappears in his hands and reappears in Anton's pocket, etc...

ANTON

Whenever we came up with a great new trick, we would write it down in a secret *enchanted* notebook.

Nicole walks on stage carrying the humble composition notebook.

BURT

Ladies and gentlemen, our beautiful, talented assistant, Nicole.

The crowd applauds as she hands the notebook to Burt.

BURT (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinking. That notebook doesn't look all that enchanted, does it? But trust me. It's full of magic.

ANTON

As we grew older, we did pretty much every trick in that book. And over the years, the tricks got bigger and bigger.

Several of their enormous old props drift down from the rafters behind them: the laser cannon from Man Head/Lady Body, a big fiberglass box, etc.

BURT

Our audiences grew along with our fame and our paychecks. But one thing didn't change.

ANTON

It was always Albert and Tony. Just a couple old pals doing magic together.

BURT

Until a few months ago when we went our separate ways.

The stage goes completely black except for a spotlight on Burt.

MUSIC CUE: The stirring sounds of Hans Zimmer's "Now We Are Free" from the movie "GLADIATOR" swells from the sound system.

BURT (CONT'D)

You see ladies and gentlemen, I was a fool. Burt Wonderstone forgot the one thing that Albert Weinselstein always knew: I could play with myself all day alone in my room. But it was only when Tony and I played with each other that it became magic.

A spot illuminates Anton UPSTAGE of Burt.

ANTON

After all, that's what a real magical friendship is all about.

Now spotlights pick up both men.

BURT

Tonight, as we celebrate our reunion, we offer you the only illusion in the enchanted notebook we've never dared perform... until now!

ANTON

Ladies and gentlemen, we give you, the Disappearing Audience!

The FOG MACHINES switch on and smoke begins to waft over the audience. Burt and Anton slip on their face-shaped gas masks. Suddenly, an alarmed Nicole leans into Burt.

NICOLE

(sotto)

We've got a problem.

She points to where Haines lies watching from his gurney just off stage. His head is bandaged and he wears an oxygen mask over his face.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

They've got him on oxygen. He won't breathe in the gas wearing that!

BURT

You've got to get that mask off him.

NICOLE

I think I know a way.

BURT

That's what makes you the best
magician's assistant in Vegas.

Nicole nods and purposefully hurries over to Haines's side. She leans over him.

NICOLE

Steve, you were right. These guys are losers. You're the one I should be with. And seeing you shoot yourself tonight, I just... I want to kiss you.

HAINES

(slurred)
On the mouf?

NICOLE

Right on the mouth.

HAINES

Duhrty gurhl.

Haines removes his oxygen mask and waits for the kiss but the moment he does, Nicole grabs the mask from him and puts it over her own nose and mouth.

From the POV of the audience, SMOKE fills the frame for a fleeting moment...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - "ONE SECOND LATER" (30 MINUTES LATER)

...the smoke clears and there is stunned silence as a thousand people, including Doug Munny, realize they are sitting in their same seats, only in the middle of the moonlit desert.

On the sand in front of them, stand Burt, Anton and Nicole, holding out their arms in a flourish.

Slowly but surely, the vast desert is filled with a building thunder of awestruck applause.

BURT/ANTON

Thank you!/You've been great!

The audience leaps to its feet. Rick the Implausible turns to Lucius Belvedere.

RICK THE IMPLAUSIBLE

And you wanted to leave!

Overcome by the success of the trick, Burt and Anton embrace.

BURT

We did it, Tony.

ANTON

We sure did, Albert.

Munny approaches them. Haines, whose gurney is also parked nearby, stands unsteadily and hobbles over.

MUNNY

Guys, I have to admit I was expecting another disaster. In fact, I was kind of hoping for one. But this? I don't know how you did it, but that was one hell of a trick.

BURT

Thanks, Doug. And thanks for giving us the chance to redeem ourselves.

MUNNY

You bet.

(then, to Haines)

Congratulations, Steve. You've got the gig.

Burt, Anton and Nicole react with shock.

ANTON

What?!

MUNNY

The guy shot himself in the head.

BURT

But what about our new and stronger magical friendship?!

MUNNY

He shot himself. In the head. I'll have lines out the door every night to see that.

HAINES

Whoa, whoa. Whah do you mean, "evewy night"?

MUNNY

That'll be your signature trick.

HAINES

Are you nuths? I can't thoot mythelf evewy night. I'm lucky to be alive.

MUNNY

Ohhh. Well, in that case-- Burt and Anton, congratulations!

HAINES

Whah?!

The paramedics take a woozy Haines by the arms and lead him away.

BURT

(to Munny)

You're giving us back our show?

MUNNY

Damn right. There's no one else I'd even consider for the job.

Burt and Anton shake hands with Munny.

MUNNY (CONT'D)

Just one thing. You are going to make the audience reappear again, right? I make a shitload off them in the casino.

ANTON

Not a problem.

They nod to Nicole, and the three of them slip on their gas masks as the hidden fog machines begin to pump out kratom gas again.

As the fog clears we see the audience has fallen unconscious.

ANTON (CONT'D)

Okay, let's get 'em back on the trucks!

Several 18-wheelers pull up and a group of BURLY TEAMSTERS begin hurling audience members into the back of the trucks like bags of potatoes, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Chyron: "Six Months Later"

ANGLE ON the entrance to the theater. Over the door in gold letters reads "THE RANCE HANSON MEMORIAL THEATER."

We track inside where it's the end of Burt and Anton's all-new show. The sold-out audience is on its feet, giving a standing ovation as an energized Burt, Anton and Burt's visibly pregnant wife, Nicole, take bows.

BURT

Thank you for coming to the Rance
Hanson Theater.

ANTON

Where you'll always find...

BURT/ANTON

... a real magical friendship!

EXT. AZTEC RESORT - MINUTES LATER

Members of the audience exit the hotel and head for the taxi line. A few pause when they notice a street magician performing a trick for a small GROUP. It's Steve Haines, but this time without a camera crew. He has yet to fully recover from his brain injury.

HAINES

(pointing at a big guy)
You thir. Punth me in the faith. Hard
ath you can.

A BIG GUY steps up, shrugs, and CLOCKS Steve in the face. The magician goes down hard. And doesn't get up. The small crowd walks away, completely indifferent.

We fly up over the Aztec's pyramid, over the sparkling lights and up into the night sky until the brilliant colors of the Strip are just specks of light.

SMASH TO:

BLACK.

THE END

AS CREDITS ROLL, we see a SERIES OF SHOTS showing the behind-the-scenes of the "Disappearing Audience" trick:

-- The fog clears in the theater and a team of STAGEHANDS wearing gas masks begin carelessly grabbing unconscious members of the audience and dragging them up the aisle by their ankles. The sleeping people's heads bang against the seats and floor.

-- A Japanese MAN wakes up as he's being loaded into a truck and looks around, frightened. Seeing he's awake, Burt gestures "Shhhh" and shuts the rear door of the truck.

-- Burt and Anton ride in the cab of a truck as a driver drives into the desert. Anton glances in the side-view mirror and yells to the driver to stop. When they get out, we see that the back door of the truck has opened and there are unconscious bodies strewn for hundreds of yards on the road behind them.

-- In the desert, STAGEHANDS follow a seating chart as they place the audience in their proper seats. One of them notices an AUDIENCE MEMBER has a black eye. Nicole hands him a makeup kit and he quickly covers the injury.

-- Out in the desert, Anton looks over and reacts as he notices a COYOTE trying to drag a sleeping INFANT audience member away from its sleeping MOTHER. Anton quickly shoos the animal away and returns the child to its mother.

-- In the desert, the audience have all been placed in their proper seats. A STAGEHAND approaches Burt and shows him a prosthetic leg. He shrugs. No idea who it belongs to. Burt hurls it out into the desert.

-- The same Japanese MAN as before looks around, frightened as he is loaded with the others onto the truck for the return trip to the theater. Once again, Burt gestures "Shhhh" and shuts the door of the truck.