

JINGLE BELL HEIST

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Exile Entertainment
CAA

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY/ESTABLISHING

SOFIA V.O.

Is anything more wonderful than New York at the holidays?

She's right. As sleigh bells ring, we whisk through tree lights shining at Rockefeller Center... Ice skating in Central Park... Store windows overflowing with treasures as SHOPPERS race to find the perfect gift.

It's the week before Christmas, and the city buzzes with frantic, festive cheer.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DUSK

CROWDS bustle, marveling over the designer displays.

SOFIA V.O.

Ever since I was a kid, I've loved this time of year. And one place represents Christmas most of all. Sterling & Co Department Store.

Standing tall in the heart of the mayhem, we find this temple of the retail gods. Six floors of fine goods, waiting to be wrapped in tissue and placed in an iconic navy blue bag.

And at the holidays? It's a sight to behold. WREATHS hang in every doorway. Swarovski REINDEERS frolic in the windows. A tasseled DOORMAN invites us inside, to...

INT. STERLING AND CO - CONTINUOUS

Holiday heaven. Gleaming marble floors reflect the glittering chandeliers, as SHOPPERS browse the cavernous main halls.

A GIRL (8) races excitedly through the aisles to the atrium, where a 100ft FAKE TREE (a la the Grove) looms over a snowy GROTTO with FAMILIES in line. She bumps past --

SOFIA (28), watching with a nostalgic smile. With a bubbly demeanor wrapped in a clumsily-knit Christmas scarf, she's full of holiday spirit.

SOFIA V.O.

The store is an icon. A New York institution. But like all great institutions, it's been **corrupted**.

The Art Deco elevator doors open, revealing MAXWELL STERLING (65), a fastidious man in an overcoat and driving gloves.

Sofia's smile dims as she sees Maxwell emerge, flanked by LULU, his anxious assistant (26s), and MCGREGOR, (45) a bruiser whose designer suit can't contain his ex-SAS frame.

Maxwell strides through the aisles, noticing everything, as the others keep pace.

MAXWELL

Revenue?

LULU

Fifteen percent above last year.

MAXWELL

Tell them to get it up to twenty.
Security?

MCGREGOR

Extra guards on the floor, the usual sticky fingers. Eleven -- make that a dozen shop-lifters nabbed today.

Up ahead, the DOORMAN hustles a SCRAWNY TEEN past.

SCRAWNY TEEN

I didn't take nothing! I just wanted the bag, for my girl.

Maxwell intercepts.

MAXWELL

Those bags aren't for sale. Ergo, they're priceless. Ergo, you'll be tried as an adult.

He strides on.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Why is there a line at the grotto?

LULU

I think Santa's on a break.

MAXWELL

Then find me a new Santa. Happy children make happy parents who take that comfort and joy straight to the cash register.

He spots a FEMALE ASSOCIATE (50s) at a makeup counter.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

And what did I say about the staff?
We're selling a brand here. Classy.
Young. Get her out of my sight.

What a charmer. If this were another type of holiday movie, Maxwell would be due a visit from the Ghosts of Christmas Past, but we'll just have to settle for...

NICK (32), watching from a nearby counter. A man who blends into the crowd, with a charming, off-beat charisma.

ANXIOUS LADY O.S.

I don't know. Is it too much? Not
enough? Just right?

Nick turns. The SALESWOMAN is showing an ANXIOUS LADY (30s) an expensive men's wristwatch. She sees Nick looking.

ANXIOUS LADY

What do you think?

NICK

It's a fine piece. Any man would
love it. Except...

He pauses, but he just can't help himself. He moves in.

NICK (CONT'D)

No wedding ring, so this is for
your boyfriend?
(off her nod)
You've only been dating a couple of
months, otherwise you'd have more
confidence in his taste. So, long
enough that he's leaving dirty
laundry in your hamper, but you
haven't met his friends because he
wants things to move *organically*.

ANXIOUS LADY

(defensive)
The dryer in his building is out.

NICK

Uh huh. So, let me paint a picture.
Christmas Eve, he comes over. You
spent all day cooking, you want it
to be special, right? There's wine,
candles, you're snuggled together
by the tree as you give him this
thoughtful, expensive gift...

The lady and saleswoman are smiling, imagining it.

NICK (CONT'D)
 ...And he hands you a cheap
 greeting card he got at the bodega
 while he was picking up condoms and
 a packet of gum.

Their faces fall. Nick hands the watch back.

NICK (CONT'D)
 Save it for a man who can launder
 his own tighty-whities. Trust me,
 love is a transaction, and come New
 Year's, you'll be left with nothing
 but a credit card bill and a whole
 heap of regret.

Nick moves on, eyes already sweeping the store, looking for --
 A JANITOR, 40s, mopping up a spill.

CLOSE ON: the SECURITY BADGE dangling on the janitor's belt.

Nick casually moves through the CROWD towards him. He's ten
 feet away, moving in, when --

Someone bumps into the janitor. It's Sofia, bags spilling.
 She gushes smiling apologies as Nick PIVOTS, pretending to
 browse a make-up display nearby.

CLERK
 Can I help you, sir?

NICK
 No thanks. Not my shade.

Sofia moves off, and Nick resumes his approach. *Ten feet
 away... five feet...* As he passes, Nick smoothly bumps the
 janitor, while reaching under his jacket for --

Nothing. The security badge is gone.

What the fuck? Nick is thrown, until he sees -- a glimpse of
 Sofia, exiting the store. She beat him to it.

EXT. STERLING AND CO - DUSK

Nick exits to the packed sidewalk in time to see Sofia enter
 a coffee shop across the street. He follows.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

Nick joins Sofia, waiting by the drink pick-up counter.

BARISTA
Grande dark roast for Sofia!

She takes the cup. Nick flashes a friendly smile.

NICK
You sure you're not forgetting something? Mocha whip, extra dolche with tiramasu triple frappe sprinkles on top?

Sofia smiles back, charmed.

SOFIA
Tempting but... you can't beat the classics.

NICK
Good call. Less likelihood of early-onset diabetes.

SOFIA
Thanks for your concern.

NICK
Hey, whatever eases the burden on our national healthcare system.

Nick gets the door for her. Sofia brushes close as she exits.

SOFIA
Happy holidays!

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Sofia strolls, sipping her coffee, then checks her bag. She stops, frowning. Steps out of the CROWDS and into --

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Sofia sets her coffee down and rifles through her purse again, anxiety growing.

NICK O.S
Hey! You dropped something!

He jogs over, all friendly smiles. Holds up the security badge we didn't even see him lift.

SOFIA
Thank you!

NICK

No problem... Dave. You look more like a Charles to me.

SOFIA

It's... my boyfriend's. He left it at my place. I'm returning it.

She reaches for the pass. Nick pulls it back.

NICK

You know, I was heading to the store for a little last-minute shopping. I'll give it back to him.

SOFIA

That won't be necessary.

NICK

It's no trouble.

SOFIA

Really, you're too kind.

NICK

Oh, I most definitely am not.

Their eyes lock. Stale-mate. Sofia frowns. *What's his deal?*

SOFIA

Fine. You take it.

She walks away. Nick watches her, intrigued.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Nick catches up to Sofia, weaving through the CROWDS.

SOFIA

Didn't you have shopping to do?

NICK

I just wanted to make sure you weren't planning anything stupid.

SOFIA

I don't know what you mean.

NICK

Well, you see, there's only one reason to steal a security pass like this -- nice lift by the way -- and that's if you're planning some nefarious scheme.

SOFIA

Who, me?

She bats her eyelashes, the picture of innocence.

NICK

Uh huh. But see, whatever you're thinking, it would be monumentally ill-advised. A store like that has security everywhere. Cameras. Guards. And even if you did manage to slip through a door you shouldn't, what are you going to take? The armored truck arrives at five sharp to whisk away the day's takings. Big men. With big guns.

They pause at a crosswalk, where - sure enough - they have a view on the side entrance of the store.

ACROSS THE STREET, the massive armored truck pulls up. McGregor oversees the BIG MEN with their BIG GUNS collecting the safe deposit boxes.

Sofia and Nick are both watching the operation with a more-than-passing interest.

NICK (CONT'D)

See? Any after-hours shenanigans would just leave you empty-handed.

SOFIA

Because the truck comes every day.

NICK

Like clock-work.

SOFIA

Even Sundays?

NICK

Especially Sundays.

A beat. Then he realizes she knows what he does:

NICK (CONT'D)

... Except when Sunday happens to fall on Christmas Day.

SOFIA

Like this year. How about that?

GREEN LIGHT. Sofia resumes walking. Nick catches up, annoyed.

NICK

Look, I know what you're thinking. Christmas Eve is a mad-house. The biggest retail day of the year. And all those takings will be sitting in the vault for the rest of the weekend, with their most expensive jewels, and only a skeleton staff to keep watch. And even they're waiting to clock off and eat mince pies with the rest of the family.

SOFIA

You've clearly put some thought into this.

Nick grabs her arm, pulling her to a stop.

NICK

Enough cute stuff. Whatever you've been planning, cut it out. Business at the store needs to continue as usual this week. No unexpected surprises, no stupid disruptions.

SOFIA

No *shenanigans*?

NICK

I mean it.

Sofia regards him with a smile.

SOFIA

Merry Christmas!

NICK

Was that a 'yes?'

SOFIA

And a happy new year!

She disappears into the crowds. Nick watches, unconvinced. *She's trouble.* He remembers something, and hurries away.

INT. KATZ'S DELI - DAY

Nick enters the packed deli. He fights through the CROWD to meet OTIS, a dapper Black man (70s). They back-slap affectionately and sit in a booth as the WAITRESS appears.

NICK
Just coffee for me, thanks.

OTIS
He'll get the matzo ball soup,
extra fries for the both of us.

She leaves. Nick looks around, wary.

OTIS (CONT'D)
What have they been feeding you out
there in Seattle? You so pale and
skinny...

NICK
Gee, thanks.

OTIS
You need a woman cooking for you,
that's what you need.

NICK
But could she beat your brisket?

OTIS
The brisket's not all you need.

The fries arrive.

OTIS (CONT'D)
It was a beautiful service. The
whole gang showed up to pay their
respects to the old man. What's
left of us, anyway.

NICK
That would have meant a lot to him.

OTIS
Not as much as seeing you safe. Why
are you back, Nick? Of all your bad
ideas...

NICK
Don't worry about me, it's a quick
job, that's all. I'll be gone by
New Year's. Ticket to Tahiti.

He pats his jacket breast pocket: the outline of the security badge. A confident smile. But Otis isn't smiling.

OTIS

You shouldn't have come.

Something's up, Nick realizes as -- XAVIER (50s) strolls through the deli to join them. Heavy-set, with a sharp suit and an even sharper gaze.

Through the window, Nick sees a town car double-parked at the kerb. A BODYGUARD (VANCE, 40s) is batting away BENNY (25, idiot-bro) who wants to see his gun. *Fuck*.

NICK

(to Otis)

You called him?

OTIS

Sorry, kid. He would have found out soon enough.

As Xavier lands a heavy hand on Nick's shoulder:

XAVIER

Your friend is smart to bank some credit where he can. But you never play it smart, do you Nicky?

Otis departs. Xavier sits. Nick sweats.

NICK

Look, I always planned on getting us straight. It's why I'm back. To get you your money.

XAVIER

That's good to hear.

Xavier is distracted by Benny's antics out front. Taps angrily on the glass as Nick shifts, uneasy.

NICK

Look, I'm telling you, I have a job planned. A good one. It'll clear the balance, then we'll be even.

XAVIER

Even? Even is only the half of it, my friend. Eight years protection upstate doesn't come cheap.

NICK

Some good it did him in the end.

XAVIER

He lived long enough for his heart
to give out. There are those who
would call that a blessing.

Not Nick.

NICK

One week, OK? You'll have your
money -- with interest.

Nick gets up, but Xavier GRIPS his arm.

XAVIER

Don't fuck with me, Nicky. One
week.

(releasing him)

And tell my idiot nephew to quit
waving that thing around.

NICK

Which thing?

EXT. KATZ'S DELI - NIGHT

Nick walks away as he reaches into his jacket pocket and
pulls out -- not the security pass.

Instead, there's a library pass, the same size and weight.
SOFIA MORGAN. Nick can't help but chuckle.

NICK

So, that's how we're playing it?

EXT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: the stolen badge.

Sofia swings the pass with a smile, tucking it away and
hoisting paper bags as she enters a squat brick building.
Fairview Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

INT. NURSING HOME/RECEPTION - NIGHT

Basic and bright. Sofia waves to NURSES and PATIENTS, passing
a lounge with OLD-TIMERS in wheel-chairs, watching TV.

INT. NURSING HOME/RITA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sofia enters a small patient room, made homey with framed photos and a crocheted blanket. RITA (50s) sits in bed, knitting on her lap, watching 'Love, Actually' on a small TV.

SOFIA

Again? You know I can't stand anyone messing with Emma Thompson.

She bustles, pulling decorations from her bags: adorning a spindly tree with tinsel and cheap ornaments.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Pete from the deli says 'hi'. And I ran into Judy Delgado, and you'll never guess what: her Tony is getting divorced. Again. You'd think triple alimony would keep it zipped, but nope. Took up with his trainer at the gym. And Mindy was the one who wanted him to get into shape. She didn't think his new abs would come with a side of HPV.

Satisfied with the sparkle, Sofia settles beside the bed.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

That scarf's coming along.

RITA

I'm bed-ridden, not blind.

With great effort, she moves the knitting needles, working on another clumsy scarf. Up close, we see her expression is alert, but half her body is paralyzed from a stroke.

SOFIA

I mean it! It's only *kind of* bad, compared to the last one, which - let's face it - was pretty much grotesque. I mean, Tony Delgado could probably do better, even with one hand busy scratching his balls.

She earns a laugh from Rita. Sofia smiles.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

I know it's hard, but you just have to be patient. You'll be back on your feet in no time. And I brought you a treat.

She sets a *Magnolia Bakery* bag on the tray.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
 Let's see what this bastard Alan
 Rickman has to say for himself.

Joni Mitchell croons as Sofia feeds Rita banana pudding.

LATER

Rita is asleep as the final credits roll. Sofia smooths back
 her hair and kisses her forehead.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
 (softly)
 Night, mom.

She turns out the lights.

INT. NURSING HOME/ RECEPTION - NIGHT

Sofia heads for the exit past nurses, ROBERTA and JEAN (50s).

JEAN
 Sofia, honey. How's your mom doing?

SOFIA
 Good! The new physical therapist is
 really working out.

ROBERTA
 We were wondering... What your
 plans are. For the end of the
 month. Where you'll be moving her--

SOFIA
 (interrupting)
 She's not moving. She's happy here.

Sofia walks on. Roberta and Jean exchange a silent, 'you go',
 'no, you' battle. Jean loses. She hurries after Sofia.

EXT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

Jean catches up to Sofia on the front steps.

JEAN
 I know it's a lot to be dealing
 with, honey, but... the insurance
 company rejected your appeal.

SOFIA
 It's not the end. I can sue.

JEAN

And where are you going to get the money for that?

SOFIA

I've got two years of law school, I can figure it out.

JEAN

We've all been rooting for you, but the bills are overdue. They're taking applications for her room--

SOFIA

Don't give up her spot. Please. I have a plan, I promise. I just need some more time. One week.

Jean nods slowly, unconvinced. Sofia forces a smile.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Happy holidays!

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Sofia sits alone on a half-empty L train. There's an ad for Sterling & Co on the wall opposite, glittering with luxury.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Sofia climbs a rickety stairwell, past the sound of LOUD MUSIC and FIGHTING NEIGHBORS.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia flips the lights to reveal a small, boho studio: law textbooks piled on the milk-crate coffee table, and Christmas decorations twinkling everywhere.

And taking up a whole wall? A web of photos, blueprints and plans. A certifiable, Carrie-from-Homeland crazy murder wall™, if the victim was Sterling & Co. Department Store.

Plumbing schematics. Newspaper clips of Maxwell Sterling. Surveillance-style photos of STAFF and exits.

Sofia hangs the security badge by a pic of the JANITOR. Picks up a book titled 'How to Sue Absolutely Anyone'. Paces as she reads late into the night...

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A new morning dawns in Manhattan. **Five days until Christmas.**

EXT/INT. STERLING AND CO/VARIOUS - DAY

The store comes to life. Window cages rattle up. CLERKS straighten up their counters. SANTA and his ELVES arrive at the grotto, shooting the shit until McGregor strides through.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICES - DAY

A cluttered reception area in front of the corner office. Lulu waits by the door with a china coffee cup and saucer.

MAXWELL O.S.

Button your shirt, kid. This isn't a goddamn start-up.

He strides in, taking the espresso from Lulu and knocking it back (again in driving gloves) as he marches into --

INT. MAXWELL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Richly-appointed, with views of Fifth Avenue - and CYNTHIA FOX-STERLING (50) waiting silently on the couch. A former bombshell now outfitted in Dior and icy desperation.

Maxwell tosses his coat aside and settles at the desk.

CYNTHIA

You haven't RSVP-ed to the Davenport party.

MAXWELL

My secretary deals with that bullshit. Lulu!

Lulu darts into the doorway.

LULU

Sorry. She wouldn't leave.

MAXWELL

Don't I know it? Make a reservation at Balthazar. Something romantic.

Lulu gulps, looking between them, then withdraws.

CYNTHIA

The party. Should I expect you, or will you be *otherwise* engaged?

MAXWELL

I'm a busy man.

CYNTHIA

Clearly. And while I'm long past caring exactly where you go, and with whom, we have an agreement--

MAXWELL

--To wait 'til New Year's before I file. That doesn't mean I have to squire you to every damn soiree in town.

CYNTHIA

People will talk.

MAXWELL

Christ, Cynthia, I'm not parading our sham of a marriage around for another week just to keep your fragile ego intact! That's what you pay those chattering idiots at the spa for. Because God knows, they're not making you look any younger.

Ouch. Cynthia gathers her expensive coat and stands.

CYNTHIA

Our marriage wasn't the sham, that was all you. Which is why you think Balthazar is romantic when anyone can see, it's *well past its prime*.

She stalks out. Maxwell scowls.

MAXWELL

Lulu!

(as she appears)

Call my finance guy, Joel. Have him put a stop on my soon-to-be-ex-wife's cards. And tell him to make the buy. He'll know what it means.

(muttering)

If she thinks she's getting a single dollar in the settlement...

He taps on his phone.

ON-SCREEN: a chart showing the price of Bitcoin. As we go...

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE/ SIDEWALK - DAY

A long way from Fifth Avenue. Nick, carrying greasy takeout, heads down stairs to a grimy basement door. Hits the buzzer.

SECURITY CAMERA VIEW: Nick looks directly at the camera.

NICK

C'mon, DJ. Quit jerking off to My Little Ponies. The bagels are getting cold.

INT. DJ'S APARTMENT - DAY

CLICK. Nick enters a basement that spans the whole building. Bare brick, industrial shelving, and \$100k of gaming tech.

DJ (30) is sprawled on the couch in virtual reality headset, one hand down his pants and a vape in the other. Blond, tattooed, and chill to the edge of oblivion.

NICK

Seriously, man? Put it away.

DJ

It's my process. You want genius? I gotta unlock my creative juices.

NICK

Keep your juices to yourself. I'm on a deadline here for that vault.

He sets the food on a table, pushing aside blue-prints and surveillance of Sterling & co - just like Sofia's.

DJ zips up and ambles over.

DJ

Chill, bro. You've got days.

NICK

Five days. For a job that should take a month, with zero crew.

DJ

Who needs crew when you've got me?

NICK

The vault.

DJ

About that. I hacked the specs, and it's... not great.

As DJ clicks blueprints up onto a PROJECTOR SCREEN - and Nick leaps to stop him spilling Mountain Dew on the papers, we LAUNCH INTO our VAULT MONTAGE:

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ SIDEWALK - DAY

Fifth Avenue is chaos, SHOPPERS streaming into the store.

DJ V.O.

As predicted, security at the store is a real motherfrakker.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY SUITE - DAY

GUARDS study walls of screens, under McGregor's supervision. Feeds from the retail floor, exits, interior store hallways.

DJ V.O.

Guards covering every exit, state-of-the-art cameras, plus - you're going to love this - an AI facial recognition algorithm to identify customers and sound an alert for any suspicious activity.

An ALARM. McGregor checks the screen, then makes a call.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROUND FLOOR HALL - DAY

A GUARD approaches a SWEET OLD LADY, browsing accessories. She blusters, PEOPLE look askance, but the guard takes her purse and reveals -- a magician's trick worth of scarves.

He hustles her away -- past Maxwell Sterling, returning from his lunch with a smudge of lipstick from his neck.

DJ V.O.

Forget about lifting anything from the main floor. They'd have you in cuffs before you reached contempo casuals. But the stuff you want is locked up tight down in the vault.

McGregor joins Sterling and hands him a RED LEATHER FOLDER.

INT. STERLING AND CO/BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Behind-the-scenes, the glitter gives way to brisk activity: McGregor and Maxwell stride past CLERKS pushing garment racks, JANITORIAL STAFF, and DELIVERYMEN hauling boxes.

They reach a service elevator.

NICK V.O.

The elevator is the only way down?

DJ V.O.

Badge access, VIPs only.

McGregor swipes his pass then hits B. The elevator descends.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY SUITE - DAY

On the CCTV FEED: we see the elevator interior.

DJ V.O.

Plus, there's motion-trip triggers.
That elevator hits the vault level,
the boss gets an automatic alert.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Maxwell gets the text, with bonus photos of them from the elevator security cameras. He smooths his bald patch.

INT. DJ'S APARTMENT - DAY

Nick is studying the plans.

NICK

So what's the fix? You can override the program, right?

DJ

In theory.

NICK

I'm going to need a lot more than hypotheticals.

DJ

Chill, bro. I'll figure it out.
We're not even at the hard part.

NICK

Great.

INT. STERLING AND CO/HALLWAY - DAY

Maxwell and McGregor walk down a long, brightly-lit hallway. At the far end, a secure door with hi-tech keypad.

DJ V.O.

Next up, another door. This one needs fingerprint to access. Which would be simple, except --

NICK V.O.

-- The boss is a germophobe who never takes his gloves off.

Maxwell peels off a leather driving glove and gives the print. The door opens, leading us to --

INT. STERLING AND CO/VAULT ROOM - DAY

A large ante-room, in front of the motherlode: a massive bank vault door, with elaborate security pad.

NICK V.O.

So, say I get the print. Then what?

DJ V.O.

Then you're home free. As long as you can over-ride the security on one of the most sophisticated vaults on the market. A new access code is generated every twenty-four hours, and goes straight to Sterling's hands.

Maxwell opens the red leather folder. It contains a single sheet of paper with a 10-digit code.

He types it in. CLICK. The door swings open.

INT. STERLING AND CO/VAULT - DAY

The vault is twenty feet square, lined with shelves of EXPENSIVE MERCH, PRICELESS JEWELRY and CASH.

Maxwell pulls a SLIM MEMORY DRIVE from his jacket pocket, and places it on a shelf.

He browses the jewelry, and picks out a diamond bracelet. Exits. The door slams shut, laser beams back up.

NICK V.O.

That's everything?

INT. DJ'S APARTMENT - DAY

DJ shovels a bagel in his mouth as Nick studies the plans.

DJ

Everything except an exit plan.
Even if everything goes great, how
are you going to stroll down Fifth
Avenue carrying a big sack of loot
without anyone noticing?

NICK

One thing at a time. Every system
has a weak point, I just have to do
some recon, and figure out where to
apply the right pressure.

DJ

How are you going to swing that? I
told you, the system flags anyone
hanging around.

NICK

I just need a little holiday
spirit, that's all...

And we're off his mischievous smile to...

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROUND FLOOR HALL - DAY

Sleigh bells ring-- OK, they jingle, as we PAN UP past bell-
tipped shoes and candy-cane striped tights to find Nick, in a
green ELF OUTFIT, strolling through the store to --

THE ATRIUM

Where the tree towers over the GROTTA STAGE, which is covered
in fake snow and a loaded sleigh. Two-dozen BRATS jostle in
line with their IMPATIENT PARENTS to get a moment with SANTA.

SPOILER BRAT

I'm getting a mini-Tesla!

JADED KID

Whatever. Santa doesn't even exist.

Gasps from the other kids. Someone's going to cut a bitch
when -- KELLY (40s, store uniform) greets Nick with relief.

KELLY

Quickly. They're going to riot.

NICK

I'll just stash my things.

He ducks BEHIND THE GROTTA, glances around. All-clear.

Pulling a STAR ORNAMENT from his bag, Nick LEAPS UP on a riser and SWITCHES the star on the top of the grotto.

When he climbs down, he finds Sofia standing there, also in a ridiculous girl-ELF OUTFIT -- and a scowl.

NICK (CONT'D)
You!

SOFIA
You.

Nick is intrigued to see her. She's just plain annoyed.

NICK
I thought I told you, no shenanigans.

SOFIA
Says the man in candy-cane tights.

NICK
You like 'em? I had my doubts, but they're surprisingly cozy.

Kelly appears, looking frantic.

KELLY
Big smiles! Let's give these kids a memory they'll treasure forever!

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROTTO - DAY

A view on the CRYING, COMPLAINING, SUGAR-CRAZY CROWD. *Chaos.* Jaded Kid scowls on Santa's lap as BEAMING MOM snaps pics.

SANTA
And what would you like from Santa?

JADED KID
A divorce.

Behind them, Nick turns on the charm with Sofia.

NICK
You're clearly new to this, but there's little something called professional courtesy. If someone calls dibs on a target, you move along and leave them to it.

SOFIA
Honor among thieves?

NICK

Exactly.

SOFIA

Who's saying I'm a thief?

BEAMING MOM

Can we get the elves in the shot?

They all strike a happy pose. FLASH! The kid scrambles down, and the SPOILED BRAT pushes to the head of the line.

As they pose for another pic, Nick murmurs to Sofia:

NICK

How do I know? Because you've spent the last five minutes clocking the location of every guard and camera in this place. You're wondering if our charming head of security has a penchant for fine leather goods - and what his husband might think about that...

We FLASH TO where McGregor is in LINGERING CONVERSATION with the HOT GUY at the leather goods counter.

NICK (CONT'D)

Not to mention why the wife of the billionaire boss is having a problem with her credit cards...

At CUSTOMER SERVICE, Cynthia Fox-Sterling is in hushed argument with an APOLOGETIC CLERK.

NICK (CONT'D)

But most of all, you're thinking about that door over there.

A CLERK opens that 'staff only' door, and stops to talk to a CO-WORKER, revealing the backstage HALLWAY beyond.

NICK (CONT'D)

You want to know if that badge you stole opens it -- and just how far can you make it down that hallway before someone stops you?

SOFIA

How did you...?

NICK

It takes one to know one.

Their eyes lock for a long, sizzling beat.

KELLY O.S.

Next!

They snap out of the moment. Nick beckons a SHY BOY over.

NICK

So what's on the list this year,
kid, a pony? Private jet?

The kid offers a hand-written note: *Dog food. Litter. Treats.*

SOFIA

You want a puppy?

SHY BOY

We've got one, but mom lost her
job, so we can't afford him now.
But Pickles is my best friend.

Nick and Sofia exchange a pained look.

SHY BOY (CONT'D)

Do you think Santa will get my
message in time?

SOFIA

I think whatever happens, Pickles
knows you love him very much.

They deliver him to Santa and move away.

NICK

This is why I am morally opposed to
Santa. What good does it do that
kid to think a magical fat man will
fly in and make everything OK?

SOFIA

At least he gets a little hope.

NICK

To be dashed into tiny pieces come
Christmas morning. Rely on anyone,
you're asking for disappointment.

Maxwell Sterling passes nearby. Nick follows Sofia's gaze.

NICK (CONT'D)

You know what else spells failure?
A man's reach exceeding his grasp.

(off her)

Robert Browning.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

You should check him out. Stay in, crack a book. Leave this to the big boys.

Wrong move. Her eyes narrow.

SOFIA

Since I'm the one who got the badge, maybe *I'm* calling dibs.

NICK

No, that's not--

SOFIA

Go ahead, move along. Professional courtesy, and all that.

NICK

I'm not playing around here.

SOFIA

Say that without jingling.

(louder)

Is that alcohol I smell? Have you been *drinking*?

An ALERT MOM perks up nearby.

ALERT MOM

What? There's a drunk elf?

NICK

Very funny. It's just... peppermint mouthwash, is all.

But he's too late. The word spreads like wildfire.

OTHER MOM

The elf's an addict?

MOM #3

He's pushing pills on our kids?

OTHER MOM

What kind of store is this?

A CHORUS OF COMPLAINTS. Kelly panics.

KELLY

Please, calm down! Santa is not distributing methamphetamines!

CUT TO:

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROTTO - DAY

A frustrated Nick is hustled off by two SECURITY GUARDS. Sofia flutters a smug wave. *Victory*. As they pass --

Lulu exiting the elevator. Sofia grabs her backpack.

SOFIA

I'll go find us another elf.

As Kelly tries to keep the festive hoards at bay, Sofia crosses to that STAFF ONLY door. A quick glance around, and then she uses the stolen security badge to swipe inside.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ HALLWAY - DAY

Sofia walks fast down the empty hallway, eyes darting. STAFF bustle past her, too busy to notice, when --

EDDIE O.S.

Hey!

A security guard (EDDIE, 60s) has seen her. Sofia speeds up.

EDDIE

You, the elf. Hold up.

Shit. Sofia stops, bracing herself as she turns.

Eddie lights up in recognition.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Sofia? Look at you. I almost didn't recognize you in that get-up.

SOFIA

(relief)

Eddie, hi.

EDDIE

What's with the bells? I thought you were in law school.

SOFIA

I was. Am. Just picking up some extra work for the holidays.

EDDIE

I hear ya. Marsha's got her heart set on a new air-fryer. Says it'll save our arteries, but I like the regular grease just fine.

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(beat)
How's your mom doing?

SOFIA
Good! The physical therapy's helping.

EDDIE
Well, you tell her we're all rooting for her.

The radio on Eddie's belt BUZZES.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
That's my cue. You take care, kid.

He exits. Sofia ducks into a closet with her bag.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Sofia - now blending in preppy clothes - walks purposefully through the main floor, carrying a THICK SHEAF of DOCUMENTS.

She heads for the corner office. Lulu's station is empty. Sofia glances around, then slips into --

INT. MAXWELL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sofia goes to the desk and nervously SEARCHES: rifling through papers, checking drawers; one eye on the door.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Lulu returns to her desk to collect -- her purse. She's about to leave when A NOISE comes from Maxwell's office.

INT. MAXWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Sofia is still searching. She sees the corner of the RED FOLDER peeking out under a file, and reaches to grab it--

LULU O.S
What are you doing?

Sofia whirls around and tries to look innocent.

SOFIA
I'm here to talk to Mr. Sterling!

LULU
 (suspicious)
 There's nothing on the books.

Lulu moves closer, noticing the desk out of place when--
 Sofia leaps to block her view.

SOFIA
 I'm here to serve him. With this!

She produces the documents and slams them down. A lawsuit.
Rita Morgan versus Sterling & Co Incorporated.

LULU
 (recognizing)
 Morgan...

SOFIA
 That's right. We're the ones you've
 been screwing over for months,
 ducking every call. Well, duck
 this!

LULU
 I'll have to call someone in legal.

SOFIA
 You do that!

With a last look at the RED FOLDER, she backs to the door.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
 Tell them Sterling's liability is
 through the roof. Gross negligence.
 Dereliction of care. Infliction of
 grave emotional distress--

She BACKS INTO McGregor, looming in the doorway.

MCGREGOR
 Is there a problem?

Sophia's eyes travel up to his scowl. *Oh shit.*

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY LOCK-UP - DAY

A door SLAMS shut. Sofia is in a jail-like HOLDING CAGE.
 McGregor locks her in with a key on a globe-shaped keychain.

Sofia slumps against the bars with a sigh.

NICK O.S.
 How's the recon going?

She turns. He's relaxing on a bench in his elf outfit.

NICK

Did your genius plan to just stroll past security not work out?

SOFIA

You don't know anything about my plan.

NICK

Aside from the fact it's doomed to failure?

She paces, trying to ignore him.

SOFIA

Aren't we supposed to get a phone call?

NICK

That's the police. These mall cops can keep you all day.

SOFIA

That's un-constitutional.

NICK

That's retail.

He watches her as she tries to get comfortable on the bench.

NICK (CONT'D)

What's your story, anyway? Needed a change for the holidays, so you decided to become a master thief?

SOFIA

It was either this or bangs.

NICK

Sure. Everyone needs a hobby. You meet new people, get to enjoy all kinds of comfortable surroundings.

There's a long beat. Nick waits. Sofia finally spills.

SOFIA

My mom. She worked in house-keeping here for twenty years, but now Maxwell Sterling is claiming he fired her -- the day *before* her stroke. Insurance won't pay for rehab or long-term care.

(MORE)

SOFIA (CONT'D)

I've spent months trying to find someone do the right thing, but...

NICK

...The right thing is in short supply these days.

(off her nod)

That's rough. But it doesn't mean knocking over the vault is the answer to your prayers.

SOFIA

Why not? Isn't that your plan?

Good point. He drops the quips for some straight-talk:

NICK

Let me tell you something, you can't imagine what it takes to pull off a job like this. I'm not talking about experience, or the technical know-how to get in, or even the contacts to fence whatever you take out. I'm talking about nerve. Balls.

(gesturing crotch-ward)

Whatever you want to call it.

Sofia rolls her eyes. She's rattled, but hiding it.

NICK (CONT'D)

Can you put it all on the line and not miss a step? Because one mistake, one second of hesitation, and that's it: game over. And a judge sure as hell isn't going to care about your pretty face when you're looking at Grand Theft Larceny, first degree, up to--

SOFIA

--Fifteen years in prison, I know.

(beat)

So, I'm pretty, huh?

NICK

You'll be the belle of Bedford Hills. Some good it'll do your mom.

That one hurts. Sofia shakes her head.

SOFIA

You're just trying to get rid of the competition.

Nick snorts with laughter. It riles her even more.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
Did you ever think that maybe I
know what I'm doing?

NICK
Anyone who could work this job
already turned me down. Even if you
can get past the cameras, and
through the double-locked doors,
and down to the basement on the
impregnable elevator--

Sofia smiles slightly. Nick sees.

NICK (CONT'D)
You have a way past the elevator?
No. That's impossible.

They're interrupted by Eddie and another guard, Ramirez (30s)
escorting the SCARF THIEF LADY into the lock-up.

SCARF THIEF
I get confused, at my age.

Eddie spots Sofia.

EDDIE
What are these guys in for?

RAMIREZ
Drunken elf, and that one caused a
ruckus in Sterling's office.

NICK
Again, I'm stone cold sober!

Eddie unlocks the cage and gestures them out.

EDDIE
Move it, we need the space.

Sofia and Nick exit. Eddie winks at Sofia as she passes.

SCARF THIEF
I'm feeling rather dizzy. My heart.
An old woman like me...

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ SIDEWALK - DUSK

Sofia and Nick emerge from the store. Nick brushes off his
elf hat and puts it on, whistling.

SOFIA

What's there to be happy about? Our cover's blown!

NICK

Take it as a sign, some things are best left to the professionals.

He saunters off.

EXT. DJ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick approaches the basement when he notices -- a black town car parked opposite on the street. His smile drops.

INT. DJ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick enters. DJ is at the four-screen set-up, eating cereal from the box. Nick checks the EXTERIOR SECURITY FEED.

NICK

DJ? How long's that car been there?

DJ

Since this morning, I think.

Fuck.

NICK

Tell me you've figured out the elevator by-pass.

DJ

Sorry, bro. I thought I could reroute the weight equalizer, but it turns out, there's a sensor mod.

(off Nick)

That system's tighter than a virgin's--

NICK

I get it. Super-tight.

Double fuck.

NICK (CONT'D)

So, we've got nothing?

DJ

With more time. A bigger crew...

Are we up to triple fucks yet?

NICK

All this counts for nothing if I
can't get down to that vault.

DJ

Maybe if we had someone on the
inside, who knew the building...

A beat, as Nick realizes something.

NICK

Twenty years...
(off DJ)
You work on scrambling the cameras.
I'll get us the elevator fix.

EXT. DJ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The car is idling opposite. Nick taps on the driver's window.
It lowers: Xavier's goon, Vance and the idiot nephew, Benny.

NICK

Anything I can get you to pass the
time? Snacks, hot beverage, '*Big
Jugs Monthly*'?

BENNY

You know, I'm more of an ass man--

Vance rolls the window up.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia makes tea, reading '*How to Disappear for Dummies*'.
Her BUZZER sounds. She opens to the door, still reading --

INT. SOFIA'S BUILDING/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

-- Nick is standing there with a pizza box. Sofia tries to
slam the door. Nick sticks his foot in.

NICK

Meat feast?

SOFIA

You seem more like a kids-sized
portion.

A NEIGHBOR opens their door, looking expectantly around.

NICK
Sorry. We're just hashing out plans
for a major break-in--

Sofia YANKS him inside.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia slams the door. Nick examines her store dollhouse.

NICK
Someone's crafty. Are those...?

SOFIA
Muppets. To represent the guards.
How did you find me, anyway?

He tosses her library badge on the table.

NICK
For an aspiring criminal, you sure
do like to leave a trail.

Whoops. Sofia grabs it, flustered.

NICK (CONT'D)
Luckily, some of your holiday
spirit has rubbed off. I've got a
deal for you.
(off her)
Clearly, you have insider info. A
way to bypass the elevator and get
down to the vault. That might be
valuable to me. Worth, say... ten
percent of the take.

A beat, then Sofia breaks into a broad smile.

SOFIA
You need me.

She takes the pizza box from him. He snatches it back.

NICK
I could *perhaps* use your insight.
An advisor. One of many.

Sofia moves to the KITCHEN AREA, retrieving dinnerware and
glasses as Nick follows.

NICK (CONT'D)
You have to admit, it's a killer
offer. Zero risk, all the upside.

SOFIA

So what, you go pull the heist, and then drop me a check in the mail?

NICK

I prefer cash, but sure. My sources say there should be two, three million worth of goodies in there, easy. Your cut would be enough to keep your mom in the lap of luxury.

SOFIA

You think I'm trusting you?

She takes the things back to the LIVING AREA and sets the table, Nick trailing after her.

NICK

Maybe we got off on the wrong foot, but I'm a very honest person.

SOFIA

When you're not stealing things?

NICK

Come on. You're smart enough to realize you can't pull this job alone. And, as much as it pains me to admit, neither can I.

A beat.

SOFIA

You're right. We'll do it together.
(over him)
Fifty fifty. Equal split.

She sits, and Nick sees: the table is SET FOR TWO. Silverware and wine glasses. Sofia looks at him expectantly.

NICK

You're crazy.

SOFIA

And you're screwed. You wouldn't be here if you had any other way.

NICK

Fine. Good luck to you.

He heads for the door. Sofia pours wine into two glasses.

SOFIA

Just out of curiosity, how were you planning to bypass the elevator? Isn't there an extra sensor? I heard those were un-hackable.

Nick stops. *She's got him.* He turns back.

NICK

Thirty percent. And you stay silent partner.

SOFIA

It's so cute you think you're calling the shots.

She beckons for the pizza box. Nick sighs. *Goddammit.*

NICK

Fine. Fifty.

He sits. She raises her glass in a toast.

SOFIA

And we're partners. For real.

NICK

You want me to pinky-swear, too?

A beat, then he reluctantly raises his. CLINK.

SOFIA

So now we're flagged at the store--

NICK

-- Thanks to *your* little stunt--

SOFIA

--How exactly are we supposed to figure out the security plans?

NICK

We make like the wise men in the nativity. We follow the stars.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROUND FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

The store closes up for the night. CLERKS cash out, CLEANING CREWS do the rounds.

IN THE EMPTY GROTTA, we CLOSE ON the star on top of the structure -- the one Nick switched.

CLICK. The top half of the star rises, revealing a SMALL CAMERA EYE. It spins, sweeping 360 degrees.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia watches DJ click through a COMPLICATED COMPUTER SYSTEM now set up in her living area.

SOFIA
Can't we do this at your place?

NICK
We have a... rat problem. Nasty vermin hanging around. You're safer keeping your distance.

THE CAMERA VIEW from the star appears on-screen.

DJ
Boom, there it is. And we're intercepting the store feed, too. Thank you very much.

The hacked feed flashes up: all the store cameras, every angle. ON-SCREEN is a clear view of the after-hours routine.

NICK
You're a maestro, my friend.

SOFIA
So what happens now?

NICK
Watch and learn.

Sofia sits forward expectantly.

NICK (CONT'D)
No, I mean, watch and learn.
(pointing to screens)
We need to know every minute of their routine. If Officer Krupke takes a shit, I need to know how long, and which stall.

Sofia sighs. *Great.* He settles in to watch. Sofia grabs a yellow legal note-pad and joins him.

SURVEILLANCE MONTAGE

FAST-FORWARD the (lack of) action as the night passes. Nick and Sofia log the action... pace in boredom... eat snacks...

LATER

The screen shows **3.12 a.m.** Sofia does YOGA POSES to stay awake. Nick tries not to watch her shapely stretching.

NICK

You're missing the action.

SOFIA

Two sixteen, Hobbs took a stroll to get a magazine. Two thirty, Ramirez scratched his ass. Real thrilling.

NICK

It can't all be Vegas fountains and villas in the Caribbean.

SOFIA

You think you have a stitch on Thomas Crown?

NICK

Seeing as he's a fictional character, yes.

Sofia stops stretching. She studies Nick.

SOFIA

So this is just a regular day at the office for you?

NICK

It's more annoying than usual.

SOFIA

I'm serious. When was the first job you pulled?

NICK

I was six. My dad needed a look-out for a gallery job, so he stuck me out front with a PB&J and an *Archie* comic. Gave me five bucks for my trouble. Once I'd known the sweet, sweet taste of crime, there was no going back.

SOFIA

So your dad is a...

NICK

Criminal. Small-time, mainly, but he was an artist with a safe.

(off her)

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

He died a few months back. Heart disease.

SOFIA

I'm sorry.

NICK

Don't be. He was nine years into a ten-year sentence at Sing-Sing, so I'm used to not having him around.

SOFIA

You think they'll always be there for you, then suddenly...

NICK

You're the adult, looking out for them.

They share a look of understanding. *Intimacy*. Interrupted by MOVEMENT ON SCREEN.

SOFIA

He's just making coffee.

NICK

Log it.

Sofia sighs, but makes the note. They get back to work.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Day dawns over a snowy Central Park. **3 days until Christmas.**

EXT. UNION SQUARE PARK - DAY

Sofia flips through her notebook as Nick meets her with two steaming cups of coffee. They stroll.

SOFIA

Look at this. They're supposed to patrol every half-hour, but they barely left the booth all night.

NICK

Plus, the schedule says they'll be down to two bodies on Christmas Eve. So if we loop the camera feed--

SOFIA

We'll have a clear window, they'll never even know we were there.

They exchange smiles. *This is going to work.*

NICK
So, about the elevator...

SOFIA
You think I trust you yet? Let's just focus on the rest of the plan. Like getting into that vault. I heard it was impossible to break.

NICK
To mere mortals, maybe.
(off her skepticism)
A vault doesn't just appear out of nowhere. Someone has to install it.

PRE-LAP ORCHESTRA MUSIC as we go...

INT. THEATER - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

KIDS and PARENTS watch rapt as DANCERS perform *The Nutcracker* on-stage. Nick slips into a seat beside ARVIN, a twinkling-eyed grandfather (70s) sitting with his GRAND-DAUGHTER (5).

NICK V.O.
Sterling refused to pay the guy's full rate.

SOFIA V.O.
He's got a grudge?

As the audience APPLAUDS a dance, Arvin turns to Nick.

ARVIN
Cheap motherfucker. Do you know the overtime my crew pulled hauling that fucking thing in place?

The KIDS nearby all GASP and GIGGLE at the cursing.

INT. THEATER FOYER - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

The audience STREAMS out, past Arvin and his grand-daughter, buying pink, sparkly merchandise. Nick pays the tab.

ARVIN
The fucker doesn't know, but that model has a reset delay. If the power goes out, it takes three seconds for the defense mainframe to switch to the back-up generator.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Sofia stops walking.

SOFIA

Three seconds? We won't even make it through the door!

NICK

We don't have to. We'll use the window to upload a virus, a back door into the system. DJ can log the codes, even generate new ones for us. Open sesame.

SOFIA

That's... impressive. *If* it works.

NICK

It will. You know, I'm the only one solving problems here. Anytime you want to jump in, *partner*.

SOFIA

Relax. I'm way ahead of you.

And we're off her mysterious smile...

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ SIDEWALK - DAY

Fifth Avenue bustles with SHOPPERS. A HOMELESS SANTA rings a bell by the main doors, collecting donations.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAXWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Maxwell is being fitted by a TAILOR as he talks on a Bluetooth headset, agitated.

MAXWELL

No! No to Palm Beach, no to the yacht. Don't you dare give an inch.

(off tailor)

Not you. I'm serious, Marty, that shrew isn't getting a dime. It's too tight.

(to tailor)

Too tight!

A KNOCK. Lulu enters with KAREN (30), a buxom notary.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 According to the official books,
 I'm mortgaged up to my eyeballs.
 Let a judge give her half...

Karen places a THICK STACK OF LEGAL PAPERS on the desk.
 Maxwell signs where she indicates, as:

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 Fifty percent of nothing is still
 fuck all.

Maxwell ends the call and removes a glove for the notary.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 What is all this?

LULU
 The Rita Morgan lawsuit?

MAXWELL
 Right. Rehab, insurance, yada yada.

He inks up and gives the print. Leers at Karen.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 Give me a call if you want a change
 in career.
 (offering card)
 Excellent commissions.

She packs the documents in a handbag. We CLOSE ON the bag as -

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Karen walks through the OFFICE... Exits the bustling MAIN
 STORE... Heads down into the SUBWAY... Stands on a RATTLING
 TRAIN... Emerges... Enters THE STRAND BOOKSTORE.

INT. THE STRAND BOOKSTORE - CONTINUOUS

As Karen enters, we FIND Sofia and Nick loitering by a
 display. Sofia has her eyes trained on the door.

SOFIA
 Come on.

Sofia approaches Karen, acting inconspicuous.

CLOSE ON: Karen's bag. DOCUMENTS peeking out.

Nick trails Sofia trailing Karen through the STORE to --

A SECLUDED CORNER

Where Karen is waiting, arms folded. *Busted*. A beat, then --

SOFIA
Babe, you look great!

KAREN
You too.
(hugging)
What about the bangs?

SOFIA
I'm still on the fence. It's a big
commitment.

KAREN
Hel-lo. Who's this?

SOFIA
My assistant.
(off him)
He's on look-out duty. Aren't you?

Nick gets the hint and moves a few paces away as Karen retrieves her NOTARY BOOK.

KAREN
Cute guard dog.

SOFIA
It's not like that.

KAREN
It could be. That whole Josh thing
ended months ago.
(off Sofia)
OK, OK. You were right about
Sterling. That guy's a walking
harassment suit.

She presents Maxwell's fingerprint.

NICK
Wait, you got the print?

SOFIA
You didn't think my lawsuit was for
real, did you?

CUT TO:

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Sofia types at her laptop, surrounded by LAW BOOKS and FILES.
Rita Morgan versus Sterling & Co Incorporated.

INT. LAW LIBRARY - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

Sofia and Karen huddle in the library stacks. Karen flips through the documents, looking dubious.

KAREN

You sure about this? There's nothing here that needs notarizing.

SOFIA

I'm hoping if you wear that blouse, he won't even notice.

Karen glances down. Pops another button.

BACK TO:

INT. THE STRAND BOOKSTORE - DAY

Sofia SNAPS close-up pics of the print.

SOFIA

There were only two ways he's taking off that glove. And nobody wants to try option B.

Nick is impressed.

KAREN

When will you be back in class? We miss you in Con Law.

SOFIA

Maybe next semester.

Karen looks between her and Nick but doesn't ask.

KAREN

Stay safe, babe.

EXT. THE STRAND BOOKSTORE - DAY

Sofia and Nick exit the store.

NICK

I had a fix for this, you know.

SOFIA
A simple 'thanks' would be fine.

NICK
Getting a print is child's play.
It's nothing like cracking a vault.

SOFIA
'Great job, Sofia. You're a valued
member of the team.'

They stroll off, not noticing --

Vance is watching from a black town car across the street.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - EVENING

Lights are twinkling everywhere as Nick and Sofia -- dressed in jumpsuits and hard-hats -- exit a nondescript white van.

NICK V.O.
Cutting power to the building
shouldn't be a problem. They route
the cables through a transformer
box across the street.

Carrying duffel bags, they head into an alley across the street from Sterling & Co.

EXT. ALLEY - EVENING

Sofia approaches a manhole cover.

NICK
Wrong way.

He yanks down a fire escape ladder and nods upwards. Sofia looks nervous.

SOFIA
I have a thing about heights.

NICK
Now she tells me. Stay here then.

SOFIA
No, I'm coming. I just...

She takes a deep breath, and starts to climb. Nick follows.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - EVENING

Sofia climbs, hating it. Her foot SLIPS on a rung --
She recovers, but Nick sees her fear.

NICK
who's Josh?

SOFIA
What?

NICK
The ex.

SOFIA
You were eavesdropping.

NICK
I couldn't help it. Your friend has
an extraordinarily loud voice.

Sofia is climbing more surely now, distracted.

NICK (CONT'D)
Why is it women always make
reckless decisions after a breakup?
Should have stuck with the bangs.

SOFIA
It's none of your business.

NICK
Come on. What happened? Did he
start a podcast? Stop showering?
Try telling you not to commit a
major vault heist?

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

They reach a flat section of roof, four floors up. The
Sterling building is lit up across the street. Sofia clambers
over the ledge.

SOFIA
Things changed. It was fun, and
light, and then my mom was in
hospital, and he still wanted
things to be fun and light.

She takes Nick's hand to help him after her.

NICK
But thing's change.

Their eyes lock. A charged beat. *They're still holding hands.*

DJ V.O.
You got the wiring yet?

INTERCUT: INT. DJ'S APARTMENT - EVENING

DJ is at his computer.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Nick finds a SERVICE BOX and unscrews the cover bolts, revealing a tangle of cables.

NICK
We're good to go.

Nick isolates a blue wire. Sofia hands him wire-cutters.

NICK (CONT'D)
Once the power's cut, it'll only take three seconds for the vault to switch to the backup generator. If we're not in perfect sync--

DJ
I get it. These fingers are ready. Just give me the countdown, bro.

SOFIA
You heard him, bro.

NICK
Cutting power in three... two... one...

He cuts the wire.

WHOMP. WHOMP. WHOMP.

The buildings around them all go dark - except Sterling & Co. It's still LIT UP, a beacon in the black-out.

SOFIA
Did you get the right wire?

DJ
System's still online.

NICK
I don't understand. The whole
block's down!

He rifles through the wires. Sofia goes to the ledge, looking
at something across the street.

SOFIA
Uh, Nick?

NICK
Main relay, sub-cable, grounding
router...

SOFIA
Look!

Nick follows her pointing to a WALL OF POSTER ADS for the
store. A high-end winter wonderland, boasting CLEAN ENERGY.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
Net-zero. I read about this. Net-
fucking-zero.

NICK
Translate!

SOFIA
The store's gone green, a PR thing,
environmental sustainability.
Sterling won an award.

NICK
So?

SOFIA
So, we can't cut the power -
because there's no power to cut!

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

DJ breaks the bad news to Sofia and Nick, scrolling through
pics from a PRESS RELEASE and blueprints.

DJ
She's right, bro. These blueprints
are from *last* year. The store runs
on a self-sustaining system now.
Solar panels on the roof, back-up
cells charging... The apocalypse
couldn't take this baby down.

NICK
There has to be a way in.

DJ
Not in three days, my friend.

Fuck. Nick buries his head in his hands.

NICK
What about a trojan? Infect the mainframe. Upload in person and--

DJ
I'd be going in blind. This tech's brand-new. It'd take a week just to figure out the specs, and you have--

NICK
--Three days.

A long beat. He studies their materials. Paces. Finally sinks into a chair, defeated.

NICK (CONT'D)
That's it then. Game over.

SOFIA
What? No. We're not giving up.

NICK
You heard him! We can't bypass security on the vault. So unless you want break in just to grab a couple of lipsticks--

SOFIA
--We'll get the codes. If the vault can't be cracked, then we need the genuine access codes.

NICK
That's impossible.

SOFIA
We'll make it possible.

NICK
You're not listening to me--

SOFIA
--No, you're the one who's not listening. You think this is all fun and games? My mom sacrificed everything for me.

(MORE)

SOFIA (CONT'D)

She came here with nothing, and scrubbed floors for a living so I could have a real chance. And now she's laid up in a hospital bed where she'll stay for the rest of her life because Sterling is refusing to cover the physical therapy to get her back on her feet. So we are *not* quitting. I don't have the luxury of giving up.

Nick is torn.

NICK

I've already run every scenario.

SOFIA

Run it again.

CLOSE ON: The STORE SECURITY FEED screen, taking us to...

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT ROOM - DAY

The ARMED PICKUP GUARDS file out carrying the safe deposit boxes. McGregor moves to the ACCESS PANEL.

NICK V.O.

McGregor resets the codes every night after pick-up. Then he walks them straight to Sterling's hands.

BACK

SOFIA

What about the assistant? Lulu.

NICK

Squeaky clean and googling 'how to make your boss happy'.

SOFIA

McGregor then. If we intercept--

NICK

Nope.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROUND FLOOR HALL - DAY

McGregor strides across the store.

NICK V.O.

This guy doesn't stop for anything.
Ex-SAS, a real SOB.

A SHOPPER knocks into him, her BAGS spill, her KID WAILS.
McGregor doesn't pause to help, he heads straight to:

Maxwell, by the doors. Hands him the RED LEATHER FOLDER.

SOFIA V.O.

What happens to the codes next?

NICK V.O.

Sterling heads home.

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE/ STERLING'S BUILDING - NIGHT

A pre-war on the park. Maxwell exits his car and heads past
the DOORMAN into the swanky lobby.

REVEAL Sofia and Nick staked out across the street.

NICK

He's out the door in an hour,
dinner with his flavor of the
month.

SOFIA

That could give us a window.

NICK

No, it gives us a headache. Cams,
security, dedicated elevator...
It's buttoned up tighter than the
store. And nobody gets up there
without an invite.

SOFIA

So we'll just have to get one.

NICK

From who, Santa?

Cynthia emerges from the building, dressed to kill. She
lingers, FLIRTING with the DOORMAN (20s): brushing something
from his collar, eyelashes-a-fluttering.

Sofia watches. Inspiration.

SOFIA

From *her*.

NICK

The wife?

SOFIA

The soon-to-be-ex wife. Who's feeling all alone at Christmas, and needs some tender loving care.

She gives Nick a meaningful look. He catches on.

NICK

You want to trade my precious innocence to get us in?

SOFIA

You're right. Forget it.

She starts walking. He catches up.

NICK

I'm happy to volunteer my services. Take one for the team.

SOFIA

So, what, you're just going to flutter your eyelashes at her and she'll come running in the next twenty-four hours?

NICK

Oh ye of little faith.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY/VARIOUS - ESTABLISHING

GUYS play basketball in the snow. **Two days until Christmas.**

INT. BERGDORF'S SALON - DAY

WASPy wives of the 1% get blow-outs and manicures, sipping rosé. Nick enters wearing a ball-cap, with a package.

He's directed to a chair where CHARLOTTE (28, sleek and stunning) lays with cucumber slices over her eyes and TWO TECHNICIANS attending her hands and feet.

NICK

Delivery for Charlotte van der White?

Charlotte jolts upright and snatches the cucumber away. She recognizes Nick. Scowls.

CHARLOTTE
I don't believe I ordered anything.

NICK
Check again.

He shows her his phone screen. **You owe me.**

Charlotte looks around. One of the other GUESTS is watching.

CHARLOTTE
(fake sweet)
You're right. Here, let me get you
something for your trouble.

She gets up and strolls out to the reception area. Nick trails. Once they're out of sight, Charlotte suddenly **SHOVES HIM** into the coat closet.

INT. COAT CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte whirls on him, talking in hushed whispers.

CHARLOTTE
What the hell are you doing here?!

NICK
Great to see you too, Charlie. The
money looks good on you.

She looks anxiously to the salon.

CHARLOTTE
My answer is no.

NICK
I haven't even--

CHARLOTTE
Whatever you need from me, it's off
the table. Jesus, Nick, you can't
just show up! If people see you...

NICK
They might discover Mrs. Huxley Van
der White the Fourth used to be
plain old Charlie, the best card
shark in town?

CHARLOTTE
It's been three years.

NICK

And you haven't aged a day. What is that, Botox?

CHARLOTTE

Embryonic fluid. They suck it out of donor babies and pump it right in your cheeks. Takes years off.

NICK

Glad to hear ol' Hux is keeping you in the manner to which you always wanted to become accustomed.

CHARLOTTE

Nicky...

NICK

Don't worry, I'm not going to blow your cover. I need those society connections of yours to get me to a party tonight. Eleanor Davenport's holiday shin-dig. You were on the Met fundraising committee together last year.

CHARLOTTE

I think I got an invitation.

NICK

Perfect.

CHARLOTTE

No. Not perfect. Hux flies back from Paris tomorrow, and I'm not getting dragged into whatever bullshit scam you've got going on.

She makes to leave, but Nick pulls her back.

NICK

Look, I get it, you're living the dream. You've got your platinum AmEx and the house in Aspen, and the ancient husband who can only get it up once a week with a whole gallon of Viagra. You made it out, kid, and I'm happy for you, I really am. But some of us are still out here, trying to get by.

(imploring)

One favor, and I promise, you'll never see me again.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

Not even when you get sick of old Huxley's wrinkled dick, and you call me up, begging to come back and know the touch of a real man--

Charlotte laughs, she can't help it.

CHARLOTTE

OK. Look, I'll get you in the door. But if you do one thing to fuck up my life, I will wrench those balls from your body, and stuff them so far down your throat you'll be shitting semen for a month. Got it?

NICK

Charming as ever.

CHARLOTTE

And you better not show up looking like *that*.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick - now dressed in a smart tux - admires himself in a mirror as Sofia tucks CASH into an envelope.

NICK

Not too shabby.

He takes a strip of painter's tape and sticks it on the inside of his jacket, out of sight. Futzes with his bow-tie.

SOFIA

Don't screw this up.

NICK

I mean, I think I'm supposed to screw *something*...

Sofia impatiently goes to tie his tie for him.

SOFIA

This was a crazy idea.

NICK

What's crazy? Many a sophisticated woman has fallen for my charms.

SOFIA

Was that before or after you made off with their wallets?

NICK

Don't you worry about me.

SOFIA

Of course I'm worried! It's Christmas Eve tomorrow. We have exactly one chance left to get those codes, and it rests entirely on your ability to be handsome and charming.

NICK

You don't think I'm handsome and charming?

Their eyes catch. *Maybe a little.* Sofia finishes the tie and steps back, breaking contact.

SOFIA

DJ left these.

She produces a small case with tiny skin-toned patches. Nick takes one and applies it behind his ear. It's a transmitter/mic combo. Totally invisible. She does the same, fumbling.

NICK

Don't be nervous.

SOFIA

I'm not.

NICK

Considering this is the first actual felony you're committing, doubts would be understandable.

He helps her fasten it in place, brushing hair from her neck. Sofia reacts to the touch, but covers:

SOFIA

My only doubts are how you'll sweep Mrs Fox-Sterling off her feet.

NICK

Are you kidding? Who could resist this face?

EXT. DAVENPORT BUILDING/ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

Holiday lights twinkle. A stream of RICH GUESTS walk a red carpet to the doors, past ICE SCULPTURES and OBNOXIOUS DECOR.

INT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Charlotte and Nick enter the lavish PARTY. A jazz trio plays Sinatra holiday tunes, a SERVER offers champagne.

CHARLOTTE
None for me, thanks.

NICK
(realizing)
Congratulations. That's worth,
what, an extra million a year in
the pre-nup?

CHARLOTTE
One point five.

NICK
That's my girl.

They move deeper into the party. Charlotte sends smiles and waves to several SOCIETY FOLKS as:

CHARLOTTE
So, who's the poor sucker you're
scamming tonight?

NICK
She's definitely not poor.

He FINDS Cynthia Fox-Sterling, chatting to a COUPLE.

CHARLOTTE
No way. She's out of your league.

SOFIA (EARPIECE)
That's what I said.

INT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE/PREP KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sofia, dressed in WAIT STAFF UNIFORM, hoists a platter. She murmurs, transmitting to Nick through her ear-patch.

She's intercepted by a CATERER.

CATERER
Who are you? Where's Julie?

SOFIA
Julie's off tonight. Sick as a dog.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A real RAGER. JULIE (25) knocks back SHOTS as the crowd cheers. A familiar ENVELOPE OF CASH is visible on the table.

CROWD
Shots! Shots! Shots!

BACK TO:

INT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Our genteel party. Charlotte and Nick join a GROUP including Cynthia and ELEANOR DAVENPORT (50s). Air-kisses all around.

CHARLOTTE
Eleanor, what a lovely party.

NICK
Those ice reindeer: wow. Danny Fitzpatrick. Pleasure to meet you.

CHARLOTTE
Danny's an old friend of Hux. Does something with crypto start-ups, please don't ask him to explain.

NICK
No, really, please don't.

He flashes a charming smile at Cynthia. She's unmoved.

CHARLOTTE
Now, you must tell me about your trip to Vail...

As Charlotte chats to Eleanor, Cynthia drifts away.

SOFIA (EARPIECE)
Great first impression there. Really bowled her over.

Nick SEES Sofia across the room, serving canapés.

NICK
The night is young.

Sofia eyes Charlotte circulating, sleek and charming.

SOFIA
When did she dump you?

NICK

What makes you think *she* dumped me?

SOFIA

Because she's got a hundred k of diamonds on her left hand, and you rented that suit by the hour.

NICK

For your information, the break-up was mutual.

(beat)

He had mutual funds, and I didn't.

SOFIA

Did that kill at open-mic night?

NICK

Tough crowd.

He notices Cynthia waiting at the bar, and crosses the room to join her. She's about to order when he arrives:

NICK (CONT'D)

Let me guess, it's a talent of mine. You look like a... Paloma kind of woman. Mezcal. Smoky, with a sophisticated palate.

SOFIA (EARPIECE)

That's your line?

CYNTHIA

I haven't drunk tequila since college.

NICK

So, just a couple of years ago?

Cynthia narrows her eyes, whiffing his bullshit.

CYNTHIA

Enjoy your evening.

She takes a glass of wine and exits. *Dammit.*

SOFIA

Strike two.

NICK

I'm warming up, that's all.

SOFIA

Warm faster. She's a glacier.

NICK
Wouldn't you be, married to that
chump?

INT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia freshens her lipstick in the mirror. FEMALE VOICES
become audible in the adjoining room.

BITCH #1 O.S.
Was that Cynthia arriving? *Without*
Maxwell.

BITCH #2 O.S
She's so brave.

BITCH #2 O.S (CONT'D)
He doesn't even try to be discreet.
She must be so humiliated.

Ouch. Cynthia swallows, looking tired. A long beat, then she
collects herself. Blots lipstick. Exits with her head high.

INT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick is scoping the crowd when he sees -- Cynthia exit to the
BALCONY. He follows, until --

Sofia plants herself in front of him, blocking his way.

SOFIA
Do you even know what women want?

NICK
Freud had a few ideas.

SOFIA
Cynthia's a grown woman, not some
Bambi-eyed coed in a bar. She wants
what everyone wants. To be seen.
Listened to. For someone to come
along and acknowledge that we're
all just human beings full of doubt
and dreams, hoping for a brief
moment of connection so we don't
feel so alone in this world.

NICK
So I shouldn't lead with a dick
joke?

Sofia shoves a plate of CAKE at him. Adds TWO FORKS.

SOFIA
Do *exactly* what I say.

EXT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE/ BALCONY - NIGHT

Cynthia passes SMOKING GUESTS and moves to a quiet corner, high above the city. She looks at the view, deep in thought.

Nick approaches. She's startled - and on guard.

NICK
Sorry, I'm hiding. Eleanor wants to tell me all about her charity work. For such a selfless woman, she sure does like to talk about herself.

Cynthia thaws a little.

CYNTHIA
My husband is the same way.

NICK
Ah yes, the great Maxwell Sterling. Between you and me, I'm not that fond of him.

CYNTHIA
Between you and me, neither am I.

Now she's positively warm.

THROUGH THE WINDOWS, Sofia is watching, dictating to Nick.

SOFIA (EARPIECE)
Now, offer her the cake.

Nick does so. Cynthia pauses, then takes a fork: *why not?*

SOFIA (EARPIECE) (CONT'D)
I've got to ask...

NICK
...What do you see in him?

CYNTHIA
He wasn't always this way. When we were younger, he was caring. Funny. He was going to change the world.

NICK
And what about you? What did you want to do?

Cynthia pauses, surprised

CYNTHIA
Nobody ever asks me that.

NICK
Well, I'm asking you now.

He leans in. As Cynthia blooms under his attention... The holiday Sinatra PRE-LAPS, taking us to...

INT. DAVENPORT PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The party continues. Sofia winds through the CROWDS with a drinks tray, down the hall, to where an OPEN DOOR reveals the LIBRARY, where Nick and Cynthia are deep in conversation.

Sofia pauses, watching. Nick has Cynthia laughing, lit up.

CHARLOTTE O.S
It's his gift.

Charlotte joins her.

CHARLOTTE
You never see him coming, and then
BAM: he's the only one in the room.

Sofia moves away from the door, flustered.

SOFIA
The infuriating one, you mean.

CHARLOTTE
That's just his act.

SOFIA
So he's not arrogant, cynical, and
morally bankrupt?

CHARLOTTE
He can't help it. In this game,
it's liars and cheats, all the way
down. Soon enough, you stop looking
for the best in people, and start
expecting the worst.

SOFIA
So he wasn't always like this?

CHARLOTTE

Trusting people takes faith, and
Nick's father made off with his a
long time ago.

(beat)

Looks like your plan is working.

Sofia turns. Nick and Cynthia are heading for the exit. He helps her with her coat, chivalrous. Touch lingering.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You're good from here. This next
part, he doesn't need any help.
Nicky's more than capable in that
department. Very talented. I mean,
with hands like his--

SOFIA

(interrupting)

I get it. Talented. Great.

Charlotte smirks, like she can see something's going on. Sofia watches Nick and Cynthia leave, conflicted.

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE/ STERLING'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Nick helps Cynthia out of a cab. She's giggly and flushed.

INT. STERLING'S BUILDING - NIGHT

They head for the elevator. Cynthia waves to the DOORMAN.

CYNTHIA

Night, Lyle.

As Cynthia waits, Nick doubles back to the desk.

NICK

We've got a delivery coming. No
need to buzz, just send them up.

He slides a \$20 across the desk with a wink. LYLE nods.

INT. STERLING'S PENTHOUSE - DAY

Cold and modern. As Cynthia takes off her coat, Nick peels the tape from inside his jacket and covers the door lock.

Cynthia doesn't notice.

NICK

Gorgeous place you have here.

CYNTHIA

Maxwell hired the decorator. He was probably fucking her, too.

(off him)

Sorry. The holidays are... hard.

NICK

I get it. This time of year, everyone's so busy trying to be jolly and festive, it kind of makes you want to throttle someone with a string of holiday lights.

CYNTHIA

Exactly! Drink?

He quickly assesses, clocking the open-plan LIVING ROOM with clear sight-line to the door. *Not ideal.*

NICK

How about you show me that Degas you were telling me about?

CYNTHIA

It's in the bedroom.

NICK

I won't tell if you don't.

She leads him down the hall, past an OPEN DOOR to what is clearly Maxwell's office. Cynthia doesn't see --

Nick subtly pulls out his phone and dials SOFIA.

EXT. STERLING'S BUILDING/STREET - NIGHT

Sofia is loitering beside the building, a JACKET HOOD pulled low, hiding her face. She checks her phone.

Missed call from Nick. *The signal.*

INT. STERLING'S BUILDING/LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Sofia approaches the desk, holding up a brown paper bag.

SOFIA

Delivery for Sterling?

LYLE
Penthouse. They're expecting you.

INT. STERLING'S BUILDING/HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator opens on the penthouse level. Sofia cautiously steps into the hallway, hood still pulled low.

She approaches the front door. Nick's TAPE has stopped the door from locking. She pushes it open easily.

INT. STERLING'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Sofia tip-toes inside. MUSIC is audible from down the hall. Marvin Gaye. *Let's get it on...*

SOFIA
Original.

She ventures deeper into the apartment, spotting the office.

INT. STERLING'S PENTHOUSE/OFFICE - NIGHT

Sofia slips inside, pulling the door ajar behind her. Desk, cabinets, shelving... She starts to search.

INT. STERLING'S PENTHOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nick and Cynthia are passionately making out. His tie undone. Her dress strap hanging.

A NOISE comes from down the hall. Cynthia pulls back.

CYNTHIA
What was that?

NICK
(kissing her neck)
Probably just the cat.

CYNTHIA
How did you know I have a cat?

Beat.

NICK
You had hair on your coat. I'm guessing you don't shed.

He tries to kiss her again, but Cynthia is on alert.

CYNTHIA

Maxwell said he'd be out tonight,
but if he catches you here...

She stands. *Fuck*. Nick bolts up too.

NICK

How about I get us those drinks?

INT. STERLING'S PENTHOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cynthia walks towards the office. Nick hurries behind.

NICK

I'm sure it's nothing. Old
buildings like this, they rattle
all night.

Cynthia flings open the office door, revealing --

An empty room. She looks around. Nothing wrong. Except -- an open desk drawer. She goes to shut it and we glimpse THE RED FOLDER nestled inside as --

Nick steps into the room and sees -- Sofia HIDING behind the door. They trade a panicked glance.

NICK (CONT'D)

Cynthia. My God, you look beautiful
in this light.

He kisses her passionately, GESTURING to Sofia to get out.

But Sofia looks to the drawer. *She needs those codes.*

As Nick continues kissing Cynthia, Sofia TIPTOES towards the desk -- just ten feet away -- and DIVES behind it.

BEHIND THE DESK: Sofia crouches, reaching into the drawer to retrieve the RED FOLDER. She opens it. The codes! She pulls out her phone and SNAPS--

The faint sound is AUDIBLE. Cynthia breaks the kiss, starting to turn --

Nick GRABS her face between his hands.

NICK (CONT'D)

Your husband is a damn fool. I
would never let you go.

He kisses her again, making loud GROANING noises as Sofia emerges from behind the desk. Nick gestures. *Go.*

Sofia tip-toes to the door and RACES out.

Cynthia detaches herself from Nick's ardor and looks around again. *Sensing something's amiss.*

CYNTHIA

You know, I think it's time to call it a night.

NICK

Well, if you insist.

INT. STERLING'S PENTHOUSE/FOYER - NIGHT

Cynthia shows him out.

NICK

Will you call me? I'd love to pick up where we left off sometime.

CYNTHIA

I'll check my diary.

She closes the door behind Nick, then sees his scarf on the table. She collects it, and opens the door again --

He's already gone.

Then Cynthia notices the tape over the lock. She peels it off, frowning. *What's going on here?*

INT. STERLING'S BUILDING/ LOBBY - NIGHT

Cynthia exits the elevator.

LYLE

Mrs Sterling, did you need anything?

Through the windows, she sees Nick hurry across the street to meet Sofia. They hug, clearly celebrating.

CYNTHIA

Did anyone come up to the apartment?

LYLE

Just the delivery girl. Your friend said you were expecting her.

An Uber pulls up. Sofia and Nick pile in.

EXT. STERLING'S BUILDING/ STREET - NIGHT

Cynthia flags down a cab, and drives away after the Uber.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia bursts in, exhilarated. Nick follows.

SOFIA

I can't believe we just did that!

NICK

It's called adrenalin.

SOFIA

I get it now, why you live this way. I feel... incredible!

NICK

It'll fade.

SOFIA

Why aren't you pumped? She nearly busted us, but we got away! And now we have the codes, the heist will be a breeze.

NICK

Don't go tempting fate.

SOFIA

I can't believe you're so calm. Didn't you feel it too? Even for a second?

NICK

You mean, the blind panic of certain discovery?

SOFIA

Admit it. You love the rush.

NICK

Maybe.

Their eyes lock. Sofia takes a step towards him.

SOFIA

Is it always like this?

Nick shakes his head. Takes a step towards her.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
And when you were with Cynthia...?

NICK
It was just the job.

A beat, then they GRAB each other in an impulsive KISS. Bumping furniture, swept up in passion, shedding clothing as they give in to the chemistry that's been building--

CYNTHIA O.S
Well, this is disappointing.

Nick and Sofia leap apart. Cynthia is in the doorway.

CYNTHIA
I'm guessing your name isn't Danny.
And you're not a caterer.

Fuck.

Sofia fumbles to cover up as Cynthia strolls to survey the Big Heist Board.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Of course. The store. I take it
your little seduction routine was
fruitful?

SOFIA
We're so sorry, we really are. This
isn't about you, you seem great -
really, love your whole vibe, you
deserve so much better than a dick
like him --

NICK
-- Calm down.

SOFIA
Calm? How the hell am I supposed to
stay calm. The police are already
on their way. My mom's going to be
homeless, and never mind law
school. You can't take the bar as a
convicted criminal!

As Sofia panics, Nick watches Cynthia, assessing.

NICK
She hasn't called the cops.
(to Cynthia)
Have you?

CYNTHIA

Not yet.

SOFIA

What? Why?

NICK

She wants to make a deal.

CYNTHIA

You really are perceptive. So rare in a man. My husband is sorely lacking, but that's to my benefit now. He thinks I don't know that he's transferred all his assets into Bitcoin, to hide them in the divorce.

NICK

Cryptocurrency is pretty much untraceable, if you've got the password to the digital account.

CYNTHIA

And his password is sitting on a memory drive in the Sterling vault.

Sofia catches on.

SOFIA

You want us to steal the drive?

CYNTHIA

If you deliver it to me, then I can forget about all this. But if you fail... Well, I'll have plenty to tell the cops, won't I?

SOFIA

That won't be necessary! We'll get it for you, I promise.

(off Nick)

We don't have a choice.

CYNTHIA

No, you don't. If you try and fuck me on this... the police will be the least of your problems. My husband is not a forgiving man. We have that in common.

Cynthia exits. Sofia sags in relief. Nick is grim.

NICK
You wanted to go all-in. Well,
there's no backing out now.

SOFIA
We have the access codes, we can
pull this off without a hitch.

NICK
You have got to stop tempting fate.

SOFIA
I'm not tempting anything!

A beat, as they remember what just happened between them.

NICK
I, uh, should be going.

SOFIA
What about surveillance?

NICK
Right. That. You take the first
shift. I'll get coffee.

He grabs his coat and leaves, too. Sofia looks after him,
sighs, then settles in at the security feeds.

EXT. SOFIA'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Nick exits the building and sees --

Vance and Benny outside a bodega down the block. They're
arguing over something, and don't notice Nick walking fast --

AROUND THE CORNER

Nick pulls out his phone and dials.

NICK
I need to meet.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Nick sits with Otis by the window, eating pancakes. He steals
food from Otis's plate. Off him:

NICK
You owe me.

OTIS
And you've got yourself in quite
the pickle this time.

NICK
Nothing about this job is going to
plan. First the girl--

OTIS
(interrupting)
Ah yes, the girl. How's her
brisket?

Nick looks flustered. Otis smirks.

OTIS (CONT'D)
That good, huh?

NICK
I'm more concerned with getting out
of this with all my limbs attached.
Our friend doesn't exactly have a
history of playing it straight.

OTIS
You're right about that.

NICK
He doesn't just want his debt
repaid, he'll be after the whole
damn haul. And now there's this new
Bitcoin wrinkle...

OTIS
How much, you reckon?

NICK
She wouldn't say, but I'm guessing
a woman like Cynthia Fox-Sterling
doesn't get her silk panties in a
twist for anything under ten mill.

Otis whistles.

OTIS
That's one hell of a wrinkle.

NICK
So what do I do?

OTIS
That depends. What's more
important: honoring your deal with
the girl, or saving your own bacon?

He steals bacon back from Nick's plate, as Nick considers the ten million dollar question.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick enters with coffee and a box of donuts. Sofia is sleeping on the couch, the security feed playing.

Nick puts down the snacks. He gently covers Sofia with a blanket, taking a beat to brush hair from her eyes.

She stirs. He settles in to keep watching.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Otis dials his cellphone.

OTIS

I just heard a little something
that might be of value to you.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY/ VARIOUS - DAY

Christmas Eve dawns across the city.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK/ WOLLMAN RINK - DAY

Music and laughter echo as FAMILIES and TOURISTS skate under snow-capped trees. Sofia is coaxing Nick from the wall.

SOFIA

You just have to glide.

NICK

Gliding is not in my repertoire.
Stumbling, yes. Falling,
absolutely, but gliding--

SOFIA

(over him)

Swoosh left, then right. See?

She demonstrates some effortless skating.

NICK

I'm just going to stick to the edge--

SOFIA

Come on.

She grabs his hand and pulls him away from the railing. He STUMBLES, but manages to keep a clumsy pace.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

There you go! It's fun, right?

NICK

Not even a little.

SOFIA

My mom would bring me here every winter. I'd skate until my toes were numb.

NICK

Just another reason why I'm buying a one-way ticket to Tahiti.

SOFIA

That's what you're doing with your half of the money?

NICK

Beaches and cold beer. Where are you going?

Sofia looks reluctant. He clocks it.

NICK (CONT'D)

You can't stay here. After the job, there'll be too many people asking too many questions.

SOFIA

I know. I'll head out of town for a while. Lay low, until everything dies down.

NICK

And your mom?

SOFIA

If she's getting the care she needs... It'll be worth it.

(beat)

You don't think about staying?

NICK

There's nothing keeping me here.

Nick stumbles, and Sofia grabs his hand again to keep him from falling. They CLUTCH each other tightly for a long beat.

NICK (CONT'D)
We should be good to go.

Sofia turns, seeing -- McGregor step onto the ice with his HUSBAND (40s) and two BOYS (10). Happy family time.

INT. RINK LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Nick palms a \$20 to a LOCKER CLERK and gets a slip of paper in return. He walks to where Sofia is unlacing her skates.

NICK
Locker 342.

INT. LOCKER - DAY

The door swings open. Nick peers in. Shoes, scarf, keys.

INT. RINK LOCKER ROOM - DAY

As Sofia keeps watch, Nick prizes the globe fob from the keyring and replaces it with an identical-looking one.

SOFIA
He's coming!

VIEW ON: McGregor returning to the locker room.

Nick shoves the keys back in and SLAMS the door. He YANKS Sofia around the corner as McGregor approaches, stumbling like Bambi on the ice-skates on dry land.

McGregor opens the locker and grabs a scarf. Exits. Sofia and Nick emerge from hiding - with the keyfob.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
We're ready then. Tonight.

NICK
Tonight.

They exchange an excited look, as we launch into our CHRISTMAS EVE MONTAGE...

EXT. NEW YORK/ VARIOUS - DAY

A dusting of snow falls over the city, the streets are packed with festive bustle.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STORE - DAY

Last-minute SHOPPERS cram the gleaming aisles. Maxwell happily surveys the flurry of credit cards and cash.

INT. STERLING AND CO/SECURITY SUITE - EVENING

McGregor reviews the SECURITY CAMS.

CLOSE ON: His keys and wallet on the desk. The globe keychain that Nick switched at the rink. We see a TINY BLINKING LIGHT.

INT. DJ'S APARTMENT - EVENING

DJ types away: a SCROLL OF CODE rolling, until --

SYSTEM CONTROL: GRANTED.

In the background, a printer whirrs. FAKE ID BADGES for Sofia and Nick emerge. *Diamond Cleaning Solutions*.

INT. NURSING HOME/REC ROOM - DAY

Sofia and Rita attend a celebration with NURSES and OTHER RESIDENTS. Food, music, and holiday cheer.

INT. STERLING PENTHOUSE/ LIVING ROOM

Cynthia sits alone, drinking a glass of wine. ON HER PHONE she checks a PRICE OF BITCOIN graph.

EXT. ROOFTOP - EVENING

Nick watches the city lights sparkle. He's deep in thought. As we END ON:

INT. NURSING HOME/RITA'S ROOM - EVENING

Sofia helps Rita settle in bed.

RITA

If you come before lunch, I'll
steal you some of Debra's famous
cookies.

Sofia fluffs pillows and avoids eye contact.

SOFIA

I... won't be coming tomorrow. I'm going out of town for a while.

RITA

Why? What about school?

SOFIA

School can wait. Look, I'm fixing it with management, your room and therapy will all be taken care of, you don't need to worry about anything except getting better.

A beat.

RITA

What did you do?

SOFIA

Nothing.

RITA

Sofia Isabella Agnes--

SOFIA

Always with the Agnes!

(softer)

I'll be fine, mom, I promise. You know me.

RITA

That's what I'm worried about.

Rita pulls a messily-wrapped gift from a drawer. Offers it.

RITA (CONT'D)

Don't worry. It's not another scarf.

SOFIA

Thank God. I was lying when I said you were improving.

Sofia unwraps it. A leather-bound day-planner. Empty.

RITA

I want those pages full. You have your whole life ahead of you.

Sofia is moved, but tries to hide it.

SOFIA

You're not dead yet, either. I saw the way you were looking at the guy in 4B. You should go for it.

They hug, laughing to hold back the tears.

EXT. NURSING HOME - EVENING

Sofia exits to find -- The black town car is parked out front, with Vance leaning against it.

VANCE

Let's take a ride. Sofia.

Her confusion turns to fear.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick sits silently opposite Xavier as Benny rifles through Sofia's drawers. The door opens, and Vance enters with Sofia.

Nick bolts over to her.

NICK

Are you OK?

SOFIA

No, I'm not OK. I just got kidnapped in broad daylight. Who the hell are these people?

BENNY

Black lace. Saucy.

Sofia crosses and grabs her underwear out of Benny's hands.

SOFIA

Get out. Now.

XAVIER

(to Nick)

Your girlfriend needs to learn a little hospitality.

NICK

She's not my girlfriend.

SOFIA

I'm not his girlfriend.

XAVIER

And I don't give a fuck. What I do care about is this job of yours.

What? Sofia processes as:

NICK
You'll get your money.

XAVIER
I don't doubt it. But just in case,
you'll have some company tonight.

NICK
Great. We could use the muscle.
(to Vance)
What do you bench, two hundred? Two
twenty?

XAVIER
Not him.

BENNY
Whaddup party people?

Jesus. Benny is dressed in a designer streetwear onesie.

XAVIER
Remember what I said. Follow
Nicky's lead, and watch out for any
funny business.

As he gives a pep talk, Sofia YANKS Nick into the kitchen.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT/ KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They talk in hushed voices.

NICK
I can explain.

SOFIA
Which part? The gangster, the creep
rifling through my lingerie, or how
they know about our secret plan?

NICK
We'll have a third wheel tonight,
that's all.

SOFIA
Are you kidding me? He's an idiot!

NICK
He's harmless.

Through the pass-through, they see Xavier giving Benny a handgun. He strikes action poses.

SOFIA

An idiot with a loaded gun?!

Nick pulls her up against the refrigerator, out of earshot.

NICK

I owe some money, that's all. For protection.

SOFIA

When did you need protecting?

NICK

Not me. My dad.

Realization dawns. Sofia's conflicted, but doesn't soften.

SOFIA

I trusted you. Everything is riding on this.

NICK

And it'll all be OK. I promise.

He gives a reassuring smile and tenderly cups her cheek. Sofia shoves his hand away.

SOFIA

You're forgetting, I've seen that smile before. It's the one you give your marks, right before you *lie*.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT/ LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sofia and Nick rejoin just as Xavier and Vance exit.

BENNY

Alright! You ready to grab Christmas by the baubles?

He puts up his hand for a high-five.

SOFIA

Don't touch me.

BENNY

Feisty. Me likey.

Benny sets the GUN on the table and helps himself to snacks.

SOFIA
(to Nick)
I hope you know what you're doing.

Nick takes a deep breath. *Me too.*

NICK
OK, team. Countdown to Christmas.
We have one chance to do this
right.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STORE - NIGHT

A chaotic crush of SHOPPERS grab the last gifts.

NICK V.O.
The store's open late tonight, all
the better to squeeze cash from the
last-minute panic buyers.

Registers work overtime, a flood of BILLS changing hands.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT ROOM - NIGHT

McGregor oversees GUARDS bringing stuffed cash bags and
jewelry cases, filling the vault to the brim.

NICK V.O.
Since the armored truck isn't
coming, all that dough is heading
straight for the vault.

Sterling's MEMORY DRIVE is still sitting on the shelf. The
door slams shut.

NICK V.O. (CONT'D)
DJ, you ready?

DJ V.O.
Born ready, boss.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT ROOM - NIGHT

As McGregor resets the vault security as usual... CLOSE ON
the new access code on screen.

McGregor exits, not seeing the numbers spin to a new code.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN HALL - NIGHT

As the store shuts down for the night, McGregor joins Maxwell and hands him the red leather folder.

NICK V.O.
Sterling thinks his loot is locked up tight, but he doesn't know those codes have already changed.

A fur-clad MODEL flutters a wave at Maxwell. He joins her and exits the store.

NICK V.O. (CONT'D)
Now, our head of security will do a final round before heading home to set out milk and cookies for Santa.

PULL UP until McGregor is just a dot moving in the store.

BLEND TO:

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A GPS beacon blinking as McGregor moves. Nick has the map on his phone. Benny is absent from the room.

Sofia is adjusting a blonde wig and glasses. Nick is disguised in a baseball cap and fake long hair.

NICK
As long as McGregor stays out of the picture, we'll be golden.

SOFIA
Which guards are on duty tonight?

NICK
Ramirez and Fuller.

SOFIA
Eddie Fuller?

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY SUITE - NIGHT

The GUARDS switch out. Ramirez settles in, greeting... Eddie.

NICK V.O.
He's covering. Is there a problem?

BACK TO:

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sofia shakes her head, but still looks troubled.

SOFIA
Promise me, nobody gets hurt.

BENNY O.S
Yo yo, when we gonna split?

A FLUSH. Benny exits the bathroom. Nick hands him the gun. Benny promptly sticks it down his pants.

NICK
Safety was off.

Benny snatches it out and checks. Sofia glares at Nick as they grab matching duffel bags.

NICK (CONT'D)
Teamwork makes the dream work.

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ STREET - NIGHT

A CHOIR carols on the corner as STAFF usher the last shoppers out and lock up.

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

STAFF exit the back doors by the loading dock, as the CLEANING CREW arrives. Nick, Sofia, and Benny are among them, dressed in uniform.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

The CREW are waved into the building by BORED SECURITY and retrieve their supplies. Our team stashes their duffel bags in the cleaning carts, sporting the fake ID BADGES.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SERVICE LOBBY - NIGHT

Our trio are waiting in the lobby with the group when -- Lulu exits the elevator, strolling towards the exit.

SOFIA
Oh *shit*.

Sofia panics, quickly turning away to hide her face.

LULU
Goodnight, Iris. Night, Lou.

BENNY
(whistle)
Dayum, smokeshow.

Lulu looks over at his comment -- and sees Sofia's reflection in a mirror. She slows, frowning. *She recognizes her.*

Their eyes meet in the mirror. *Fuck.* Sofia panics when --

HOT BOYFRIEND O.S
Babe!

Lulu turns. Her HOT BOYFRIEND is waiting by the doors. Lulu greets him with a kiss, then turns back, still distracted.

HOT BOYFRIEND
Ready to go? My mom's driving me crazy texting. She can't wait to meet you.

LULU
I thought I saw...
(beat)
You know what? He doesn't pay me enough to care about this shit.

She beams, squeezes boyfriend's hand, and walks out.

Sofia exhales -- and hits Benny. The CLEANING CREW LEADER claps for attention.

CREW LEADER
Let's be quick about it. Nobody wants to be working Christmas Eve.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

The cleaning crew make their rounds, dusting and sweeping the empty store. The grotto sits empty, the STAR CAMERA spinning.

INT. DJ'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

DJ kicks back in a Santa hat, surveilling the scene.

DJ
You're clear on the West Hall.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STORE - NIGHT

Nick, Sofia, and Benny casually move out of sight from the crew to the 'Staff Only' door. Sofia uses the STOLEN SECURITY BADGE and SWIPES through.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick, Sofia, and Benny head down the hallway.

NICK
(to earpiece)
Approaching the switch point.
Three... two... one...

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY SUITE

Ramirez and Eddie are settling in.

RAMIREZ
...Thing is, everything comes back to shame. Brené says, you've got to practice radical self-acceptance.

CLOSE ON a screen with the feed of our team in the hallway. There's a brief FLICKER as they round the corner, then they disappear from screen.

The guards don't notice.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nick looks up to the SECURITY CAMERA.

DJ V.O
Invisibility cloak: activated.

Nick, Sofia, and Benny hustle into a storage closet.

INT. STORAGE CLOSET - NIGHT

Cramped and cluttered. They awkwardly settle in.

BENNY
This brings back some memories. Seven minutes in heaven, Brittany Gold. Eighth grade. She couldn't get enough of the B's D.

Sofia glares, and puts on a big pair of headphones.

INT. STERLING AND CO/VARIOUS - NIGHT

Eddie shows out the cleaning crew and LOCKS UP behind them. Lights flick off. Hallways sit empty. The tree glitters in the middle of the store.

Eddie and Ramirez break open some festive snacks in the security suite, 'Home Alone' playing on one screen.

DJ V.O.

OK, kids. Nap-time's over. Time to rock 'n' roll.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The closet door opens. Nick, Sofia, and Benny emerge with their bags, no longer in the cleaning crew uniform.

NICK

So, what's your super-secret plan for getting to the basement?

SOFIA

This way.

Sofia leads them past the ELEVATOR to the vault. Benny idly HITS the elevator call button as they pass. We STAY on it...

PRE-LAP: A TEXT NOTIFICATION NOISE

INT. MCGREGOR'S HOME - NIGHT

A cellphone BUZZES on the kitchen counter. In the background, McGregor's husband and kids settle in for movie night with pizza and matching holiday pajamas.

McGregor checks the phone. ELEVATOR REQUEST. He frowns as his husband wraps his arms around him.

MCGREGOR'S HUSBAND

You promised. It's Christmas Eve.

McGregor calls up the SECURITY FEED. Rewinds. The screen shows an EMPTY HALLWAY (*DJ's looped feed*).

MCGREGOR

Nobody's there.

MCGREGOR'S HUSBAND

So what's the problem?

McGregor ducks out of the embrace and grabs his keys.

MCGREGOR

One hour. I'll pick up ice-cream.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Sofia is heading up the stairs. 3rd floor and climbing.

BENNY

Isn't the vault *downstairs*?

She keeps going. The guys follow.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

Sofia leads them through the empty office to the BACK WALL.

SOFIA

When the store was built, they had a whole system of dumb-waiters connecting each floor. I used to play hide-and-seek in them when I was a kid.

NICK

They aren't on the blueprints.

SOFIA

They did a big refit twenty years ago. Contractor didn't want the hassle of filling them in, so they just boarded it all up.

She paces out ten feet, drops the duffel, and pulls out a SLEDGE-HAMMER.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

DJ?

INTERCUT: INT. DJ'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

DJ V.O.

I gotcha. Prepare for disharmony.

He types wildly on the keyboard.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STORE - NIGHT

The electronics department sits silently, and then --

MAYHEM.

TVs BLARE to life. STEREOS BLAST. Robotic toy dogs YAP.
Anything with a wifi connection is playing at full volume.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY SUITE - NIGHT

The noise startles Eddie and Ramirez. They check the screens.
The main office cam is RUNNING A LOOP - no sign of our trio.

RAMIREZ

What the hell's going on?

EDDIE

It's probably just a fuse or
something. I'll check it out.

He grabs his GUN HOLSTER and exits.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

As the noise BLARES below, Sofia swings the sledge-hammer,
BUSTING THROUGH the wall. Again. She stands back.

Nick shines a flashlight through the small opening, REVEALING
a cavity in the wall, 3ft deep, with CABLES running down.

SOFIA

Straight shot, all the way to the
basement. No alarm, no sensors.

NICK

I could kiss you.

As their eyes lock:

BENNY

Save some sugar for me.

Sofia sighs, hands Benny her hammer.

SOFIA

Time to earn your keep.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STORE - NIGHT

The CACOPHONY continues. Eddie arrives, and starts yanking
power cords from outlets.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

CRASH. The sound of sledge-hammers is covered by the din downstairs as Nick and Benny SMASH an opening in the wall.

The NOISE suddenly cuts. Nick quickly grabs Benny's arm to stop him swinging again. A beat. Silence.

NICK
Good enough.

They dress in HARNESES. Nick CLIPS a cable, hoists his duffel and steps into the shaft. They follow.

INT. DUMB-WAITER SHAFT - NIGHT

Head-lamps bob as our trio slowly lower themselves down the shaft. Nick reaches solid ground and unclips, assessing the wall as the others join him.

SOFIA
Hopefully they didn't reinforce
this hallway.

NICK
Now you mention that?

SOFIA
Only one way to find out.

They produce the sledge-hammers and start SMASHING.

INT. DUMB-WAITER SHAFT - NIGHT

We PULL UP the shaft, the noise getting muffled...

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SERVICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Eddie strolls down the hall, the noise too faint to be heard. His cellphone RINGS. He answers.

INTERCUT: INT. MCGREGOR'S SUV - NIGHT

McGregor drives across the Queensboro Bridge.

MCGREGOR
What's the situation over there?

EDDIE

All good. We had a couple of electrical surges, but--

MCGREGOR

(interrupting)

I want a full patrol, every floor. Start at the basement. I need eyes on that vault.

INT. DJ'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

ON-SCREEN: The security feed shows Eddie heading for the vault elevator, still talking on his phone.

PULL BACK TO SHOW: DJ's on his way out, and doesn't see. The door slams shut behind him.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ BASEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

CRASH. Plaster flies, as Sofia, Nick, and Benny emerge from the shaft into the basement hallway.

Nick goes to the security panel.

NICK

Fingerprint?

Sofia produces a FILM TRANSFER. CLICK. The door opens. Sofia and Nick share an exhilarated smile as they step into --

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT ROOM - NIGHT

-- The ante-room. The vault door looms, imposing.

Nick pulls up the text from DJ with the new code.

BENNY

C'mon, let's do this.

NICK

Relax. Good things come to those who... Wait.

The vault door swings open, revealing shelves of JEWELRY and CASH glittering like Aladdin's cave.

A beat, as our trio take it all in.

BENNY

Bling bling, baby!

SOFIA

We did it. We actually did it!

All three of them eye Maxwell's MEMORY DRIVE, sitting inconspicuously on a shelf near the door.

NICK

Start with the cash. Jewelry, watches. Big-ticket only. Hurry.

QUICK SHOTS

BILL WADS are stuffed in the bags. Luxury WATCHES scooped up. GLITTERING JEWELRY folded into velvet wraps.

As they load up, we PULL BACK through the open vault door and down the hallway to the elevator. The DISPLAY shows it descending: 3...2...1...0

The doors open. Eddie steps out, and clocks the scene. Pulls his FIREARM.

EDDIE

Hands up! Down on the floor!

Oh shit!

In a flurry: Benny brandishes his GUN -- Sofia PANICS --

SOFIA

Eddie, it's me!

EDDIE

On the floor!

BENNY

You get on the floor!

NICK

Everybody stay calm!

BENNY

I said, get the fuck down!

NICK

Relax! Just stick to the plan, and nobody's going to jail.

EDDIE

You think? Armed robbery, felony theft--

SOFIA

He gets it! Please, just listen--

Eddie lifts his walkie-talkie.

EDDIE

They're at the vault. Call for back-up. I repeat--

BANG!

A beat, then Eddie FALLS. Sofia SCREAMS and rushes to him.

Benny stands with his gun in his hand, looking stunned.

NICK

What the fuck did you do?

BENNY

I.. I don't know. I didn't mean--

SOFIA

Eddie? Eddie, talk to me!

She cradles his body. Blood is spreading on the floor.

NICK

Killing an officer? They'll give you the electric chair!

BENNY

It's not my fault! He shouldn't even be here!

NICK

Fuck. Fuck!

Benny snaps out of his daze. Drops the gun.

BENNY

No way I'm going down for this. It's not my fault!

He dives into the vault and grabs the MEMORY DRIVE, then RACES to the elevator.

The doors close behind him, leaving Sofia sobbing over Eddie's bloody body on the floor.

SOFIA

Don't just stand there, we need to call 911!

(to Eddie)

Please, wake up! You can't die!

Eddie's eyes open.

EDDIE

Are you kidding? Marsha would kill me first.

He sits up -- perfectly fine. *What the fuck?*

Nick gives Eddie a hand and helps him to his feet. Eddie opens his jacket, revealing a VEST and LEAKING BLOOD BAG.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Sorry to scare you, kid. Real touching, though.

NICK

Great job with the weeping, you really sold it for us.

(to Eddie)

And you. Man, that was one hell of a performance. That little whimper as you fell? Genius.

EDDIE

You liked that? You know, I did a little theater, back in the day. Summer stock, Shakespeare.

NICK

I can tell. Natural instincts--

SOFIA

WILL SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?!

They turn.

NICK

I didn't plan it this way, I swear. But once Xavier got wind of the job, I knew he'd find a way to screw us. So, I had to make sure it was on our terms.

EXT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

As Nick arrives with snacks, he sees Vance's town car loitering down the block. He's troubled.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Otis exits the diner and dials his cellphone.

OTIS
I just heard a little something
that might be of value to you...

He hangs up, and we REVEAL Nick standing beside him. They exchange nods of agreement.

INT. XAVIER'S OFFICE - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

Xavier talks on the phone.

XAVIER
Ten million, huh?

He smiles, and turns to Benny, who's taking selfies.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
Put that shit away. I've got a real
job for you...

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT ROOM - NIGHT

Sofia processes.

SOFIA
So you led them right to us.

NICK
Better than an ambush we didn't see
coming.

Nick picks up the gun and empties the chamber.

NICK (CONT'D)
Blanks. I switched them back at
your place.

SOFIA
How did you know he would shoot?

NICK
He's a goddamn idiot. Of course
he'd shoot.

Nick switches the blanks out for the real bullets.

EDDIE
Make it the leg. My buddy took a
bullet in his calf. Full pension
and benefits, barely a limp.

NICK

On three--

Sofia snatches the gun from Nick and SHOOTs Eddie in the leg.

BANG!

Eddie reels, WAILING. Sofia ignores him.

SOFIA

He took the memory drive. Cynthia
will shop us straight to the cops!

NICK

We'll figure that out later. For
now, how about you focus on what we
do have. *This*.

A beat. The bags of loot are stuffed full around them.

SOFIA

This doesn't mean I forgive you.

NICK

But it helps a little, right?

Eddie, nursing his bleeding leg, notices his cellphone buzz.
McGregor calling.

EDDIE

Time to wrap it up. Boss is coming.

As Sofia and Nick load up the last of the goods:

SOFIA

Will you be OK?

EDDIE

Are you kidding? I'm a goddamn
hero.

NICK

We'll run your fee through a dummy
corp. Consulting. Feds won't know a
thing.

EDDIE

Merry Christmas, kid!

He settles in, proudly tourniqueting his wound.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Should've been on the stage.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ BASEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sofia and Nick scramble into their harnesses, and load the bags. They SWOOP UPWARDS into the shaft, as the BUZZ of McGregor's missed calls takes us to...

INT. MCGREGOR'S SUV - NIGHT

McGregor is stuck in MIDTOWN TRAFFIC, leaning on the horn.

CAR PLAY
Your call cannot be connected.

MCGREGOR
Fucking fucker.

He swipes through the all-quiet VIDEO FEED. Shakes his head.

MCGREGOR (CONT'D)
Something's fucked.
(to phone)
Launch system reboot.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ SECURITY SUITE - NIGHT

Ramirez is dozing in front of the screens as they all GO BLACK. **Rebooting...**

The suite phone RINGS, jolting Ramirez awake.

INTERCUT: INT. MCGREGOR'S SUV - NIGHT

McGregor weaves through grid-lock.

MCGREGOR
What the fuck's going on over there? Where's Fuller?

RAMIREZ
Huh?

MCGREGOR
He went to secure the vault.
Fucking radio silence.

RAMIREZ
Relax, boss. Everything's cool.

MCGREGOR
It better fucking well be. I just rebooted, so get the fuck out there and find your fucking partner.

Ramirez swings his chair around and sees the VIDEO FEEDS come to life revealing:

- The vault door wide open, shelves STRIPPED BARE.
- Eddie BLEEDING in the hallway.
- Sofia and Nick emerging from the smashed wall in the main office, laden with packed BAGS.

RAMIREZ

Oh shit!

INT. STERLING AND CO/ MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

Nick and Sofia unclip and hoist their bags, bickering.

SOFIA

Textbook narcissism. Whatever happened to 'trust me, Sofia'? 'Stick to the plan, Sofia'.

NICK

It worked, didn't it?

SOFIA

Only because that idiot got trigger-happy.

NICK

Which I predicted.

An ALARM BLARES. *Fuck.*

SOFIA

Predict this?

They take off running as --

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VARIOUS - NIGHT

ALARMS wail. Lights FLASH. Security grilles SLAM -- as our festive CHASE SOUNDTRACK kicks in:

'You better watch out, you better not cry...'

INT. STERLING AND CO/ OFFICES - NIGHT

Sofia and Nick RACE through the office, carrying their bags.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Ramirez SPRINTS up the stairs, GUN DRAWN.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Sofia and Nick BOMB into the stairwell. Ramirez is just one floor below.

RAMIREZ

Hey! Stop!

Sofia and Nick DIVE through the door on 4th.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ STORE - NIGHT

Sofia and Nick RACE through the homeware department, sending festive DISPLAYS crashing to the ground.

SOFIA

This way!

She leads them to the elevator. HITS the button. Nothing.

NICK

(realizing)

The alarm. Automatic shut-down.

Fuck. They exchange a look of panic as --

BANG!

A bullet hits the wall by Sofia's head. Ramirez is in hot pursuit.

They take off RUNNING again through the displays.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROUND FLOOR HALL - NIGHT

The TREE and grotto sit quietly as -- Ramirez CHASES Sofia and Nick around the atrium above.

BANG!

INT. STERLING AND CO/ FOURTH FLOOR

Ramirez grabs his walkie-talkie.

RAMIREZ

I've got them pinned down on four!

ACROSS THE ATRIUM

Sofia and Nick duck behind a Le Creuset display.

BANG! The bullet ricochets off the luxury iron-ware.

SOFIA
There's no way down!

Nick looks around desperately and sees --

NICK
Trust me?

SOFIA
No!

NICK
Good enough.

He grabs her hand and takes off RUNNING, making straight for the atrium railing -- and the CHRISTMAS TREE towering, its top branches within reach.

SOFIA
No. We can't--

NICK
-- Go!

Nick SCRAMBLES over the railings and LEAPS -- grabbing hold of the tree. It sways dangerously, ornaments chiming as --

Sofia hesitates on the railing, thinking twice about the *fucking insanity* of this plan.

BANG!

Another bullet SHATTERS glass nearby.

Fuck. Sofia takes a breath and LEAPS -- grabbing onto a strand of lights, but it GIVES WAY -- she FALLS --

Nick GRABS her hand.

RAMIREZ'S POV

Ramirez gapes at the sight of them swaying on the top of tree, 100ft above the ground.

BACK ON THE TREE

Sofia recovers, clinging on to the massive branches.

BANG!

An ornament EXPLODES nearby. Ramirez is SHOOTING again.

NICK

Come on!

He HURLS his weight over, and Sofia does the same, building enough momentum to PULL the base free of the SCAFFOLDING.

Metal SCREECHES as the tree TIPS -- slowly over-balancing and CRASHING down through the atrium.

Timber!

Ramirez DIVES CLEAR. Ten thousand ornaments SMASH. Light strands EXPLODE as the structure goes SMASHING to the ground.

Sofia and Nick CLING ON, riding it down until --

The tree LODGES at 45 degrees, stuck into the open floors.

NICK (CONT'D)

Go, go!

Nick and Sofia SCRAMBLE down the trunk, LEAPING onto the roof of the grotto and SLIDING down to the ground.

Ramirez can only stare down at the epic holiday devastation as Sofia and Nick RACE towards an emergency EXIT.

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ALLEY - NIGHT

Nick and Sofia EXPLODE out the door into a back alley and take cover behind the BINS.

WITH URGENCY: Sofia turns her jacket inside out so it's RED --

Nick pulls a RED CAPE from his bag and wraps it over his clothes. Hands Sofia a SANTA HAT and puts one on himself --

They trade the wigs for COTTON WOOL SANTA BEARDS, then open the duffel bags and pull out the SACKS lining the insides.

They emerge to the street to REVEAL --

Santa Claus is coming to town!

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

TWO HUNDRED SANTAS are MILLING on Fifth Avenue, BLOCKING the street outside the store!

INT. DJ'S BASEMENT - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

DJ

Even if everything goes great, how are you going to stroll down Fifth Avenue carrying a big sack of loot without anyone noticing?

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

This is how! Sofia and Nick exchange a smile of victory as they hoist said sacks of loot and move away from the store, completely anonymous in a crowd of Santas.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

DJ blasts HOLIDAY MUSIC from speakers on a truck bed as Santas of all stripes party.

Nick and Sofia weave casually through the crowd --

HONK! McGregor's SUV nearly hits Sofia.

INT. MCGREGOR'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

MCGREGOR

(on phone)

What do you mean, they're gone?

He HONKS again in frustration, surrounded by Santas. He doesn't recognize Nick and Sofia as they move on.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT ROOM - NIGHT

Ramirez is tending to Eddie, who's groaning dramatically.

RAMIREZ

Eddie's down. They hit us bad, boss. Cleared out the vault!

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

McGregor stops the SUV and gets out. Grabs a passing Santa.

MCGREGOR
 What the hell's going on?

REVEAL: this Santa is Otis!

OTIS
 Merry Christmas!

McGregor releases him, disgusted. We PULL UP into the night, as the festive party rages on....

EXT. NEW YORK CITY/ STREET - NIGHT

Holiday lights twinkle in apartment windows. Nick and Sofia, carrying their sacks, duck into her building.

INT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT/ HALLWAY - NIGHT

They exit the stairwell, still high on the win.

SOFIA
 --When you jumped, I thought you'd lost your mind! How did you know the tree would hold us?

NICK
 I didn't.

They arrive at her door and linger a beat. *Is this goodbye?*

NICK (CONT'D)
 Remember to keep the cash payments small. And fence the jewels out of state so they can't--

SOFIA
 --Trace me, I know. I did my research.
 (beat)
 What about Cynthia? She said that if we don't deliver the drive--

NICK
 We'll be long gone. DJ's scrubbed the security footage, so they won't have any evidence. We're home free--

As Sofia unlocks her door and swings it open to reveal -- Xavier, lounging on her couch; a rattled Benny pacing nearby.

XAVIER
 Come in, please.

Vance looms by the door. It's not an invitation. They enter.

XAVIER (CONT'D)
I heard you ran into some trouble.

NICK
We handled it.

XAVIER
Then there's no reason not to
deliver what's owed.

NICK
We're square. There's ten million
on that drive!

XAVIER
But until we break the encryption,
it's a useless hunk of metal.

He nods to Vance, who roughly grabs the sacks from Nick and Sofia. They spill over jewels and cash.

NICK
What happened to our deal?

As Vance pats Nick down, retrieving a Rolex from his pocket and a stray wad of cash:

XAVIER
You really are your father's son.
When are you going to learn, if you
can't see the sucker...?

BENNY
Sucker's you, ha!

Xavier strolls to the door.

XAVIER
Happy holidays.

The trio exit. Nick closes the door behind them and slams his palm against the wood in frustration.

Sofia sags in disbelief.

SOFIA
They took everything... I just blew
up my entire life, and I don't even
have enough to pay for mom. What am
I going to do? I can't stay here.
I'm a felon!

NICK

It's OK.

SOFIA

How can you say that? I'm not a criminal like you. I have a stomach ulcer from all the stress, I can't just go out and rob somewhere else--

NICK

You don't have to.

He starts taking off his sweater.

SOFIA

Now? Read the room!

But Nick reveals -- A money belt, taped to his stomach. Vance missed it in the pat-down.

Nick pulls out a diamond necklace. Considers it, then... Hands it to her.

NICK

This should cover your mom's bills.

SOFIA

But... What about you?

NICK

I'll be fine. Like you said, I'm the criminal.

SOFIA

Nick...

There's a charged moment, but he breaks it.

NICK

I've got a plane to catch.

SOFIA

Right. Me too. Grayhound, I mean.

NICK

Splurge for an upgrade. You can afford it now.

She pulls him in for a kiss.

SOFIA

Thank you. I couldn't have done it without you.

NICK
Back at you.

He pauses. *Tempted to change his mind.* But he doesn't.

NICK (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas.

He exits, leaving her clutching the necklace.

EXT. SOFIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Nick pauses on the sidewalk, looking up at her window.
Regret. He hoists his sack, and disappears into the night.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY/ VARIOUS - DAY

The city sparkles under blue skies. **Christmas Day!** The delis bustle, trees twinkle, and everyone is full of cheer. Except--

EXT. STERLING AND CO/ SIDEWALK - DAY

Police tape blocks off the store, CROWDS watch POLICE swarm.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ GROUND FLOOR HALL - DAY

POLICE buzz around the WRECKED STORE, the tree collapsed like a beached whale in the middle of the atrium.

A haggard McGregor reports by the wrecked grotto.

MCGREGOR
The footage is wiped, but even so,
my guys say they were in costume.
Wigs, hats... We've got nothing.

CRASH! People flinch back as the tree PLUMMETS another few feet, ornaments SMASHING. McGregor looks on in despair.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT LEVEL - DAY

More COPS document the crime scene: Eddie's bloodstain on the floor, the open vault door, ransacked contents.

Maxwell CHARGES out of the elevator, Lulu trailing behind.

LULU
 ...Legal called, and Julie in PR,
 and the insurance company wants to
 get a team on the ground ASAP to
 estimate loss--

MAXWELL
 (over her)
 Where is it? Did you find it yet?

BLANK LOOKS all around as he shoves through.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
 The memory drive! *This* big, it was
 right there!

As he frantically searches the wreckage of the vault, the
 cellphone Lulu is holding rings. She answers.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STERLING PENTHOUSE/ LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cynthia is smugly watching the theft news on TV.

LULU
 I'm sorry, Mr. Sterling is... busy.

CYNTHIA
 Of course. I can only imagine what
 he's going through right now. Let
 him know I'm thinking of him.

BACK IN THE VAULT: Maxwell is melting down. He crumples to
 the floor, realizing what he's lost.

Lulu intercepts a COP.

LULU
 Are there any leads?

COP
 Looks like a pro job. I'm guessing
 they're long gone.

Maxwell sobs in the background.

INT. NURSING HOME/ RECEPTION - DAY

Holiday celebrations echo in the halls. Nurse Jean returns to
 the desk to find a THICK MANILA ENVELOPE with a handwritten
 note: 'See that Billing get this - Sofia.'

Jean peeks inside and finds WADS OF CASH. She looks around, but there's no sign of anyone.

EXT. PORT AUTHORITY - DAY

Sofia waits in line to board a Greyhound bus. Hood up, incognito. She watches a NEWS REPORT on her phone.

REPORTER ON-SCREEN
...Police are baffled by this
daring robbery, the thieves
escaping dressed as Santa Claus...

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK - MORNING

The Greyhound bus speeds up the interstate.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Sofia is in a seat at the back. She's counting a small wad of hundred dollar bills. She slips them in a money-belt hidden under her sweater when--

She sits up, realizing something.

SOFIA
Motherfucker.

EXT. TAHITI/ BEACH - DAY

Paradise. Turquoise waters lap the golden sand in front of a cool BEACH BAR playing tropical vibes.

Nick collects a cold beer and strolls to a lounge chair in the sun. He kicks back, nodding happily to PEOPLE as his cell phone rings.

DJ (PHONE CALL)
We're in.

Nick sits up excitedly.

NICK
Already?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. JOSHUA TREE DESERT/ CABIN - DAY

DJ is at his laptop. Through the windows we can see a HANDSOME GUY lounging in a hot-tub with desert views.

DJ clicks CODE on screen.

DJ
Tier one encryption, could break it
in my sleep. Emailing the code now.

NICK
I owe you.

DJ
Damn right you do!

EXT. TAHITI/ JUNGLE - DAY

Nick approaches a luxe-looking house, nestled by the water.

INT. LUXE HOUSE - DAY

Inside, it's all minimal chic. He goes to a desk, and opens a drawer. Pauses. RIFLES through, panic growing --

SOFIA O.S.
Looking for something?

She steps into the room. Nick smiles in surprise -- and then sees she's holding up Maxwell's memory drive. *Busted.*

SOFIA
I was halfway to Poughkeepsie
before I figured it out. You had
that money belt on for a reason.
You didn't just hide the necklace
in there, did you?

Nick is smiling, impressed. *She's got him.*

NICK
I knew Benny would go for the
drive. I just needed a distraction.

SOFIA
Like first-degree murder.

INT. STERLING AND CO/ VAULT - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

GUNSHOT! As we REPLAY Benny shooting Eddie --

SOFIA

Eddie? Eddie, talk to me!

NICK

Killing an officer? They'll give you the electric chair!

As Benny freaks the fuck out, we ANGLE ON Nick quickly switching the memory drive for an identical-looking model. He stashes the real one under his clothes.

BENNY

No way I'm going down for this.
It's not my fault!

He dives into the vault and grabs the dummy memory drive, then RACES to the elevator.

EXT. LUXE HOUSE - DAY

They're on the deck, overlooking the water. Nick connects the drive to his laptop, and clicks away.

NICK

DJ just broke encryption. We can get the passcode and log into Sterling's Bitcoin account.

SOFIA

Now it's 'we'.
(off him)
Don't think I'm forgetting you double-crossed me, too. Were you planning to cut me in, or just relax here alone with your ten million?

NICK

Thirty.
(off screen)
He stashed thirty million in this account.

Holy shit! They trade stunned looks.

NICK (CONT'D)

I guess Cynthia gets a cut, after all.

He clicks again, then shuts the laptop.

NICK (CONT'D)

We deserve a drink.

SOFIA
So I'm your partner again?

NICK
Can't we just focus on the good
here?

SOFIA
The good part in screwing me over?

NICK
The part about winning in the end.

He pulls her into his arms and kisses her passionately. Sofia wraps her arms around him, laughing, as we PULL BACK, leaving our criminals together in the tropical breeze.

But wait, there's one more thing...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A KNOCKING SOUND. The SHY KID from the grotto opens the door to find a MASSIVE BOX.

He opens it to reveal -- dog supplies. **From Santa.**

SHY BOY
Mom! He got my message! We can keep
her!

Pickles the Pug scampers around. His MOM checks the card -- and finds a WAD OF CASH. She checks the hallway, but it's empty. As they celebrate... SMASH TO BLACK.

THE END.