

CASTLE

(Season Two)

"The Phantom of the Ballroom"

a Teleplay by

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. PRECINCT, BULLPEN - DAY

RICK CASTLE arrives at KATE BECKETT's desk with steaming coffee. She is plowing her way through piles of paperwork.

BECKETT

Thanks.

He looks up as several CATCALLS and WHISTLES greet a trio of undercover cops, including DET. VENTI dressed as prostitutes.

CASTLE

(to Detective Venti)

Catch any fish?

VENTI

Only a few johns. But not the one we were trawling for.

CASTLE

Shame.

He eyes Venti's fishnet stockings as she ambles away.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Why aren't we working that case?

BECKETT

What case?

CASTLE

Where have you been?

He unfolds the newspaper under his arm and holds up the headline, *'Midnight Slasher' prompts voluntary city-wide curfew'*.

BECKETT

Except for one, the vics were all prostitutes. Detective Venti has an extensive network on the street, people who will speak with her and no one else. It's all about building trust.

CASTLE

Building trust. I like the sound of that.

(MORE)

CASTLE (CONT'D)

(studies newspaper)

But 'Midnight Slasher' shows a serious dearth of imagination. I would have chosen something with a little more zing, like 'Jack the Knife' or the 'Bellevue Butcher'.

BECKETT

How do you know the killer was in Bellevue?

CASTLE

We don't but it's plausible enough. He has a serious leg fetish. They said he would fondle his victim's legs after they were dead. There must be a clinical name for that.

He sees KEVIN RYAN approach with a large blue box.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Oh, whoa, that there blue box has the same cache as one from Tiffany's, only this box can only be from that hot new pastry shop, Chewy's.

BECKETT

(distracted)

Chewy's?

RYAN

(to Castle)

Hold it, pardner, you have to feed the kitty first.

Castle sticks a bill in Ryan's shirt pocket.

CASTLE

Meow.

Ryan opens the box.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Wow, I haven't had churros since Alexis was three.

RYAN

Not just any churros. They're filled with caramel.

BECKETT

I'm in.

Beckett surrenders a bill. Ryan pulls out a churro which is promptly snatched up by ESPOSITO.

ESPOSITO

Thanks.

(to Beckett)

The boss wants to see you in his office. Pronto.

(bites into churro)

Mmmm!

INT. PRECINCT, MONTGOMERY'S OFFICE - DAY

Beckett accepts a file from CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY.

BECKETT

But Veronika Kardos was one of the Slasher's victims.

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY

Not anymore. We thought he was just varying from his usual M.O. with Kardos but with the latest victim, it's clear that she is not one of his.

Beckett studies the file, frowning.

BECKETT

There were enough similarities, initially.

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY

Dr. Parish said the knife used was different. Plus the fact she was not a prostitute.

Castle leans over Beckett's shoulder, reading as he munches on his pastry. She gives him a look. He offers but she declines.

CASTLE

A ballroom dancer?

BECKETT

That wouldn't be another way of saying 'high-class call girl'?

CASTLE

No, it's an actual profession and perfectly respectable.

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY

You're familiar with ballroom dancing?

CASTLE
I've dabbled.

BECKETT
It could be a copycat.

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY
God forbid. The last thing we need
is a second hacker. I already have
the mayor's office calling me every
two hours.

As Beckett and Castle leave--

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY (CONT'D)
And guys? Keep a tight lid on it.
As far as anyone is concerned, you're
helping Detective Venti with this
case. There is no other guy.

BECKETT
Understood.

INT. BECKETT'S UNMARKED - DAY

Castle is flipping through the file and pulls up a photo of
a couple in dance costume.

CASTLE
Nice. Who's the guy?

BECKETT
Chad Devine, her former dance partner.
Also the co-owner of the studio,
behind which her body was found.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO, REAR ALLEY - DAY

Beckett's unmarked pulls up. She and Castle exit the vehicle.
They approach a short flight of steps. Balloons, flowers
and a teddy bear decorate an area by the railing. Castle
bends down to pick up a photo of a smiling Veronika.

Beckett takes the file and finds the photograph of the
bloodied body. The woman is wearing a sweater over a sporty
skirt and leggings. She lies at the foot of the steps.

CASTLE
You think someone ambushed her? A
rival dancer? A disgruntled lover?

BECKETT

One of the owners locked up the studio a little after 10 that evening. She was stabbed some time between 11 and two.

CASTLE

You're positive it's not the Slasher?

Beckett shakes her head and looks both ways in the quiet alley, then back to the steps.

BECKETT

I think she was waiting for someone.

She leads the way up the steps and tries the back door, which is unlocked.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Beckett and Castle walk down a hallway, slowing as they notice the framed photos on the wall.

CASTLE

There she is.

He points to a photo of Veronika which is signed 'To my friends at the Light Fantastic! XO Veronika'. They continue and Castle suddenly slows. Another photo has caught his eye. Chad Devine and a woman of Castle's age are beaming as they cut a ribbon in front of the studio.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Uh oh.

Beckett is greeted by the same woman in the photograph, attractive and poised. SHANNON WALSH has a slight limp but is otherwise a glowing picture of health.

SHANNON

You must be Detective Beckett. I'm Shannon Walsh.

The two women shake hands. In the background, OLIVER, a Brit in his late 20's, is teaching a trio of seniors.

BECKETT

Thank you for your time, Ms. Walsh.
This is my--

She realizes Castle is not beside her and glances back to see him lurking in the hallway.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Castle?

He reluctantly approaches.

SHANNON

Rick Castle?

CASTLE

Shannon. It's been a while.

SHANNON

A very long while.

She hugs him. They pull apart and he looks relieved. She is squeezing his hands with a fond smile.

CASTLE

As incandescent as ever.

BECKETT

You two know each other?

SHANNON

(sentimental)

Ricky was my very first partner.

BECKETT

Partner?

SMASH CUT TO:

CASTLE TITLE CARD

INT. DANCE STUDIO, OFFICE - DAY

Sue pulls an album off a shelf and finds a page.

SHANNON

Here it is. Our first competition.

She lays it on the desk and Beckett eyes the pic of Castle and Shannon, both 12, posing together on the dance floor.

BECKETT

That's adorable.

SHANNON

We took second place. But after that we went undefeated. At least, until he stood me up.

BECKETT
(to Castle)
You stood her up?

CASTLE
No, wait, I gave you two weeks notice.

SHANNON
Right before the Ohio Star Ball.
How was I suppose to find another
partner and rehearse in that amount
of time?

CASTLE
You knew there was a big comic
convention that weekend. With Stan
Lee, the godfather of comics!

SHANNON
Oh, I forgave him. Eventually.
Boys will be boys.

BECKETT
And jerks will be jerks.

Castle gives her an injured look but Beckett moves on.

BECKETT (CONT'D)
I wanted to ask you a few questions
about the night Veronika died.

SHANNON
Of course. Murder is bad for
business.

BECKETT
I take it you and Ms. Kardos were
not close?

SHANNON
No, I stopped competing a decade
ago, after my accident.

BECKETT
Accident?

Shannon lifts a leg and taps it with her pen, indicating it
is a prosthetic.

CASTLE
How did that happen?

SHANNON

Hit and run. They figure he was drunk. Never did find him.

BECKETT

She was discovered on the back steps of your studio. Is there any reason why she would have been there?

SHANNON

I can't understand that myself. But she was here earlier that evening.

BECKETT

She was?

SHANNON

We hold our social dance every Sunday from 7 to 9. Veronika and Chad performed a dance that night. Everyone had left by a quarter to ten. My son and I tidied up, then we left.

BECKETT

What time did Veronika leave?

SHANNON

As soon as she finished signing photos, which was about 8:30.

BECKETT

She left alone?

SHANNON

As far as I could see.

Beckett digests this.

CASTLE

How many people show up to these dances?

SHANNON

Normally we get about fifty. But we had well over a hundred that night.

BECKETT

Do you have a list?

SHANNON

I have a sign in sheet.

Shannon rises and leaves the room.

BECKETT

I'm surprised.

CASTLE

About what?

She picks up the photo album.

BECKETT

That you would do something like this. At an age when most boys are into comic books and baseball.

CASTLE

I was.

(sighs)

I was drafted. Shannon's mother and my mother were BFFs and when my mother found out Shannon needed a partner, they both decided I was it.

Flipping through the album, Beckett pauses with a chuckle.

BECKETT

Are you supposed to be a Spanish matador?

Castle grabs the album and snaps it shut. Shannon re-enters and hands Beckett the list. Beckett rises and Castle follows suit.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time, Ms. Walsh.
(hesitates)

Is it possible we could have a word with Chad Devine?

SHANNON

Chad? Well, he has a private lesson at the moment but he should be done soon.

INT. DANCE STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

Shannon leads Beckett and Castle to a door with a window in it. They peer inside the

INT. DANCE STUDIO REHEARSAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where CHAD DEVINE, a sinfully handsome Romeo in his early 30's, is practicing a foxtrot with RITA, 60.

INT. DANCE STUDIO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Shannon gestures to a pair of padded benches in the hall before excusing herself. Beckett and Castle sit, finding a girl, LINLEY, 21, looking like Chad's next appointment, already sitting opposite. Linley looks up from her phone.

LINLEY

Are you cops?

CASTLE

She is.

LINLEY

I guess you're here about Veronika.
It really is a tragedy.

BECKETT

Did you know her?

Linley shakes her head.

LINLEY

I met her for the first time that night, the night she died. I can understand why Chad wanted to get back together with her. They're just amazing together.

She looks at her phone.

LINLEY (CONT'D)

I have this video of their tango.
Do you want to see it?

BECKETT

Sure.

Linley moves to Beckett's other side. Castle puts an arm around Beckett and edges closer so he can watch it too.

Linley's phone screen shows Chad and Veronika engaged in a sexually charged tango in the main room of the studio. People are watching from around the dance floor.

LINLEY

You can feel the chemistry between them. It's just incredible.

CASTLE

She was hot.

LINLEY

She was like the queen of the ball. All the men wanted to dance with her. But she only did that one dance with Chad.

CASTLE

Sounds like she may have broken some hearts along the way. I hear she was his former partner. Why did they break up?

LINLEY

Morris Applebaum. Two-time champ at Blackpool. She and Chad were already on their way to the top. Maybe she thought she'd get there faster with Morris.

BECKETT

And how did Chad take it?

LINLEY

Badly, I suppose. After he and Veronika broke up, he helped Shannon start this studio. He's only been competing pro-am. He hasn't taken another professional partner since Veronika.

CASTLE

But a reunion was in the works?

LINLEY

(nods)

She wanted him back. He couldn't tell me for sure that he could continue teaching me. But I guess that's all behind us now.

BECKETT

Could I have a copy of this video?

The door opens and CHAD and RITA emerge.

RITA

Can you make it eight instead of seven on Thursday?

CHAD

No problem.

She squeezes his arm possessively and shoots Linley a superior look as she saunters off. Linley pulls a face.

BECKETT

Mr. Devine, I'm with the NYPD. Could I ask you a few questions?

CHAD

Sure. Linley, can you wait a few?

LINLEY

I can stay later if I have to.

CHAD

Cool. Officers?

He steps back and Beckett and Castle step into the

INT. DANCE STUDIO REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

CHAD

Veronika called me out of the blue about a month ago. She wanted us to compete together again. Not only that, but she had sponsors willing to finance a new line of dance studios. She wanted me to help promote and run them.

BECKETT

Is that why she came to New York?

CHAD

Yeah, I wanted to make sure there was a contract involved. That she wouldn't pull the rug out from underneath me.

BECKETT

Like last time?

Chad smiles wryly and takes a swig from his water bottle.

CHAD

She fell hard for Morris. He was technically an excellent dancer but one of the most obstinate cold-blooded human beings I've ever had the privilege, if you could call it that, to meet.

Beckett consults her notebook.

BECKETT

Morris Applebaum? Where is he now?

CHAD

Still in ye olde England. He dumped her, eventually. Separately, they were both top dancers but together they were a disaster. Veronika was fire and he was ice.

CASTLE

Did she have any rivals, any contentious relationships? Would this Morris have had it in for her?

CHAD

(chuckles)

He just goes on to the next one.

(thinking)

If she had any enemies, I wouldn't know who they were. It's been over three years since I'd seen her.

(realizing)

Are you saying she wasn't murdered by the Slasher?

BECKETT

We're just exploring all the options, Mr. Devine.

He walks them to the door.

CASTLE

You said you were discussing a deal to open more studios over in Europe. What would happen to this one?

CHAD

I'd be pulling out. There's no way I could continue teaching here. I told Shannon after Veronika made her initial offer. I felt guilty because I knew she'd have a rough time of it. Not to be immodest or anything, but I bring in close to seventy percent of the business.

INT. PRECINCT, BREAKROOM - DAY

Beckett refills her coffee cup, then notices the blue Chewy's box on the table. Looking around to make sure no one sees, she carefully opens it, only to find it empty. She chucks the box into a trash receptacle.

RYAN

You gotta be fast. That thing empties in thirty seconds flat.

BECKETT

Then why keep the box?

RYAN

I don't know. It kind of upgrades
the break area. I got the financials
on that dance studio.

He hands her the papers and they walk back.

INT. PRECINCT - BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

BECKETT

Hmm, Devine was right. She wouldn't
have survived without him. Can you
do me a favor and look up a Morris
Applebaum, currently living in London.
I want to know his whereabouts the
night Veronika was murdered.

Ryan heads for his desk while Beckett finds Castle at hers,
watching the video Linley had provided on her computer.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Reliving your glory days?

Castle quickly relinquishes her seat for his, but pulls it
closer.

CASTLE

I've been trying to get a handle on
this Veronika. Take a look.

He restarts the video. Chad and Veronika finish their dance.
There is applause and the couple bows. Veronika flashes her
megawatt smile and throws out kisses. A fan passes her a
bouquet of flowers.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

I mean, they do a little dance and
she acts like they're at the Olympics.

BECKETT

Ballroom dance is a sport?

CASTLE

Some professionals consider it to
be. What do you think?

The video now shows Veronika sitting at a table, signing
pictures of herself. She laughs and rises to sign a male
fan's chest.

BECKETT
She reminds me of a certain someone.

CASTLE
Really? Who?

BECKETT
Esposito, how are you doing on that list?

At a nearby desk, Esposito turns in his seat.

ESPOSITO
Nada. A few minor traffic violations here and there. Except for this one. We ran a sting on a male escort service several years ago and a 'Rita McKenzie' was one of their customers.

CASTLE
Rita? That same old biddy we saw at the studio? She can't be a day under 60.

Beckett reaches for the phone.

BECKETT
Let's find out.

INT. ANTIQUE STORE - DAY

Rita is helping a customer while Beckett and Castle linger near her office area. He picks up a silver plated letter opener.

CASTLE
Mrs. Peacock in the parlor with a letter opener? Or...

He bends over a bucket and pulls something out.

CASTLE (CONT'D)
On the patio with an ice pick?

Beckett leans over a display of antique daggers. Castle joins her.

CASTLE (CONT'D)
Or on the dance floor with a dagger?
That's quite a selection. I wonder if she packs one wherever she goes?

Rita finishes up and joins them. She is dressed elegantly, a woman of old money and good taste.

RITA
How can I help you?

BECKETT
Did you know Veronika Kardos, Ms.
McKenzie?

RITA
Only by reputation.

BECKETT
You've never met?

RITA
When she first arrived in New York,
she dropped by the studio, right
before my lesson with Chad. She had
the gall to offer me some 'tips' on
improving my performance.

BECKETT
I can see you weren't friends.

RITA
Friends? I wouldn't friend that
twit if she begged me. I know, I
shouldn't speak ill of the dead but
I'm not at all surprised someone had
it in for her.

BECKETT
Did you have any idea who would have
wanted her dead?

RITA
Oh, I imagine she had plenty of
rivals. Not that she made much of a
splash with that Applebaum fellow.

BECKETT
Were you at the dance that Sunday?

RITA
No. I told Chad I couldn't attend.
The thought of watching him with her--
(shudders)
I have to commend Shannon for letting
them do that show at the studio,
knowing full well Veronika was
stealing Chad away.

BECKETT
So you know about her offer?

RITA
Of course. Chad tells me everything.

CASTLE
It must have come as a shock, knowing he was going to leave the studio.

RITA
Yes, well, we've blazed quite a path through the pro-am circuit. I'm not sure I'd be able to do the same with another teacher. Certainly not Oliver.

BECKETT
Oliver?

RITA
He's the other male pro at the studio. Younger, less experienced, he's quite suitable for all the *beginning* dancers.

BECKETT
Ms. McKenzie, could you tell me where you were that night between the hours of 11 and 2?

RITA
You don't think---well, honestly! I was at home, in bed, asleep, as most women my age are bound to be.

Rita squirms nervously under Beckett's steady gaze.

RITA (CONT'D)
Well, I did have a date that evening.

CASTLE
With Richard Gere?
(to Beckett)
American Gigolo.

RITA
We had dinner at a little bistro called Angelo's and then went to my apartment. He left around midnight.

BECKETT
And we can verify that--

RITA
With the doorman.
(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

Now, if you're looking for any funny business around that studio, you'd best ask about the Phantom.

BECKETT

Phantom?

CASTLE

As in ghost, specter?

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Beckett and Castle are talking to TWO TEENAGE COUPLES while Oliver is working on the dance floor with another couple.

BOY 1

It's a myth.

GIRL 2

No, it's true! If you have the last lesson at night, there's a chance you'll see him.

GIRL 1

Or dance with him.

CASTLE

So he's not a ghost?

GIRL 2

I hear he wears a suit, with a cloak and a mask.

(looks up)

Ask Linley! She's seen him!

Linley arrives for her lesson, accompanied by a shy lanky boy of about 19, TREVOR. He heads over to a desk where he dumps his backpack.

LINLEY

Seen who?

CASTLE

The Phantom.

LINLEY

Have I? I've danced with him, twice.

BECKETT

So this is a real person.

LINLEY

I was in this room and Chad was locking up when the music started. And then the Phantom sailed in. And he stretched out his hand like we were in some old Fred Astaire movie. He taught me some new steps. It was awesome.

BOY 2

It must have been Chad punking you.

LINLEY

(shakes her head)

Chad showed up just as we were done and the Phantom took off.

BOY 2

Oliver?

LINLEY

Too short.

BOY 2

How about Trevor?

He indicates the boy behind them, sitting at the desk.

LINLEY

(pulls a face)

He was very elegant and stately. And he had this musty old guy smell.

BECKETT

Could it have been a friend of Ms. Walsh's?

LINLEY

I knew exactly who it was.

She walks over to a picture next to Shannon's office door. Underneath a sign labeled 'Our Founder' is an old b/w photo of a middle-aged man in a tux, 'Charles Toombs 1929-2007'.

LINLEY (CONT'D)

It was him.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. CASTLE'S LOFT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Castle glides into the room holding aloft a small Chewy's box like a pizza. ALEXIS, 16, sits at the bar finishing her homework while MARTHA, his mother, fixes a cup of tea.

CASTLE

And the prodigal son returns.

ALEXIS

(brightens)

Chewy's?

He pops open the box invitingly.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)

I'm surprised, after that lecture you gave us the other day about eating healthy.

He pulls out a Danish.

CASTLE

This one is filled with strawberry-rhubarb. A fruit *and* a vegetable. That's what I call a win-win.

Alexis grabs a pastry but Martha is fighting the impulse.

MARTHA

How dare you bring that into the house when you know I have my final fitting for the play tomorrow. Chinese silk is very unforgiving.

CASTLE

They must have accidentally slipped in this custard-filled eclair, which happens to be one of your favorites, mother. What a pity.

He strides over to the trash bin and--

MARTHA

Oh, give it over. I'll eat half and add a cardio to my workout tomorrow.

She takes the pastry.

ALEXIS

How's the case?

CASTLE

Very perplexing. One possible suspect has been dead for several years, yet he was recently seen tripping the light fantastic.

ALEXIS

A zombie?

CASTLE

(winces)

I hope not. The Viennese waltz is usually not a part of their repertoire.

MARTHA

The Light Fantastic? Oh, your old friend Shannon, the one you used to dance with, opened a studio with that name.

CASTLE

I know. The murder happened behind her studio.

ALEXIS

Dance? You used to dance?

MARTHA

And he did so divinely, like a young Fred Astaire. My genes of course. I think I still have those photos.

Martha hurries out of the room.

ALEXIS

Gee, I just can't picture you--

CASTLE

That's fine. Let's hope she lost that album.

Martha returns.

MARTHA

Here it is!

She opens a small album and Alexis pores over the pictures.

ALEXIS

Wow, these outfits! You look really cool, dad!

CASTLE

I do?

MARTHA

He stuck it out for only a year.
Such a gifted dancer too.

CASTLE

Well, I do have a natural sense of
rhythm.

ALEXIS

I don't understand. Why did you
give it up if you were so good at
it?

CASTLE

(vaguely)
I had other commitments.

MARTHA

He was just overly sensitive to his
friends' remarks. Really, just
because they called you 'Twinkle
Toes'; they were only jealous.

CASTLE

That was not out of jealousy.

ALEXIS

You shouldn't let peer pressure get
in the way of doing something you
love.

CASTLE

That is true. But the dancing was
just a hobby, a short-term hobby.

MARTHA

He loved it. He just wouldn't admit
it. The girls were all over him.
Shannon had to work hard to keep
them from stealing him. She even
got into a cat fight, behind the
studio one day.

CASTLE

(frowning)
I don't remember that.

MARTHA

Of course, you don't. I didn't tell
you. Your head was swollen enough
already.

Alexis closes the album wistfully.

ALEXIS

I wish I'd been around to see you dance.

CASTLE

We had the father-daughter dance when you were in second grade, remember?

ALEXIS

Barely, but that's different.

MARTHA

Oh, now you've done it!

They look up. She indicates an empty dessert plate.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

You distracted me, so I ate the whole thing.

She tosses a napkin aside in disgust.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

That's it! I'm going to my room to do some yoga!

CASTLE

Working on your Flying Crow?

MARTHA

No, Curse the Sun!

She exits in a huff.

INT. MORGUE, DR. PARISH'S OFFICE - MORNING

DR. LANIE PARISH is going over the Slasher vic photos, comparing them to those of Veronika Kardos, with Beckett and a distracted Castle.

LANIE

The knife used in the Slasher murders was small and sharp, something easy to conceal under a coat.

Lanie reaches for a picture of Veronika.

LANIE (CONT'D)

On Veronika, it looks like a typical butcher block carving knife.

(MORE)

LANIE (CONT'D)

And from the angle of entry, I'd say our killer was a lefty.

BECKETT

The Slasher is right-handed.

LANIE

Correct. The smudged blood on the legs are there, but it's as if this killer just placed them there as a token. The real Slasher actually spent some time fondling his vic's legs.

BECKETT

It's as if someone read the accounts in the papers and reenacted the murder based on those details.

LANIE

So you think a copycat is on the loose?

BECKETT

I think this was someone Ms. Kardos knew.

The women glance at Castle who is staring into space.

INT. MORGUE, HALLWAY - DAY

Castle and Beckett leave the morgue.

CASTLE

Aren't we going to follow up on that Phantom story?

BECKETT

(bemused)

The NYPD doesn't handle ghosts. Besides, what would his motive be for killing Veronika? Unless her mode of dress offended his mid-century sensibilities.

CASTLE

Actually, burlesque dancers were much more risqué. And then you have those short skirts the flappers wore. Maybe he knew Veronika's appearance meant the studio would shut down. He'd lose his home.

Beckett sighs.

BECKETT

You're just afraid I'm going to arrest your girlfriend.

CASTLE

She's not my girlfriend.

BECKETT

So far, she's the only one with a motive. And her alibi isn't that watertight either. Her son is the only one who can say they went home before 11.

CASTLE

Shannon wouldn't kill someone, especially when her son is right there in the studio with her.

BECKETT

He could have gone home ahead of her.

CASTLE

Seems unlikely.

BECKETT

You're right. Maybe we should have a word with him. He was there for the entire evening; he might have seen a possible suspect.

CASTLE

There you go.

EXT. UNIVERSITY GROUNDS - DAY

Trevor Walsh, 19, the tall shy boy who we saw before in the studio with Linley, and Beckett and Castle are seated on benches in the parklike grounds.

TREVOR

I-I didn't know her that well. Linley said she was very famous in Europe.

BECKETT

Did you see anything unusual or out-of-the-ordinary the night she died?

TREVOR

(shakes head)

It was very crowded. We had to turn some people away. But they waited outside until she came out, so they still got their autographs.

BECKETT

Did your mother get along with Ms. Kardos?

TREVOR

Not really. I mean, you know what was going to happen, with Chad leaving? Mom was stressed out about it. Especially that night, she--

He shifts nervously.

BECKETT

She what?

TREVOR

(reluctantly)

She complained that Chad promised they would do three dances. Mom told everyone they'd be doing three dances, but Veronika wanted to do only one. In the end, they did just the tango.

BECKETT

She must have been upset.

Trevor nods abruptly.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

You can confirm that you were both home by 11?

TREVOR

I was in bed about midnight. Mom stayed up. She likes to bake when she's stressed out.

Beckett and Castle exchange a look.

CASTLE

Have you heard about this Phantom?

TREVOR

(smiles nervously)

That's just a rumor. I've never seen him.

CASTLE

That girl Linley has. And apparently Chad and a few others. You've never crossed paths?

TREVOR

No. I, uh, have a class in a few minutes. Can I go now?

BECKETT

Sure. Thank you for your time.

Trevor shoulders his backpack and leaves. Beckett and Castle walk back to the car.

CASTLE

He knows.

BECKETT

Knows what?

CASTLE

Who the Phantom is.

BECKETT

I think what's more important is that we now know your girlfriend had both the motive and opportunity to kill Veronika Kardos.

CASTLE

Shannon did not kill anyone. I would stake my own life on that.

BECKETT

Then you need to help me prove that she didn't.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. PRECINCT - BULLPEN - DAY

Beckett finishes signing a paper and proffers it to Esposito.

BECKETT

I need a warrant for the dance studio.

CASTLE

Hey, wait!

Castle hurries up and grabs the paper from Esposito.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Let's not be hasty.

Beckett pulls the paper out of his grasp.

BECKETT

You are interfering with an investigation.

CASTLE

Let me talk to her first.

BECKETT

And give her time to hide any evidence?

CASTLE

Look, if she did it, the evidence would be long gone by now. Shannon was always thorough and meticulous. Just give me a day.

BECKETT

It'll take at least that long to get the warrant approved.

Beckett hands it to Esposito.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

(to Castle)

Go ahead.

CASTLE

Thanks.

Beckett watches him walk away. Ryan casually sidles up, a file in his hand.

RYAN

You're not worried?

BECKETT

About what?

RYAN

Oh, his rekindling a relationship with his childhood sweetheart. You hear about those all the time. They reconnect, get married, start posting all those sappy status updates like my ex-girlfriend does.

(checks his phone)

BECKETT

My only concern is whether or not she's guilty of a crime.

RYAN

Right.

Ryan moves on with a chuckle. Beckett settles at her desk but she is definitely distracted.

INT. UPSCALE PUB - EVENING

A busboy removes the remnants of Rick and Shannon's meal. They've both relaxed with a couple of beers.

SHANNON

And that time you put that dead mouse in Mrs. Grechowski's shoe?

CASTLE

You double dog dared me.

SHANNON

(laughing)

I'll never forget her scream.

CASTLE

And she immediately thought it was Everett.

SHANNON

Oh, he got blamed for everything. Why did we do that to him?

CASTLE

We were her star couple. We could do no wrong.

The waiter leaves separate checks. Rick tries to take both but she snaps hers up.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

As independent as ever.

SHANNON

Oh, Ricky, I know this date isn't entirely social.

She tucks in her credit card while Castle does the same.

CASTLE

This doesn't feel like business.

SHANNON

You think I had something to do with Veronika's demise. And I can't blame you.

She takes a sip of her beer.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I resented her from the start. It was difficult to be cordial with her, even more so with her personality. It was hard to believe I used to have an ego like that.

Castle reaches out to her hand on the table, squeezes it.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

What would have happened if you'd stayed with me, if we'd kept dancing?

CASTLE

I wouldn't be a writer.

SHANNON

No, you'd be a successful dancer. We'd have a studio together. I'd still have my leg. But not Trevor.

CASTLE

What happened to your husband?

SHANNON

Mike?

(sigh)

He was returning from a competition upstate. Decided he'd drive through the night instead of spending the money on a hotel room. He must have been tired. His car went off the road and hit a utility pole. They say he died instantly.

CASTLE

I'm sorry.

SHANNON

So was I. I lost my mother that same year. Sold her house and used the money to open the studio with Chad. Things started to look up.

The waiter returns with their checks. Shannon examines hers, then Castle notices her sign it with her left hand. She puts it aside.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

What do you think, Ricky? Do you think I killed her?

CASTLE

I, uh . . .

EXT. SHANNON'S APARTMENT BLDG - NIGHT

Castle and Shannon exit the taxi, which remains at the curb. He walks her to the front of the building, an arm around her. Shannon turns to him.

SHANNON

Now you can prove to me this date was entirely social.

They eye each other soberly, then Rick leans forward and gently kisses her on the mouth. They look at each other again and burst out laughing.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

That felt like one of the fake kisses you gave me when we were twelve.

CASTLE

That wasn't intentional.

SHANNON

Some things never change.

Castle suddenly bestows her a longer, decidedly more mature kiss. He pulls away and she is silent.

CASTLE

But people do. Change.

Shannon nods and pulls away, going into the building. Castle glances up at a window and sees a shadow disappear, the blinds swaying slightly. Thoughtfully, he walks back to the taxi.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO, REAR ALLEY - MORNING

Beckett is coordinating the police search and removal of items from the studio when Castle hurriedly exits a taxi.

CASTLE

Hey, hey, I thought you gave me a day, as in 24 hours?

BECKETT

I didn't realize the warrant would be approved so quickly. Most people believe Veronika is still a part of the Stalker murders.

CASTLE

You could have given me a heads up.

BECKETT

Why? Castle, I think you need to back out of this case. You have a personal involvement with a suspect and that's a conflict of interest.

CASTLE

I want to find the killer too, the real killer. How is that a conflict of interest?

Castle notices Shannon, Trevor and Oliver standing to one side and walks over. Shannon smiles bravely.

SHANNON

I suppose I should have expected this.

CASTLE

It'll be over soon and you can get back to business.

OLIVER

That is, if the Bluebottles don't confiscate the stereo. I have a class starting in an hour.

Castle gives Shannon a comfort hug, which Beckett witnesses. Beckett quickly walks into the studio.

INT. DANCE STUDIO, KITCHEN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Beckett looks around the well-stocked break area and notices a wood block filled with knives.

INT. DANCE STUDIO, HALLWAY - DAY

Linley hurries in, spotting Castle, who is looking at pictures on the wall.

LINLEY

Trevor texted me. He said the police were here!

CASTLE

The fun is over. They're in a conference call with the lawyer.

He indicates Shannon's closed office door then points at a picture on the wall, showing a 19 year old Shannon with a partner and two other dancing couples.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Is this Shannon and her husband?

LINLEY

No, that's Adam Ferry. He was her partner for about a year. This is Mike.

She points to the man standing next to another older girl.

LINLEY (CONT'D)

He used to dance with Cora Lemus.

CASTLE

And the third couple?

LINLEY

Viktor and Maria Csorba. They were cousins. This group was the top dancers in America in the 1990's.

CASTLE

So they were all friends?

LINLEY

Well, friends and rivals. Frenemies?

CLOSE-UP on the photo.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOURINT. PRECINCT - BULLPEN - DAY

The phone on Beckett's desk rings. She picks it up.

BECKETT

Beckett. Uh-huh. I see. Thanks.

She hangs up and mentally digests the latest development, but she is not happy.

Beckett ambles over to Vinci's desk where Vinci and Ryan are in discussion. She slumps into an empty chair and stares at the murder board for the Slasher which displays four victims. The third, formerly Veronika, has been X'd out.

VINCI

How's the case?

BECKETT

I wish the Slasher killed her.

VINCI

That bad, huh?

BECKETT

They found the murder weapon in the studio. A knife in the kitchen had a trace of Veronika's blood underneath the handle.

RYAN

Sounds like a breakthrough to me.

VINCI

I could use one of those. We were so sure we had a pattern locked in. Exactly two weeks between each vic. But he just missed that window.

BECKETT

Maybe he's done.

VINCI

I don't know. I got a feeling this Reaper hasn't finished harvesting his field.

Welcoming the distraction, Beckett leans forward and reads some of the details of the various murders.

BECKETT

You found dog hair on the first and second vics?

VINCI

We got it narrowed down to a German Shepherd or some kind of mix. But we had a police dog on the scene of both, so that may have been compromised.

BECKETT

Stomach contents of second and third were similar.

VINCI

Some type of cinnamon pastry. But there are a heck lotta donut shops open at that hour.

RYAN

Yeah, I know one that has a 99-cent midnight churro special.

ALL

(simultaneously)
Chewy's.

Vinci rises to look at the map.

VINCI

Smack dab in the middle of it all.
(grabs her bag)
Come on, Ryan, I hear they do killer empanadas. My treat.

They leave Beckett behind.

INT. PRECINCT, INTERROGATION ROOM/OBSERVATION - DAY

Castle, a file tucked under his arm, strides over to where Montgomery and Esposito are watching through the window.

CASTLE

Have you seen Beckett?

CAPTAIN MONTGOMERY

Right here.

Castle looks through the window.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beckett is interviewing Shannon, who is accompanied by a lawyer.

SHANNON

We did use knives and other cutlery to prepare the food for the party.

BECKETT

Did you see anyone else in the kitchen that night? Anyone who shouldn't have been there?

SHANNON

I didn't really visit the kitchen while the party was in progress, so I don't know.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM/OBSERVATION - CONTINUOUS

CASTLE

Wait a minute!

He tries to go in but Esposito collars him.

ESPOSITO

If she wanted you here, she would've called you.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

BECKETT

You were the only one who used the knives that evening?

SHANNON

Linley arrived early and helped slice up some cheese.

BECKETT

What about the following morning?

SHANNON

I received the phone call, about a woman being found dead behind the studio. I had no idea it was Veronika. I went into the kitchen around noon, washed up all the cutlery, and put it away.

BECKETT

There were no traces of blood? On a utensil or in the sink?

SHANNON

No. Not that I was looking for it
but no, I saw nothing.

Beckett contemplates Shannon, then reviews her notes.

BECKETT

The only people with keys to the
studio are you and two instructors,
Chad Devine and Oliver Dodson. Could
anyone else have a copy of the key?
The cleaning crew?

SHANNON

I let them in myself on Friday
mornings. There's no one else.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM/OBSERVATION - CONTINUOUS

CASTLE

She's arresting her?

CAPT. MONTGOMERY

Not today.

Montgomery leaves. Castle and Esposito watch as Beckett and Shannon rise. Shannon leaves with her lawyer. Castle hangs back so he isn't spotted.

INT. PRECINCT - BULLPEN - DAY

Castle catches up to Beckett.

CASTLE

Miss me?

BECKETT

Why are you here?

CASTLE

Because I don't believe in
coincidence.

They sit at Beckett's desk and he opens up a file.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

What if the hit-and-run incident,
the death of her husband, and Veronika
Kardos's murder were all connected?

Beckett leans back in her chair, eyeing him skeptically.

BECKETT

Okay, shoot.

Castle pulls out a copy of the picture of Shannon with her rivals.

CASTLE

These were Shannon's rivals, except Shannon hooked up with Cora Lemus's partner, Mike Walsh. What if Cora resented her for that?

BECKETT

You think she was behind the hit and run?

CASTLE

Most likely her, with some possible involvement from the Csorbas. They're not exactly your clean-cut American kids. Both their fathers did time for money laundering and tax evasion.

Castle finds another paper.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Cora and the Csorbas were both present at the competition, right before the hit and run. As for Mike Walsh, the event he competed at before he met his demise shows Cora Lemus in attendance.

BECKETT

So how is Veronika connected?

CASTLE

Veronica is a member of the Csorba family. An interview with her here mentions how her Aunt Maria coached her in her teenage years.

BECKETT

That doesn't explain who killed her and why.

CASTLE

What if Cora discovered Veronika's plan and was afraid she would blab about her involvement with the hit-and-run and Mike's death?

BECKETT

That's assuming Veronika knew.

CASTLE

Cora Lemus married a fairly prominent banker in London several years ago. She wouldn't want her reputation endangered.

Beckett considers this.

BECKETT

I'll look into it. But Shannon isn't out of the woods yet. Her prints are the only ones we found on the murder weapon.

She rises and reaches for her bag.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

If Chad and Oliver have rock solid alibis, I may have no choice but to bring her in.

Beckett starts to walk away, leaving a brooding Castle. Then stops.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Well?

Castle scrambles to his feet and joins her.

CASTLE

(happily)
You missed me.

Beckett's retort is delayed by Ryan's sudden appearance.

RYAN

You guys kiss and make up?

Beckett looks even more pissed now, but Ryan continues.

RYAN (CONT'D)

That Chewy's lead has been a wash so far. They get like a thousand customers at that time of night. I even asked the blind pan handler a block away but he said he didn't see anything unusual.

He and Castle have a good laugh.

BECKETT

The counter people didn't see the girls?

RYAN

Oh, they did, or at least, they think they did. I've got the surveillance tape, so I'm going through that.

INT. DANCE STUDIO, REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

Beckett and Castle are interviewing Chad and Oliver in a corner of the room.

CHAD

We went home right after the party. Oliver and I are roommates.

BECKETT

You stayed home all evening?

CHAD

(amused)

What is this? Are we under suspicion now?

OLIVER

That's ridiculous. If the police did their job properly, they would have caught the Slasher by now.

CHAD

Oliver.

(to Beckett)

We were home all night. I got a call from Shannon the following day about the murder. It wasn't until evening that we learned the victim was Veronika.

BECKETT

Did Veronika mention any plans she had for the day after the party? Was she planning to meet anyone?

CHAD

If she did, she didn't tell me. Our relationship has always been strictly business.

CASTLE

We saw a video of you two dancing at the party. You're saying there was never anything hot and heavy?

CHAD

Part of dancing is creating that illusion of intimacy. People liked to believe we still had that connection off the dance floor. We don't go out of our way to dispel that illusion.

BECKETT

Veronika received a call to her cell at about 11:45 that night. They traced the number to a pay phone about a block away.

CHAD

We were home.

BECKETT

There was no argument or disagreement with Veronika at the party? Between you and her or any other people?

CHAD

Why should there be? We were about to enter into a very lucrative agreement.

OLIVER

I did see her in the kitchen with Shannon. I went to tell her that the guests had started to arrive. She and Veronika were arguing.

CHAD

I don't remember this.

OLIVER

You were helping Trevor move a table.

BECKETT

Did you hear anything specific?

OLIVER

(thinking)

Shannon said, 'I don't care if he's dead now. We still have a score to settle.'

CASTLE

Who is the guy she's referring to?

Oliver glances at Chad, who shrugs.

OLIVER
Haven't a clue.

INT. DANCE STUDIO, OFFICE - DAY

Beckett and Castle wait for Shannon as she finishes teaching a childrens' class. Her son, Trevor, is assisting. Linley walks in, ready for her lesson. She joins them.

LINLEY
I like seeing Trevor work with the kids. He used to compete too.

CASTLE
Why did he quit?

LINLEY
Oh, it was kind of a traumatic experience. He had a very demanding partner and, you know, when he's nervous and starts making mistakes, it just snowballs. One time, he messed up so badly that she screamed at him in front of everyone: the judges, the audience, the other dancers. He decided to give it up.

BECKETT
He seems like a capable instructor.

LINLEY
Oh, he is, he's great with kids. He won't teach adults, though.

Chad hails Linley, and she leaves with him.

The class breaks up and Shannon joins them.

INT. DANCE STUDIO, OFFICE - DAY

Shannon is seated behind her desk, facing Beckett and Castle.

SHANNON
It's true. But it wasn't an argument. More like a disagreement.

BECKETT
You referred to someone who was dead and that it wasn't over yet.

SHANNON
Veronika's uncle is Viktor Cserbo, a former dancer I knew.

(MORE)

SHANNON (CONT'D)

He died recently. Veronika said that Viktor told her who was behind the hit and run accident that took my leg. But she wouldn't tell me unless I promised not to sue Chad for breach of contract.

CASTLE

What contract?

SHANNON

Though I consider him part owner of the studio, technically, Chad is a contractor. He signed an agreement that's supposed to last another two years.

BECKETT

Were you really going to sue him?

SHANNON

I have no choice unless he could help me find a replacement who's equally well-known. But most pros at his level already have studios of their own.

Beckett's cell phone rings and she answers it.

BECKETT

Beckett. Alright, we'll be right there.

(to Castle)

Ryan found something.

INT. PRECINCT, BULLPEN - DAY

Beckett and Castle hurry over to Ryan's desk, where he is looking at a computer monitor.

RYAN

You know, I pulled up the video for the evening Veronika Kardos died, just for the heck of it, and then I saw this guy.

He replays it. We see a grainy image of Chad Devine approaching the counter. The time is 12:03 am.

CASTLE

Mr. Chad Devine, who said he was at home with his roommate.

RYAN

Just in time for the 99-cent churro special.

BECKETT

He lied. They both lied. But why?

CLOSE on MONITOR again, where Chad leaves with his purchase.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVEINT. PRECINCT, INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

An agitated Chad Devine is being grilled by Beckett and Castle.

CHAD

Look, I didn't call her. I have no motive whatsoever for killing Veronika.

BECKETT

You haven't explained why you lied about your whereabouts.

CHAD

(reluctantly)
I went to see someone.

CASTLE

Veronika?

CHAD

No, a friend. Someone I see every now and then.

INT. UPSCALE NY APARTMENT BLDG, HALLWAY - DAY

Beckett raps on the door as she and Castle wait. The door opens and ED SHATKIN, a nattily dressed man in his late 40's answers, a cat in his arms.

BECKETT

Edward Shatkin? Detective Beckett with the NYPD.

ED

Chad told me to expect you. Come in.

INT. UPSCALE NY APT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is cluttered with movie memorabilia and film posters. Castle is distracted by the barbaric display of metal masks, weaponry, and instruments of torture on one wall.

ED

I'm a film director. I'm not sure if you've seen my films; they're mostly horror.

CASTLE

The Scarecrow series. Oh man, the original mask from 'Return of the Metal Reaper'?

ED

(pleased)
You've seen it?

CASTLE

Late at night, when my daughter's in bed. And I'm usually up the rest of the night.

BECKETT

Mr. Shatkin, can you confirm that Chad Devine was with you that evening?

ED

Why, yes, he arrived about 12:30 or so and left at about 5 in the morning. I offered to make him breakfast but he was in a hurry to leave.

BECKETT

Why was that?

ED

He didn't want to be seen leaving my apartment. Chad is, how can I say it, not quite out of the closet yet. As a well-known professional dancer, he has a certain image to maintain. I know there's less stigma involving sexual orientation these days, but dancers, well...

CASTLE

Need to maintain that illusion.

ED

Especially now he was reuniting with Veronika. That partnership might not appear to sizzle as much if people knew he was gay.

INT. BECKETT'S UNMARKED - LATE AFTERNOON

Beckett and Castle settle into the car but she doesn't start the engine.

CASTLE

What are you thinking?

BECKETT

That I'd really like one of those
caramel-filled churros from Chewy's.

CASTLE

How about I take you there for their
midnight special? Only you have to
change into something girly.

BECKETT

I'm not a girly girl.

CASTLE

You are when you make the effort.

BECKETT

You realize we're back to square
one? Your girlfriend is still my
Number One suspect.

CASTLE

She's not.

Beckett looks at him.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

My girlfriend.

Beckett starts the car.

INT. PRECINCT, BULLPEN - EVENING

Esposito hands Beckett a file.

ESPOSITO

That report on Mike Walsh. You might
want to get a good look at the scratch
marks on the side of that car,
especially the driver's mirror.

BECKETT

Thanks.

ESPOSITO

You staying on?

BECKETT

Just killing time. I have a date
later. Sort of.

Esposito leaves. Beckett opens the file and studies the
photo of Mike Walsh's wrecked vehicle. Frowning, she reaches
for a magnifying glass.

There are definitely scratch marks and possibly paint from another vehicle on the driver's side mirror casing.

Beckett pulls out the picture of the three dancing couples and studies it before turning to the computer and initiating a search.

The computer monitor shows an article headlined 'Head of Flemings Bank marries dancer Cora Lemus.' There is a picture of the wedding party. Cora, about 40 in the picture, looks radiant next to her much older groom. Beckett skims over the text and pauses. She has found something.

INT. CASTLE'S LOFT, DINING AREA - NIGHT

Castle, Martha, and Alexis are finishing up their dinner.

MARTHA

I see no problem in selling discounted tickets to my play through your website. Your readers will be getting an excellent deal.

CASTLE

You do like to exploit nepotism to its fullest.

MARTHA

Well, of course, what else is family for?

Castle's cell phone RINGS and he checks the number.

CASTLE

Ah, my date for the evening. Hope she's not canceling. Yo!
(listening)
I'll meet you there.
(hangs up, grim)
Beckett's headed for the dance studio. They're going to make an arrest.

ALEXIS

Is it Shannon?

MARTHA

Oh God, I'm sorry.

He grabs his blazer and heads for the door.

CASTLE

She's making a big mistake.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIXEXT. DANCE STUDIO, REAR ALLEY - NIGHT

Beckett, Esposito, Ryan and a bunch of cops are dressed in riot gear when Castle arrives by taxi. Beckett is directing the other cops.

BECKETT

Block off the front entrance.

Castle quickly grabs the Writers vest that Ryan holds up and shrugs it on.

CASTLE

Why didn't you just ask her to turn herself in? This is so unnecessary.

BECKETT

Hang back, Castle, and don't interfere.

Beckett tries the door. It is open.

INT. DANCE STUDIO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gun in hand, Beckett leads the way. They emerge in

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

The main room where music is playing. Linley is dancing with a silver-haired man in a suit, cape and mask.

CASTLE

The Phantom?

BECKETT

This is the police! Freeze!

The startled couple jumps apart. The Phantom makes a break for it, running down another hallway. Beckett and the others go in pursuit.

INT. DANCE STUDIO HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Beckett carefully checks each rehearsal room. They reach the final one and go in.

INT. DANCE STUDIO, REHEARSAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Phantom is halfway through a window.

BECKETT

Freeze!

Esposito and Ryan sprint forward, grab the Phantom's legs, yanking him back. All three men tumble back onto the floor.

Beckett trains her gun on the Phantom while the two other men pin him down. She reaches out and pulls off the mask, revealing Trevor Walsh, wearing a silver wig.

TREVOR
I didn't kill her!

BECKETT
Then why did you run?

TREVOR
I--I got scared.

We hear Linley's SCREAM in the background.

TREVOR (CONT'D)
Linley!

INT. DANCE STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Shannon and Chad have just exited her office, while Beckett, Castle, et al. emerge from the hallway. Another man in a cape and mask has Linley, holding a knife to her throat.

CASTLE
Another Phantom?

PHANTOM
Stay back!

He edges away from the group towards the hallway next to Shannon's office. As he shuffles, the knife hand pulls away from Linley's throat. She grabs his arm and bites down.

PHANTOM (CONT'D)
Ow!

She breaks away and he makes a run for it. As he passes Shannon, she sticks out her prosthetic leg. He trips and sprawls.

Beckett steps on the arm still holding the knife, pinning it down, so Esposito can take it away. He grabs the Phantom and shoves him back into the room. Beckett pulls off his mask to reveal Oliver Dodson.

BECKETT
Oliver is Cora Lemus's stepson.

Shannon gasps.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

You didn't know, did you? He's been working for you for 18 months and he never told you.

OLIVER

(to Shannon)

Cora hated you with all her heart, it just consumed her. She promised she'd help me patch up my relationship with my father if I came here and found a way to ruin your business.

SHANNON

But I don't understand. You were a fine teacher.

OLIVER

(tearful)

I couldn't do it. After I got to know you and especially Chad. You treated me like family. I was the happiest I'd ever been.

BECKETT

Why did you murder Veronika Kardos?

OLIVER

(hesitating)

I didn't--

CASTLE

Wait a minute. If Chad was with Ed Shatkin that night, then Oliver had no alibi.

OLIVER

I confronted her. She knew who I was, and I knew that her uncle was involved in the hit-and-run on Shannon. My stepmother rented the car he drove that night.

SHANNON

It was Viktor. I should have guessed. He was the only one not to visit me in the hospital afterwards.

OLIVER

Veronika knew all about it, yet she felt no remorse whatsoever in taking Chad away, even though it meant you'd go out of business. She was a selfish bitch.

BECKETT

You were the one who called her from the pay phone that night.

OLIVER

I told her that Chad wanted to meet her here, that he had a change of heart. She was so cheesed off, she couldn't get here fast enough. As I let her in through the door, I stabbed her.

He looks at Shannon and Chad.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

I did it for us. I did it for all of us.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - LATER

The lights have dimmed. Trevor and Linley are quietly practicing a few dance steps. Shannon and Castle are sitting, drinking wine.

CASTLE

What was the deal with the Phantom?

SHANNON

The boys thought it would be a good way to help some of the women, when they hit a wall. Sometimes it helps, to dance with someone else.

CASTLE

Looks like it hasn't hurt Trevor.

SHANNON

I hope he'll start dancing in public again. Maybe Linley will be the one.

Castle refills her wine glass.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

What will happen to her?

CASTLE

Cora? Well, Beckett tells me they're re-opening your hit-and-run case as well as having another look at your husband's death. But with Oliver's arrest, Cora's world should already be feeling some reverberation.

SHANNON

I did feel guilty when Mike fell for me. Cora was crazy in love with him. After the accident, I thought, maybe it's karma.

CASTLE

Murder and attempted murder are not karmic in the slightest. You didn't deserve any of what happened to you.

Shannon reaches out and squeezes his hand.

SHANNON

And you still owe me a dance. Do you still remember our ChaChaCha?

CASTLE

I can just barely recall. But you--

She rises and takes his hand.

SHANNON

I may not be able to dance at a championship level but I can still dance.

Linley puts on a Latin pop SONG.

Castle and Shannon face each other on the dance floor.

BEGIN DANCE SEQUENCE

YOUNG RICK and YOUNG SHANNON are 12-year-olds again, sparkling and magical in their performance costumes. Rick extends a hand, she takes it, and they begin a lively ChaChaCha.

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Beckett appears, entering through the back. She is dressed nicely in a short red skirt that bares her legs. She hesitates, holding back in the shadows, watching the couple.

BACK TO DANCE FLOOR

Young Rick and Young Shannon poignantly conclude their number.

END DANCE SEQUENCE

Linley and Trevor are clapping. Castle and Shannon are adults again.

SHANNON

Not bad.

She leans forward to hug Castle.

BACK TO HALLWAY

Where Beckett makes a strategic retreat.

EXT. CHEWY'S BAKERY - NIGHT

Beckett walks by a BLIND MAN sitting against a wall, his guide dog beside him.

BLIND MAN'S POV

Of Beckett's shapely legs as they go by. She crosses the street.

ON BLIND MAN

He grabs his cane and struggles to his feet.

BLIND MAN'S POV

He watches as Beckett stops to talk to Vinci, dressed like a prostitute, outside the shop. They both laugh and Beckett enters Chewy's while Vinci moves on.

LATER

Beckett is walking back to her car, churro in hand, when she is approached by the Blind Man, cane tapping.

BLIND MAN

Miss? I wonder if you could help me
find my dog?

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

They enter the mouth of an alleyway. We hear a dog BARK.

BLIND MAN

Oh, that's Sparky! His leash must
have got caught.

BECKETT

Stay here. I'll fetch him.

A bright moon gives a bit of light. Beckett ventures in.

She finds the German Shepherd, its leash wrapped around the leg of broken table. There is a shadow behind her, the glint of moonlight off a knife blade. She grabs a pipe on the ground and brings it around. It connects with a skull.

The man crumples to the ground. It is the Blind Man. Beckett hurriedly kicks the knife out of his hand.

A figure moving at the entrance of the alley alerts her. She holds up the pipe.

BECKETT (CONT'D)

Who's there?

CASTLE

Miss Scarlett in the alley with a pipe. I never would have guessed.

Beckett sighs, lowering the pipe, as Castle approaches.

CASTLE (CONT'D)

Why did you take off like that?

BECKETT

You were occupied.

Castle notices the cane on the ground nearby.

CASTLE

Is that the Midnight Slasher? He's blind?

BECKETT

How much do you want to bet he can see as well as you and me?

CASTLE

Oh, a churro maybe?

The German Shepherd is happily eating the churro Beckett dropped.

INT. CASTLE'S LOFT, KITCHEN - MORNING

Castle is hunched over a bowl of cereal and a newspaper when Alexis breezes in.

ALEXIS

Good morning. You're up early.

CASTLE

Because I never slept.

He shows her the headline on the paper, 'Blind Man's Bluff'.

ALEXIS

You caught the Slasher!

CASTLE

And we also got the guy who murdered
Veronika Kardos. It was a two-fer.

He stifles a yawn. Martha sails into the room, a yoga mat
tucked under one arm.

MARTHA

I just talked to your friend, Shannon.
I'll be brushing up on my Rumba.

CASTLE

Speaking of Shannon, I have a video
of our performance last night.

ALEXIS

You were dancing?

Martha and Alexis eagerly check out the video on Castle's
phone. The video shows him awkwardly stumbling through the
steps, trying to keep up with Shannon.

MARTHA

Perhaps you need a refresher course.
I know, I'll have Shannon sign you
up and you can bring Beckett as your
partner. Oh, my yoga class!

She hurries away.

CASTLE

No, wait! Mother!

We hear the door SLAM.

ALEXIS

They do say practice makes perfect.

Alexis leaves with her glass of orange juice.

CASTLE

(glumly at phone)
That's not how I remembered it.

END OF EPISODE