

NAKED IS THE BEST DISGUISE

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ARDIS (V.O.)
Think of your happiest memory.

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LOBBY - SUNSET - SEQUENCE

The lobby of Chicago's Palmer House Hotel boasts a timeless elegance that would not be out of place in the First Class cabin on the Titanic.

And yet... Pedestrians in the lobby control their cell phones through wireless earpieces. The fashions are out-of-place. The tablet screens are nanometer thin.

This film takes place a few years in the future. (But only a few.)

Entering through the revolving doors is:

ARDIS VARNADO - 30s, she could sell ice to an Eskimo, a skill-set that's enabled her to become a high-end dealer of a very curious product.

ARDIS (V.O.)
Maybe it was a milestone.

EXT. CENTRAL AMERICAN MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY - SEQUENCE

POV: We ascend the final few steps to the top of a CENTRAL AMERICAN MOUNTAIN, looking out over the wide country below.

ARDIS (V.O.)
A line that once crossed would
change your life forever.

INT. DAIS - DAY - SEQUENCE

POV: We glance down as an ADMINISTRATOR hands us a hard-earned DIPLOMA. We look into the Administrator's congratulatory face as we shake hands.

ARDIS (V.O.)
Maybe you were St Paul on the road
to Demascus, and this moment was
your salvation.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: We're crammed into the bathroom stall of an exclusive nightclub, where we DO A LINE of coke alongside a GIGGLING WOMAN.

ARDIS (V.O.)
 Or maybe it's simply that one night
 – you know which night – that was
 just a hell of a lot of fun.

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LOBBY - SUNSET - SEQUENCE

Back in the Palmer House, Ardis carries her BRIEFCASE through the lobby and up the central staircase.

ARDIS (V.O.)
 Come on, you can tell me, there's
 nothing to be embarrassed about.
 The scene playing in your head
 right now – that's who you are.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY - SEQUENCE

POV: We kick a SOCCER BALL down the grass as a line of PRE TEEN GIRL DEFENDERS – in uniforms – line up against us... But we expertly maneuver the ball around them and FIRE it past the GOALIE.

ARDIS (V.O.)
 Even now, to recall this moment is
 to be reminded of your truest self.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: On a moonlit bed, we gaze across the sheets at a WOMAN'S DARK HAIR nestled upon the pillow beside us. We admire the curve of her bare shoulder as she tosses restlessly.

ARDIS (V.O.)
 So whatever it is, really picture
 it. Squeeze that feeling, suck it
 into your lungs. Like you're
 suffocating and this memory, this
 singular transcendence, it's the
 only thing keeping you alive.

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LOBBY - SUNSET - SEQUENCE

Ardis turns past the gilt-bronze torchieres –
 – And enters the elegant LOBBY BAR.

ARDIS (V.O.)
 You got it? Okay. Now...
 (beat)

ARDIS (V.O.)
 ... How much would I have to pay
 you to give it up?

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LOBBY BAR - SUNSET

In the intimate hotel bar, Ardis sits across from her new client:

RICHARD FITZGERALD – 50, square as they come, has the kind of money that makes him accustomed to hotels like this one.

RICHARD
 ... People go for that? They sell?

ARDIS
 And they sell me something so unique and precious that they cannot believe they let it go.

RICHARD
 High quality... "mems."

ARDIS
 (re: "mems")
 Richard, you can be honest with me:
 Is this your first time?

RICHARD
 Is it that obvious?
 (off her look)
 I met your – colleague – Zeke. He told me that you were the person to talk to...

ARDIS
 Did Zeke explain to you how this works?

RICHARD
 I read an article. The Style section.

ARDIS
 The technology was developed by the Defense Department. To remove traumatic memories from soldiers with PTSD. But then people realized, you could do more than suck a memory out. You could pop it in someone else's head. His brain would incorporate it, as if it'd happened to him.

RICHARD

But the mems aren't reproducible.
The chemistry is too complicated.
Only a human brain can create a
memory.

ARDIS

They covered all that in the Style
section?

RICHARD

The point is, in order for one
person to gain a memory, someone
else has to lose it.

ARDIS

What business did you say you were
in again?

RICHARD

Investment banking.

ARDIS

Lot of Marxists in investment
banking?

ON RICHARD: Point taken.

RICHARD

I don't suppose there are a lot of
Marxists in your business either.

ON ARDIS: Touché.

ARDIS

Richard, I don't mean to be rude,
but before we can continue there's
something I need to hear you say
out-loud. Just once. Will you say
the magic words for me?

ON RICHARD: Nervous.

RICHARD

I'm not a cop.

ON ARDIS: Gauging... She believes him.

ARDIS

Thank you. Now: How may I be of
service?

(no response)

(MORE)

ARDIS (CONT'D)

You want some common, "I had a threesome at Burning Man" – well Zeke could've sold you that. But he sent you to me, which means that you are in the market for something... Bespoke.

ON RICHARD: Reticence.

ON ARDIS: She's seen this look before.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

Nothing you say will blush my virgin cheeks.

He instinctively fiddles with his wedding ring.

Ardis notices.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

It's not cheating. You're remembering someone else getting whatever it is that you're not. A younger woman? A man?

RICHARD

It's not a man.

ARDIS

Then a woman who has a taste for something that your wife doesn't?

RICHARD

I've never cheated on my wife.

ARDIS

Do you watch porn?

(no response)

Do you ever think about those women, when you're in bed with your wife?

ON RICHARD: Doesn't make eye contact.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

What about ex-girlfriends. One-night-stands from your misspent 20s. All the women you've known who responded to your touch with so much more enthusiasm. When you're with your wife, whose tongue do you imagine thrilling at the taste of your skin?

ON RICHARD: Startled by her boldness.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
 So what's the difference?
 (beat)
 A good day, a bad day, the real
 lover beneath you, or the distant
 echo of someone else's half-
 remembered orgasm... It's all in
 your head.

ON RICHARD: There is something about her that makes him want
 to tell her things...

RICHARD
 ... I want to be hurt.

ARDIS
 Tell me.

RICHARD
 Just to feel someone else in
 control for – I love my wife. 24
 years, two kids, and I still love
 her, you have to understand. But
 she's so good and polite and – I've
 never had to beg.

ARDIS
 Tell me.

RICHARD
 To be tied down. To be controlled.
 I want someone to leave bruises.

ON RICHARD: He can't believe he just say that out loud.

ON ARDIS: She can.

ARDIS
 There is a collective I work with.
 Conceptual artists. They do things
 to each other. Then try on each
 other's memories of the
 proceedings. Sometimes, the really
 special ones, they'll trade to me
 for rent money.

RICHARD
 I wouldn't really do that. With a
 stranger. For real.

ARDIS

Oh honey. There's no such thing as real. There's only this...

She reaches out and affectionately taps his forehead.

ON RICHARD: Even the small touch of this woman feels nice.

RICHARD

You have it with you?

Ardis places her BRIEFCASE on the table.

ARDIS

(re: briefcase)

Maybe we should go someplace a little more comfortable.

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LUXURY SUITE - MINUTES LATER

In the hotel's MOST EXPENSIVE SUITE, Ardis opens up her briefcase, REVEALING a series of curious objects:

- 1) A strange, futuristic SYRINGE. Nicknamed a "spike."
- 2) ROWS of MEDICAL VIALS. In each vial floats a murky orange liquid.

Plus one object that is decidedly more familiar:

- 3) A GUN.

ARDIS

(re: the equipment)

Do you know how this stuff works?

RICHARD

The Style section.

(re: futuristic syringe)

You call that a "spike".

(re: vial)

The orange color comes from a chemical called Tetralazine. It helps the brain soak up the mem.

ON ARDIS: Very good.

She removes the syringe and a vial from the case.

ON THE VIAL: A handwritten label on which Ardis has noted the contents as a series of coded symbols.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 (re: vial)
 Is that it?

She nods, and shows him her phone, which has a BITCOIN TRANSACTION app on it.

Richard looks at the price on Ardis' phone.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 That's a lot of money.

ARDIS
 The best things in life are free.
 The second best are very, very
 expensive.

ON RICHARD: Fuck it. He can afford it.

He waves his own phone near hers, and both phones DING simultaneously, completing the transaction.

She gestures to the bed. Richard sits on the edge.

She loads the mem vial into the spike and places the spike against the back of Richard's head.

Finds the spot, right where the spinal column meets his skull. Pushes his hair away, exposing the skin underneath.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
 You ready?

Richard nods, and Ardis INJECTS THE LIQUID INTO RICHARD'S BRAIN —

FLASHES OF IMAGERY:

POV: We raise our arm over our head as a YOUNG WOMAN ties our wrist to a bedframe.

POV: We peek down at our unclothed (male) body as the Young Woman affixes straps to our ankles.

POV: We watch the Young Woman run a LEATHER PROD across our nipples.

BACK TO THE HOTEL:

Ardis continues slowly injecting the liquid into Richard.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
 At first, it feels like you're
 watching television.
 (MORE)

ARDIS (CONT'D)
 Or struggling to recall a faded
 dream. But if I let the memory soak
 in, it'll start to bond with your
 consciousness.

Richard's face tenses as his brain incorporates these
 memories as his own -

FLASHES OF IMAGERY:

POV: The Young Woman smacks our nipples with the prod...

*... Only as our head drops to the side we catch our
 REFLECTION in the brass bedpost...*

... REVEAL: We've become Richard Fitzgerald.

The Young Woman prepares for another smack as we go -

BACK TO THE HOTEL:

Ardis finishes her injection and steps back...

... As Richard's eyes POP OPEN.

ON RICHARD: An odd sense of calm.

ON ARDIS: She's seen that expression on the faces of a
 thousand clients.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
 There is an author in your brain.
 And he is replotting the tale of
 your life so it makes sense even
 though a new chapter has been
 added. Tap tap tap on his
 typewriter, and your consciousness
 rewires. Tomorrow, you'll know you
 met with me today, you'll know what
 we talked about, but it'll be so
 strange because you really *did* have
 sex with that young woman.

ON RICHARD: Not happy, exactly... But a dazed contentment
 settling in.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
 It's your first time, so this is
 going to take a lot out of you.
 With practice, your brain will get
 better at it.

Ardis puts away her equipment.

RICHARD

(woozy)

... I was at a bar... But that was a year ago... She invited me back...

ARDIS

Rest. And when you wake up... They say that naked is the best disguise.

RICHARD

What?

ARDIS

William Congreve. 17th century. "No mask like open truth to cover lies / For to go naked is the best disguise."

(beat)

Rest.

Ardis walks to the door, then turns and to take one last look at her newest client.

ON ARDIS: The oddest unplaceable expression as she watches him sleep. Is that... recognition?

Recognition of what?

FADE TO WHITE.

OPENING TITLES.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

Night falls on near-future Chicago.

The glittering skyline is almost identical to that of 2017 – but with a few GLEAMING NEW SKYSCRAPERS.

A light coat of AUTUMN RAIN begins to wash the dirty streets in a smooth sheen.

EXT. ARDIS' APARTMENT BUILDING - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Rain taps against a stylish glass apartment building along the lake.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: Our toes DIG INTO perfectly white sand as we gaze out at a CARIBBEAN OCEAN, the water radiating the strangest shade of blue...

REVEAL:**INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Ardis COMES TO at the sound of the DOORBELL.

She's on her couch, a mem vial in one hand, a spike in the other. She's groggy, the newly inserted memory just bonding with her brain. She's wearing the same clothes she was in the previous scene.

DING DONG.

She tries to shake off the memory-bonding wooziness as she moves through the apartment, which is Spartan in its minimalism. The only signs of human life are the used VIALS OF MEMORIES that have accumulated on the floor.

She opens the front door to reveal:

MASON RUSSELL, 40, a southern gentleman unburdened by remorse about turning to a life of crime.

MASON

I have the best idea.

ARDIS

Mason. What're you selling?

MASON

Selling? It's Saturday night. I thought we might go out, have a few cocktails, make some new friends -

ARDIS

- I'm busy -

Mason enters, making himself at home -

MASON

For someone who deals in other people's sex lives, you're awfully reluctant to have one your-

- But he NOTICES all the used mem vials lying around.

MASON (CONT'D)
(re: used vials)
- I taught you better than this.

ARDIS
Were there lessons?

MASON
"Never get high on your own
supply." That was lesson #1.

ARDIS
That was Biggie.

MASON
Does he deal on the west side?
(off her look)
You promised me you quit. Again.

ARDIS
I'm not using. I'm just...
dabbling.

MASON
(re: vials)
Which mem were you dabbling today?

ARDIS
(genuine)
I don't know.

Mason digs around in the pile of used mem vials.

MASON
(holding up a vial, reads
the encoded label)
Is this the beach thing? I had a
buyer lined up for that. Corporate
exec, too busy for a vacation -
easy money.

ON ARDIS: A slight smile as she recalls the implanted memory.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

*POV: We dig our toes into the sand as we stare out at the
perfect ocean water.*

BACK TO THE APARTMENT:

ARDIS
It felt so peaceful.

MASON
It wasn't you.

ARDIS
It is now.
(beat)
What're you selling?

MASON
A night out!
(off her look)
You really think the only reason
I'd come see you on a Saturday
night is to sell you something?

ARDIS
Yes.

MASON
... Well if you're looking to buy,
it does happen to be the case that
I've come across a mem.

He removes a MEM VIAL from his pocket.

MASON (CONT'D)
My clients prefer a hint of danger,
but since bedsheet intrigues are
your *specialité de la maison* – I'll
split the sale.

ARDIS
What is it?

MASON
Have a peek.

ON ARDIS: Fine.

She takes the vial then grabs her briefcase, from which she
removes her spike.

She sits down with the vial and the spike...

MASON (CONT'D)
(re: spike)
May I?

... Ardis nods, and Mason gets behind her –

– And INJECTS THE MEMORY INTO THE BACK OF ARDIS' HEAD.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: In a rooftop pool, a HANDSOME MAN glides over to us and playfully lifts our bikini top over our head...

BACK TO THE APARTMENT:

MASON (CONT'D)

All right, that's enough... I'm pulling it out before it bonds with you...

Mason quickly PULLS THE MEMORY BACK OUT OF ARDIS' HEAD.

The vial refills with the murky orange liquid.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: The Handsome Man has his hands all over us as we start to HAVE SEX...

... Before the memory FADES AWAY into white nothingness...

BACK TO THE APARTMENT:

Ardis shakes it off, the memory of rooftop sex fading from her consciousness like a dream in the morning light.

Mason holds up the vial: The mem is safely back inside.

MASON (CONT'D)

Pretty hot, right?

ARDIS

Men don't really do it for me.

MASON

That's just something you say so I don't hit on you.

(off her look)

Whatever, even you can see the value in *that* man.

ARDIS

He's that singer.

MASON

Something tells me that you know a well-kept housewife who'll pay top dollar to remember having been his groupie.

ARDIS

("Maybe. Maybe not.")

70/30 me.

MASON

50/50 – and you give me a first look at your next pulls.

ARDIS

60/40 – on consignment.

MASON

Fuck you, consignment. How do I know you're not just gonna spike it into your own head?

ARDIS

Not my type.
(off his look)
What is it, honey? You don't trust me?

MASON

No.

ON ARDIS: "Oh well then."

MASON (CONT'D)

... You are such a cunt. 50/50, consignment.

Ardis nods, takes the vial from him.

She goes to her case, opening it to REVEAL:

EVERYTHING IS THERE... EXCEPT THE GUN.

ARDIS

... My gun.

MASON

What?

ARDIS

It's gone.

MASON

You can't remember where you put it?

(off her look)

Ardis, what is the point of being a drug dealer if you spend all of your money on drugs?

ARDIS

How is it any different than booze, girls, whatever you're into? We're all just buying memories.

MASON

My memories are actually mine.

ARDIS

What's in my head is "actually" me,
Mason. You know how I can tell?

Ardis puts the new mem vial in her case, then shuts it.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

Because I remember.

I/E. SELF-DRIVING TAXI - CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Ardis rides in the back of a SELF-DRIVING TAXI. Most of the other cars on the road are self-driving, but not all.

She looks out the windows at Saturday night in Chicago – revellers abound, everyone in search of the latest highs. The freshest fixes. The timeliest thrills.

ON ARDIS: Nothing she hasn't seen a thousand times before.

SELF-DRIVING TAXI (VOICE)

Ardis Varnado. We are approaching
your destination.

EXT. DILAPIDATED BUILDING - GARFIELD PARK - NIGHT

The self-driving taxi deposits Ardis outside of an old, fucked-up apartment building in Garfield Park.

Ardis gets out of the taxi and enters –

INT. DILAPIDATED BUILDING - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

She climbs the stairs and knocks on an apartment door.

The door opens to REVEAL:

WENDELL JONES – 80s, pancreatic cancer.

Ardis presents him with a stack of PRE-PAID CREDIT CARDS.

ARDIS

Thanks for the memories.

INT. DILAPIDATED BUILDING - WENDELL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Around the apartment, we can see that Wendell is a bit of a hoarder. He doesn't leave the apartment much.

ARDIS

I still owe you for Aruba.

As Wendell counts the money, Ardis looks over the MEMORABILIA on his walls.

ON THE WALLS: Family photos of Wendell and his DAUGHTER, his GRANDKIDS, his long-gone WIFE.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

How're the grandkids?

WENDELL

Grace wants me to come live with her in Phoenix.

ARDIS

Yeah?

WENDELL

You ever been to Phoenix?

ARDIS

Yeah.

WENDELL

You sure it was you?

Ardis pauses on one of the photos...

ON THE PHOTO: It's Wendell and his wife on the same white-sand beach that Ardis was on in the memory she'd injected.

ARDIS

Where is this? I was there, I...

Wendell comes over, sees what she's looking at.

ON WENDELL: Looking at the beach. Confused.

WENDELL

... I don't remember.

They exchange a look. They both realize that her memory of the beach must have originally been his.

WENDELL (CONT'D)

You've been spiking again. One of my pulls.

ON ARDIS: "None of your business."

WENDELL (CONT'D)

I wanted to ask you... What was the last mem you pulled from me?

ARDIS

Why?

WENDELL

I was on the phone with Grace, and she said - it was the littlest thing, but I realized - I don't remember the day she was born.

(she doesn't react)

Did I sell you my memory of the day my daughter was born?

ON ARDIS: How exactly does one answer this question?

ARDIS

Yes.

WENDELL

Oh Jesus. Jesus. What was it like? Was she crying? How was her mom? What hospital was it?

ARDIS

I don't know.

WENDELL

Ardis - you gotta give it back.

ARDIS

It's gone.

WENDELL

I'll buy it back.

ARDIS

(re: pre-paid cards)

I already sold it to a colleague.

Wendell looks at the pre-paid cards in his hand, realizing:
This is his cut.

WENDELL

Who has it now? Who remembers Gracie?

ARDIS

I have no idea.

WENDELL

You just sold it to someone –
anyone – doesn't matter who it is?

ARDIS

I'm just the middleman.

WENDELL

You tricked me into it.

ARDIS

I'm not a fucking hypnotist.

WENDELL

You took the most precious and
special thing I have – and you sold
it to somebody with more money in
the bank.

ARDIS

And now your grandkids have a shot
at college. You sold your past to
pay for your future. You knew what
you were doing.

ON WENDELL: His disgust turns to pity.

WENDELL

Do you know what you're doing?

ON ARDIS: This is business. Pure and simple.

ARDIS

... Leaving.

Ardis walks to the door and EXITS –

I/E. SELF-DRIVING TAXI - GARFIELD PARK - MOMENTS LATER

– Ardis SLAMS the door shut as she enters another SELF-
DRIVING TAXI.

SELF-DRIVING TAXI (VOICE)

Good evening! Please place your
eyes in front of the screen to
confirm your identity.

ON ARDIS: What did he expect from her? She's no different
from anyone else trying to make a living in a fucked up
world.

She leans forward, putting her eyes in front of the screen.

SELF-DRIVING TAXI (VOICE) (CONT'D)
Ardis Varnado. Where would you like
to go this evening?

EXT. BENEATH NORTH AVENUE BRIDGE - NIGHT

The taxi leaves Ardis off at a desolate area beneath the North Avenue Bridge.

In the distance, the tall buildings of downtown gleam in the moonlight.

Her taxi drives off, as from the opposite direction she hears the SOUND OF TIRES ON DIRT -

- And turns to see an ENORMOUS BLACK SUV approaching.

The SUV's windows are tinted. Bullet-proof glass. Doors and roof are armored.

The SUV comes to a stop, and TWO BODYGUARDS - Chinese, professional - get out.

ARDIS
I have an appointment with Mr.
Wing.

BODYGUARD #1
Turn around.

Ardis hands her case to one of the bodyguards, while the other one PATS HER DOWN...

... They don't find a weapon, but they do find her wallet and phone.

BODYGUARD #2
No phones.

Bodyguard #2 holds on to Ardis' case and phone, while Bodyguard #1 takes out a SPIKE from his jacket.

Bodyguard #1 holds his spike beside Ardis' head.

ARDIS
Couldn't you guys use a metal
detector or something?

BODYGUARD #1
Ready?

ON ARDIS: "Yeah."

BODYGUARD #1 (CONT'D)
Are you wearing a wire?

Before she can answer, the Bodyguard INSERTS THE SPIKE INTO HER BRAIN –

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: Getting dressed in the morning, we catch a glimpse of ourself in the mirror –

– We're Ardis, half-clothed, and we have no wires, recording devices, or weapons in sight.

BACK TO THE BRIDGE:

Ardis' eyes flutter as the memory leaves her brain.

The Bodyguard takes the spike and places it against the head of his partner –

– Then INJECTS ARDIS' MEMORY INTO BODYGUARD #2.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We – Ardis – glimpse ourself in the mirror, half-clothed, no wires or weapons.

BACK TO THE BRIDGE:

Bodyguard #1 pulls the memory right back out of Bodyguard #2's head.

ON BODYGUARD #2: A little woozy.

BODYGUARD #2
 She's clean.

BODYGUARD #1 USHERS Ardis into –

INT. ARMORED SUV – CONTINUOUS

Ardis slides into the back of the SUV, where she meets:

MR LARRY WING – 29, Chinese, Australian accent, the confident young heir to a massive criminal empire.

His armored SUV is equipped with TOUCH SCREEN DISPLAYS, a HALF KITCHEN – a family of 5 could live back here for a week.

Bodyguard #1 hands Larry Wing the freshly removed mem of Ardis getting dressed.

LARRY WING
 (re: mem vial)
 You want this back?

ARDIS
 I've seen it before.

Wing POURS THE MEM into the sink. Washes it away, the orange liquid swirling in the drain.

LARRY WING
 You could've bought spikes or Tetra from any of my guys.

ARDIS
 Word on the street is that you're expanding.

LARRY WING
 ... What have you heard? Those words on the street?

ARDIS
 That you're on the cusp of something big. New crews, new transpo lines... You know exactly how much money I'm bringing in for you, Mr. Wing. I think it's time I moved off the street and up to a position that's a little more - appropriate.

ON WING: Considering her proposition.

LARRY WING
 "Appropriate..."
 (thinks)
 Do you know, when my father first told me that he wanted to expand the family business into mems, I was against it. High barrier to entry, inelastic supply.

ARDIS
 Is that what they said at Wharton?

LARRY WING
 Hong Kong School of Business. But then your government made it illegal - and suddenly we were in a position to corner the market on a disruptive technology. We have the potential to be corrugated steel in 1820.

(MORE)

LARRY WING (CONT'D)

To be color television in 1950.
Ardis, it is 1980, and this could
be crack cocaine!

(beat)

Which means I need to be very
careful about who I entrust with a
management position. There is no
place for anyone... Unreliable.

ON ARDIS: What does he mean by that?

LARRY WING (CONT'D)

If I checked, how much Tetra would
I find in your bloodstream right
now?

ON ARDIS: Fuck.

ARDIS

I'm quitting.

ON WING: Yes, yes. He's heard that before.

LARRY WING

I'm grateful to Zeke for bringing
you into my organization. You're
the best salesman I have – so when
you start conducting yourself like
a professional, we can have a
conversation about your
professional future.

ON ARDIS: This is not a man to whom one presses an argument.
He can have her killed anytime he wants, for any reason.

She opens the door –

EXT. BENEATH NORTH AVENUE BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Ardis exits the armored SUV –

– And Bodyguard #1 hands her back her phone and her case.

ON ARDIS: She's going to quit. Any day now.

CUT TO:

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

A woman we'll come to know as DEA SPECIAL AGENT LUCIA DIAZ –
30s, the modern face of graduate-educated, hyper-professional
federal law enforcement – walks through the hotel lobby.

She carries a PAPER COFFEE CUP.

The lobby is pretty sparse at this hour, but Agent Diaz finds a UNIFORMED COP talking to the CONCIERGE.

AGENT DIAZ

(to Cop)

I'm looking for the senior
detective on the scene?

UNIFORMED COP

Upstairs.

(re: coffee cup)

Did you get him his almond milk?

Agent Diaz just sighs and heads to the ELEVATOR BANK.

She enters an elevator -

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - HALLWAYS - SECONDS LATER

- And then exits onto the top floor.

She walks down the hall and enters -

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LUXURY SUITE - CONTINUOUS

- Based on the wallpaper and the fixtures, we recognize this as the same luxury suite in which we first saw Ardis and her new client Richard Fitzgerald...

... Only as Agent Diaz enters, we see that now it's SWARMING WITH COPS.

An EVIDENCE TEAM takes prints, scanning glass surfaces with IR beams.

Agent Diaz flashes her badge, moving past the cops and into the bedroom, where she finds a CPD HOMICIDE DETECTIVE - 60s, son of a son of an Irishman - standing over the bed.

REVEAL:

There's a dead body on the bed.

Blood sprayed everywhere.

ON THE BODY: It's Richard Fitzgerald.

Two gunshots to the chest.

AGENT DIAZ
 (to Homicide Detective)
 Are you the senior detective?

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE
 (re: coffee cup)
 Thank you, sweetheart.

He takes the cup from her hand, sips.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 This isn't almond milk.

In response, Agent Diaz flashes her BADGE.

AGENT DIAZ
 Special Agent Diaz. DEA. I'm gonna
 need control of the scene.

The Homicide Detective gives her a once-over.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE
 I don't see that happening.

AGENT DIAZ
 (to Forensics Tech)
 ... What's your name?

FORENSICS TECH
 Pete.

AGENT DIAZ
 Pete, what happened to the dead guy
 on the bed?

FORENSICS TECH
 He got murdered.

AGENT DIAZ
 My detective's intuition tells me
 this might be a murder scene. Did
 you recover the weapon?

The Forensics Tech hands her a GUN IN A PLASTIC EVIDENCE BAG.

ON THE GUN: It's identical to the one from Ardis' case.

FORENSICS TECH
 We ran the prints. They belong to a
 mem dealer named -

AGENT DIAZ
 - "Ardis Varnado." Low level.
 Couple busts, no jail time.
 (MORE)

AGENT DIAZ (CONT'D)

(off their looks)

When you ran the prints, it lit up my desk. Because if you scroll down her sheet, you'll see she's a KA of one Larry Wing.

The Forensics Tech does just that on his tablet – and sees that Diaz is correct.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE

"Larry Wing" – as in, the Wing family?

AGENT DIAZ

Larry Wing is the target of a major, long-time DEA operation. I have permission from DOJ to roll up your murder into my op.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE

What's the status of your op?

AGENT DIAZ

Classified.

(re: the other cops)

How many of these guys do you trust? Because I don't know them.

(off his look)

I'm not trying to jam you up, and I'm not trying to say my dick is bigger. It isn't. But if Larry Wing finds out she murdered a client, he will put her in the river by morning – and then you've got two bodies on your docket. Or you can make this shit-show my problem.

ON THE HOMICIDE DETECTIVE: What's he gonna do?

The Detective hands her back the coffee cup.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE

(to Forensics Tech)

Pete? Enjoy your night.

Diaz and Pete the Forensics Tech eye each other warily.

The Homicide Detective walks to the door, passing the windows.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

(re: windows)

Oh, and FYI... You got flies on your shit.

Agent Diaz looks at the windows -

- OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS: MINIATURE NEWS DRONES hover outside, taking FOOTAGE of the crime scene.

DRONE FOOTAGE:

A CHANNEL 7 NEWS LOGO appears on screen as we see Diaz run up to the hotel room window and close the blinds.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTH AVENUE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Ardis HAILS a passing SELF-DRIVING TAXI and enters -

I/E. SELF-DRIVING TAXI - NORTH AVENUE BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Ardis settles into the back of the taxi, placing her case on the seat beside her.

SELF-DRIVING TAXI (VOICE)
 Good evening! Please place your
 eyes in front of the screen to
 confirm your identity.

Ardis looks down at her case, opens it up...

... And stares at the DOZENS OF MEM VIALS inside.

ON ARDIS: It's like if Willy Wonka was addicted to fucking chocolate.

SELF-DRIVING TAXI (VOICE) (CONT'D)
 Good evening! Please place your
 eyes in front of the screen to
 confirm your identity.

She starts leaning forward to let the taxi read her retinas...

... When she notices what's playing on the TINY SCREEN, in between ads:

ON THE SCREEN:

Drone footage of Agent Diaz closing the blinds at the murder scene...

... And then a Facebook profile photo of Richard Fitzgerald.

Ardis freezes, the image of Richard Fitzgerald inches from her face.

She turns up the volume -

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (ON TV)
 ... Richard Fitzgerald, a local investment banker, was found murdered this evening at the Palmer House Hotel.

ON ARDIS: What the fuck?

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 Our sources with the police say that the mem byproduct Tetralazine was found in Fitzgerald's blood stream.

ON THE TV: More drone footage of the hotel. A replay of Agent Diaz shutting the blinds.

LOCAL NEWSCASTER (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 Since Congress placed "mems" on the list of Schedule 1 narcotics, the illicit businesses surrounding them have -

SELF-DRIVING TAXI (VOICE)
 Good evening! Please place -

Ardis quickly GETS OUT OF THE TAXI -

EXT. NORTH AVENUE BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Walking quickly away from the taxi, she pulls out her phone and makes an encrypted call...

... The line on the other end RINGS, but no one answers.

ARDIS
 (into phone)
 Zeke. The client you sent to me is dead. What the fuck is happening? Call me. ... No, fuck it, I'm coming over.

She hangs up.

ON ARDIS: Whatever is going on, it is very, very bad.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARDIS' APARTMENT BUILDING - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Outside Ardis' apartment building, a SWAT TEAM POURS out of a VAN -

- They take positions by the front door -

- Agent Diaz, in tactical gear, forms the point of the tactical phalanx -

- And on Diaz's HAND SIGNAL -

- The SWAT team follows her into the building -

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

- Flooding through the lobby and around the elevators -

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - SECONDS LATER

- Before using a BATTERING RAM to knock down Ardis' door -

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - CONTINUOUS

- And then BURSTING into Ardis' apartment.

Diaz and the SWAT team spread through the room, guns leading the way...

... But they find few signs of life...

... Save all of Ardis' MEM VIALS by the couch.

Diaz looks over the empty vials - there's a lot of them.

ON DIAZ: She picks up a vial, staring at it. Her suspect isn't just a dealer - she's also a user.

DING! The sound of a new VOICE MESSAGE appears on all of Ardis' interconnected DEVICES. (TV, computer, etc - in the near future you'll be able to read text messages on your microwave screen if you want to.)

Diaz HITS PLAY on one of the appliances.

DEVICE (VOICE)
Message from: Zeke Gerry.

ZEKE (VOICE)
Ardis! Did you fucking kill that
guy? What is wrong with you?
(MORE)

Look, I don't care what you did but
you better not fucking come here.

The message clicks off.

ON DIAZ: She pulls out her TABLET and scrolls down Ardis' police file, finding her known-associate "Zeke Gerry..."

CUT TO:

EXT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - WEST LOOP - NIGHT

The West Loop is full of people at this hour. The crowded bars spilling out into the streets.

Ardis moves quickly through the crowd, finding her way to Zeke's SIX-STORY APARTMENT BUILDING.

She enters -

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

- Climbs the central stairwell to the fourth floor -

- KNOCKS on Zeke's door -

- But the door SWINGS OPEN at her touch.

ON ARDIS: That's strange.

ARDIS

Zeke?

She enters -

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ZEKE'S APARTMENT

The apartment is low-end cool, red-brick walls, Bohemian chic - but even in the dark, Ardis can see that...

... It's been TOTALLY RANSACKED.

... The only light coming from the open fridge door and the twinkle of the city through the windows...

... Ardis moves through the LIVING ROOM...

... Past the KITCHEN...

... And finally in the BEDROOM...

... The bed is overturned... Nightstands upside down...

... An odd, black splotch on the white wall...

... Ardis FLICKS ON THE LIGHT SWITCH:

REVEAL: The wall behind her head is sprayed with blood.

ON ARDIS: She doesn't see it yet, slowly looking around and...

... She tries not to gasp.

She moves toward the bloody wall, to the other side of the bed...

... And finds ZEKE'S BODY on the floor.

His face has been TORN UP, eyes poked out with something sharp. Throat punctured.

Next to his body is a BLOOD-SOAKED SPIKE.

ON ARDIS: Holy fuck, somebody murdered him with his own spike.

But she quickly gets herself together: Time to think fast.

She pats down his bloody corpse.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
Where's your phone...

But it's not on him.

She looks around the room -

ARDIS (CONT'D)
... Where did you put your phone...

- But no luck.

All she finds is a TABLET that dropped beneath the nightstand.

She TURNS IT ON, and a CALENDAR ALERT appears.

ON THE TABLET SCREEN: "UA 457"

ON ARDIS: Is that a flight number? Was Zeke going somewhere?

But before she can figure out more –

– There's A POLICE SIREN from the street outside.

Ardis drops the tablet, goes to the window. Looking down she sees a SELF-DRIVING POLICE CAR pulling up outside the building...

I/E. POLICE CAR - WEST LOOP - SAME TIME

INSIDE THE POLICE CAR:

The TWO UNIFORMED COPS sit in the front, while Agent Diaz rides in the back.

The car pulls itself up to the curb, dispersing pedestrians.

Diaz and the Cops get out, walk up to the building –

AGENT DIAZ

(to Cops)

You stay on the front door, you go around back. Nobody in or out.

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ZEKE'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Ardis sees the cop car pull up and has to move fast.

She rushes out of the apartment –

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

– And onto the stairwell –

– Only she looks down and sees Diaz coming up the stairs.

ON ARDIS: Shit shit shit shit shit...

She does the only thing she can and runs UP the stairwell –

– All the way to the top (6th) floor.

There's a locked apartment door in front of her.

Ardis KNOCKS on the door...

ARDIS
Delivery!

INSIDE THE LOCKED APARTMENT:

We see an OLD WOMAN peek out the key hole at Ardis – whose friendly smile is not exactly convincing.

OLD WOMAN
Bullshit.

ON THE SIXTH FLOOR LANDING:

Ardis turns away – but there's nowhere else for her to go.

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR LANDING:

Diaz gets to Zeke's door, notices it's open.

She draws her gun...

AGENT DIAZ
DEA! I'm coming in.

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ZEKE'S APARTMENT

Diaz enters...

... Sweeping the dark apartment for signs of life...

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL

Ardis takes this opportunity to DASH DOWN THE STAIRS –

– Past the fourth floor landing –

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ZEKE'S APARTMENT

– Diaz is staring at Zeke's dead body when she hears the CREAK OF FLOORBOARDS from the stairwell –

– Diaz turns and runs to the stairs –

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL

– Ardis keeps running down the stairs, now on the third floor landing –

– Diaz comes out onto the fourth floor landing, gun leading the way, looks down –

– And sees...

... A UNIFORMED COP LOOKING UP FROM THE GROUND FLOOR.

AGENT DIAZ
(calling down stairwell)
Did anyone come down?

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

The Uniformed Cop looks up – sees the gun in Diaz's hand.

UNIFORMED COP
(re: gun)
What's wrong?

The Cop DRAWS HIS GUN TOO.

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

Ardis freezes. Neither Diaz nor the Cop can see her. She's trying not to make a sound.

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR:

AGENT DIAZ
(calling down stairs)
Stay down!

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

UNIFORMED COP
Do you need back-up?

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

Ardis has no weapon and there's a cop above, a cop below. What can she do?

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR:

AGENT DIAZ
Officer, I've got a body up here, I need you to seal the exits.

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

UNIFORMED COP
A body? O'Connor has the door, you need back-up.

He starts walking up the stairs...

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

Ardis tries to quietly retreat up the stairs...

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR:

... But Diaz, pissed, starts walking down the stairs...

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

... Ardis is completely trapped...

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

... The Uniformed Cop is getting closer to Ardis...

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR:

... Diaz is getting closer from the other end...

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

... Ardis can't go up, can't go down...

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

... The Uniformed Cop is rounding the corner to Ardis' landing...

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR:

... Diaz is feet away herself...

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

... Ardis has to do *something*...

... So she...

... LEAPS DOWN THE CENTER OF THE STAIRWELL.

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

ARDIS USES HER CASE TO BREAK HER FALL –

– As she LANDS with a painful THUD a story *below* the Cop.

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

The Uniformed Cop turns at the sound.

ON THE FOURTH FLOOR:

So does Diaz.

Both Diaz and the Cop RACE down the stairs...

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

Ardis picks herself up, dazed and bruised from the fall -

- Grabs her case -

- Just as the Uniformed Cop arrives -

- But Ardis KNOCKS the gun from his hand -

- And with a quick, expert SET OF MOVES SHE SENDS HIM TO THE FLOOR with a broken shin -

ON THE SECOND FLOOR:

Diaz leaps down the stairs two at a time -

ON THE FIRST FLOOR:

- As Ardis takes off down the back of the hall, toward the rear of the building -

- Diaz gets to the first floor, trains her gun at Ardis -

- Who finally makes it to the rear door just as -

- The door OPENS FROM THE OUTSIDE, REVEALING:

- The SECOND UNIFORMED COP, inches from Ardis' face.

Ardis spins around -

- But there's Diaz, gun pointed at Ardis from the other end of the hallway -

- So Ardis turns back to the Second Uniformed Cop and, as he's drawing his gun, she -

- PUSHES HIM OUT INTO -

EXT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

- Ardis and the Second Uniformed Cop TUMBLE out into the alley -

- Where Ardis SWINGS HER CASE AT THE DOORKNOB BEHIND HER -

- Breaking it off, ruining the mechanism so the door can't open.

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

Inside, Diaz runs to the door, struggles with the knob -

- No luck -

- So she KICKS the door -

- But it won't budge. The fucker is made of steel.

EXT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - BACK ALLEY - SAME TIME

Ardis uses her case to KNOCK THE GUN from the Second Uniform Cop's hand -

- But as they struggle he KICKS her case -

- SMASHING IT OPEN on the pavement -

- VIALS and SPIKES clattering to the ground -

- As the Second Uniformed Cop and Ardis FIGHT.

Finally, she's able to get the gun out of his hand and DRAG HIM TO THE GROUND -

- Pressing his face to the pavement while she holds his arm behind his back, a knee against his shoulder-blades.

ON ARDIS: She needs to take him out of the picture.

She reaches across the pavement and grabs the Cop's gun -

- Which she presses against the back of his skull.

ON ARDIS: She doesn't want to kill him.

Is there any other way to incapacitate him?

Yes, there is.

She drops the gun and REACHES FOR HER SPIKE -

- And with one hand loads it with the FIRST VIAL SHE FINDS -

- Then, holding him down with her knee, she FORCIBLY INJECTS THE MEMORY INTO THE BACK OF THE COP'S HEAD.

ON THE COP: Struggling, but can't move.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: In a rooftop pool, a HANDSOME MAN glides over to us and playfully lifts our bikini top over our head...

BACK TO THE ALLEY:

Ardis holds the Cop still while continuing to inject the memory...

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We begin to HAVE SEX with the Handsome Man, but as we look down at the water we briefly glimpse our reflection...

... REVEAL: We have become the Second Uniformed Cop.

We can see that our hands are now the Cop's as we grab for the Handsome Man, tugging him closer, passionately...

BACK TO THE ALLEY:

ON THE SECOND UNIFORMED COP: An odd peacefulness taking over his face as the memory bonds with his consciousness.

Ardis stands, leaving the syringe stuck in the Cop's head.

He MOANS and WIGGLES as his brain soaks in the memory, but he doesn't get up.

Ardis looks around: At one end of the alley is a BUSY STREET. At the other end is a WOODEN FENCE.

Ardis turns to the busy street -

- But Agent Diaz appears at the lip of the alleyway.

ON ARDIS: Fuck.

She spins and RUNS to the wooden fence, starts to climb -

AGENT DIAZ

Stop!

- Diaz runs closer -

- But as Ardis gets to the top of the fence -

- Diaz stops running, points her gun at Ardis -

- Ardis, at the top of fence, looks Diaz right in the eyes.

AGENT DIAZ (CONT'D)

Ardis Varnado!

(beat)

I don't want you. I want Wing.

A LONG BEAT OF EYE CONTACT...

AGENT DIAZ (CONT'D)

I can help -

... But Ardis FLINGS HERSELF OVER THE EDGE OF THE FENCE -

- As Diaz FIRES -

- The BULLET LANDING IN THE WOOD -

- As Ardis RUNS OFF on the other side of the fence.

ON DIAZ: Shit.

She runs to the fence, climbs up to the top, and looks out:

Nothing but a barren yard.

Ardis is gone.

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ZEKE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Twenty minutes later, Zeke's apartment is SWARMING WITH COPS. FORENSICS TECHS and the like.

Diaz checks in on the Second Uniformed Cop.

AGENT DIAZ

(to Cop)

You feel okay?

SECOND UNIFORMED COP

Just woozy.

AGENT DIAZ

What'd she inject you with?

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: The Handsome Man glides over to us seductively in the pool.

BACK TO THE APARTMENT:

SECOND UNIFORMED COP

(genuine)

I don't know. All my memories
feel... Like me.

But before Diaz can respond they're interrupted by:

FORENSICS TECH (O.S.)
Warrant came through for the
traffic cams.

Diaz turns to find the Forensics Tech handing her a TABLET.

ON THE TABLET: Live feeds from TRAFFIC CAMS all over the city. The cams are automatically performing AI-based FACIAL RECOGNITION on the feeds, hunting for Ardis' face.

FORENSICS TECH (CONT'D)
She walks in front of a red light –
buenas noches.

AGENT DIAZ
What about me made you think you
should say that in Spanish?

FORENSICS TECH
(embarrassed)
Well... I mean... I just...

AGENT DIAZ
(she's fucking with him)
Relájate, amigo.

She turns her attention back to the tablet.

ON THE TABLET: Traffic cam footage of PEDESTRIANS walking around Chicago at night...

Their faces getting SCANNED by the software...

TRAFFIC CAM FOOTAGE:

A desolate street, on which a solitary pedestrian shuffles along, the person's face tilted down, away from the camera...

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - EAST RANDOLPH - SAME TIME

The same street, where we REVEAL:

The pedestrian is Ardis. As she walks quickly, she keeps her head down to avoid detection by the traffic cams.

As she gets to the edge of the river, she starts to slow. Takes long, deep breaths as she collects her bearings.

Takes a long look over the churning black water below.

ON ARDIS: She is so fucked.

But just as she starts to get her breath back –

– TWO DRONES ZOOM OVERHEAD.

Ardis DUCKS, turning away from their cams.

She looks up: The drones keep flying. They didn't spot her.

Not this time.

ON ARDIS: She's gotta get off the street.

INT. BATHROOM - DIVE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Ardis bursts into a DIVE BAR'S single-occupancy bathroom, locking the door behind her.

She reaches into her jacket pocket and takes out...

... Her phone.

Tosses it into the toilet.

Reaches down and takes out...

... Her wallet. ID, credit cards.

Tosses them into the toilet. No use for any of those.

Reaches one more time and finds...

... Her spike.

She stares at it. Checks the loaded vial, shaking it to see if there's any more liquid inside – there isn't.

ON ARDIS: Should she throw the spike out?

No – instead, she sits down on the closed toilet lid...

... And with a deep breath, she places the spike to the back of her own skull, preparing to pull a mem.

ON ARDIS: Closes her eyes, thinks very carefully about what she wants to remove.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We stare at the gruesome sight of Zeke's dead body.

RETURN TO THE BATHROOM:

Ardis pulls the memory from her head –

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: The horrific image fades into white nothingness...

RETURN TO THE BATHROOM:

ON ARDIS: Finishes pulling the mem from her head, lays down the spike with a woozy sigh of relief.

It's gonna be okay. If she doesn't remember it, it never happened.

So what now?

EXT. STATE ST BRIDGE - NIGHT

Ardis walks over the STATE STREET BRIDGE.

She's keeping her head low, eyes on her feet.

TRAFFIC CAM FOOTAGE:

Ardis walking across the bridge – but the cam can't make out her face.

EXT. LOFT BUILDING - WICKER PARK - NIGHT

Ardis walks through Wicker Park to a LOFT BUILDING. It's a four-story former factory turned into something between an artist's commune and a 24-hour rave.

She enters –

INT. LOFT BUILDING - WICKER PARK - CONTINUOUS

Inside, TATTOOED ARTISTS are smoking and drinking in the halls. Some are 15, some are 50, everybody is fucked up.

Ardis walks the halls, past all of the various loft spaces, all the doors open as everyone lives here communally –

– She moves through the debaucherous tableau and into –

INT. LOFT BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

On the 2nd Floor, a bunch of FUCKED UP KIDS notice Ardis, who doesn't really belong –

– but that said, no one else does either.

ARDIS
Where's Nev?

The kids stare at her, sizing her up: Who is she?

ARDIS (CONT'D)
... Do I look like a fucking cop?

ON THE KIDS: Well, no...

Ardis walks around the loft, past MORE KIDS...

But no luck until -

GIRL WITH MANY PIERCINGS
The fuck do you want with Nev?

ARDIS
Where is he?

The Girl With Many Piercings instinctively LOOKS DOWN A HALLWAY, then tries to hide it.

GIRL WITH MANY PIERCINGS
I don't know.

Ardis brushes past her to the hallway -

GIRL WITH MANY PIERCINGS (CONT'D)
You better not be a cop!

DOWN THE HALLWAY:

Ardis comes to a quiet corner where she finds who she's looking for:

NEV COLE - early 20s, but he's bought and sold three lifetimes worth of memories. His grip on reality is... loose.

ARDIS
I need cash. A burner. Prepaid cards.

NEV
Since when do I owe you a favor?

Suddenly, a CRASH from downstairs. Somebody dropped a bottle.

Nev JUMPS. Scared.

ARDIS
Settle down, tough guy.

NEV
Been jumpy ever since I got back.

ARDIS
Syria?

NEV
Yeah.

ARDIS
Nev. You were never in fucking
Syria.

NEV
Bullshit.

ARDIS
Car bomb, right? Kills the guy next
to you? Blood and pieces of
intestine all over your helmet?

ON NEV: Yeah...

ARDIS (CONT'D)
A marine got rid of that one. I
bought it, sold it to you. Because
you grew up in Highland Park and
you always wanted to know what it
was really like in the shit.

ON NEV: Was he really never in Syria? The memory feels so
real.

He looks around, touches the wall, the window, trying to
remind himself of what's real.

NEV
(to himself)
This is Nev touching the wall...
This is Nev touching the glass...
This is Nev breathing in... This is
Nev breathing -

ARDIS
- Cash, burner, cards. I don't have
a lot of time.
(beat)
Since you owe me two grand, you can
add a gun.

NEV
I don't owe you two grand.

ARDIS

You remember fucking that chick
with the nose ring? Piercings
around her ears?

NEV

(concerned)

Caitlin and I have been sort of
seeing each other -

ARDIS

- Wrong again. I sold you that
memory for two grand.

ON NEV: No way.

NEV

Serious?

ON ARDIS: "Serious."

NEV (CONT'D)

(sadly)

... So who really had sex with
Caitlin?

INT. LOFT BUILDING - WICKER PARK - MINUTES LATER

Ardis walks back down the hall as she slips some PREPAID
CREDIT CARDS, a BURNER PHONE, and a GUN into her jacket
pockets.

She walks past the Girl With Many Piercings, who looks down
the hall, then back to Ardis suspiciously.

GIRL WITH MANY PIERCINGS

... WHAT'RE YOU DOING WITH MY
BOYFRIEND?!

ON ARDIS: Did she lie? Sure. But what's real anyway?

EXT. CITY STREETS - LOGAN SQUARE - NIGHT

Ardis moves through the crowded streets, keeping her head
down -

- When TWO DRONES FLY OVERHEAD -

- Ardis SPINS into an alley to avoid them -

- And the drones keep flying straight ahead.

ON ARDIS: That was close.

CUT TO:

INT. COCKTAIL BAR - LOGAN SQUARE - NIGHT

Mason ENTERTAINS a BACHELORETTE PARTY of YOUNG WOMEN at an elegant cocktail bar. Penis hats, pink sashes, the whole thing.

MASON

... Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, but today is a gift – and that's why we call it the present. But you know what? I can give you yesterday too. 20% off.

As the girls leans in, intrigued, the BARTENDER hands Mason another drink.

BARTENDER

From the woman at the end of the bar.

Mason looks: There is no lady at the end of the bar.

He looks down at the drink, and finds a message written on the napkin:

"MEET ME IN THE BATHROOM"

MASON

(to Bartender)

The lady at the end of the bar...
Was she attractive?

INT. COCKTAIL BAR - MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mason enters the MEN'S ROOM –

– And someone SLAMS him against the wall –

– Locking the door behind them.

He turns and we REVEAL:

It's Ardis.

MASON

... Christ! Okay I'm glad you're here, I've got a group of young ladies who –

ARDIS

— This morning, I get a call from Zeke. Had a new client, thinks I might be able to hook the guy up. I do. Now the client is dead. And so is Zeke.

MASON

What? Christ... He owes me money.

ARDIS

Somebody is setting me up. I need you to help me figure out who.

MASON

Ardis, of course. You're my best friend and there's nothing I wouldn't do for you.

(beat)

Are you fucking high? Get out of here.

ARDIS

I know you have a CPD source. Get me a copy of the police file.

MASON

No.

ARDIS

I'll give you half my clients.

MASON

If Zeke's dead and you're in jail, I'll get all your clients.

ON ARDIS: There is something kind of perversely pure about Mason's unabashed commitment to his self-interest.

Time to try another tack.

ARDIS

If the cops find me, they're going to start looking for my accomplice.

MASON

You have an accomplice?

ARDIS

You are my known associate. You got me staked in the business. Witnesses saw us together tonight.

MASON

No one saw us together tonight.

ARDIS

I walk out that door and make eyes at the bartender again – and yeah, somebody has.

MASON

... Either I provide material aid to a fleeing murder suspect – or you'll tell the cops I did?

ON ARDIS: Bingo.

MASON (CONT'D)

Fuck you so much for dragging me into this.

ARDIS

Look on the bright side, honey: You were right not to trust me.

CUT TO:

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT

Agent Diaz looks at her tablet, flipping through TRAFFIC CAM FOOTAGE of the city.

ON THE TABLET: Various WOMEN crossing intersections are flagged for possible facial matches. Diaz flips through them one by one – none of them are Ardis.

ASAC THORNE (O.S.)

You know those people who can walk into a new bar, instantly make friends with everybody?

Diaz look up as her boss, ASAC PAT THORNE – 50s, Cubs fan, Bud man – enters.

ASAC THORNE (CONT'D)

You're the opposite of those people.

AGENT DIAZ

What are you doing here?

ASAC THORNE

That's what I came to ask you.

AGENT DIAZ
My op is classified.

ASAC THORNE
... CPD homicide is having a
conniption.

AGENT DIAZ
(re: "conniption")
Is CPD homicide entirely staffed by
the elderly?

ASAC THORNE
You roll into town, set up shop on
some top-secret op against Larry
Wing, fine. But now that op entails
taking over one of their
investigations, spending all night
chasing a low-level dealer who was
dumb enough to pop a civilian – it
does beg a certain question.

AGENT DIAZ
What's the question?

ASAC THORNE
"What the fuck?"

AGENT DIAZ
... I don't trust CPD.

ASAC THORNE
Neither do I. But they are rabid
fucking dogs, and unless you toss
them a little meat, they are gonna
growl.

ON DIAZ: What can she tell him? How far can she trust him?

AGENT DIAZ
The Wing family sends their most
important communications – all
around the world – via courier.

ASAC THORNE
They're paranoid fuckers, think
we're tapping all of their coms.

AGENT DIAZ
Which we are. So they send the high
value messages as mems – put it
into one of their guy's brains, put
him on a plane, pull it out when he
lands.

ASAC THORNE

We can't wiretap a memory.

AGENT DIAZ

Last week, we intercepted chatter in Shenzhen. A courier is being sent to Chicago – with some very high-value information in his head.

ASAC THORNE

What information does the courier have?

AGENT DIAZ

If I knew that, I wouldn't be out here looking for him.

ON THORNE: Taking stock of Diaz. Putting it together.

ASAC THORNE

So your plan is to grab this dealer, flip her, offer her some bullshit immunity on a murder beef, convince her to lead you to Wing's courier?

AGENT DIAZ

("Maybe")

... Like I said, my ops are classified.

ON THORNE: This plan seems... dangerous.

ASAC THORNE

Couple years back, Larry Wing pops up in Chicago. The little psycho is going to extend the family empire. Like he's franchising a KFC. So, what do I do? I flip one of his street guys, new hire – guy starts ratting. Good intel... Until Wing checks the guy's memories. Guy comes back with his cock cut off, balls sewn into his open mouth. Even if you find this girl – even if by some miracle she can lead you to the courier – what anatomical impossibility do you think Larry Wing will perform on her?

ON DIAZ: Is she playing a fast and loose game with Ardis' life? Yes.

But the stakes are worth it.

AGENT DIAZ

If she can take me to the courier –
then I don't a shit what Wing does
to her.

CUT TO:

EXT. OHARE AIRPORT - ARRIVALS - NIGHT

A MAN – late 40s, Chinese, full-sleeve military tats peaking out from under his sportcoat – walks across the airport arrivals platform.

We'll come to know this man as the Wing family SECURITY CHIEF.

An ARMORED BLACK SUV pulls up to meet him, and he gets in–

I/E. ARMORED SUV - AIRPORT ROADS - NIGHT

Inside the armored SUV, the Security Chief is greeted by the two bodyguards and...

... Larry Wing.

LARRY WING

Huānyíng lái dào Chicago.

SECURITY CHIEF

Your father sent me. To provide assistance.

ON WING: Damn it.

LARRY WING

This is my expansion.

SECURITY CHIEF

Your father trusted you with the most valuable information we have – the very key to our expansion – and sent the courier to you. But now...?

(Wing looks away)

The courier is gone. Our rivals in the Shay family are looking for him. And the police are on a manhunt for some street dealer who they'll try to use against you.

ON LARRY: He's fucked this up, and he knows it. But he can still lead the family to glory.

LARRY WING
... Marcus Goldman.

SECURITY CHIEF
Who is Marcus Goldman?

LARRY WING
A German Jew who immigrated to Philadelphia. This is 1848. Marcus Goldman pushes a cart down Chestnut Street, buying and selling apples, pears, plums. Trading. Then he has an idea: What if he could trade debts, just like they were fresh fruit? Now, this was a time of rapid investment - debt was cheap. But if he could bundle it, sell it to Wall Street... Today, the firm Marcus founded on apples and pears is called Goldman Sachs.

ON THE SECURITY CHIEF: He doesn't know what Goldman Sachs is. And he doesn't care.

LARRY WING (CONT'D)
Under my leadership, we have an opportunity to -

SECURITY CHIEF
(to Bodyguard #1)
- Did you bring what I asked?

The Bodyguard hands the Security Chief a CASE.

The Security Chief opens it.

INSIDE THE CASE: GUNS.

SECURITY CHIEF (CONT'D)
(to Larry Wing)
Did you know that when you were little, your mother once asked me to change your diapers?
(off his look)
When your family asks me to do something, it gets done.

ON WING: Furious. Emasculated.

SECURITY CHIEF (CONT'D)
Now: Where is Ardis Varnado?

LARRY WING
We're looking.

The Security Chief sighs. Looks at his collection of weapons.

SECURITY CHIEF

If you are looking for her, then so are the Shays. Your father would like to make quite sure that we kill her before they do.

(to Bodyguard #1)

Why don't we take young Mr Wing home? I'll continue my long tradition of cleaning up after him.

CUT TO:

INT. 24-HOUR DINER - ROOSEVELT ROAD - NIGHT

Ardis sits alone at a back booth in a 24-hour diner.

She cradles a cup of coffee, keeping her head down, trying not to attract notice from the other patrons.

Every booth is equipped with its own TOUCH SCREEN DISPLAY on the wall, for ordering, displaying ads, putting songs on the jukebox.

ON THE DINER DISPLAY: Nightly news photos of Richard Fitzgerald... And a photo of Ardis.

Ardis stares at her photo on the news - the curious sensation of watching herself on a TV.

MASON (O.S.)

Sweetheart, you are done for.

Ardis looks up as Mason slides into the seat across from her.

ARDIS

What'd you get?

MASON

You're welcome.

He takes out his PHONE, shows her the POLICE FILE on his screen.

MASON (CONT'D)

Your missing gun? Well, it fired two bullets into Richard Fitzgerald. And then was found beside his body. With your prints on it.

ARDIS

So someone stole my gun. Knew when I was meeting with Richard. Went in after.

MASON

And then this person also stabbed our friend Zeke to death with his own spike?

ARDIS

Richard was a first-timer. Zeke was the only person who knew when and where we were meeting – so the killer must have been trying to cover his tracks.

MASON

Maybe – but this wasn't Richard Fitzgerald's first time.

ARDIS

What?

Mason shows her CHEMICAL DATA in the file.

MASON

Decayed Tetralazine in his system. Enough for three lifetimes worth of memories. Richard's brain had been rewired six-ways-from-Sunday before you ever got to him.

ON ARDIS: What the fuck?

ARDIS

He told me it was his first time.

MASON

Ardis Varnado, are you suggesting that someone using illegal narcotics *lied* about it? Heavens.

ARDIS

I know how to read a client, okay? He wasn't lying. Somebody removed his memories – of removing his memories.

MASON

Why?

ARDIS

... I don't know.

MASON

May I propose a simpler explanation?

ARDIS

Who do you think killed Richard?

ON MASON: Stares at her. "You."

ON ARDIS: "No... No. No. No. No."

MASON

People do things.

ARDIS

I'm not saying I'm a saint. But I am not a killer.

MASON

You're a fucking drug dealer whose brain is half-full of the illegally obtained memories of strangers.

ARDIS

I met Richard at the hotel. Made the sale. And then I left.

MASON

Are you sure?

ARDIS

(she's not)

Yes.

MASON

Just like you were sure you it was you on the beach?

ON ARDIS: "Cheap shot."

ARDIS

Why would I kill a man I'd never met before?

MASON

Maybe you had. Maybe you two shared something that neither of you wanted to remember.

ARDIS

So I removed my memory of murdering him? And Zeke?

MASON

You're right – you would never respond to an unpleasant situation by rewiring your brain.

ON ARDIS: Did she do this? Could she do this?

MASON (CONT'D)

I suggest Mexico, then Ecuador, then I don't –

ARDIS

– No.

MASON

“No”?

ARDIS

If Wing thinks I killed a client – a civilian – that will not be good for business. He'll find me. Anywhere.

(beat)

The only way out of this alive is to clear my name.

MASON

... When I met you, you were detoxing so hard that you didn't know up from down. You'd pulled so many of your own mems that your brain was swiss cheese. Filled it with god knows what. You've been spiking on and off ever since. I'm not sure that you're the most... capable person for determining the truth.

ON ARDIS: Is this really all she is? A fucked up, unreliable addict?

ARDIS

I can do this, Mason. I have to.

ON MASON: Is there a part of him that actually... likes her?

EXT. 24-HOUR DINER - ROOSEVELT ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Ardis and Mason exit the diner, heads low to avoid cameras.

ARDIS

... Whoever set me up had to know exactly when I was meeting Richard.

(MORE)

ARDIS (CONT'D)

And where. The killer had to be connected to me – to Richard – and to Zeke.

(beat)

So what's the connection?

MASON

The only two people who would know are unhelpfully dead.

ARDIS

... There's someone else who might know how we're connected.

CUT TO:

EXT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - GOLD COAST - NIGHT

Richard Fitzgerald's HOUSE is as tasteful and elegant as the tree-lined street on which it lies.

Ardis and Richard approach from the darkness, finding the name "FITZGERALD" on the mailbox.

They look up at the house: A light on upstairs.

MASON

I don't imagine the Lady Fitzgerald will be keen to help you out.

In response, Ardis produces the GUN she got from Nev.

ARDIS

Wait here.

MASON

I'm glad to see we're finally embracing the outlaw lifestyle.

ARDIS

Not exactly.

She tucks the gun into the front of her pants, in plain sight, the way cops do as she –

I/E. FITZGERALD HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ardis walks right up to the front door and RINGS THE BELL.

INSIDE:

EMMA FITZGERALD – 40s, silk nightgown – sits by the side of the bed, unable either to sleep or to stop her crying. This is the worst night of her life.

Emma's heartsick reverie bursts at the sound of the bell.

Confused, she goes downstairs to investigate.

OUTSIDE:

Ardis waits as Emma OPENS THE DOOR.

Ardis and Emma get a good long look at each other...

... Nope. No recognition. They've never met.

But Emma cannot fail to notice the gun at Ardis' waist.

ARDIS

I'm Detective Lynne. May I come in?

Emma instantly softens and lets Ardis in –

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

– As they enter, Emma CLOSES the door behind them.

Locks it.

EMMA FITZGERALD

Your colleague said the evidence team was coming.

ARDIS

That's right.

EMMA FITZGERALD

In the morning.

ARDIS

This case is a priority.

EMMA FITZGERALD

Sorry, do you want some coffee or something?

ARDIS

That'd be great.

Ardis follows Emma into –

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emma starts making coffee from a near-future version of those (detestable) Keurig machines.

ARDIS

I hate to ask this, Mrs. Fitzgerald, but did your husband ever inject mems before?

EMMA FITZGERALD

Are you kidding? I already told the other detective – err, Agent? My husband was not that kind of man.

Emma presses buttons and the machine HUMS and BUZZES, but no actual coffee seems to be coming out.

ARDIS

Friends? Relatives? Did he know people who were users?

EMMA FITZGERALD

Of course not.

She keeps fiddling with the frustrating machine. No success.

ARDIS

What about you?

Emma stops. Glares at Ardis.

EMMA FITZGERALD

Pardon?

ARDIS

Did he tell you he was going to the Palmer House Hotel tonight?

EMMA FITZGERALD

No.

ARDIS

You didn't know where he was? What he was doing?

EMMA FITZGERALD

Let me explain something: Richard did not do drugs. He did not consort with people who do drugs. I tried to get him to smoke pot with me once and you know what he said?
"

(MORE)

EMMA FITZGERALD (CONT'D)

It makes me sleepy." For God's sake, my husband was the squarest man I'd ever met.

ON ARDIS: Emma is telling the truth. This is a dead end.

EXT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME TIME

Outside, Mason watches the house, growing impatient...

... When he gets a TEXT MESSAGE...

ON MASON'S PHONE: "DEA looking for Wing courier. High-value mem. Won't tell us contents."

ON MASON: His CPD source is worth the money he's getting paid tonight.

When just then Mason hears a SIREN in the distance...

ON MASON: Shit.

He stands up, ready to run...

... When the SIREN fades away into the distance.

Mason looks back up to the windows: Ardis better hurry.

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Ardis looks around the kitchen as Emma continues fiddling with the Keurig unit...

.... When Emma's PHONE RINGS.

She ANSWERS and we -

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - SAME TIME

Agent Diaz is on the other end of the call.

AGENT DIAZ

(into phone)

Mrs. Fitzgerald? It's Agent Diaz.
Did I wake you?

EMMA FITZGERALD

(into phone)

No. Your colleague is here.
(MORE)

EMMA FITZGERALD (CONT'D)
 (to Ardis)
 It's Agent Diaz.

ON ARDIS: Fuck.

ARDIS
 ... Tell her hi.

AGENT DIAZ
 Which colleague?

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (to Ardis)
 I'm sorry, I forgot your name.

ARDIS
 I'm from evidence collection.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (into phone)
 Your colleague is from evidence
 collection.

ON DIAZ: "Huh. Okay."

ON ARDIS: Time to get the fuck out of here.

ARDIS
 (re: the living room)
 I'll just be -

Ardis walks towards the living room when she passes the
 FRIDGE -

- AND THEN ARDIS FREEZES.

ON THE FRIDGE: A wall calendar. And on the calendar, in black
 Sharpie...

... "UA 457"

ON ARDIS: Holy shit.

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 We're waiting to release this
 information, but I wanted you to
 hear it from me first. Do you know
 a woman named "Ardis Varnado?"

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (into phone)
 "Ardis Varnado..."

ON ARDIS: Turns from the fridge to Emma. Can't let herself react to either her name or the calendar.

EMMA FITZGERALD (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 I don't think so.

ARDIS
 (re: calendar)
 Mrs. Fitzgerald?

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 Your husband never mentioned her?

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (into phone)
 I'd remember that name. Did Ardis Varnado kill my husband?

ON ARDIS: Keeping her face perfectly still.

ARDIS
 (re: calendar)
 What is this? UA 457?

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 We have a warrant out for her arrest.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (into phone)
 Who is she?

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 We believe that she deals mems.

ON EMMA: Taking this all in.

ON ARDIS: Trying not to appear frantic. But she needs to know what those numbers are.

ARDIS
 Mrs. Fitzgerald, is this a flight number? Was your husband on an airplane recently?

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (hand over the phone)
 What? Oh. Yes, that's just his flight from Shenzhen.

ARDIS

Your husband just returned from
Shenzen?

EMMA FITZGERALD

He goes to Shenzen every month.

AGENT DIAZ

(into phone)

Pardon, what did you say?

EMMA FITZGERALD

(into phone)

Oh I was just talking to your
colleague.

AGENT DIAZ

(into phone)

Did you say "Shenzen?"

EMMA FITZGERALD

(into phone)

Yes, my husband goes every month
for work, he just got back – why
are you both asking me this?

ARDIS

Was there anything strange
about this trip?

AGENT DIAZ

(into phone)

Was there anything out of the
ordinary about this trip?

EMMA FITZGERALD

(both into phone and to
Ardis)

No. Like I said, he went every
month. Same flight. Clockwork. He
sent me a loopy email from the
plane this time – I think he took
too much Ambien – but other than
that it was perfectly – You know
what, maybe you two should just
talk to each other if you're going
to ask me the same questions.

Emma extends her phone towards Ardis.

ON ARDIS: Staring at the phone...

... How can she talk her way out of this?

ARDIS

That's all right.

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 Mrs. Fitzgerald, will you put my
 colleague on the phone?

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (to Ardis)
 She wants to talk to you.

ON ARDIS: Hand sliding nearer to her gun in case this gets
 ugly...

ARDIS
 ... Tell her that CPD homicide sent
 me. I have orders to report only to
 them.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 My husband is dead and you people
 are bickering about some
 bureaucratic rule?

ARDIS
 We're doing the best we can.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (into phone)
 She says she can only report to
 homicide.

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
Assholes.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (to both Diaz and Ardis)
 This is insane. You people – is
 someone going to figure out who
 killed my husband?

ARDIS
 I'm sorry.

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 I'm sorry.

ARDIS
 I'm gonna let you get some rest.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 (into phone)
 Your colleague is leaving.

AGENT DIAZ
 (into phone)
 Tell my "colleague" not to remove
 any evidence - I'll be there in 10
 minutes.

IN THE FITZGERALD HOUSE:

Emma HANGS UP. Looks at Ardis.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 She'll be right here.

ARDIS
 I have to go.

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Emma Fitzgerald shows Ardis to the door.

EMMA FITZGERALD
 Why did Ardis Varnado kill my
 husband?

ARDIS
 I promise you, I'm going to get to
 the bottom of what happened
 tonight.

A DING from Emma's phone.

Emma looks at it.

ON THE PHONE SCREEN: A message from Agent Diaz.

It's a PHOTO OF ARDIS from her police file.

And a message: "Do you recognize this woman?"

ON EMMA: "Holy fuck the woman in front of me is the killer."

EMMA FITZGERALD
 ... Excuse me, I forgot something
 in the kitchen.

ON ARDIS: At the door, turning back to look at Emma. Is
 something going on?

Emma tries to casually walk back to -

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In the kitchen, Emma moves to hit REDIAL on her phone...

... When she HEARS A CLICK from the doorway.

ARDIS (O.S.)
Don't do it.

Emma turns to find Ardis, in the doorway, pointing a gun at her.

EMMA FITZGERALD
I don't have any drugs. I have some jewelry. Take anything you want.

ARDIS
The cops can't know what we talked about.

ON ARDIS: How can she keep Emma quiet?

ARDIS (CONT'D)
Sit on the couch.

CUT TO:

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A MINUTE LATER

Emma sits perfectly still on the living room sofa.

REVEAL:

Ardis and Mason stand in front of her. Mason is pointing Ardis' gun at Emma. Ardis is holding a SPIKE.

ARDIS
(to Emma)
Think about tonight. You couldn't sleep, I came in, we talked - think about that memory.

MASON
Think about the wrong memory and I'll shoot you.

Ardis holds the spike to Emma's head.

ARDIS
Ready?

ON EMMA: Scared. And yes.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We toss and turn in Emma's bed, unable to sleep.

POV: We get up at the sound of the doorbell.

POV: We open the front door to find... Ardis.

BACK TO THE LIVING ROOM:

Ardis EXTRACTS Emma's memory of Ardis' visit.

Emma, groggy, slumps over on the sofa.

Ardis holds up the vial containing the memory.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

Now she can't tell the cops a thing.

MASON

Test it. Make sure it's the right one.

Ardis places the spike to her own head and quickly INSERTS THE MEMORY INTO HER BRAIN.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We toss and turn in Emma's bed.

POV: We get up at the sound of the doorbell.

POV: We open the front door to find... Ardis.

BACK TO THE LIVING ROOM:

Grimacing as if tasting rotten food, Ardis EXTRACTS the memory right back out again.

Shakes it off as she POCKETS the vial with Emma's memory.

ARDIS

... I hate it when you're in them.
Looking at yourself.

MASON

Can we skip your existential crisis and get out of here?

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND FITZGERALD HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Ardis and Mason exit out the back, running down the dim alley...

... AS DIAZ'S COP CAR SPEEDS ACROSS THE ALLEYWAY, ACROSS THE STREET IN FRONT OF THEM -

Ardis TUGS Mason back into the alley, out of Diaz's sight -

- As Diaz's car PULLS AROUND in front of the Fitzgerald House.

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma Fitzgerald AWAKENS on the sofa at the sound of the DOORBELL. Groggy and confused, she answers the door to find...

... Agent Diaz.

AGENT DIAZ

Where is evidence collection?

EMMA FITZGERALD

What are you talking about?

Diaz takes in Emma's confusion...

... And realizes what happened.

ON DIAZ: *MOTHERFUCKER.*

CUT TO:

I/E. EL TRAIN - NORTH SIDE - NIGHT

Ardis and Mason ride on an EL TRAIN, which doesn't seem to have changed at all since about 1990 - save for the VIDEO ADS on every available surface.

At this hour, they're the only passengers left on the train.

MASON

(reading from his phone)

... United Airlines flight 457,
from Shenzen to Chicago, landed at
6:46 this morning.

(beat)

I don't get it.

ARDIS

Your CPD source said that they're looking for a courier, right? Well, I think we found the courier.

(beat)

Richard.

MASON

Why would a banker agree to be a courier for the Wing family?

ARDIS

Maybe because the Wings had a gun to his head.

(beat)

Whatever mem the Wings had in Shenzen, it was valuable. Maybe they had to get rid of it. Fast. The Shay family was on their tail. So the Wings find a civilian – somebody who makes regular trips back and forth, won't be suspicious – and they grab him. Inject the memory by force. "Keep this in your head for 12 hours or we'll kill your family." Richard's wife said he sent her a strange email from the plane! It wasn't Ambien – he had a mem in his head that his brain was having a hard time wrapping itself around.

MASON

Then he lands... And Larry Wing has Zeke pick him up from the airport.

ARDIS

Zeke takes Richard to the hotel, removes the mem, removes his memory of any of this even happening – and then calls me. Zeke knew that Richard would wake up in withdrawal–

MASON

– Or he even planted the idea in Richard's head –

ARDIS

– Gave him a mem of wanting to buy a mem –

MASON

– So that Richard would meet with you –

ARDIS

– And then Zeke could set me up for his murder.

ON MASON: This explains a lot, doesn't it?

Well, except for one not-so-little detail...

MASON

... So who killed Zeke?

ON ARDIS: That is an excellent question.

ARDIS

Someone hunting for the mem.

MASON

Who?

ARDIS

... The person who took Zeke's phone.

MASON

Who took Zeke's phone?

ON ARDIS: A new idea forming.

ARDIS

Let's find out.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECLUDED BENCH - LINCOLN PARK - MINUTES LATER

Ardis and Mason sit on a secluded PARK BENCH.

She places her burner phone on the bench. Hits SPEAKERPHONE.

MASON

... You're just going to call up the killer and... Say hey?

ARDIS

(points)

Look: We'll call on public wifi. It'll take him a minute to find our exact location.

MASON

And in that minute, you'd like
to...

ARDIS

Do what I do.

(beat)

Make a deal.

She hits DIAL on the phone...

... RINGING on the other end...

... Another long RING...

ON ARDIS: This is either the most brilliant idea she's ever
had, or the most suicidal.

ON MASON: This is definitely a bad idea.

... And another RING...

... Before...

VOICE (ON SPEAKER)

(male, French accent)

... Bonjour?

ON ARDIS & MASON: Well. Fuck.

ARDIS

My name is Ardis Varnado.

A long pause on the other hand.

VOICE (ON SPEAKER)

How may I help you this evening,
Miss Varnado?

ARDIS

You're looking for something. But
you don't have it.

VOICE (ON SPEAKER)

What makes you think I don't have
it?

ARDIS

... If you had it, you'd hang up
right now.

Another long pause.

VOICE (ON SPEAKER)
 My people said you were the clever
 one. I'd like to meet somebody so
 clever.

ON MASON: Shakes his head – "absolutely fucking not."

ON ARDIS: Looks at Mason. Then down at the phone.

ARDIS
 How do I know you're not going to
 kill me?

VOICE (ON SPEAKER)
 Because like you said... I'm
 looking for something. And I don't
 have it... Yet.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - WEST SIDE - NIGHT

Ardis and Mason wait in a nearly empty parking garage.

It's quiet, eerie – since most cars are self-driving, these
 old parking structures don't get as much use as they once
 did.

MASON
 This is fucking bananas.

ARDIS
 Mason, think about it: Whoever this
 is, he's been one step ahead of me
 all night. If he wanted to kill me,
 I'd already be dead.

MASON
 Or maybe he just had a couple of
 things higher up on his to-do list.

But before they can argue more, they hear the SOUND OF TIRES
 AGAINST PAVEMENT coming from the floor below...

... They turn, and look into the darkness...

... As the sound gets louder...

... And an ARMORED SUV approaches them.

But this armored SUV is a different model than Larry Wing's –
 this is somebody else.

This armored SUV pulls up right in front of Ardis and Mason...

... And the rear passenger door SWINGS OPEN.

Ardis and Mason stare at the open door: They can't see what's inside.

ON MASON: Takes a step back, puts his hands in the air.

MASON (CONT'D)
No fucking way.

ON ARDIS: Here goes nothing.

She takes a deep breath and ENTERS -

I/E. SECOND ARMORED SUV - CONTINUOUS

Inside, it's about the same size and quality of accoutrements that were in Larry Wing's armored SUV, only the design is different. More practical, less ostentatious.

Ardis finds herself sitting next to THREE BODYGUARDS...

... As she turns to face...

... A MAN who we will come to know as MR PHILLIP SHAY - 40s, Korean, French accent.

PHILLIP SHAY
Well that was dramatic.

ARDIS
(recognizing his face)
You're Phillip Shay.

PHILLIP SHAY
If Larry Wing knew you were speaking to me, he'd have you killed.

ARDIS
Then let's add another item to the list of things we have in common. Larry Wing would like to kill us both.

PHILLIP SHAY
... I came to Chicago to buy a memory.

ARDIS

Then you've come to the right woman.

ON SHAY: Gauging her.

PHILLIP SHAY

Here's my quandary: Yesterday, I got a call from your colleague, Zeke. At Wing's behest, he'd removed a mem that Richard Fitzgerald had carried in his head from Shenzen - but Zeke, he was an unscrupulous man. He offered to betray Larry Wing and sell the mem to me instead. My people arrived at his apartment, but the negotiations did not go smoothly.

ARDIS

Your people killed him.

PHILLIP SHAY

But he wouldn't tell where he'd hidden the mem. This is the problem with turncoats - you just can't trust them. Do you know where the mem is?

ARDIS

I can find it.

PHILLIP SHAY

Because you're the clever one?

ON ARDIS: Unreadable.

PHILLIP SHAY (CONT'D)

And what will it cost me if you do?

ARDIS

Get me out of here. New name, new identity - protect me from Wing. Pay me whatever you were paying Zeke.

ON SHAY: Thinks for a moment... Then nods.

PHILLIP SHAY

... Oh, but if you find this mem and you give it to Larry Wing instead of to me - that would not be good.

ARDIS
Understood.

She turns to leave...

... Then turns back to Shay.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
What's in the mem?

But Phillip Shay just LAUGHS.

PHILLIP SHAY
Zeke didn't tell you?

ARDIS
When would he have told me?

PHILLIP SHAY
When you killed Richard.

ON ARDIS: What?

ON PHILLIP SHAY: Noticing her confusion.

PHILLIP SHAY (CONT'D)
Oh dear... Zeke said you were
unreliable, but he did not say it
had gotten this bad.

ARDIS
Why would I kill Richard?

PHILLIP SHAY
Zeke couldn't do it all alone. He
needed the cops to think Richard's
death was just a drug deal gone bad
— so he asked a fellow dealer to
help. You.

ON ARDIS: Trying not to let him see how much this information
is fucking with her head.

PHILLIP SHAY (CONT'D)
The deal we just made — that's
exactly what he told me you'd want.
I agreed to those terms yesterday.
(beat)
You don't remember?

ARDIS
... I'll be in touch, Mr. Shay.

She EXITS —

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - WEST SIDE - MOMENTS LATER

A few seconds later, Shay's armored SUV drives off...

... Leaving Ardis and Mason alone in the parking garage.

MASON
(re: her expression)
What happened?

ON ARDIS: Like someone has died. Only that someone is any illusion of her own innocence.

ARDIS
Let's go.

She brushes him off, walking away into the darkness.

ON MASON: What the hell happened in there?

CUT TO:

EXT. FLATIRON LOFT BUILDING - WICKER PARK - NIGHT

The Security Chief enters the industrial loft building.

INT. FLATIRON LOFT BUILDING - 2ND FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

In a private second-floor loft, the Security Chief meets with...

... Nev and the Girl with Many Piercings.

NEV
Is it true what they say about you guys?

SECURITY CHIEF
What guys?

NEV
When you join the Wing family, they pull out every memory in your life that doesn't have to do with murder. One of you gets hurt, retires - you take that guy's kills, put them in your head. All you know in the world is killing.

ON THE SECURITY CHIEF: A perfectly unreadable expression.

SECURITY CHIEF

You reached out. Do you know where Ardis Varnado is or not?

GIRL WITH PIERCINGS

She fucking tricked him. That bitch is gonna get what she deserves.

SECURITY CHIEF

Where is she?

NEV

I sold her a burner. You can trace the GPS.

Nev writes a PHONE number on a slip of paper.

The Security Chief reaches over to take it...

... But Nev pulls the paper back.

NEV (CONT'D)

I want something in return.

SECURITY CHIEF

How much?

NEV

I don't want money... I want to kill someone.

(off his look)

Not for real. But I want to know what it feels like. You have so many memories of killing in your head - you can spare one.

ON THE SECURITY CHIEF: This is a unique request.

SECURITY CHIEF

... Deal.

Nev passes the Security Chief the paper with the phone number on it, and then takes out a spike.

Hands the spike to the Security Chief.

The Security Chief looks at the spike. Thinks.

And in a flash, the Security Chief pulls out a gun and SHOOTS THE GIRL WITH MANY PIERCINGS.

Nev jumps up -

NEV
 - WHAT THE FUCK -

- But before Nev can do anything the Security Chief BEATS the shit out of him.

Nev lies on the floor, bleeding, moaning.

The Security Chief picks up the spike, places it to the side of his own head...

... And REMOVES HIS MEMORY OF KILLING THE GIRL WITH MANY PIERCINGS.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: 10 seconds ago, we - the Security Chief - shoot the Girl...

... But the image fades to white...

BACK TO THE LOFT:

The Security Chief then places the spike against Nev's head...

NEV (CONT'D)
 No... What are you...

... And INJECTS THE MEMORY INTO NEV.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: 10 seconds ago, we shoot the Girl...

... But as our reflection flashes in a piece of glass...

... REVEAL: We are now Nev.

BACK TO THE LOFT:

Nev gets woozy, trying to reconcile his shifting sense of reality.

The Security Chief takes the Girl's cell phone out of her pocket, calls 9-1-1 on it...

... He leaves the call connected as he fires TWO MORE SHOTS into the Girl's body...

... And then wipes his prints from the gun...

... Before placing the weapon into Nev's hand.

ON NEV: Woozy... Imagining himself killing his girlfriend... The murder weapon now literally in his own hand... Drifting into sleep...

And with that, the Security Chief LEAVES.

EXT. FLATIRON LOFT BUILDING - WICKER PARK - MOMENTS LATER

The Security Chief walks away from the loft building as a pair of COP CARS rush to the scene of the 9-1-1 call.

The Security Chief enters the burner number into his phone, pulls up ENCRYPTED GPS DATA.

ON THE SECURITY CHIEF'S PHONE: A map of Chicago. And a dot showing him exactly where Ardis is.

CUT TO:

INT. EL TRAIN - SOUTH SIDE - NIGHT

As Ardis and Mason ride south on another EL TRAIN, she stares out the window at the city skyline.

ON ARDIS: Thinking about what she's become.

ON MASON: Seeing how distraught she is.

MASON

... You didn't do it.

(off her look)

Maybe Zeke lied to Shay. Maybe Shay lied to you. Maybe there was a big conspiracy! Whatever - you're not the killer.

ARDIS

I like you better when you're mean.

Mason removes a spike from his pocket and hands it to her.

MASON

(re: spike)

Pick a story that appeals and tell yourself that.

ON ARDIS: Staring at the spike.

ARDIS

... Do you know why I started pulling?

MASON

No.

ARDIS

Neither do I.

(beat)

It's easier to leave out the parts you don't like. To make excuse after excuse. "I'm just dabbling." "I can stop anytime." "I'm just a middleman." But it's bullshit. Just because you tell yourself a story about who you are – that doesn't make it true.

The train ARRIVES at the station.

Ardis stands...

... And hands the spike back to Mason.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

You ready?

MASON

For what?

ARDIS

To remember.

EXT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - HUMBOLDT PARK - NIGHT

Ardis and Mason stand across the street from the "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING FACILITY – a three-story clinic where addicts come to detox under clinical supervision.

MASON

... Why would Zeke stash the mem in a detox clinic?

ARDIS

Because this is where he got his supply.

(off Mason's curious look)

Addicts come in, detoxing, and Zeke offers them a trade – he'll sneak them pills, booze, whatever they want – and all it costs them is a few of their most precious memories.

ON MASON: That's fucking dark.

MASON
How do you know that?

ARDIS
... Because that's what he did to me.

Mason looks at Ardis, putting it together.

MASON
When I met you – your brain all hollowed out – Zeke introduced us. That's how you knew him – rehab?

ARDIS
Which is how I know where he keeps his stash.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Ardis and Mason enter the lobby, where they're stopped by a GUARD.

Ardis holds up the PRE PAID CREDIT CARDS she got from Nev.

ARDIS
10 minutes. No questions.

ON THE GUARD: He's made deals for less.

CUT TO:

INT. FITZGERALD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Fitzgerald House has become a crime scene as more TECHS look for Ardis' prints on every available flat surface.

Diaz surveys their work when she's interrupted by:

FORENSICS TECH
Agent Diaz?

He hands her his phone.

FORENSICS TECH (CONT'D)
Got a call from a security guard at a detox clinic, says Varnado walked in there 10 minutes ago.

Diaz takes the phone as we –

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - NIGHT

Ardis and Mason walk down the hallway on the 3rd floor, shoes clicking against the tile floors.

The design of the facility reflects the hopes of its patients – pristine white, open floor plan, opaque glass dividers instead of doors. Patients sleep in private rooms down the hall, but the central areas are there to encourage bonding. A sense of community.

It's dark up here, deathly quiet. We hear Ardis' and Mason's footsteps on the tile floors.

As they turn a corner, they run into...

... A DAZED PATIENT.

DAZED PATIENT

... Who are you?

ARDIS

(feigning hurt)

You don't remember me?

ON THE PATIENT: Mortification. This happens to him a lot...

He turns away, heading down another hall, as Ardis and Mason find...

A KITCHEN:

Where Ardis approaches the microwave.

Ardis hits a series of BUTTONS on the microwave –

– And a secret COMPARTMENT opens up behind it.

From the compartment, Ardis removes...

... A BRIEFCASE.

She sets the case on the table, and as Mason watches, she opens it to...

... REVEAL: DOZENS AND DOZENS OF MEM VIALS.

ON ARDIS: Bingo.

MASON

... Which one is it?

As they start to dig through the vials we –

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOBBY - SAME TIME

Agent Diaz enter the lobby and flashes her badge to the Guard.

AGENT DIAZ
Where is she?

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

Ardis and Mason flip through the vials...

... Until Ardis holds up a VIAL WITHOUT A LABEL.

ARDIS
No label.

MASON
You think that's it?

ARDIS
Only one way to find out.

Ardis removes her spike from her jacket –

– And loads it up with the vial.

Hands it to Mason, who does the honors –

– INJECTING THE MEM INTO ARDIS' HEAD.

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We are in some kind of laboratory, FILLED WITH NANOMETER TOUCH-SCREEN DISPLAYS...

... Orange liquids in huge jars...

... And on all of the displays: chemical formulas.

But as we stare at the displays –

– GUNFIRE sprays across the vials, destroying them –

– Someone is attacking the laboratory, shooting everything –

BACK TO THE SCENE:

ARDIS (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

Mason PULLS THE MEMORY OUT of Ardis before it bonds with her.

MASON

What is it?

Ardis, woozy, leans against the wall, setting her gun down on a nearby table.

She takes the mem vial from Mason, stares it at.

ON ARDIS: This little orange vial is worth an unimaginable fortune. And now she understands why.

ARDIS

A chemical formula. It's like Tetra, but... *Fuck*.

MASON

A formula for what?

ARDIS

... Reproducing mems.

MASON

You can't reproduce mems. Only a human brain can make...

(off her look)

... *Fuck*.

ARDIS

If we could make copies - water them down, mass produce them - mems would be so much cheaper. More addictive. We've been selling cocaine - and this is the formula for crack.

ON ARDIS & MASON: Realizing how off-the-charts valuable this formula is.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

Mason... Wing's lab was attacked. Shay's people, probably. That's why everyone needs this thing so badly - this mem is the only remaining record of the formula.

Mason takes out a cell phone.

MASON
I'm calling Wing.

ARDIS
No.

MASON
You trust Shay? We'll get a better deal from Wing.

ARDIS
We're giving it to the cops.

ON MASON: Say fucking what?

MASON
Your brain has been through a lot tonight – you're confused. Hand me the vial.

ON ARDIS: A resolve forming.

ARDIS
No. The cop who's chasing me – she said she could help. I can make a deal with her if I turn on Wing.

ON MASON: His frustration turns to disappointment.

MASON
Ardis, please be reasonable about this.

He PICKS UP HER GUN FROM THE TABLE –

– And points it at her.

MASON (CONT'D)
Give me the vial and I can get you out alive.

ON ARDIS: Staring at Mason... The gun...

... Realizing that there is precisely one more piece to this puzzle:

ARDIS
... Shay was right. Zeke needed another dealer to help him. To kill Richard. But it wasn't me.
(beat)
It was you.

ON MASON: "No shit."

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOBBY - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON: SECURITY MONITORS showing LIVE FEEDS of different rooms in the facility. No sign of Ardis and Mason...

REVEAL:

The Lobby Guard is showing the monitors to Diaz.

LOBBY GUARD

We don't have cameras everywhere.
Patient privacy.

AGENT DIAZ

(looking at the monitors)
... Where are they...

But then Diaz sees something on a different monitor...

... ON THE MONITOR:

A DELIVERY TRUCK enters the building's loading dock...

... And out of the truck descends...

... The Security Chief.

The Security Chief pulls a gun from his coat.

ON DIAZ: Shit is about to get heavy.

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

Mason points his gun at Ardis as she holds the vial.

ARDIS

(putting it all together)
You stole my gun. Took it from my
case while I had your mem in my
head.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - SEQUENCE

From earlier this evening, Ardis INSERTS Mason's rooftop-groupie-sex memory -

– And Mason dashes over to her case and steals her gun.

At the end of that scene, Ardis walks over to the case, opens it – and is shocked to find the gun missing.

ARDIS (V.O.)
And then you used it to shoot
Richard.

INT. PALMER HOUSE HOTEL - LUXURY SUITE - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

At the Palmer House Hotel, Richard sleeps in the bed...

... When Mason enters and uses Ardis' gun to SHOOT RICHARD TWICE IN THE CHEST.

Mason then drops the gun on the floor for the cops to find.

ARDIS (V.O.)
That was Zeke's plan, wasn't it?
Steal the mem – then make everyone
think that I'd done it. Wing. The
cops. He told Shay that I was in on
it.

INT. 24-HOUR DINER - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

Ardis and Mason in the diner, as he first suggests that she was the one to kill Richard.

ARDIS (V.O.)
You even convinced me.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - NIGHT

Back to Ardis and Mason on the 3rd Floor.

MASON
Zeke's plan? You think he knew you
well enough to come up with this?

ARDIS
You weren't his accomplice. He was
yours.

MASON
But he fucked up, hid the mem...
and now you found it!
(MORE)

MASON (CONT'D)

This is even better – all we have to do is take the mem back to Wing, blame everything that happened tonight on Zeke, and we walk away.
Paid.

(beat)

We'll split it 90/10, me, because...

(re: gun)

... I have leverage.

ON ARDIS: Looking at where they are. Thinking about the number of new addicts this formula will create.

ARDIS

... No.

Ardis takes a slow, defiant step backwards.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

I'm giving it to the cops.

MASON

What is wrong with you? We give that vial to Wing and he'll clean up your murder charge. You can sit on an island somewhere, spiking yourself with mems of any life you want.

ARDIS

At the cost of how many others?

Ardis takes another defiant step backwards...

... Mason follows, gun trained on her...

MASON

What – "lives"? We ruin people's lives every day for a percentage!

ARDIS

Not anymore.

Another step back...

EYE CONTACT BETWEEN THEM AND –

– MASON FIRES THE GUN ABOVE HER HEAD.

Ardis freezes.

MASON

STOP! You don't want to be the bad guy? You're not. Wing, Shay - we live in a world full of truly evil motherfuckers. But we're not like them. We're not killers. We just... help. I'm not asking you to pump poison into some kid's veins. I'm not asking you to put a gun to an old lady's head. All I'm asking you to do is hand me the vial - and walk away.

ON ARDIS: Looks him dead in the eye. It's appealing, isn't it? It would be so easy to hand him the vial and go.

But Ardis grips the vial until her knuckles turn white.

ON MASON: He genuinely doesn't want to kill her. But she's leaving him no choice.

MASON (CONT'D)

... Fuck you so much for making me do this.

Mason's finger pulls on the trigger...

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOBBY - SAME TIME

In the lobby, Agent Diaz stares at the security monitors...

... But now that Ardis and Mason have taken a few steps down the hallway DIAZ CAN SEE THEM...

... And she can see that Mason is pointing a gun at Ardis.

Diaz instantly PULLS THE FIRE ALARM -

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

- Mason SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER -

- But suddenly the FIRE ALARM GOES OFF -

- Mason is distracted and his shot MISSES -

- Ardis, still holding the vial, RUNS down the hall -

ON MASON: Fuck.

He CHASES after her -

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOBBY - SAME TIME

In the lobby, Agent Diaz has just pulled the fire alarm to save Ardis.

She watches Ardis run from Mason on the security monitors.

LOBBY GUARD
(putting down phone)
SWAT says they're on the way.

AGENT DIAZ
Get the patients out of here.

Diaz runs to a STAIRWELL -

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

The Security Chief runs up a different STAIRWELL -

CUT TO:

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

On 3, Mason HUNTS Ardis across the open-floor facility.

It's dark, empty. Flashing RED LIGHTS from the fire alarm. A twinkle from the distant skyscrapers through the tall windows.

Ardis, unarmed, SNEAKS from hall to hall, keeping low to the ground, hiding.

Mason stalks her through the eerie, red-white-red-white gloom.

IN THE DARKNESS:

The Security Chief emerges from a STAIRWELL.

He joins the hunt.

ELSEWHERE ON THE FLOOR:

Agent Diaz appears from another STAIRWELL.

She quietly joins this four-way dance...

Mason, Diaz, and the Security Chief silently stalk Ardis through the facility.

Ardis, the only one without a gun, is just trying to escape.

Ardis moves towards an exit...

ELSEWHERE ON THE FLOOR:

Diaz sees a shape moving through the darkness...

... Is it Ardis? Or the Security Chief? Should she fire?

BACK TO ARDIS:

Nearing the exit...

... But the Security Chief is too close...

... She slowly creeps back the other direction...

Is anyone getting out of this alive?

EXT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - HUMBOLDT PARK - SAME TIME

On the street outside, a SWAT TEAM arrives -

- Surrounding the main entrance -

- As PATIENTS stream out of the lobby.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

Our tense, four-way hunt continues as...

... Ardis gets near another FIRE EXIT, only to turn a corner to find...

MASON.

They see each other.

He FIRES -

- And Ardis LEAPS behind a table.

ELSEWHERE ON THE FLOOR:

Diaz and the Security Chief both hear the gunshot –
– And come running.

BEHIND THE TABLE:

Ardis crouches as MORE GUNSHOTS pin her down.

ON MASON:

Firing at the table. Angry. Can't believe it's come to this.

BEHIND THE TABLE:

How can Ardis get out of this?

Well, she can FLING THE VIAL DOWN THE HALL.

ARDIS

You want it? Go fetch.

ON MASON: Shit. He dashes down the corridor after it...

BEHIND THE TABLE:

Ardis gets up –

– Starts to go to the exit –

... When the Security Chief appears in front of her. Mere inches from her face.

Ardis is just fast enough to get the gun out of his hand –

– But not fast enough to stop him from PUMMELING THE EVER-LOVING-SHIT OUT OF HER.

ACROSS THE FLOOR:

Mason finds the vial on the floor –

– Pocketing it when –

– BANG.

A bullet lands beside him and he TURNS:

Mason is under fire from Diaz.

BACK TO ARDIS & THE SECURITY CHIEF:

The hand-to-hand combat between Ardis and the Chief is quick, brutal, and she doesn't remotely stand a chance.

BACK TO DIAZ & MASON:

Diaz and Mason trade gunshots.

BACK TO ARDIS & THE SECURITY CHIEF:

Well, this isn't going any better, is it?

Looks like he just broke one of her ribs.

BACK TO DIAZ & MASON:

Mason is finally able to race away from Diaz.

She's about to give chase, when she hears SOUNDS OF THE SCUFFLE between Ardis and the Security Chief.

ON DIAZ: Which way should she go? To Mason, or to Ardis?

BACK TO ARDIS & THE SECURITY CHIEF:

The Security Chief SMASHES Ardis to the floor, takes hold of his gun, raises it to shoot her...

... When...

... BANG.

The Security Chief is shot in the back.

REVEAL: Diaz stands behind him.

Diaz fires again, two more shots to his chest –

– And the Security Chief goes down. Dead.

Ardis looks up at Diaz – who just saved her life.

AGENT DIAZ

Listen –

– BANG.

Before Diaz can say anything, a BULLET LANDS IN HER CHEST, and she falls to the floor.

Ardis turns to see Mason behind her, FIRING blindly in their direction as he makes a break for the nearby EMERGENCY EXIT –

– As Ardis lies bleeding on the floor, her face inches from Diaz's, who starts BURBLING UP blood from her punctured lung.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

Mason dashes down the stairs –
 – Hiding the gun in his coat –
 – As he bursts out into –

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

In the lobby, Mason joins the other PATIENTS who are fleeing the building –
 – As they pass the entering SWAT Team –

MASON
 She's upstairs! She has a gun!

The SWAT Team – who, let us remember, have no idea who Mason is, since the police never connected him to Ardis – help Mason and the patients out of the building –

– Before they take to the stairs –
 – A THREE-MAN TEAM going up each staircase.
 There is no way out for whoever is left alive up there.

EXT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - HUMBOLDT PARK - NIGHT

Once outside, Mason SLIPS AWAY from the arriving COPS amidst all the commotion.

Mason walks casually away from the building...

... And pulls the vial from his pocket.

ON MASON: He's gotten away with it.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

Slowly, painfully, Ardis stands, wiping the blood from her nose...

... And then she picks up the Security Chief's gun.

Ardis stands above Diaz, weapon trained on her in case Diaz makes any sudden moves.

ON DIAZ: Losing ounce after ounce of blood, she reaches into her jacket pocket –

ARDIS
Hands.

AGENT DIAZ
(reaching into pocket)
You don't know what's going on.

ARDIS
HANDS.

AGENT DIAZ
... I need to show you...

Diaz reaches farther into her pocket...

ARDIS
HANDS! NOW!

... Ardis is about to pull the trigger...

AGENT DIAZ
"Naked is the best disguise."

And that stops Ardis cold.

ARDIS
... What did you just say?

But Diaz, too weak to speak anymore, is just able to reach into her pocket and remove...

... A MEM VIAL.

There's a BLOOD-SOAKED PHOTOGRAPH wrapped around the vial.

Ardis stares at Diaz's dying face, trying to make some - any - sense of what she just said.

Ardis takes the vial and uncurls the photograph...

ON THE PHOTO: Ardis and Diaz.

BOTH ARE SMILING, WEARING POLICE UNIFORMS.

Ardis' sense of reality is shifting beneath her, and she's doing everything she can to hold on.

What does this photo mean? How is it possible?

ARDIS (CONT'D)
Who are you? What the fuck is...

But Diaz has lost too much blood to respond.

Ardis sets down her gun...

... And removes the spike from her jacket pocket...

ON ARDIS: Is she really going to do this?

Yeah. She is.

Ardis INJECTS HERSELF WITH THE MEMORY.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, this is where our story gets... stranger.

Deep breath.

Here we go.

CUT TO:

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY - SEQUENCE

POV: Four years ago, we - Ardis - stare directly into a mirror.

ARDIS
(to her own reflection)
Hi. It's me.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SEQUENCE

In the present, Ardis closes her eyes, receiving the memory into her brain.

ARDIS (V.O.)
You.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY - SEQUENCE

POV:

ARDIS
(to her reflection)
Me.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SEQUENCE

Ardis' eyelids fluttering as her consciousness rewires.

ARDIS (V.O.)
You.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY - SEQUENCE

POV:

ARDIS
 (to her reflection)
 Us. Whoever we are anymore.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY - SEQUENCE

We return to a shot from our opening sequence:

POV: We kick a SOCCER BALL down the grass as a line of PRE TEEN GIRL DEFENDERS – in uniforms – line up against us... We expertly maneuver the ball around them and FIRE it past the GOALIE...

ARDIS (V.O.)
 If you're remembering this, then
 you're taking it all back in. What
 we had. What we gave up.

... But the memory continues and we turn to the crowd, to see our DAD applauding. We run up to our Dad...

ARDIS (V.O.)
 Our name. I'm Anna.

... REVEAL: Our Dad has a DETECTIVE'S BADGE on his belt.

INT. DAIS - DAY - SEQUENCE

From our opening sequence:

POV: We glance down as an ADMINISTRATOR hands us a hard-earned DIPLOMA. We look into the Administrator's congratulatory face as we shake hands...

... Only now the memory continues on and we turn to the crowd see that this is a DEA ACADEMY GRADUATION CEREMONY.

ARDIS (V.O.)
 Our partner.

And standing right behind us at graduation?

The newly christened Agent Diaz.

All the happy memories we saw in the opening?

They were Ardis'.

EXT. CENTRAL AMERICAN MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY - SEQUENCE

From our opening sequence:

POV: We ascend the final few steps to the top of a CENTRAL AMERICAN MOUNTAIN, looking out over the wide country below...

... Only now we turn back to see Agent Diaz is hiking right behind us.

ARDIS (V.O.)
An undercover op.

We extend her a hand, help her up to join us on the mountain top.

Diaz turns to face us.

AGENT DIAZ
DOJ can classify everything – but if you go undercover, there's one person who's always going to know who you really are: You.

ARDIS
... What if I didn't?

Diaz gives us a look: "Are you suggesting what I think you're suggesting?"

INT. ARDIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

From our opening sequence:

POV: On a moonlit bed, we gaze across the sheets at a WOMAN'S DARK HAIR nestled upon the pillow beside us. We admire the curve of her bare shoulder as she tosses restlessly...

... But now the woman turns to face us:

It's Diaz.

Ardis and Diaz are lovers.

AGENT DIAZ
I'm worried you're not gonna come back.

ARDIS
Wing won't figure it out. I'll work my way up his crew, get operational intel –

AGENT DIAZ

- I mean you, Anna. Your head. You live long enough with somebody else's memories - you're going to become someone else.

ARDIS

What are you really worried about?

AGENT DIAZ

... You're going to forget me.

We can see our - Ardis' - face reflected in the bedroom mirror. We see how much it kills us to have to do this.

ARDIS

I'll never forget you, okay? I promise. Some part of me... Somewhere... I'll never forget.

Diaz looks at us: Does she really believe this?

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY - SEQUENCE

ARDIS

(to her reflection)

But that's not why I'm talking into a mirror. Why I'm committing these words to a memory I'm about to have removed.

INT. ARDIS' BEDROOM - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: We sit on our bed as Diaz stands over us with a spike.

ARDIS (V.O.)

I read about this philosopher once. He said that people are either apples, or they're onions.

We lie back as Diaz REMOVES OUR MEMORIES.

ARDIS (V.O.)

An apple has a solid core. A fixed center, from which it grows. You can cut off a slice, you can bruise around the sides - but the core is still there.

The image fades in and out of white as we get groggy, confused, disoriented as Diaz plucks out happy memory after happy memory.

As we get sleepier, our brain hollowed like swiss cheese, the film itself begins cutting in and out, losing frames, freezing in pixelated bursts –

– When the film freezes on an image of Diaz loading NEW MEMORIES into her spike –

– The label on the vial of new mems reads “ARDIS VARNADO”...

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

From our opening sequence:

POV: We're crammed into the bathroom stall of an exclusive nightclub, where we DO A LINE of coke alongside a GIGGLING WOMAN.

ARDIS (V.O.)

Now an onion, there's a skin. You peel the skin, and there's one layer. You peel it. There's another layer.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: The pixelation returns to normal as Diaz finishes inserting the new memories into us –

ARDIS (V.O.)

You peel that, another. And another. And another.

– And lays our weary head down on the pillow.

One final image of Diaz's face, looking down at us: We see her concern for her lover who's about to lose any sense of identity.

ARDIS (V.O.)

Until you get to the smallest, tightest one, and you open it, and... Nothing.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN - SEQUENCE

POV: We WAKE UP in our apartment. All of our memories of being a cop have been removed.

We drag ourself out of bed –

– Catching a glimpse of our reflection in the mirror –

– *We are Ardis, and we look strung the fuck out.*

We stare at our reflection, a curious look on our face – our brain is rewiring.

ARDIS (V.O.)

There's no center. Just a series of layers that create the illusion of a solid whole.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: Some weeks later, we come home at night –

– *To find Diaz in our apartment, gun trained at us.*

We can see our shocked expression in a reflection in a wall mirror.

ARDIS

Who the fuck are you?

Those words sting Diaz's heart as she holds up the photo of her and Ardis at graduation, then the vial of Ardis' real memories...

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: We stay up talking all night talking with Diaz at the kitchen table. She has notes in front of her, detailed charts of Wing's organizational structure, which we feed her:

ARDIS

... Your wiretaps are coming up empty because he's using couriers – puts the information in their heads as a mem, then puts them on a plane...

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: Another month later, we come home at night –

– *To find Diaz in our apartment, gun trained at us.*

ARDIS

Who the fuck are you?

Again Diaz feels the sting as she holds up the photo, and the vial of Ardis' real memories...

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

*POV: Two more months later, we come home at night –
– To find Diaz in our apartment, gun trained at us.*

*ARDIS
Who the fuck are –*

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

*POV: Another year later, we come home at night –
– To find Diaz in our apartment, gun trained at us.
Diaz looks wearier, the routine of this wearing her down.*

*ARDIS
Who the fuck –*

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

*POV: Another two years later, we come home at night –
– To find Diaz in our apartment, gun trained at us.
Diaz looks even more pained.*

*ARDIS
Who the –*

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - MAIN AREA - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

POV: We watch Diaz find something under the couch in our apartment...

... Diaz holds it up: A mem vial.

*AGENT DIAZ
You're using.*

*ARDIS
Ardis is using. She wakes up after these sessions in withdrawal – her brain is full of holes – she needs to fill them.*

*AGENT DIAZ
You're becoming her.*

ARDIS

I'm not. Okay? I know exactly who I am.

Diaz watches the woman she loves slip away from her.

AGENT DIAZ

I'm not sending you back in.

ARDIS

Wing is planning a major expansion. If I can figure out what it -

AGENT DIAZ

- YOU'RE CHANGING. I feel it - I can feel it, Anna. I get one night a month with the real you, but it's not - it's not you anymore. It's her.

We stare at Diaz - is that true? What's happening to us?

ARDIS (V.O.)

What do you think? Is there such a thing as a self? Or are we just an endless series of peeling skins that look, from far enough away, like a human being?

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAWN - SEQUENCE

POV: We wake, again, unaware of who we really are.

ARDIS (V.O.)

I don't know. But here's what I believe: No matter how far gone you are - whatever you've done - I am still in there.

We once again catch a glimpse of ourself in the mirror - are we losing it?

ARDIS (V.O.)

It's never too late to remember who you are. Who you can be again.

INT. ARDIS' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY - SEQUENCE

ARDIS

*(to her reflection)
Come back, Anna. Please come back.*

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - NIGHT

And finally we return to Ardis in the present, spike against her head.

ON ARDIS: Eyes fluttering open. She remembers everything.

She knows she's a cop again.

She's groggy, struggling to keep it together. Trying to hold on to what's real as her brain rewires itself to her new (old?) identity -

- But the sound of Diaz GASPING for breath brings her back to the moment.

Ardis turns to Diaz...

... Just as DIAZ'S EYES CLOSE.

ARDIS
No. No. No. No.

Ardis frantically tries applying pressure to the bullet hole in Diaz's chest -

- But it's no use -

ARDIS (CONT'D)
Fuck fuck fuck fuck -

- And with a final gasp, Diaz dies.

ON ARDIS: Just as she's learned how much Diaz means to her, Diaz is dead. Seconds after regaining her old life, it's been taken from her.

But Ardis has little time to mourn, as a THREE-MEMBER TEAM OF SWAT GUYS arrives on the floor.

SWAT MEMBER
Freeze! Hands behind your head!

The three SWAT Members surround Ardis, a triangle of automatic weapons pointed at her.

She puts her hands up.

ARDIS
I'm a cop.

SWAT MEMBER
Hands behind your head! Get on the floor!

ARDIS

You have an officer down here. The man responsible is fleeing the scene. His name is -

SWAT MEMBER

- Down! Now!

The SWAT Members step closer -

- One of them puts a hand on Ardis' shoulder, pushing her down to her knees.

ARDIS

- His name is Mason Russell, six feet, brown hair, you have to call it in before he gets -

- The SWAT Member KICKS Ardis in the back of her head -

- And then as her face SLAMS against the floor, he DIGS his knee into her back -

- Holding her down as he presses his gun to her temple.

ON ARDIS: Can't move. Can't breathe.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

Mason -

(gasp)

- You have to stop -

She's broken. Defeated. Beaten to a pulp for the second time tonight.

All she has to do is close her eyes, pass out, and worry about getting herself out of jail in the morning.

But across the floor, she sees Diaz's dead body.

Ardis' face hardens into cold steel resolve. She wants to be the hero of this story? Time to prove it.

In a flash, Ardis performs a FEAT OF UNARMED COMBAT ACROBATICS -

- Taking two of the SWAT Team Members to the ground as she DISARMS the third.

Stealing his automatic weapon, she dashes across the floor to the exit -

- Pressing her ear against the door to hear THE SOUNDS OF MORE SWAT MEMBERS COMING UP THE STAIRS.

ON ARDIS: What to do?

She opens the door -

- And FIRES AT THE EMPTY STEPS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HER -

A FLIGHT DOWN:

The SWAT Members back off at the sound of gunfire, retreating backwards...

TOP OF THE STAIRS:

Ardis places the gun across the steel bar of the fire door, LOCKING IT FROM INSIDE.

Then she runs to the OTHER STAIRS -

- Opens the door and looks down: It's clear...

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

... Ardis BOLTS down the stairs as fast as she can...

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - SAME TIME

On the 3rd floor landing, the SWAT Members TRY TO OPEN THE FIRE DOOR that Ardis barricaded -

- But it won't budge. They're stuck.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - LOADING DOCK - LATER

Ardis BURSTS from the stairwell out to the LOADING DOCK -

- Where A UNIFORMED COP guards the exit.

ARDIS
(feigning hysteria)
Oh my God help! Help!

COP
Ma'am, are you okay?

Ardis runs up to the Cop and DISARMS HIM -

- Then SWIPES his GUN and PHONE while he's on the ground-

- She runs out to -

EXT. ALLEY - HUMBOLDT PARK - CONTINUOUS

Ardis runs away down a back alley.

She's out.

But so is Mason. And the cops are on the hunt for *her*.

CUT TO:

I/E. ARMORED SUV - CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

Larry Wing rides in the back of his SUV.

His cell rings.

LARRY WING
(into phone)
This is not a secure line.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. SOUTH STATE STREET - SAME TIME

Mason talks into his cell as he walks down the street, avoiding traffic cameras.

MASON
(into phone)
I don't give a shit. I have your
mem - but your chemist is dead.
Which means this memory of the
formula is your only record of it.
(beat)
You want this thing? It's not going
to come cheap.

ON WING: This formula is worth more than anything Mason could ask for.

CUT TO:

EXT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - HUMBOLDT PARK - NIGHT

A small army of COPS contains the scene around the facility.

ASAC Thorne surveys this mess with the CPD Homicide Detective we'd first met at the hotel.

ASAC THORNE
 (re: building)
 ... Anything?

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE
 Varnado is gone. But she swiped a
 phone off one of our guys.

The Detective shows Thorne his phone, which has the track-
 another-phone feature enabled.

HOMICIDE DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 The second she turns it on, we'll
 know where she is.

ASAC THORNE
 I lost an agent tonight. So we find
 Varnado - we shoot on sight. Do you
 understand?

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED SLAUGHTERHOUSE - BACK OF THE YARDS - NIGHT

A self-driving cab deposits Mason outside an old ABANDONED
 SLAUGHTERHOUSE in the "back of the yards" neighborhood - this
 place has been a continuous slum since 1880. And it's not
 getting nicer anytime soon.

Mason enters the abandoned slaughterhouse -

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

- To find that it's not so abandoned after all:

Inside, ENORMOUS TUBS OF ORANGE LIQUID have been stacked
 floor-to-ceiling...

... The conveyor belts look new, ready to function again...

... And hundreds of boxes of MEDICAL VIALS line the far
 walls.

What was once a slaughterhouse for hogs is in the process of
 being converted into a state-of-the-art mem factory.

ON MASON: Wing isn't wasting any time mass producing this
 stuff, is he?

Speaking of whom:

LARRY WING (O.S.)

They used to slaughter hogs here.

Mason turns to see Wing and his two bodyguards approaching.

Wing's armored SUV is parked behind them.

LARRY WING (CONT'D)

1890s. At its peak, 75,000 hogs a day. So many gallons of blood flowed into the river from this very spot that it made the water bubble all the way downtown – can you imagine that? Safety standards not being what they are today, if a workman's finger got lopped off, packed in with the meat – well, the irony was that the worker's own family was probably buying that very hunk of rotting pork! It's what we've been doing ever since...

(beat)

... Feeding the animals to each other.

Mason reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out the vial.

MASON

How many mems can you make at a time with this thing?

LARRY WING

Enough to make the river bubble all the way downtown.

(beat)

Of course, the quality will suffer. Apparently the copies will get hazier – and more addictive. They start to fade or something. But memories, like hogs, are a renewable resource.

(beat)

Give me the vial, and I'll wire the money into your account.

Mason hands the vial to Bodyguard #1.

MASON

It's a living.

LARRY WING

(to Bodyguard #1)

Test it.

Bodyguard #1 takes out a spike, loads the vial into it, and INJECTS IT INTO HIS BRAIN -

FLASH OF IMAGERY:

POV: We - Emma Fitzgerald - toss and turn in bed.

POV: We get up at the sound of the doorbell.

POV: We open the front door to find... Ardis.

BACK TO THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE:

Bodyguard #1 quickly PULLS THE MEM OUT.

BODYGUARD #1
No good. Some old lady.

MASON
What?

ON WING: Just nods. He was expecting this.

The front door of the armored SUV opens...

... And Ardis steps out.

(N.B.: Her left hand is now bandaged. Doesn't seem too odd, since she recently lost a fist fight, but this little detail may prove more interesting in a moment.)

ARDIS
(to Wing)
I told you he doesn't have it. I do.

MASON
How did...?

Mason stares at her, figuring it out.

INT. "FRESH START" SOBER LIVING - 3RD FLOOR - FLASHBACK

Back at the facility, when Ardis was hiding behind the table as Mason shot at her...

... Ardis takes the vial out of her pocket, ready to throw it down the hall to distract Mason...

... When she feels ANOTHER VIAL in her pocket - takes it out - realizes she still has Emma's mem and THROWS THAT ONE towards Mason -

ARDIS
You want it? Go fetch.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - NIGHT

Back to the slaughterhouse, where Mason glares at Ardis:
Fuck, she's clever.

LARRY WING
(to Ardis)
I'll offer you the same deal I
offered Mason.

ARDIS
Unlike him, I took precautions. I
don't have the vial on me - but I
know exactly where I hid it.

From her jacket, she takes out a spike.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
All you have to do is pluck out my
memory of hiding it. If I'm lying -
kill me.

ON WING: Fuck, she is *really clever*.

ARDIS (CONT'D)
Unless I get a better offer.

Suddenly, the GATES to the slaughterhouse door RAISE -

- And MR SHAY'S ARMORED SUV DRIVES IN.

The gates close behind the SUV as it pulls up beside them.

Shay and THREE BODYGUARDS - armed to the hilt - get out.

Wing's two bodyguards point their guns at Shay and his three
bodyguards - who point their guns right back.

Even Wing and Shay draw guns of their own.

PHILLIP SHAY
Miss Varnado, I'm beginning to
think you enjoy these dramatic
entrances.

Everyone is pointing guns at everyone...

... As Ardis, unarmed, walks right into the center of the
Mexican stand-off.

Wing and his guys on one side. Shay and his guys on the other.

Mason, with Wing's people, is trying to figure out how anyone is getting out of here alive.

One of Shay's bodyguards trains his gun on Ardis –

– When Shay waves him off.

PHILLIP SHAY (CONT'D)

(to his bodyguard)

No. She's the only person here who you *can't* kill.

ARDIS

(taps her forehead)

You want to know where the vial is? I'm taking bids.

ON WING: Are you fucking serious?

ON SHAY: The balls on this chick.

PHILLIP SHAY

(to Ardis)

Pick a number. It's yours.

LARRY WING

(to Ardis)

I can promise you that I won't be outbid by this – thug.

PHILLIP SHAY

(to Wing)

One econ class at university, and you're Maynard fucking Keynes.

ARDIS

... Hmmm, who should I sell the vial to? It's a big decision.

Ardis slowly, deliberately paces back and forth between the two sides.

LARRY WING

You want a promotion? You can have half of this town.

PHILLIP SHAY

You can have all of it.

ARDIS

... Hmmmm... Oh, I almost forgot –
there's one more interested party.

From her jacket pocket, Ardis removes the COP'S CELL PHONE
that she stole...

... REVEAL: The phone is on.

From outside, we hear the sounds OF POLICE SIRENS –

CUT TO:

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - SAME TIME

Outside, POLICE CARS speed towards the slaughterhouse from
every direction.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - SAME TIME

ON WING AND SHAY: Hearing the sirens. The cops are on the
way.

LARRY WING

(to Ardis)

This is not helpful.

PHILLIP SHAY

(to Ardis)

For once, Larry and I are in
agreement.

Ardis looks back and forth between them, the sounds of sirens
growing louder.

ARDIS

... Well, I guess I better make a
decision.

(beat)

Larry, I suppose loyalty counts for
something. Transfer the money –
right now – and the vial is yours.

Ardis looks back at Shay, who is livid – but can't shoot her
and risk losing the vial.

Wing nods to his Bodyguard #2, who uses his phone to TRANSFER
THE MONEY.

WING
 (to Ardis)
 Your turn.

ARDIS
 (re: Shay's guns)
 I'd feel more comfortable with one
 gun on me at a time.

Wing gestures to his Bodyguard #1, who follows Ardis *behind*
 Wing's SUV.

So from above the layout looks like:

[SHAY]	[WING &]	[]	[ARDIS]
[&]	[MASON &]	[SUV]	[&]
[3 GUARDS]	[GUARD]	[]	[GUARD]

Separated from the Mexican stand-off by the SUV, Bodyguard #1
 points *his* gun at Ardis.

BODYGUARD #1
 Let's go.

Ardis holds the spike up to her own head –

– And REMOVES A MEMORY.

ON SHAY: Trying to get a glimpse of what Ardis is doing.

ON WING: Same.

ON MASON: Cannot believe this is happening.

Woozy, Ardis hands the loaded spike to Bodyguard #1.

ARDIS
 Enjoy.

WING
 (to bodyguard)
 Check it.

Bodyguard #1 keeps his gun on Ardis...

... While with his free hand he puts the spike to his head...

... He and Ardis make eye contact...

... ON ARDIS: Unreadable...

... And Bodyguard #1 INJECTS HER MEMORY.

CUT TO:

INT. DILAPIDATED APARTMENT BUILDING - WENDELL'S APARTMENT

POV: 30 minutes ago, in Wendell's apartment, we - Ardis - and Wendell stare at a MIRROR.

ARDIS

(into mirror)

Wendell, will you tell the man who will remember this what you're going to do the second you see the money has been transferred?

WENDELL

(into mirror)

Close the account. And go see my grand-kids.

We set the mem vial on a table, in plain view.

ARDIS

And the vial will be right here, waiting to be picked up. Will you tell the man who will remember this where we are?

WENDELL

310 S Pulaski. Apartment #2.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - NIGHT

Back at the slaughterhouse, Bodyguard #1 receives the mem-

BODYGUARD #1

Got it.

ON ARDIS: See? She was telling the truth.

ON WING: Pleased.

ON SHAY: Wants to kill all of these motherfuckers.

ON MASON: Ardis is about to get away with his money.

CUT TO:

INT. DILAPIDATED APARTMENT BUILDING - WENDELL'S APARTMENT

POV: Back to us - Ardis - and Wendell talking into the mirror.

ARDIS
Wendell, best of luck with your grandkids.

We stand...

... But as the memory is incorporated into the Bodyguard's brain Ardis BECOMES THE BODYGUARD...

... Who then turns back to look right into the mirror.

BODYGUARD #1
(into mirror)
Oh, and you?
(beat)
This is going to hurt.

And with that we PICK UP A KNIFE that we had kept just off-camera -

- And JAB THE KNIFE INTO OUR OWN HAND.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - SAME TIME

Back to the slaughterhouse:

Bodyguard #1 SCREAMS IN PAIN -

- As his left hand instinctively SPASMS -

- And he DROPS THE GUN HE WAS HOLDING IN IT -

- While frantically trying to PULL THE MEMORY OUT OF HIS HEAD with the other hand -

- But before anyone can figure out what the hell is happening Ardis GRABS Bodyguard #1's GUN and SHOOTS HIM WITH IT -

- While on the other side of the SUV they respond to the sound of the GUNSHOT -

- And EVERYBODY STARTS SHOOTING AT EVERYBODY.

CUT TO:

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - SAME TIME

Outside, the cops hear the gunfire -

- And ASAC Thorne leads a SWAT TEAM INSIDE.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE - SAME TIME

Inside, we find "slaughterhouse" to be an apt description of the proceedings.

Wing's Bodyguard #2 is able to take out two of Shay's Bodyguards before they kill him -

- Wing lands a shot between Shay's eyes -

- Before Shay's final bodyguard kills Larry Wing -

- And then Mason is able to grab a gun and kill Shay's final bodyguard.

Everyone is dead, save for Ardis and Mason...

... As Ardis pops up from behind the SUV and FIRES AT MASON -

- He FIRES back at her -

- And they TRADE VOLLEYS from either side of the huge SUV -

ON THE ENTRANCE:

ASAC Thorne and his SWAT Team fan out across the area.

ON THE SUV:

Ardis and Mason crouch on either side of the SUV - if either makes a break for it, the other will have a clean shot.

MASON

We can still put down these guns
and walk away. Split the money
50/50.

ON ARDIS' SIDE:

ARDIS

70/30. Me.

ON MASON'S SIDE:

MASON

60/40.

ON ARDIS' SIDE:

ARDIS

Deal.

And with that...

... They both stand and FIRE AT EACH OTHER.

Two bullets echo in the gloom.

Both shots hit their targets.

As both Mason and Ardis fall to the ground.

Everything is still as ASAC Thorne and the Cops surround the SUV...

... Forming a circle around Ardis' and Mason's bodies...

... Moving in on the two corpses...

... Until, at last...

... Ardis slowly sits up.

REVEAL: The bullet went clean through her shoulder.

She looks to Mason -

- Who has a bullet in his heart.

Mason is dead.

The Cops converge around Ardis, ready to fire.

She puts her hands above her head.

ARDIS (CONT'D)

I am Anna Finn. DEA undercover. DOJ
classified file. Password MNE30S7N.

ASAC Thorne stares at her: Is she telling the truth?

He takes out his phone, accessing the classified file...

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER BANKS - BEHIND THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE - DAWN

A short time later, the first blue tingle of dawn is just starting to coat the city.

Behind the slaughterhouse, plumes of cold grey mist waft up from the river. Everything is murky and unfathomable.

PARAMEDICS finish checking Ardis – she’s been through a lot, but she’ll live.

ON ARDIS: Who is she now? Who has she ever been?

She’s approached by ASAC Thorne.

ASAC THORNE

... My name is ASAC Pat Thorne.
It’s nice to meet you.

Ardis nods.

ASAC THORNE (CONT'D)

You need to go to the hospital.

ARDIS

Yeah.

ASAC THORNE

But there’s something we have to talk about first. I’m sorry. Can’t wait.

ARDIS

What?

ASAC THORNE

Thanks to you, the Wings just took a major hit. Which means that the Shays will be quick to take over their ground. And...

ON ARDIS: And...?

ASAC THORNE (CONT'D)

... And your cover isn’t even blown.

ON ARDIS: Realizing what he’s suggesting.

ASAC THORNE (CONT'D)

As far as the Shays know, you're the dealer who tried to sell out Wing — we charge you with Richard's murder, you go on the run, reach out to them for help... You're in a perfect position to infiltrate.

ARDIS

You can pull out my memory of tonight. Send me back under.

ASAC THORNE

I know you've given a lot already. Asking for more, is... But if we're going to do this, best to do it now.

ARDIS

I'd forget everything I've done.
I'd forget who I really am.

ASAC Thorne looks down at her classified case file, which we can't see.

ASAC THORNE

You think this is who you really are?

ON THORNE: "Maybe. Maybe not."

Thorne holds on to the unseen file and hands her a spike — the choice is hers.

Then he steps away, giving her some time to think.

We stay on Ardis' face. She stares at the spike. Grappling with the decision.

This is the real her, isn't it? This is her real identity?

Beneath it all, there is a person inside there... Right?

As she thinks, the morning mist slowly drifts across her face.

Covering her up in an impenetrable grey fog.

THE END