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200 Days of Innocence: An Original, Feature-Length Screenplay

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200 Days of Innocence:
An Original, Feature-Length Screenplay

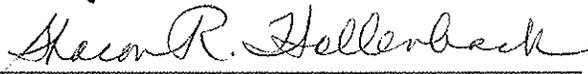
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Two Hundred Days of Innocence

by

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EXT. SCAJAQUADA EXPRESSWAY, NORTH BUFFALO - NIGHT

A lonely, quiet stretch of roadway at some time in the small hours of the morning. Very few cars are out driving.

A MAN, dressed in baggy jeans and a zip-up jacket, walks aimlessly down the road with a black duffel bag slung over one shoulder. He looks around him blankly, not seeming to have a set destination.

Then - a car up the road starts slowly veering off the road, like the driver has fallen asleep. It crashes through the metal barrier and careens down the hill, plunging into Scajaquada Creek. It is half-submerged in the dark water.

The walking man stops, stunned for a moment, then starts running towards the crash.

Another car up the road pulls over some distance ahead and the DRIVER jumps out, cell phone in hand.

The walking man drops his duffel at the side of the road and goes into the water on the driver's side to try and wrench open the door. He does, and water starts flooding the cabin. The driver is covered in blood, clearly dead from hitting his head on the wheel.

MAN

Hey! Hey, you okay? You okay?

The other driver has her cell phone to her ear. She remains by the metal barrier.

DRIVER

There's been an accident, his car's
in the creek, for God's sake...
We're north of the city, Scajaquada
Expressway, right before the
Parkside exit.

The man reaches into the dead man's car and fumbles around with the seat belt. The dead man falls to the side just as the man removes his hands and pulls out a soaking wallet.

The man steps back from the car, looking at the dead man inside it for a moment, then at the wallet.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

I called for an ambulance. Is he
okay?

MAN

He's dead.

EXT. SCAJAQUADA EXPRESSWAY, OUTSIDE BUFFALO - LATER

A pair of police cars, an ambulance, and a fire engine are all clustered around the break in the expressway barrier, lights flashing in the darkness.

The dead man is rolled away, covered, on a stretcher and into the back of the ambulance.

The driver talks tearfully to a POLICEMAN, who jots down notes on his pad.

DRIVER

I just saw his car go off the road,
he must've fallen asleep...Oh my
God.

The walking man, who has retrieved his duffel bag, stands a bit apart from the scene, still holding the wallet he has taken from the dead man. He flips it open.

Inside the wallet: a few dollars, some credit cards, a few pictures, and a driver's licence for a James Palmer from Lockport, New York. He looks a bit like the walking man.

The policeman has left the other driver and approaches the walking man.

POLICEMAN

Sir? I understand you were first at
the scene?

MAN

Uh...yeah, I was just walking by...

POLICEMAN

And he was dead when you reached
him?

MAN

Yeah.

Policeman writes this down.

POLICEMAN

Okay...and your name please, sir?

MAN

Palmer. James Palmer.

FADE IN:

INT. LOBBY, OFFICE BUILDING, BOSTON - DAY

An elegant lobby for a building of office suites, right in the heart of Boston. A receptionist sits behind a monstrosity of a desk near the front, and two security guards talk together quietly along one of the walls. People in business dress walk in and out at a constant rate, singly and in pairs.

EMILY WARREN, late twenties, stumbles in through the revolving door, buttoning up her blazer while simultaneously trying to hang onto her briefcase.

She smiles at the security guards at their station as she approaches them.

EMILY

Um, Morrow Fitzpatrick Insurance?

A guard points wordlessly towards the elevators. Emily sighs.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Emily straightens, adjusts her blazer, which has its buttons done up wrong, and heads for the elevators.

INT. SECOND FLOOR, OFFICE BUILDING, BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

Emily steps out of the elevator. Everyone else getting off with her ignores her and goes about their own business. Across from her on the wall is an elegant floor directory, at which she peers, frowning. She checks her watch quickly, then heads down the hallway.

A moment later she's running back to the elevator.

EMILY

Wait! Hold that, please!

INT. FOURTH FLOOR, OFFICE BUILDING, BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

Emily gets off on the fourth floor, and looks at the directory here, but with little success. As she frowns and studies the directory, a blond woman notices her and stops. This is SHANNON GARRISON, early thirties.

SHANNON

You wouldn't happen to be Emily Warren, would you?

Emily turns to her, smiling.

EMILY

Thank God, someone who knows something.

Shannon laughs and offers her hand.

SHANNON

I'm Shannon, one of the insurance agents at Morrow Fitzpatrick. Don't worry, everyone gets lost around here on the first day.

Shannon looks pointedly at the mismatched buttons on Emily's blazer. Emily looks down and sees them, and hastily redoes them as Shannon turns to lead her.

Shannon leads her down a branching hallway, making seemingly random turns at different points. Emily watches carefully and looks back every now and then, trying to memorize the way.

EMILY

Is this a kind of initiation thing? Find your way to the office suite and still make it on time to work?

SHANNON

Good thing it isn't. I was a full half-hour late my first day.

INT. MORROW FITZPATRICK LOBBY, OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

At last, Shannon and Emily arrive at the Morrow Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency, an expensive-looking office suite done in dark hardwoods and expensive fabrics. Shannon smiles at DAVE, the male receptionist, and leads Emily on.

INT. MAIN OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - CONTINUOUS

A massive center room dominates the office, containing numerous boxy grey cubicles filled with INSURANCE AGENTS, dressed in formal business wear. As the day has just begun most are still settling into their cubicles, chatting with their neighbors and sipping coffee.

Some turn in interest at Emily's arrival. Most ignore her.

SHANNON

My workspace's out here. But you, you get to have Jack's old office, and you can actually see sunlight and blue sky. Jack went to Nationwide, the traitor.

EMILY

I didn't think I'd actually be in my office that much. They told me --

SHANNON

Ugh, privilege is wasted on the ungrateful.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - CONTINUOUS

Shannon walks up to the open door of one of the side offices and knocks.

Inside is a middle-aged man with sandy hair, HARVEY MORROW, an owner and CEO of the agency.

SHANNON

A live one for you, Harvey.

MORROW

Thanks, Shan. Didn't help her, did you?

SHANNON

She just looked so lost, I couldn't leave her and still live with myself.

Harvey chuckles and stands up, extending one hand. Emily steps in past Shannon and takes it. Shannon, behind her, goes off to her cubicle.

MORROW

Nice to see you again.

EMILY

You too, Mr Morrow.

They both settle into seats on either side of Morrow's wide, cluttered desk.

MORROW

I think you filled out all the necessary forms and paperwork last week, when we made it official?

EMILY

Yes, that's what they told me.

MORROW

Good, then you can start right away.

(MORE)

MORROW (CONT'D)

I'd give you a tour or ask someone to show you around, but in all honesty you won't be in the office that much.

EMILY

That's fine by me. I'm much more comfortable out in the real world.

Morrow gives her an appraising look.

MORROW

And that's why we hired you. I think you're going to do good things for us, Miss Warren.

Emily beams.

EMILY

That's what I'm here for.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - DAY

Morrow unlocks and opens the door to an empty office, bare of any accessories save a utilitarian desk, chair, phone, and desktop computer system. A window along one wall overlooks the street and allows light to filter in.

MORROW

And here's that office you'll hardly ever see. Jack mostly used this room as a homebase, to organize his investigations, that sort of thing.

EMILY

Well, if there's anything else, I'd like to just jump right in, if that's all right?

Morrow dry washes his hands.

MORROW

Good, good. Yes, I think Dave out at the front actually got a phone call from the First Bank of Boston this morning, about a case Jack was working on a few months ago -- evidently it's still open. That might be a good place for you to start.

EMILY

Great.

MORROW

The message should be taped to the phone, I told him to put it there... Yes, there it is. If you need anything at all -- directions to get back out... One of the agents would be happy to help.

EMILY

Thanks, I'll be sure to do that.

Morrow smiles cheerfully and heads back to his own office. Emily sets down her briefcase on the floor beside her new desk and leans over to look at the phone.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - DAY

The office is only slightly homier than it was earlier: the computer is on with the screen saver running, a mug with crossword puzzles running around it sits on the edge of the desk, and a photo of Emily with three older men -- her brothers -- rests against one of the cabinets. Every inch of flat surface is covered with files, police reports, photographs, etc.

Emily is so engrossed in her work that she doesn't see Shannon in the doorway, a folder in hand. Shannon clears her throat.

Emily looks up, startled.

EMILY

Oh! I'm sorry, come in, sorry about the mess...

Emily immediately starts shuffling papers back together to make room for Shannon. Shannon, smiles in amusement at her.

SHANNON

So. Being an insurance claims investigator as exciting as you thought?

EMILY

More confusing. Jack has really bad handwriting, I don't even understand half the stuff here.

Emily finishes shoving all the papers away and turns to Shannon.

SHANNON

That wouldn't be the bank case,
would it?

EMILY

Yes, actually. How did you -?

SHANNON

I'm the one who handles the First
Bank's account, I took their phone
call ...jeez, six months ago?

EMILY

(checks the folder)
Yeah, April of this year.

SHANNON

Yeah. Poor rich bastards. Jack
worked day and night on that case
and nothing ever came up. It's like
the guy never even existed.

Emily chuckles nervously.

EMILY

Great. I'll get to look completely
incompetent on my first case.

SHANNON

If it makes you feel any better
Jack used to be a cop. If he
couldn't crack it, it's nothing to
be ashamed of.

EMILY

Yeah, well...I was too. For five
years.

Shannon studies her thoughtfully for a moment, before
nodding.

SHANNON

Now it makes sense.

EMILY

What does?

SHANNON

You talk like a cop. I think you
can do it.

Emily blushes and smiles a little, touched by Shannon's
confidence in her.

EMILY

Well...thanks, I guess.

SHANNON

Yeah, and you don't have your head up your ass like Jack did. You'll do all right.

Emily blinks in mild amusement, as Shannon deposits her folder on the corner of the desk.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

No rush on that one, just someone trying to con us out of some money. Still, company policy to have someone go investigate, so get to it, Nancy Drew.

Shannon exits the room.

Emily looks back and forth between the new folder and the one she'd been working on, and goes for the old one. She picks up the folder, grabs her coat and purse, and is out the door.

EXT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Emily pulls into the parking lot of the Boston Police Department's all-glass headquarters. The place is quiet on the outside, with relatively little foot- or car-traffic. But once Emily steps out of her car and heads inside...

INT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

...the place is bustling, with phones RINGING, meetings being held, and PEOPLE going every which way. Compared to the police department, Morrow Fitzpatrick looks like a mom-and-pop organization.

Emily is escorted into the main room by a man a few years her senior in shirtsleeves and suspenders, FRED MCCANDLESS.

MCCANDLESS

So, couldn't stay away, Warren?

EMILY

I'm here to question the cops on the job, then leave.

MCCANDLESS

Jeez, don't bite my fucking head off.

Many of the officers they pass recognize Emily and nod slightly in her direction, but Emily is just as frosty and distant in returning their barely polite greetings.

EMILY

Not much has changed around here.

MCCANDLESS

Yeah. Likewise.

McCandless takes her over to a cluster of three desks near the back. Two of the men, LIAM HOPEWELL and ROB KIRSCH, are leaning back in their chairs and have their feet up on their desks. The third desk is empty.

MCCANDLESS (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, we have a lady present.

Hopewell and Kirch straighten in their chairs at once, and Hopewell's face lights up.

HOPEWELL

Little Emmy Warren! Richie's baby sister!

EMILY

Liam! When did you get here?

Hopewell stands up and pulls her into his arms for a giant hug.

HOPEWELL

Eh, you know, I did a little of this and that before Academy. Just got in a few months ago. Not long after you quit, looks like.

MCCANDLESS

Took your job, actually. Worked out for everybody that way.

Emily glances back at McCandless before turning to Kirsch.

EMILY

(extends her hand)

Emily Warren, I called you this morning about the First Bank case.

Kirsch half-stands and shakes her proffered hand.

KIRSCH

Rob Kirsch. I don't know what else we can tell you you haven't already got in your file.

MCCANDLESS

Didn't you hear, Robby? Emily
here's fucking Sherlock Holmes.

There's an awkward pause. Emily glares daggers at McCandless,
who only raises his eyebrows at her.

HOPEWELL

Hey man, I'll believe it. Em always
knew the score when we were kids.

EMILY

So if there isn't anything else...?

Emily lets Hopewell lead the way to a conference room,
trailed by Kirsch. McCandless watches them go, shaking his
head, before turning on his heel and going back to his own
desk.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, BOSTON PD - DAY

Emily is seated alone at a long conference table, her folder
once again spread out before her. A rolling whiteboard has
been brought forward and has taped to it three photographs,
along with dates, times, security camera stills, and exterior
shots of the First Bank of Boston.

Hopewell and Kirsch stand on either side of the board.
Hopewell has just finished circling the last of the three
headshots.

HOPEWELL

It's pretty much a cut and dried
bank robbery, in all aspects but
one.

He points to the headshots as he names them.

Three guys -- Kevin Hagston,
custodial. Jim Lustig, customer
service. Nathan Altsher --
Altsher's the odd man out, he was
First Bank's computer systems
analyst, helped update the website
and control security passwords and
whatever.

KIRSCH

According to the two guys we have,
the whole thing was Lustig's idea.
(MORE)

KIRSCH (CONT'D)

First Bank's been laying off workers left and right all last year, they're in danger of losing their jobs.

EMILY

Okay, I think that was in Jack's notes, but like I said, his handwriting --

KIRSCH

Jack George? Yeah, that old bastard writes in Esperanto or something.

They all chuckle.

EMILY

Lustig's plan needed someone with technical expertise though, right?

KIRSCH

Yeah. The bank has an elaborate security system in place requiring passwords, ID barcodes, all kinds of shit. Altsher was in charge of all that computer stuff.

EMILY

How did Lustig and Hagston know they could trust him?

Hopewell tapes another photo to the whiteboard: this one is of an elderly man in a hospital bed, with a woman and a young man beside him -- VINCE ALTSHER.

HOPEWELL

Vince Altsher. Our boy Nathan's grandfather. Hagston said they'd been hearing from Nathan for several months how sick the old man was, and how expensive his medical bills were. His mom makes shit, she works as a waitress at one of those rundown dives in Southie, so Altsher was footing a lot of the payments himself.

EMILY

Oh. Oh now that's just evil. Altsher had a pristine record.

KIRSCH

Exactly. Not so much as a speeding ticket.

(MORE)

KIRSCH (CONT'D)

This kid was purer than the Virgin Mary... until he decided to rob a bank.

HOPEWELL

So they go to Altsher, convince him to help out, and the kid does a great, almost perfect bank robbery. Comes up with fake bank employees, gives them ID cards and passwords, the works. He even managed to add them to payroll. They used the fake IDs to get into the bank after hours and cleaned out the place.

EMILY

Where did he go wrong?

HOPEWELL

The kid knows his stuff when it comes to computers, there's no denying that. But when it comes to illegal shit...again, purer than the fucking Virgin Mary. He tried to clear out the electronic records, but didn't quite manage it. Everything pointed right back to him.

KIRSCH

God I love computers.

Emily shifts through some of the papers in front of her and picks up a stapled packet.

EMILY

Including the e-mails that connected Lustig and Hagston to him.

KIRSCH

We looked them up about a week after the robbery. They started serving their time a couple months ago.

EMILY

So you got Lustig and Hagston no problem. But then...when you went to arrest Altsher...

KIRSCH

Gone without a trace.

Emily frowns down at her paperwork.

EMILY
Gone without a trace.

INT. FIRST BANK OF BOSTON - DAY

Emily is led to the vault by the bank manager, JOHNSON. An employee removes a security deposit box and takes it out of the vault.

JOHNSON
They took everything. Absolutely everything. We're still waiting for our insurance coverage from Morrow Fitzpatrick, you know.

EMILY
Yes, and that's why I'm here. We're still trying to find the third suspect.

JOHNSON
I always knew that Altsher would end up in trouble.

Emily raises her eyebrows at that as Johnson leads her back to his office.

EMILY
Interesting. Considering that everyone else thought his involvement in the robbery came out of nowhere.

INT. JOHNSON'S OFFICE, FIRST BANK OF BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

The office is ornately decorated in hard woods and features an excellent view. Johnson sits behind the desk, Emily in front of it.

JOHNSON
Well, I mean think about it. Altsher could have worked anywhere, for anyone. I think someone told me he was offered a position at Microsoft, even. But he turned it down to work here? Very suspicious, if you ask me.

EMILY

Then you didn't know about his dying grandfather? The one he robbed the bank for so he could pay for hospital visits.

Johnson visibly falters.

JOHNSON

Oh. I see.

EMILY

Please stick to the facts, Mr Johnson. Our suspect has been on the run from police for six months now, and the last thing we need are false leads and conjecture.

Johnson is now all simpering smiles, a regular brown noser.

JOHNSON

He was a model employee. I always thought highly of him and was pleased with his output.

INT. VISITORS' ROOM, MCI CONCORD - DAY

Emily sits across from KEVIN HAGSTON, a pimply college dropout. A cop stands in the corner. Emily has a reporter's notebook and pen and is taking notes.

Alternately, she is sitting across from JIM LUSTIG, a weather-beaten man in his late thirties who has seen far better days.

We INTERCUT between the two conversations.

EMILY

Mr Hagston -

HAGSTON

Call me Kevin.

Hagston gives her a flirtacious smile. Emily blinks, unfazed.

EMILY

Mr Hagston, you were fairly close to Nathan Altsher, right?

HAGSTON

Kinda, I guess. We ate lunch together and stuff. Both kinda shy, you know. Nerds stick together.

EMILY

How well did you know Nathan?

LUSTIG

Not well. He was more Kev's friend than mine.

EMILY

Once you decided to rob First Bank did you ever talk about what you'd do with your share?

HAGSTON

Oh yeah. Man, I was gonna buy a big-ass house and stuff, and like, the new Nintendo Wii -- it woulda been wicked awesome.

EMILY

What about Nathan? What was he going to do?

HAGSTON

Well his grandpa was sick or something, and he was going to pay for like medicine and stuff.

Emily marks something down on her notebook.

EMILY

Is that what you heard, Mr Lustig?

LUSTIG

Yeah. Something like that.

EMILY

And you were the one who came up with the plan in the first place?

LUSTIG

Yeah.

EMILY

Was Nathan interested in helping out from the start?

HAGSTON

Eh, no, not really.

LUSTIG

Had to ask him three times. He was scared of getting caught.

EMILY

Is that why you think he
disappeared after the robbery?

LUSTIG

Don't know. Maybe.

EMILY

And neither of you have heard any
word from him at all?

HAGSTON

No. Nothing.

INT. LIVING ROOM, ALTSHER HOUSE, SOUTH BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

Emily is seated in an overstuffed armchair across from CAROLINE ALTSHER, Nathan's mother, a woman approaching fifty who might have been very beautiful in her youth. Caroline is seated beside the elderly Vince Altsher, who lies in a hospital bed, breathing heavily with tubes up his nose. Oxygen hisses nearby.

CAROLINE

I don't believe a word those boys
said. My Nate would never do
something like that, I raised him
better.

EMILY

I'm not here to determine
complicity, Ms Altsher. He was
already caught through electronic
records.

CAROLINE

It's their fault. If Nate did
anything, he did because they
forced him into it. Nate never got
in trouble, never had detention in
school, never failed a class,
nothing. Not until those lowlifes
caught up with him.

Emily taps her pencil on her reporter's notebook, barely
hiding her impatience.

EMILY

Do you know of any extended family,
or out-of-town friends that he - ?

CAROLINE

Nate's lived in Boston his whole life, with me and my parents. Only time he left was for college -- RPI, full scholarship, did you know that? Only boy in his high school class to get a full ride. He graduated valedictorian too.

Emily smiles a little and shifts awkwardly in her seat.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I'm so proud of him. He managed to make something of himself, you know? Got out of this dump.

Caroline looks around the shabby house in disgust.

EMILY

Then he doesn't have any friends outside Boston who would cover for him?

CAROLINE

No. We didn't know about the whole thing either. Nate left for work one day, normal day, and didn't come back. Next thing Dad and I know, they're talking on the TV about some bank being robbed and there's Nate's picture up with those two assholes that worked with him.

EMILY

He never talked to you about the robbery? The police's theory is that he got involved because of Mr Altsher's hospital bills.

Caroline looks over at her father and covers her mouth with her hand.

CAROLINE

Oh God, that'd be just like Nate, wouldn't it? Doing the wrong thing for the right reasons. Yeah, we...well, healthcare ain't cheap, you know? We got to eat too. But we haven't got any money from him, if that's what you're asking. Nothing. I don't have any stolen money, no ma'am.

EMILY

And he hasn't contacted you at all
since he left.

Caroline tears up a bit, blinking back her tears.

CAROLINE

The last thing he ever said to me
was right before he left for work
that morning. 'Ma, I love you.'

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING, BOSTON - NIGHT

Emily pulls into her parking spot and steps out of her car, yawning hugely. She starts trudging up the sidewalk and into the building.

INT. LOBBY, OFFICE BUILDING, BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is leaving now, heading home after a long day at work. Emily flashes her ID card at security, who lets her pass without incident.

INT. MORROW FITZPATRICK OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

Emily steps into the main room of the company's office suite to find it almost completely deserted. A few people smile and bid her goodbye as they head out, and Emily warmly returns their farewells. But then they leave, and she's left alone.

SHANNON (O.S.)

I understand sir, but my hands are
tied.

Emily walks forward until she finds Shannon in her cubicle, talking on her headset. Shannon's cube is a mess, with New England Patriots posters pinned up everywhere, a picture of her posing with Tom Brady, a wall calendar featuring pictures of different pubs in Boston, and numerous photos of a round-faced little girl.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

We don't cover that, no, but what I
recommend is that you talk to your
doctor and explore other options.

Emily winces. Shannon notices her standing there and gives her a humorless grin.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Yes of course. And I'm not supposed to say this, but if you can't come up with anything else I know Blue Cross Blue Shield covers that procedure.

(pause)

Of course, sir. I hope everything works out for you.

(pause)

Have a nice night.

Shannon hangs up and groans loudly. Her head drops into her hands, propped up on her desktop.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Fuck. I hate taking calls like that.

EMILY

Experimental medical procedure?

SHANNON

Something they just started using on patients like last year or something. Evidently it's this guy's only hope. Damn it.

She grabs her coffee mug and downs the dregs, wincing at the temperature of the coffee. Setting it down again, she wipes her face clear of any remorse from the caller.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

So. You've been here a whole week now. Found the bank robber yet?

Emily sighs and rubs her eyes tiredly.

EMILY

All the same, from everyone. Nathan's a good boy, he would never steal money... No one has any idea where he disappeared to. No wonder Jack couldn't get this case closed, there's no clues, no evidence at all. He's just... gone.

Shannon looks up at the clock hanging on the wall. It's nearly ten.

SHANNON

Here's my theory - you should go home and sleep on it. Something might occur to you, you never know.

Emily smiles at her.

EMILY
Yeah, I know it's late.

SHANNON
I won't even charge you for that.

Shannon starts closing down her computer.

EMILY
I've got to get up early tomorrow
anyway, I'm catching a flight to
Buffalo.

Shannon turns around, interest piqued.

SHANNON
Ooh, and who's in Buffalo?
Boyfriend?

EMILY
My oldest brother Richie and his
wife. They just had a baby a few
months ago and I haven't visited
lately.

SHANNON
Then have fun. Bring me back some
Buffalo wings, extra hot.

EMILY
(chuckles)
Will do.

INT. BUFFALO-NIAGARA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BUFFALO - DAY

RICHIE WARREN, Emily's older brother, mid-thirties, is standing out near the lobby of the airport with a little boy of about three, JAKE. A stream of passengers moves past them, and Richie, while trying to keep track of his adventurous son, is at the same time trying to look for his sister.

EMILY (O.S.)
Rich! Over here!

Emily raises her hand and waves. Richie grins broadly.

RICHIE
(to his son)
Hey Jake, look who's here! It's
Annie Em!

Jake turns and when he sees her, runs for her. Emily sets down her bag and scoops him into her arms. She picks him up and leans up to kiss Richie's cheek.

EMILY
You look exhausted.

RICHIE
Glass houses, Em, glass houses.

Emily rolls her eyes and playfully smacks his arm. Richie grabs her suitcase. They walk out to the parking lot.

INT. RICHIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Richie drives them back from the airport, with Jake in a car seat in the back.

EMILY
(to Jake)
So what's it like having a new baby sister, Jakers?

JAKE
She cries. Melly cries a lot.

RICHIE
We're realizing now how easy we had it with Jake. Mel still isn't sleeping through the night, and me and Ally have just about had it.

EMILY
I can't wait to see her. Mom said she looks just like Mikey when he was born.

RICHIE
You saying my little girl looks like a man?

EMILY
(deadpan)
Yes. Yes I am.

Richie smacks her and Emily hits him back.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Watch the road, genius!

JAKE
No hitting! Bad Annie Em!

RICHIE
(snickering)
Yeah, bad Annie Em.

EXT. RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - DAY

Richie pulls into the driveway of a standard four bedroom house. The lawn is coated with red and gold leaves, and people up and down the street are out raking them up. It's a beautifully clear mid-autumn day in Buffalo.

Richie gets out and pops the trunk. Emily gets out and goes to grab her suitcase while Richie takes Jake out of the backseat. They all head inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

Richie, Emily, and Jake enter the house and find ALLISON WARREN, Richie's wife, seated on the couch with a four-month-old baby girl sleeping in her arms.

Allison puts a finger to her lips to keep them quiet. Richie picks up Jake and takes him out of the room, while Emily leaves her bag at the door and goes over to Allison.

EMILY

Hey you.

They kiss each other's cheeks.

ALLISON

How was your flight?

EMILY

Fine, too early. How is my favorite
sister-in-law?

ALLISON

Covered in spit up and dying for a
shower. Interested in baby-sitting
for a few minutes?

EMILY

That's what I'm here for, Al.

Allison offers baby Melanie up for her to take. Emily holds her carefully and takes Allison's seat as she leaves the room. She smiles down at her niece and rocks her slightly.

INT. KITCHEN, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Richie is in the kitchen making dinner for everyone, while Emily holds a now-awake baby Melanie in her arms at the table and Allison is setting up Jake's own dinner.

EMILY

It's not that much different from working for the police, actually. I get to work out in the field, interviewing --

RICHIE

Except you work in insurance. That's like a step below being in the IRS.

EMILY

Wow, thanks Rich.

ALLISON

Well I think it sounds great. Listen, if you like it, then nothing should stop you from doing what you want.

EMILY

Thank you, Al.
(to Richie)
See? Someone cares about my happiness.

Richie gives her a look full of unspoken meaning, and the smile sinks away from Emily's face. She turns away from him.

INT. KITCHEN, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

The remnants of a casserole dinner lay spread out before them. Melanie is already up in bed, asleep, and Jake is almost falling asleep in his dinner. Allison, Richie, and Emily are laughing about something.

EMILY

You are such a liar, Rich, don't believe a word he says.

RICHIE

Oh I don't know. Mikey and Paul saw the whole thing too.

Allison laughs again, and sighs tiredly. She smiles fondly at the half-dead Jake.

ALLISON

All right, Jakers, it's someone's bedtime.

JAKE

No, mommy...

Allison gets him out of his high chair and scoops him into her arms.

ALLISON

I'll just put this one to bed, and then there's a Sabres game on at eight.

RICHIE

Okay. Night, little guy. Daddy loves you.

JAKE

No, no, I'm not tired...

Allison takes Jake upstairs.

Once she's gone, Richie turns seriously to Emily.

RICHIE

So I take it that Mom and Dad still don't know why you quit the police.

EMILY

They don't need to know.

RICHIE

You know, in some states, I think what happened constitutes sexual harassment. You could take all those guys out to the cleaners no problem.

EMILY

Look, I know you're my big brother and all, but I'm not your helpless baby sister anymore, okay? I can look after myself.

Emily stands and starts picking up dirty dinner dishes.

RICHIE

You call looking after yourself just pretending nothing happened? Em, you were gonna go places, you just got that promotion --

EMILY
I don't care, I'm not listening.

Richie rolls his eyes and gets up too.

RICHIE
Fine.

EMILY
Good, we're done.

RICHIE
If that's what you want.

EMILY
And you're not telling Mom about it
either.

Richie sighs and shakes his head.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Even if she knew anything, she'd
just tell me that she was right all
along and detective work isn't for
women.

RICHIE
Okay, Rosie the Riveter. I'm not
telling Mom.

Emily snorts but smiles at him. They clear the table and head
over to the sink.

EMILY
So what's this about a Sabres game?

They start rinsing off the dishes and putting them in the
dishwasher.

RICHIE
(chuckles)
You're in Hockeytown now, Em. Ally
and I got hooked on watching the
Sabres this season. They've been
doing really well so far. We're
playing the Senators - our big
rivals.

EMILY
Hockey, huh? What happened to
football?

Richie winces.

RICHIE
No, let's stick to happy thoughts,
okay? Happy thoughts.

INT. TV ROOM, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Richie and Emily are on the couch with the pregame show on the television, when Allison comes down from putting Jake to bed.

ALLISON
I won't be drinking, but do you
guys want any beers or something?

RICHIE
Oh shit, that's right. I was gonna
go pick some up.

Emily scoots forward in her seat.

EMILY
I'll go get a six-pack or something
if you want.

ALLISON
No, you're a guest, Rich -

EMILY
No really, it's okay. I think I
remember where that convenience
store is a few streets over?

RICHIE
I mean, if you want to...

EMILY
In exchange you'll have to teach me
how hockey works.

RICHIE
I could live with that.

ALLISON
Then here, let me go get you some
money.

INT. WILSON FARMS CONVENIENCE STORE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Emily parks her car outside in the lot and heads into the store, purse slung over her shoulder. She goes right for the back of the store, where the milk and beer are, and starts looking for the things she needs to get.

But she's at a loss. Which kind of beer should she get? She hovers between the two freezers, moving back and forth between them, anxious to choose the right kind.

JAMES, a good-looking young man in his late twenties, is standing nearby picking up potato chips. He sees her and her dilemma and smiles to himself.

JAMES

You're not a big drinker, are you?

Emily spins and sees him standing a few yards away. She smiles and laughs a little.

EMILY

Am I making it that obvious?

JAMES

Oh no, I'm just that perceptive.

Emily chuckles. He picks up a bag of chips and moves towards her. In his other hand is a six pack of Canadian import. Emily turns back to the freezer, frowning at the beer before her.

EMILY

My brother didn't tell me what he likes, so I have absolutely no idea. I was leaning towards Genny.

JAMES

(snorts)

Do you also like drinking your own urine?

EMILY

Excuse me?

JAMES

Come on, you're in Buffalo, we get all the imported stuff. The better stuff. Your brother will like Labatt's.

He shifts the chips into his other hand and grabs a six-pack of Labatt Blue for her. Emily accepts it, eyebrows raised. Now that she can see his face head on, she does a double take. James looks familiar to her somehow.

EMILY

Thanks, I guess. Who should my brother blame if he doesn't like it?

JAMES
(laughing)
I'm James.

He offers his free hand to her and she shakes it.

EMILY
Emily, nice to meet you.

There's an awkward silence. Someone comes up alongside them to get a case out of the freezer and Emily has to move out of his way, closer to James.

JAMES
What's the occasion, if you don't mind my asking?

EMILY
Sabres game. My brother told me it's a big rivalry tonight.

JAMES
Ah, of course. Didn't even need to ask. You're a fan?

EMILY
(coyly)
I'm learning.

JAMES
Yeah? That's cool. It's a great sport, it's just no one outside Canada realizes it.

EMILY
Yeah, I'm finding that out. Well... I should check out.

JAMES
Yeah, me too.

They move awkwardly towards the cashier. James lets Emily go ahead of him, and she smiles her thanks.

She hands the cashier a bill to pay for the beer, and while he's counting out her change, Emily grabs a scrap of paper and a pen out of her purse and scribbles something on it.

The cashier hands her her change. Emily turns and hands the paper to James.

EMILY
In case I need to learn more about hockey.

James looks down at the paper - it's her number.

Emily smiles at him one last time and leaves the store, leaving James impressed with his own luck.

INT. TV ROOM, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Richie and Emily sit on the couch with beers, and Allison is curled up next to Richie. The game is on, and the Sabres have just scored. Richie pumps his arm into the air and Allison cheers, but Emily is distracted.

INT. GUEST ROOM, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Emily, dressed in her pajamas, comes back from the bathroom and turns down the covers. She just sits on the edge of the bed for a moment.

She then reaches for her purse, sitting on the bedside table, and takes out her reporter's notebook and a pen. She turns to a fresh page and starts jotting down some notes.

INSERT - EMILY'S NOTES

- around 6 ft, 190-200 lbs
- dark brown / blue
- late 20s / early 30s
- tiny Boston accent?

GUEST ROOM

Emily looks down at what she's written, but she gets no further answers. Huffing in frustration, she puts the notebook back and shuts off her light.

EXT. RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - DAY

Emily rolls her suitcase down the front walk and Richie takes it from her and shoves it in the trunk.

EMILY

I'm sorry I couldn't stay longer.
You're all coming out for
Christmas, right?

ALLISON

Yeah. We figure Melly will be
sleeping through the night by then.

EMILY
Okay. Well call me anytime, I love
seeing my niece and nephew.

ALLISON
Will do.

She and Emily embrace, and Emily bends down to pick up and hug Jake.

EMILY
Take good care of your sister for
me, okay Jakers?

JAKE
Okay.

ALLISON
Have a safe flight.

EMILY
I'll see you guys later.

Emily waves to them as she gets into the car with Richie.
Jake waves back.

INT. RICHIE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Richie glances over at Emily a few times. Emily is frowning as she looks out the window.

RICHIE
You seem a little distracted.

EMILY
Have you ever run into someone and
just known that you've met them
before?

RICHIE
Yeah.

EMILY
How did you figure out who they
were?

RICHIE
I asked her out, and we got married
two years later.

Emily rolls her eyes.

EMILY
Okay, Mr Closet Romantic.

RICHIE
Seriously, though. Where'd you see
someone you knew? When you went out
for beer?

EMILY
Yeah.

RICHIE
You don't know anyone in Buffalo
except us.

EMILY
Yeah, but the weird thing is he
sounded like he might've been from
Southie.

RICHIE
Well...okay, there's probably
Boston people all over the place.

Emily leans back in her seat thoughtfully.

EMILY
I guess so.

INT. BUFFALO-NIAGARA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BUFFALO - DAY

Emily gives Richie a big hug at the security checkpoint then goes through with her carryon. Richie stands and watches her go.

EXT. EMILY'S APARTMENT, BOSTON - DAY

Emily pulls up into her apartment complex and parks in her spot. She gets out and takes her suitcase in.

INT. LIVING ROOM, EMILY'S APARTMENT, BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

Emily's apartment is small but cozy, and decorated in a fairly eclectic style. Broadway show posters hang on the walls, and the furniture doesn't all quite match. It's the apartment of someone who doesn't spend that much time at home.

Emily walks in and dumps her purse and car keys on the table by the door, then rolls her suitcase into her bedroom.

On her coffee table is her case file.

INT. KITCHEN, EMILY'S APARTMENT, BOSTON - NIGHT

Emily's kitchen is barely two counters and a microwave/oven unit, with a fridge shoved in the corner. She's hovering over the range top, stirring a pot of something as she talks on the phone to GAIL WARREN, her mother, an elegant, impeccably dressed woman in her sixties.

The Warrens' living room clearly shows where Emily got her decorating influences. There are more show posters on the walls, though these are for local productions. Some photographs show Gail and her husband with actors in costume. The furniture is done in dark woods and brocades, matching, with all kinds of exotic-looking knickknacks on tables and shelves.

EMILY'S KITCHEN / WARRENS' LIVING ROOM

We INTERCUT between their phone conversation.

EMILY

The flight was fine, yeah. None of that Buffalo snow yet.

GAIL

And how's the new job so far?
Better than the police department?

EMILY

(sighs)
Yes, Mom. It's like I'm still a detective only there's less pressure. It's a much more relaxed environment.

GAIL

Well that's great, honey. You know I never liked the idea of you with the Boston PD.

EMILY

If you're just going to go off on that again, then I -

GAIL

No, no, I'm sorry, I'll stop.

(pause)

I just want you happy, Em. Look at your brothers, all settled down already...

(MORE)

GAIL (CONT'D)

Richie and Mikey starting families,
Paul getting married next year.

EMILY

I didn't realize it was a contest,
Mom.

GAIL

Don't take that tone with me, miss.

EMILY

I don't have time for a social life
just now, Mom. I just started at a
new job, I'm working on a really
important case --

GAIL

Okay, okay. Then you should get
some sleep, so you can work on your
important case bright and early
tomorrow morning. Love you, kid.

EMILY

Love you too, Mom.

They both hang up.

INT. LIVING ROOM, EMILY'S APARTMENT, BOSTON - NIGHT

Emily takes her dinner plate into her living room and turns
the TV on. Her case file sits on the coffee table, right
where she left it.

Emily stares down at it for a moment, biting her lip. Then
she grabs it and sets it next to her purse. She flips through
the channels on the television looking for something to
watch.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - DAY

Emily is writing something on a report in a case folder --
not the bank robbery case, this one is much thinner. Shannon
is seated across from her.

EMILY

You were right. He claimed that the
car needed structural work done,
but the damage from the accident
was completely cosmetic. Dent in
the fender. I could have done more
if I'd just kicked it.

SHANNON

Fraudulent claims. And you wonder why we in the insurance business get such a bad rap.

Emily smiles and takes a drink from her coffee mug. Shannon takes the case file from her and stands up.

EMILY

Hey, I was expecting a call from a landlord today, about the First Bank case? You didn't hear my phone ring did you?

SHANNON

That guy will never call back. Trust me. You're better off going to him.

Shannon waves her file and exits the office. Emily frowns and pulls the bank file closer to her.

Just then, a showtune starts playing: Emily's cell phone ring tone. Emily reaches down for her purse and digs it out, answering it after only a few rings.

EMILY

Emily Warren.

JAMES (ALL O.C.)

The Sabres have never won the Stanley Cup.

Emily stops.

EMILY

James, right?

JAMES

(chuckles)

Yeah. So I guess I don't need to remind you about the beer, how we met...

Emily goes back to the bank file, flipping slowly through her notes and the reports inside.

EMILY

No, I was just thinking about you actually.

JAMES

Good things, I hope.

EMILY
(coyly)
Maybe.

JAMES
There's another Sabres game this
Friday, at home. I've got tickets
if you're interested.

And then Emily sees it: the photograph of Nathan Altsher.
It's him. James is the missing bank robber.

EMILY
That...sounds great.

JAMES
You'll be in town?

EMILY
Yeah, I...spend lots of weekends in
Buffalo. On business.

Emily waves frantically through her open office door until
she catches Shannon's attention. Shannon frowns at her and
gets up.

JAMES
Great. Um, I'll see you then, I
guess?

EMILY
Yeah, uh, why don't you call me the
day of and we'll figure out where
to meet?

Shannon enters her office.

SHANNON
What the hell?

Emily cuts her off with a sharp gesture.

JAMES
Sounds good. Until Friday.

EMILY
Until Friday. Bye.

She flips her cell phone shut.

SHANNON
Again: what the hell?

Emily is in a state of shock, staring down at her cell phone. She looks dazedly up at Shannon.

EMILY
You know who I just spoke with?

SHANNON
Brad Pitt. The Pope.

EMILY
Our missing bank robber.

She picks up the photo from her desk and shows it to Shannon.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Mr. Nathan Altsher of South Boston.

INT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Emily is perched on the edge of Hopewell's desk. Hopewell is seated at it, Kirsch stands a few feet away.

EMILY
I'm telling you, I swear to God
it's our guy.

HOPEWELL
And he just said his name was
James? No last name, address...?

EMILY
No, but he asked me to a Sabres
game on Friday.

KIRSCH
Great, then we'll call the Buffalo
Police and have them go with you.

EMILY
No way.

KIRSCH
What d'you mean, no - ?

EMILY
I talked to Richie about where the
Sabres play, HSBC Arena? It's a
madhouse anytime there's a game
there. Altsher sees me coming with
police, he'll have no problem
disappearing into the crowds.

HOPEWELL

We've got his number now, though.
That can be traced.

EMILY

He called from a landline. An
unlisted landline. I already looked
into it.

Hopewell laughs.

HOPEWELL

But that's okay, remember? We've
got the technology to track that
sucker down. We can get location,
bank accounts, his fucking favorite
color.

EMILY

He called from a phone booth,
genius.

Kirsch kicks the edge of the desk in frustration.

KIRSCH

Who uses fucking phone booths these
days, huh?

HOPEWELL

Someone who's trying to cover his
tracks, that's who.

EMILY

Look, I'll go to this hockey game
with him, okay? I'll do
surveillance work, just give me a
week or so -

McCandless approaches, a mug of coffee in one hand.

MCCANDLESS

A week or so? Is that how long it
takes you these days?

Emily rounds on him, glaring.

EMILY

I thought I smelled something.

MCCANDLESS

Oh, you trying for humor now? I
guess you got that stick removed
from your ass then, huh?

Emily advances on him, but Hopewell holds her back, barely.

EMILY
Let me at him, Liam.

HOPEWELL
Why don't you go back to work,
McCandless?

MCCANDLESS
Sure thing. Watch out for that one,
though. She'll draw you in and spit
you back out without thinking
twice.

EMILY
Fuck off, asshole.

Her outburst attracts the attention of several nearby cops, who look up and stare at her in confusion. McCandless smiles and walks away.

KIRSCH
I don't want to know what that was
about.

EMILY
That bastard is the reason I quit
the police department, Liam.
(looks down at his hand on
her arm)
You can let me go now.

Hopewell releases her.

EXT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Emily is walking back to her car in the parking lot, talking on the phone to Allison.

PARKING LOT / RICHIE'S LIVING ROOM

We INTERCUT between their phone conversation.

EMILY
Oh you don't have to do that,
really -

Allison is seated on the floor, playing with Legos with Jake, while Melanie sleeps in a bassinet nearby.

ALLISON

Well how long do you plan on staying?

EMILY

I don't know. A week or so.

ALLISON

We insist. Richie would kill me if he knew I was making his sister stay in a hotel when we've got a perfectly good guest room.

EMILY

I won't be very good company. I'm going to be there to work on a case.

Emily reaches her car and throws her purse in the backseat.

ALLISON

That's fine. But you're not staying in a hotel.

EMILY

All right, you twisted my arm.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - DAY

Emily enters Morrow's office and takes a seat opposite him. Morrow looks up from his computer.

MORROW

Ah yes, Miss Warren. You wanted to see me?

EMILY

I might have found the third suspect in the First Bank case.

Morrow is stunned.

MORROW

After a week? Jesus, we made the right decision in hiring you!

EMILY

Thank you, sir. It's just that in order to be sure I'll need to do some undercover investigating.

MORROW

Well that's -

EMILY
In Buffalo.

Morrow leans back in his seat.

MORROW
Ah. He's in Buffalo, is he? All right, talk to Simon in HR and he'll give you the company credit card for your expenses.

Dave goes past the office door, doubles back, and knocks urgently. Emily turns in her seat and she and Morrow both look up at him.

DAVE
Emily, I've got Caroline Altsher on the phone for you right now. She says it's important.

EMILY
(to Morrow)
I'll take this.

MORROW
By all means.

Emily jumps up and runs back to her office.

INT. LIVING ROOM, ALTSHER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Caroline is beside her father, while a Hospice worker gives Vince his afternoon pill dosages.

CAROLINE
My dad, he doesn't have much time left, Miss Warren.

ALTSHER HOUSE / EMILY'S OFFICE

We INTERCUT between their phone conversation.

EMILY
I'm doing all I can, Ms Altsher. I might have found your son, I just need to -

Caroline breaks down in tears, still on the phone.

CAROLINE
(to Vince)
Dad, they found Nate. Can you believe it? He's coming home.

EMILY
Well wait, we haven't positively
identified him yet -

CAROLINE
(to Emily)
I want Dad to see Nate one last
time before he passes. Can you do
that?

Emily winces and runs a hand through her hair.

EMILY
Ms Altsher, I don't think that's
possible. He's going to be arrested
-

CAROLINE
I'm begging you here, just let my
dad see his grandson again.

Emily closes her eyes.

EMILY
I'll do everything I can.

CAROLINE
Thank you.
(sobs)
My baby's coming home.

INT. BUFFALO-NIAGARA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Only Richie is waiting for Emily this time, arms folded
across his chest. Emily trudges wearily towards him, smiling
a little.

RICHIE
Deja-vu, huh?

EMILY
Something like that.

He puts an arm around her and escorts her out.

EXT. HSBC ARENA, BUFFALO - ESTABLISHING

HSBC Arena, the home of the Buffalo Sabres, lit up against
the night skyline and swarming with fans.

EXT. HSBC ARENA, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

Ticket holders line up outside the turnstiles, waiting to be admitted. The vast majority are adults, wearing several different versions of Sabres jerseys, though here and there are children, and nearly half are in the Toronto Maple Leafs' blue and white.

Fans chant up and down the halls. "LET'S GO BUFF-A-LO!"

In response: "GO LEAFS GO! GO LEAFS GO!"

Emily looks all around her, unable to be anything but excited by the atmosphere. She's wearing one of the new navy jerseys with Vanek's name and number on the back. She's still looking for James.

JAMES (O.S.)
Hey, you made it!

Emily spins and sees James, dressed in a throwback home jersey with LaFontaine's name and number.

EMILY
This is incredible!

JAMES
Wait till you get inside, it's insane.

They make their way through the turnstiles and run to get to their seats.

INT. HSBC ARENA, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

The team is out on the ice, doing a warm up skate. The atmosphere is charged, excited. James has great seats in the 200-level.

JAMES
Nice jersey.

EMILY
It's my brother's.

JAMES
You know the more I hear about this brother of yours, the more I want to meet him.

EMILY
Yeah?

JAMES
If he's a Sabres fan he can't be
all that bad, right?

EMILY
Okay. I see how it is.

James smiles at her.

JAMES
And how is it?

EMILY
My brother is happily married.

James throws his head back and laughs.

JAMES
Ah, you caught me. Okay, give me
back your ticket.

Emily smacks his arm and they both laugh. Emily studies his
face carefully and looks away after a moment. Is it him?

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) The opening faceoff. Sabres win and start stick handling.

B) James and Emily on their feet, the whole section standing
and cheering. A sign behind them reads "ONLY GOD SAVES MORE
THAN MILLER," another "THE MAYOR OF POMINVILLE."

C) Sundin pounds Paetsch into the boards and trips him. The
ref calls a penalty.

D) On the power play, Roy shoots from the blue line and Vanek
tips it in past Raycroft. The Sabres score, the arena goes
crazy.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

JAMES (CONT'D)
Hey, that was your guy! Vanek!

EMILY
Let's go, Vanek!

INT. ANCHOR BAR, DOWNTOWN BUFFALO - NIGHT

The bar is packed with people who came directly from the
game, and the excited atmosphere at the rink has carried
over.

James, carrying two beers, brings them back to Emily, who is saving them a table in the corner. A half-eaten plate of wings sits on the table between them.

JAMES
Here you go.

EMILY
Thanks.

Emily accepts her beer and James takes his seat.

JAMES
So how was that for your first
hockey game?

EMILY
Amazing! Just amazing. I grew up in
a football family so it's really
different.

JAMES
Who's your team?

EMILY
Patriots.

JAMES
(thumbs down)
Boooo. That's an obscenity around
here. Don't ever mention them
again.

Emily giggles and takes a drink from her beer. James smiles back.

EMILY
So you must be a Buffalo native.

JAMES
Born and raised.

He picks up a chicken wing and misses Emily's confused look. It's gone by the time he looks at her again.

INT. SOUTH CAMPUS STATION, METRO STOP, BUFFALO - NIGHT

The subway pulls into the last station on the line and opens its doors. Fans pour out, drunk, singing, cheering for the Sabres still.

Emily and James walk out, very close to each other and just barely brushing shoulders. They walk up and out.

EXT. PARKING LOT, SOUTH CAMPUS STATION - CONTINUOUS

James and Emily walk down the row of parked cars. Honking horns and jubilant fans sound in the distance.

EMILY

I had a really good time. Thanks for inviting me.

JAMES

Yeah, I had a good time too.

They smile shyly at each other again, then look away.

EMILY

Well, this is me.

They walk up alongside her car. Emily pulls out her car keys.

JAMES

How long are you in town for?

EMILY

A few weeks at least, I think.

JAMES

Would you be interested in being shown around? I promise there's more to Buffalo than the Sabres.

Emily smiles hesitantly.

EMILY

Sure. That sounds good. Can I get your number so we can...?

JAMES

Oh yeah, sure, you got a pen?

Emily fishes a scrap of paper and pen out of her purse, and James scribbles down his number.

EMILY

Great.

JAMES

Good night. I'll see you later.

EMILY

Night.

James waves a little and walks further down the row. Emily lets herself into her car but just sits in the driver's seat.

Emily sighs and bangs her head on the steering wheel.

INT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Hopewell is at his desk, leaning back in his chair.

HOPEWELL

What do you mean, you don't know
for sure?

EMILY (O.S.)

What, do I stutter?

INT. KITCHEN, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

Emily is seated at the kitchen table alone, in her pajamas, with a muffin and coffee. Her laptop is open and running nearby.

EMILY

I brought up being from Boston
several times. We talked about the
Pats, the Bruins, the Sox, the
Celtics, he hates them all.

KITCHEN / BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

We INTERCUT between their phone conversation.

HOPEWELL

So? I'm from Worcester and I can't
stand the Pats. What does that
prove?

EMILY

You're missing the point. I kept
mentioning like specific places to
him and I didn't get the sense that
he recognized any of them.

HOPEWELL

Okay, he's acting.

EMILY

You ever met a guy who could act
this well?

HOPEWELL

Sure.

EMILY

Stop yanking my chain, Liam.

HOPEWELL

What about visual? Did you get a picture of him?

Emily taps a few buttons on her laptop.

EMILY

Yeah, from the game last night. It's not the clearest picture, but I just sent it to you.

Hopewell sits up and goes to his e-mail. Moments later a picture of James appears on the screen, arms lifted as he cheers at the hockey game.

Hopewell reaches over the division between his and Kirsch's desks and pulls out the photo of Nathan Altsher. He holds it up beside the screen. Aside from minor cosmetic differences, it's clearly the same person.

HOPEWELL

That's our guy, Em. Any address for him yet?

EMILY

Liam, what kind of girl do you think I am, asking to go to a guy's place on the first date?

HOPEWELL

(chuckles)
So that's a no.

EMILY

That's a no. He asked me out again though, so we're getting there.

Emily tears off a piece of her muffin and eats it.

HOPEWELL

You know all three of your brothers would come after me if they knew what you were doing?

EMILY

He's a bank robber, Liam, not a murderer or a rapist. I'm holding my own just fine.

HOPEWELL

All right. Can I still ask you to be careful?

EMILY

You can ask, but I won't make any promises.

INT. COFFEE SHOP, BUFFALO - DAY

Emily lets herself into an eclectic Elmwood cafe, and goes over to James, seated at a table with a cup of coffee.

JAMES

Find the place okay?

EMILY

Yeah. Trust me, if you know how to navigate through Boston, this place is a piece of cake.

JAMES

Well, I wouldn't know so I'll take your word for it.

Emily gives him a look but says nothing. Her cell phone starts ringing.

EMILY

Oh jeez, I'm sorry, give me a minute.

Emily takes out her phone and turns in her seat, away from James.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Emily Warren.

SHANNON (ALL O.S.)

Caught Butch Cassidy yet?

EMILY

Did you have a reason for calling?

SHANNON

Yeah, I want to know if he's as cute in person as he is in this picture.

Emily darts a look back at James. He smiles. She quickly smiles back and turns her back on him again.

EMILY

Yes.

SHANNON

Ugh, I definitely picked the wrong career. You think the Police Academy would accept my application late?

EMILY

Shannon -

SHANNON

Someone leaked the story to the press. It's all over the news now about you finding the First Bank guy.

Emily's eyes bulge in shock.

EMILY

Is it on national news yet?

SHANNON

No, still local as far as I can tell. Our poor PR guy is working overtime to keep them from finding out where you are.

EMILY

Oh my God.

SHANNON

You're okay for now. Just don't do something stupid like fall for the guy.

EMILY

Yeah...

SHANNON

Okay, I've got to go. More hysterical people to deal with. I'll be in touch.

EMILY

Okay. Thanks.

Emily hangs up and tosses her phone back into her purse.

JAMES

Bad news?

EMILY

Co-worker. Yeah, you could say that.

JAMES

If there's something you need to go
and do -

EMILY

No.

(smiles)

I'm right where I need to be.

James smiles back.

JAMES

If you're sure.

EMILY

No, look, see? I'll turn my cell
phone off.

She reaches into her purse and turns it off, showing him the
black screen.

JAMES

I'll take your word for it.

EMILY

What? Don't you own a cell phone?

JAMES

Me and technology don't really, how
you say, mesh well. I have the
touch of death when it comes to
cell phones, computers...I can
barely check my e-mail or look up
game times.

Emily frowns.

EMILY

Really? In this day and age?

JAMES

(chuckles)

I know, it's crazy, right?

EMILY

Yeah. Crazy.

James polishes off the last of his coffee and stands up.

JAMES

All right, you ready to go?

EMILY

Where are we headed?

JAMES

Everywhere.

He starts heading out; Emily, curious, follows.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Over a number of days, Emily and James go out to different places in Buffalo:

A) James and Emily on the lake front, looking at the old grain elevators.

B) Walking through Delaware Park. Volunteers are starting to put up holiday lights. He points out the different shapes to her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can't imagine living anywhere but here.

EMILY

I know how you feel. Boston is my only home, I love it there.

JAMES

Then maybe I can forgive you for the football heresy.

Emily smiles.

EMILY

I come here often on business. My brother and his family live in Clarence.

JAMES

Okay, I gotcha. Nice place, Clarence. That's actually where lots of the Sabres live, I think.

EMILY

(chuckles)

Is that all you can think about, hockey?

James grins up at her. He's startlingly good-looking. Emily smiles back, dazed.

C) Up on the observation deck of City Hall. Buffalo is spread out beneath them, breathtaking from the air. James says something to Emily that makes her laugh uproariously.

D) Emily comes home, glowing. Richie and Allison look at her, then share a concerned look.

E) The Albright-Knox Art Museum. They talk animatedly about the exhibit on display.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. EB WHITE STEAKHOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

James and Emily are still laughing over their finished meal, their heads close together over the table. They are both dressed formally.

The man playing piano nearby sees them and shakes his head, smiling faintly. He continues with his piece, Beethoven's "Grosse Fugue."

EMILY

Okay stop, stop, my cheeks hurt.

JAMES

Done. I'm done.

They both calm down, though they still have goofy smiles on their faces.

EMILY

What do you do, James?

JAMES

I'm a security guard down on Chippewa. The red light district.

EMILY

A bouncer.

JAMES

(teasing)

No...I prefer security guard. There's no bouncing involved.

EMILY

So that's why you're available at all hours of the day.

JAMES

Yeah, I work until four AM, when the bars close.

EMILY

Four? Jesus.

JAMES
What about you?

EMILY
What do I do? I work for an
insurance company.

James pretends shock and horror.

JAMES
You? Nah.

EMILY
I'm a claims investigator.
Basically a cop.

JAMES
Okay, okay. So if you think I
claimed too much coverage, how
would you investigate me?

Emily leans back, all trace of humor gone.

EMILY
Have you ever?

JAMES
Are you kidding? No way. Not worth
the trouble, and too risky.

EMILY
Well...I'd ask why you did it.

James leans back in his seat too, mildly amused, folding his
arms across his chest.

EMILY (CONT'D)
You had a perfect record. Not a
mark on it. A model citizen.

James's smile slowly sinks away.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Why'd you ruin that?

JAMES
I must've had a good reason.

EMILY
Like what?

The conversation has taken a very serious turn, and they can
both sense it.

JAMES

I don't know. I don't remember.

Emily looks down, where she's fiddling with her napkin on the table. James finishes off the mouthful of wine in his glass. They don't look at each other.

EXT. OUTSIDE JAMES' APARTMENT, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Emily and James walk slowly down the street, wrapped tightly in their coats against the cold night air. The street is vacant, silent.

They come up to a duplex, neat and tidy and well-cared for.

JAMES

Well, this is me.

They stop on the walk in front of the house. Only his porch light is on.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You're going back to Boston soon, aren't you?

EMILY

Yeah. I'm almost done with the work I needed to do.

JAMES

Would it be weird if I asked if I could see you off?

EMILY

If you want to deal with my overprotective big brother, go for it.

JAMES

Yeah, actually, um, something else might have come up...

They both laugh awkwardly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Look...I know we live in completely different states. We barely know each other -

EMILY

I'm not the kind of girl who has a different guy in every city.

James's face falls.

JAMES

Oh. Then you have a boyfriend
already.

EMILY

No. I don't.

They look at each other steadily, wordlessly.

JAMES

I really like you, Emily.

She smiles, but it's a pained smile.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm willing to put effort into this
if you are. I mean --

Emily steps forward suddenly and cuts him off with a kiss.
James is surprised at first, but then he pulls her closer and
returns the kiss eagerly.

Just as the kiss is starting to become serious, Emily breaks
away and steps back, breathing heavily. James stares at her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Come up? We could have a nightcap.

Emily shakes her head.

EMILY

I have to go.

JAMES

Of course.

EMILY

I'll call you.

JAMES

I'll be waiting.

He steps forward and kisses her this time, more slowly and
thoroughly. Emily breaks it off again.

Their eyes meet one last time, and then Emily is walking back
down the street towards the corner. James watches her go,
before turning and heading up to his house.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL INTERSECTION, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

Emily stops, shivering in the cold, at a quiet intersection near James' house. She pulls out her cell phone and dials quickly.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Buffalo Police Department, how may
I direct your call?

There are tears in Emily's eyes, but her voice is steady.

EMILY
My name is Emily Warren, I'm with
Morrow Fitzpatrick Insurance in
Boston. I have a bank robbery
suspect in your jurisdiction...

EXT. OUTSIDE JAMES' APARTMENT, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Two cop cars pull up into the driveway of James' dark house, lights flashing. Three cops pour out and head to the front door.

INT. JAMES' APARTMENT, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

The police bang on the front door. When no one comes to answer it, they kick it open and burst inside.

James comes out of the kitchen in a bathrobe, highly confused.

JAMES
What the hell is...?

POLICE OFFICER 1 puts his hand on his nightstick and moves towards him. The other two officers start turning on lights and searching the house.

OFFICER 1
Nathan Altsher, you have the right
to remain silent.

JAMES
What the fuck is going on? My name
is James Palmer, I have no idea
what you're talking about.

OFFICER 1
We have reason to believe that you
were involved in a bank robbery in
Boston earlier this year.
(MORE)

OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used -

JAMES

I don't fucking care about the rights, I want to know what's going on!

The other two officers, having checked over the first floor, head upstairs.

A second OFFICER pulls out a piece of paper and shows it to him.

OFFICER 2

We have a warrant to search the house for incriminating evidence.

JAMES

Oh my God.

OFFICER 2

This will go much more smoothly if you cooperate, sir.

JAMES

I've never even been to Boston. You've got the wrong address. There's a street with a similar name a few blocks west of here -

OFFICER 3 (O.S.)

Norton! I've got a bag of cash up in the bedroom!

OFFICER 1

Bring it here.

Officer 3 comes down the stairs with a black duffel bag. Officer 1 shines his flashlight down on it and finds it stuffed with cash, bond certificates, jewelry, travelers' checks, the works.

OFFICER 3

It was stuffed under the bed. The bills are all consecutively numbered.

OFFICER 1

That's what we're looking for.

Officer 1 pulls out his handcuffs.

OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

Sir, face away from me and put your hands behind your head.

James is at a loss for words, frozen. It's like being trapped in a nightmare.

JAMES

I didn't rob a bank, I swear to God...

EXT. OUTSIDE JAMES' APARTMENT, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

The family that lives in the other part of the duplex has heard the commotion and seen the sirens and the couple are standing out on the porch in their bathrobes, talking to each other about what's going on.

Across the street, curtains are drawn as people look out on the arrest.

Emily stands on the sidewalk outside the house, huddled in her heavy coat. She can't stop shivering.

James is led out of his apartment in handcuffs, head down, by Officer 2, who leads him to the backseat of the second car. He holds James' head down and let him get in, then shuts the door behind him.

Officer 3 sees her standing there and goes over to her, still holding the cash-stuffed duffel bag.

OFFICER 3

Emily Warren?

EMILY

That's me.

OFFICER 3

(shakes the bag)

We found the stolen cash. We're going to take him back to the station and hold him until flight arrangements can be made. He'll be back in Boston on the earliest possible flight.

EMILY

Thank you. I'll alert the police there and prepare them.

Officer 3 nods and goes back to his squad car. Emily watches.

The rear car pulls out, sirens still going. James, in the backseat, looks out and sees her standing there.

Their eyes catch for a moment. And then the car keeps going, followed by the first, and Emily watches helplessly as they drive away, down the street.

EXT. RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - NIGHT

Emily drives up into the driveway and gets out. Her head is down, her footsteps unsteady.

INT. KITCHEN, RICHIE'S HOUSE, BUFFALO - CONTINUOUS

Richie and Allison are seated at the kitchen table, talking quietly as Emily comes in. Richie stands up immediately, and sees tears running down Emily's face.

RICHIE

Em?

EMILY

(tearily)

Why, Rich? Why do I always fall for the wrong guys?

Richie moves towards her and Emily is in his arms, crying. His eyes meet Allison's over her head, and they share a concerned look.

Richie rubs his hand up and down Emily's back, trying to comfort her.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN

The evening news show for Boston starts its opening sequence, introducing news anchors STACEY NEVILLE and CHRIS O'BRADY. The camera zooms in on the two of them seated at the news desk.

CHRIS

Good evening, Boston, I'm Chris O'Brady with Stacey Neville and this is your evening news.

Camera switches to a head shot of Stacey.

STACEY

A six-month-old bank robbery case finally came to a close earlier today.

(MORE)

STACEY (CONT'D)

Nathan Altsher, a suspect in the First Bank of Boston robbery, was escorted by police off of his flight this morning. He was found yesterday living under an assumed identity outside Buffalo, New York.

A shot of James being taken off the airplane in handcuffs, his head shielded by a policeman's newspaper from cameras. They walk quickly off, the camera follows.

A still photo of Nathan Altsher, from Emily's case file.

STACEY (CONT'D)

Police say a duffel bag filled with cash and valuables was found stuffed under Altsher's bed just last night.

Side-by-side photos of Hagston and Lustig.

STACEY (CONT'D)

His confederates, nineteen-year-old Kevin Hagston and thirty-seven-year-old Jim Lustig, were tried this past summer for grand larceny in the first degree. They were found guilty and are currently serving ten-year sentences in prison. Altsher is expected to receive the same.

INT. MORROW FITZPATRICK OFFICES, BOSTON - DAY

Emily walks into the main office at Morrow Fitzpatrick to find all of the insurance agents standing in their cubicles, applauding and cheering for her. A banner spread across the wall reads "GO GET 'EM EMILY!"

Emily is in shock. She just stands there as everyone cheers for her.

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - CONTINUOUS

Emily sets her bag down on the floor and is taking her coat off when Shannon walks up and leans against the door frame, a plate of cake in hand.

SHANNON

Seriously?

EMILY

What?

SHANNON

You solve the case of the year and you don't even eat any cake?

EMILY

Oh. I didn't know there was cake.

She drapes her coat on the coat rack near the wall. Her office is still relatively bare and impersonal. She takes a seat at her desk and reaches for a file in her inbox.

SHANNON

That's it? What's the matter with you?

EMILY

I don't want to talk about it.

Shannon shrugs and takes a forkful of her cake.

SHANNON

Suit yourself.

Shannon leaves the doorway, just as Emily's phone rings. Sighing, she picks it up.

DAVE (O.S.)

Emily, I've got Boston PD on the phone for you.

EMILY

Okay, put them on.

DAVE (O.S.)

Sir, you're through to Miss Warren.

HOPEWELL (O.S.)

Emmy?

EMILY

Hey Liam, what's up?

HOPEWELL (O.S.)

Hey, we've got your guy in the interrogation room right now. I think you should be here.

Emily closes her eyes and rubs them tiredly.

EMILY

Liam --

HOPEWELL (O.S.)
 No, Em. I think you should be here.

Emily frowns.

INT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Emily walks through the main room, purse slung over her shoulder. She's a woman on a mission.

As she goes past McCandless's desk, his eyes follow her.

MCCANDLESS
 What, it's not enough that you
 catch the guy, you've gotta try him
 too?

EMILY
 Bite me, Fred.

McCandless leans back and just laughs.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM, POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A knock on the door, and then Emily steps into the observation room, separated from the interrogation by a one-way mirror. Hopewell is standing at the mirror with his arms folded, frowning out at the other room. He turns and acknowledges Emily with a nod.

In the interrogation room, James sits on one side of the table, next to his lawyer, O'MALLEY. Across from them is Kirsch.

HOPEWELL
 You swear this is the guy.

EMILY
 You saw the duffel bag.

HOPEWELL
 And we positively ID'd him.
 (sighs)
 He says it wasn't him. He's not
 changing his tune. Not a note.

EMILY
 Purer than the Virgin Mary.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM, POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kirsch leans forward across the table and pushes a plastic bag forward. It has a New York State driver's license in it.

He pushes forth another plastic bag: in this one, a Social Security card.

Another bag: a Visa card.

KIRSCH

These yours?

JAMES

Yes, they are. And look, there's my name right there: James Palmer. I'm not the guy you're looking for.

KIRSCH

Funny thing. These all actually belong to a man who died in a car accident about six months ago. He lost control of his car on the Scjaguada Expressway. You wouldn't happen to have been there, would you?

JAMES

They're mine. I'm James Palmer, I work as a security guard at a bar in Buffalo -- I live at --

KIRSCH

Man, why are you doing this? What do you have to gain?

JAMES

My freedom! I didn't do anything!

KIRSCH

Um, except for that small, insignificant bag of cash we found under your bed, right?

JAMES

That money is mine.

KIRSCH

Where'd it come from, huh?

JAMES

I inherited it.

KIRSCH

(laughs)

Wow, that's a new one. I gotta hand it to you, I've never heard that excuse before.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM, POLICE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Emily turns to Hopewell, confused.

EMILY

Something about this doesn't sit right.

HOPEWELL

You're telling me. I don't think I've ever seen someone so convinced of their innocence before.

EMILY

You think it's possible he really isn't the guy?

HOPEWELL

He was processed this morning, fingerprinted. Lustig and Hagston recognized him right away, and his prints match two we found at the bank. We've been in touch with the bar where he worked in Buffalo, and they said they hired him April 29, a week after the First Bank was robbed.

Emily stares back out at James.

EMILY

Then what does he think he's doing?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, BOSTON PD - DAY

Hopewell, Kirsch, and Emily sit across from BRENT WESTON, a young psychologist who looks like he wants to be a hippie. He has a captive audience.

WESTON

It's called dissociative identity disorder. The reason he insists he didn't do it is because in his head, he really didn't.

(MORE)

WESTON (CONT'D)

One of his other personalities -- in this case, the one known as Nathan Altsher -- is responsible.

HOPEWELL

So we have an insanity plea on our hands.

KIRSCH

Well, only if it can be proven that he was insane at the right criminal moment.

(to Weston)

Can you prove that he had this disorder back in April, when they knocked off the bank?

WESTON

It's possible. There are certain signs to look for, family history.

EMILY

Come on. How do we know he's not faking it?

Hopewell raises his eyebrows at her.

HOPEWELL

You don't think he's crazy?

EMILY

Liam. The insanity plea? It's been abused left and right by criminals who just don't want to do the time.

WESTON

I'm certain of my diagnosis. I don't know what else to tell you.

EMILY

How certain?

WESTON

I'll go on the witness stand. I gave him the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-4 Dissociative Disorders, and he failed it with flying colors. He has D.I.D.

KIRSCH

Except that he still insists he didn't do anything.

WESTON

Well, yeah. That's the point. I told you, he thinks he's someone else.

EXT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Emily exits the police department with Kirsch and Hopewell, and the three of them are immediately surrounded by the press.

REPORTER 1

Emily Warren! Is it true you were with Nathan Altsher when he was arrested?

REPORTER 2

Why was a psychologist called in? Is he planning to plead insanity?

Kirsch and Hopewell help Emily struggle through the reporters, and they slowly make their way through to their cars.

They reach Emily's car first.

HOPEWELL

Make sure you get a lot of rest, Em.

EMILY

Why?

HOPEWELL

You're going up on the witness stand. The shit has hit the fan, and it's still flying.

INT. BOSTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

The preliminary hearing. Emily sits in the stands with the rest of the public, between Kirsch and Hopewell, watching the hearing play out.

James is at a table before JUDGE MATTHEWS, with O'Malley at his side.

At another table is the attorney general, LAUREN POLLACK, and her team of lawyers.

Hagston is on the witness stand.

POLLACK
Mr Hagston, do you see Nathan
Altsher in this room?

HAGSTON
Uh, yes, I do.

POLLACK
Please point him out for us.

Hagston points to James, who shakes his head.

POLLACK (CONT'D)
And Mr Altsher was your accomplice
in the First Bank of Boston robbery
back in April of this year?

HAGSTON
Yes ma'am.

POLLACK
How much was his share of the
stolen money?

HAGSTON
Uh, we each got, uh, about two
hundred G's, ma'am.

POLLACK
Two hundred thousand dollars each,
Your Honor. And if you'll remember
from the police report, that's just
how much was found under Mr
Altsher's bed.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Kirsch on the stand with a diagram showing enlarged
fingerprint diagrams.

KIRSCH
Those on the left were lifted from
the bank, and don't belong to
either Hagston or Lustig. These on
the right are from Mr Altsher, and
were taken when he first came into
custody. Forensics found nineteen
points of correlation. They're his,
unquestionably.

B) Johnson, the bank manager, nervously smoothing his hair as
he speaks into the microphone.

C) The evening TV news, showing further footage from the hearing.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Pollack stands again.

POLLACK

The city of Boston calls Emily Warren to the stand.

The press love this. Emily stands, straightening her skirt, and walks up to the witness stand. She's sworn in and takes her seat.

POLLACK (CONT'D)

Miss Warren, what is your profession and connection to this case?

EMILY

I'm an insurance claims investigator for Morrow Fitzpatrick. We insure the First Bank of Boston, and they called us when their vault was cleaned out.

POLLACK

And you were the one who found Mr Altsher?

EMILY

Yes, I did.

James, seated at his table, hasn't taken his eyes off Emily once. She catches his gaze, but looks quickly away. There's no forgiveness there.

POLLACK

Describe how that happened.

EMILY

We were buying beer at a convenience store. I recognized him almost immediately, and started undercover surveillance.

POLLACK

Why?

EMILY

Well, I wasn't sure if he was the guy we were looking for or not.

POLLACK

Again, explain why there were doubts.

EMILY

We had visual identification, but he just wasn't acting the way we expected. Um, for example, Nathan Altsher went to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute for computer science. When I met him in Buffalo, in his words, he told me he barely knew how to check his e-mail. Things like that.

POLLACK

Why do you think he was acting that way? The way he continues to act?

Emily looks at James, and this time she doesn't look away.

EMILY

I don't know. I'm an investigator, not a shrink.

POLLACK

No further questions.

INT. BOSTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

James stands before the judge with O'Malley. Opposite them, Pollack and company also stand, awaiting the judge's decision.

JUDGE MATTHEWS

It is my opinion that there is probable cause to believe that Mr Altsher is responsible for the crimes described. What does Mr Altsher plead?

JAMES

Not guilty.

O'Malley had opened his mouth to answer, and nudges James forcefully.

O'MALLEY

Your Honor, my client and I have decided to plead insanity --

JAMES

I don't care what you say, I don't care what anyone says. I'm not guilty. I didn't rob that bank.

JUDGE MATTHEWS

You will plead not guilty, Mr Altsher?

JAMES

Palmer. I'm James Palmer of Buffalo, New York, and I did not commit this crime.

Judge Matthews clearly thinks this is a huge mistake, but he notes the plea down as he shakes his head.

JUDGE MATTHEWS

Mr Altsher -- or Mr Palmer -- you will be tried in front of a jury of your peers on a date yet to be determined. This court is adjourned.

He bangs his gavel once.

Emily blinks at the sound. Hopewell turns to her.

HOPEWELL

Well, this should be interesting, huh?

INT. KITCHEN, WARREN HOUSE - NIGHT

Emily is seated at the kitchen table with Gail and RICK WARREN, her father, and PAUL WARREN, another of her three brothers. The four are eating dinner together.

GAIL

You need to smile more, Emmy.

EMILY

Mom --

GAIL

I was just talking with Lucy McGovern at the grocery store the other day, we've both been watching the case on TV. And all she could go on about was the fact that you looked like you were about to start sobbing all over the witness stand.

PAUL

You don't think he's innocent, do you?

EMILY

I'm a key witness in a criminal trial, I'm not supposed to discuss anything.

PAUL

Okay. Then we'll discuss it. I think he did it, and he's just being stupid now.

RICK

I could understand trying to plead not guilty, but trying to convince the judge that he's somebody completely different too? That's a bit much.

GAIL

Well, you know what they say. Crazy people don't know that they're crazy. I think he's got what that shrink said --

EMILY

Weston.

GAIL

Yes, Dr Weston, the one who hopped out of a 1960s Sears catalogue. That identity disorder, whatever it is. It's just like out of a play, isn't it?

RICK

Maybe it would make a good play. When's the last time we put on a legal thriller?

GAIL

Hm... five years ago? I can't remember.

Emily stands up and takes her plate to the sink. Rinsing it off, she stares out the kitchen window, seeing nothing in front of her.

INT. BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Hopewell and Kirsch are at their desks, filling out paperwork and chatting. Emily approaches them solemnly, hands in the pockets of her jacket.

EMILY

I want to know where they're holding James.

Hopewell looks up, eyebrows raised.

HOPEWELL

Yeah, I'm good, how're you? Nice weather we're having.

Emily doesn't crack a smile. In fact, she looks close to tears.

Hopewell exchanges a wary look with Kirsch, then looks at Emily.

HOPEWELL (CONT'D)

Why do you want to know?

EMILY

I need to tell him something.

HOPEWELL

Emmy -

EMILY

No, don't "Emmy" me, Liam. I'm a big girl now, I don't need your hand holding.

Hopewell stands up, hands extended.

HOPEWELL

Hey, hey, don't bite my head off. It's a valid question.

EMILY

It's none of your business.

HOPEWELL

Em, he's a bank robber, you're an investigator on his case. It definitely is my business.

EMILY

I just need closure. That's all.

Hopewell stares at her. He knows what's going on now.

HOPEWELL

I knew it was a bad idea, sending
you out to Buffalo by yourself. We
should've gotten the cops -

EMILY

Where is he, Liam?

Hopewell sighs.

HOPEWELL

Concord. They've got him in MCI
Concord, under his real name.

Emily nods stiffly.

EMILY

Right. That's all I wanted to know.

She turns on her heel and walks away, Hopewell staring after
her. He shakes his head and returns to his desk.

EXT. MCI CONCORD - ESTABLISHING

The Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Concord is a
long, low white building surrounded by fences. Emily drives
up and onto the grounds as the sun begins to set.

INT. PEDESTRIAN TRAP, MCI CONCORD - EVENING

Emily removes the pins from her hair and submits to being
searched by a security guard for contraband and other
unpermitted items. She passes inspection and is allowed in.

INT. VISITORS' ROOM, MCI CONCORD - CONTINUOUS

James sits at a plain table, handcuffed and in a prison
jumper. A guard stands in the corner. Emily is let in by
another GUARD.

GUARD

Half hour, ma'am.

EMILY

Thanks.

Emily inhales sharply and looks up at James. James sighs and
leans back in his chair.

JAMES

You.

EMILY

Yeah, me.

Emily steps forward cautiously and takes the chair opposite him. James frowns darkly.

JAMES

I have nothing to say to you.

EMILY

James -

JAMES

And using my real name isn't going to win you points either.

EMILY

Not everything I told you was part of my investigation.

James laughs bitterly and shakes his head.

JAMES

"Investigation." Now I've heard everything.

EMILY

I recognized you almost immediately - when I saw you at the convenience store that night -

JAMES

I thought you were a pretty girl buying beer for a hockey game. Shows what an idiot I am.

EMILY

You're not an idiot.

JAMES

So you think if you come here and bat your eyes at me that I'll just accept your apology? That's why you came, isn't it?

Emily says nothing. She looks down at the table top to calm herself.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Unbelievable.

EMILY

I told you the truth. I'm an investigator with an insurance company.

JAMES

Mm, except you forgot to mention that I was your case.

EMILY

Okay, sorry, next time I'll give the person advance warning before I have them arrested.

JAMES

Bet you had fun, didn't you? Not every day that you get to flirt with a guy and have him treat you to dinner for your job.

EMILY

If you're saying what I think you're saying -

JAMES

But I wouldn't be the first person in this room to do that, would I? Not say exactly what I mean?

Emily has reached her breaking point. She grips the edge of the table in her fists.

EMILY

Why are you doing this? You're guilty! We know you did it, robbed that bank! The case is airtight and there's nothing you can do about it! Why are you acting like you're being picked on by the school bullies?

JAMES

Because I'm innocent!

EMILY

No, you're not! Your name is Nathan Altsher, you're from South Boston -

The guard who escorted her in steps forward, hand on his nightstick.

GUARD

Ma'am, I'm going to have to ask you to leave if this keeps up.

Emily comes to her feet, staring at James. He meets her stare steadily, arms folded in front of his chest.

EMILY

And to think... I thought I could come here and offer you help.

JAMES

I think you've offered me enough "help" already, thanks.

Emily wavers, then spins on her heel and allows the guard to escort her out of the room.

EXT. PARKING LOT, MCI CONCORD - NIGHT

It is almost full darkness. Emily fumbles through the contents of her purse before pulling out her car keys. When she goes to unlock her door, her hand is shaking so badly it takes her a beat to get the key in the lock.

Once she's inside, in her seat with her seatbelt on, she loses the battle. Emily bursts into tears and bends over her steering wheel, clutching it desperately as she sobs.

INT. VISITORS' ROOM, MCI CONCORD - CONTINUOUS

James sits at the table still, staring at the place where Emily had been sitting. He breathes rapidly for a few moments, then looks away, eyes a bit shinier than usual.

The guard approaches him and starts escorting him away.

EXT. BOSTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

Emily goes up the courthouse steps with Shannon, for once not badgered by the press.

SHANNON

You broke the cardinal rule.

EMILY

I couldn't help it.

SHANNON

Doesn't matter. It's good and broke.

EMILY

And there's nothing I can do about it.

Shannon glances over at Emily, then puts her arm around her. They continue up the steps.

INT. BOSTON COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The criminal trial. A jury sits in their box, paying close attention to everything going on. Weston is up on the witness stand.

Emily sits in the gallery. A few rows behind her is Caroline Altsher, dressed all in black, weeping quietly.

POLLACK

Please describe for the jury your process of diagnosis.

WESTON

I was brought in by Mr. O'Malley, the defendant's lawyer, when Mr Altsher continued to insist that his name was actually James Palmer. I administered the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-4 Dissociative Disorders, the most effective way to diagnose dissociative disorders.

POLLACK

And what are dissociative disorders?

WESTON

When a person seeks to remove himself from himself. They include dissociative amnesia - when amnesia is brought about by emotional trauma, as opposed to physical trauma - and assuming at least two distinct identities, as Mr Altsher has.

POLLACK

So you administered this test to Mr Altsher.

WESTON

I did.

POLLACK

And what did you conclude from the test results?

WESTON

That Mr Altsher, without a doubt,
has Dissociative Identity Disorder.

INT. BOSTON COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Pollack stands up from her seat.

POLLACK

The city of Boston calls Nathan
Altsher to the stand.

James gets up and goes to the witness stand. He's sworn in by
a cop and takes his seat.

POLLACK (CONT'D)

Please state your name, birthdate,
and birthplace for the jury.

JAMES

My name is James Palmer, born
September 5, 1978, in Buffalo, New
York.

POLLACK

Does it bother you, Mr Palmer, that
when the birth records for Erie
County are searched, no such record
exists?

James just sits there, silent. Pollack turns to address the
jury, a piece of paper in hand.

POLLACK (CONT'D)

The plaintiff submits to the bench
the following evidence. A page
printed from the city of Buffalo's
birth records database for the day
in question. Nowhere in Erie County
on September 5, 1978, was there a
James Palmer born.

She gives the printout to the judge, who accepts it.

POLLACK (CONT'D)

How do you explain this oversight,
Mr Palmer?

JAMES

Well...there's obviously been a
mistake. My name is James Palmer -

POLLACK
So the lack of solid evidence
doesn't bother you?

JAMES
I'm in court, I'm on the stand, I
swore an oath to tell the truth,
right? I'm not Nathan what's-his-
name. I swear.

Pollack gives him a bemused look.

POLLACK
No further questions.

James bows his head down and cradles it between his hands.

JUDGE MATTHEWS
Mr O'Malley, your witness.

O'MALLEY
Thank you, Your Honor.

O'Malley stands, shuffling his papers together.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
Mr Altsher, where were you on the
evening of April 21 of this year?

James doesn't answer. His head is still bowed.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
Mr Altsher?

Emily sits up a little straighter, frowning. Beside her,
Shannon cranes her neck to the side to get a better view.

Judge Matthews looks at James.

JUDGE MATTHEWS
Mr Altsher, the defense just asked
you a question.

James lifts his head again, but he's still holding it, and
his eyes are still closed, tightly, as though he's in pain.

O'MALLEY
Nathan?

James groans loudly, clutching at his head.

JUDGE MATTHEWS
Do you require medical assistance?

When there's no answer, the judge waves at the cop standing nearby, who exits the courtroom.

At the back of the courtroom, the press waits with bated breath.

SHANNON

(whispers)

What's going on? What's wrong with him?

Emily waves her to silence. She's horror-struck, her eyes haven't left James once.

James shakes his head as though to clear it, and opens his eyes. He blinks once, twice, looking all around him. When he speaks, his voice is much thinner than it was before. He is now NATHAN ALTSHER, and will be referred to as such.

NATHAN

What...? Where am I? What's going on?

JUDGE MATTHEWS

That's what I'd like to know.

NATHAN

Why am I in court? What'd I do?

JUDGE MATTHEWS

Someone get Dr Weston back in here. This court is recessed until further notice.

He bangs his gavel.

NATHAN

What's happened? Someone, please, tell me what's going on!

Nathan sounds absolutely terrified.

INT. LOBBY, BOSTON COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

Emily paces the floor restlessly, as Shannon sits nearby. They are alone; everyone else has gone home.

Hopewell emerges from a room nearby. He gestures to Emily, who races to follow him. Shannon sits back, now completely alone.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS, BOSTON COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nathan is sitting at a table, head in his hands, and O'Malley sits beside him. Judge Matthews, out of his robes, is behind his desk talking to Dr Weston. Kirsch stands near Nathan.

EMILY

Well?

Dr Weston turns to her, bewildered.

WESTON

Well...it's called a dissociative fugue.

Emily looks at Nathan, then back at Weston.

EMILY

I thought you said it was an identity disorder.

WESTON

That's what I thought it was. He exhibited all the characteristics...

(laughs nervously)

This is just incredible. There's only a handful of cases of fugue states per year, it's incredibly rare...

EMILY

But what does that mean?

EXT. FIRST BANK OF BOSTON - MONTHS EARLIER

Nathan, Lustig, and Hagston are just outside the First Bank, holding their loot. Lustig and Hagston bolt away down the street, but Nathan looks down at his duffel bag, the one seen earlier. He's wide-eyed in shock, disbelief.

WESTON (V.O.)

It's brought about by psychological trauma. Altsher had a pristine record, and committing this crime probably affected him profoundly. Guilt affects us all differently.

Nathan looks up again from the bag, different somehow. He carries himself straighter, has a more confident look in his eyes. He slings the bag over his shoulder and saunters down the street, the opposite way from Lustig and Hagston.

He is now the man from the very beginning of the story, strolling along the Scajaquada.

WESTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He was ashamed of what he did. He distanced himself from the crime as much as he could - literally and psychologically. In effect, his memory rebooted itself. He erased everything and started from scratch. Assuming a new identity, new place of origin. He entered what's called a fugue state.

EXT. AMTRAK TRAIN, OUTSIDE BUFFALO - DAY

Nathan, seated on the train with his luggage beside him, looks out the window to see downtown Buffalo. He smiles.

WESTON (V.O.)

What we saw in court today was the end of the fugue state. James Palmer is gone, Nathan Altsher is back.

INT. BOSTON COURTHOUSE - DAY

Nathan and O'Malley stand before the judge. The foreman of the jury is also standing, with a paper in his hand. He offers it to the policeman.

WESTON (V.O.)

Some people never get their pre-fugue memories back. What he needs now isn't jail. He needs proper care, therapy. With time and assistance, he might be able to live a full life again.

The policeman takes the jury's decision to Judge Matthews, who reads it over, then announces it to the court.

WESTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I think you'll find him more than willing now to plead insanity. It's all he's got.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS, BOSTON COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

Emily looks over at Nathan, who has raised his head to look at them all. She takes a step towards him.

EMILY

Nathan? Do you remember me at all?

Nathan looks at her blankly, up and down, then shakes his head.

NATHAN

I have no idea who you are.

Emily barely covers her shock and dismay. Weston looks grim.

WESTON

Memories made during the fugue state never come back. We're all strangers to him.

INT. TELEVISION SCREEN

The evening news broadcast again, with our old friends Chris and Stacey.

CHRIS

The First Bank of Boston robbery case finally had some closure today. Nathan Altsher, the third of the trio who emptied the vault of the bank, plead insanity in court earlier today. He was sentenced to an unspecified term at the Christie Institution for the Mentally Challenged. Altsher will receive treatment for a rare disorder called a dissociative fugue...

INT. EMILY'S OFFICE, MORROW FITZPATRICK - DAY

Emily stands by her office window, looking down on traffic. She hugs herself tightly, her arms crossed over her chest. Snow falls lightly. Out in the main office Christmas carols play.

Shannon enters and dumps a file on the corner of her desk.

SHANNON

Another fraudulent claim, get to it, Nancy Drew.

She stops when she gets no answer.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

You're not being paid to people watch, you know.

EMILY

Do you think he's gotten any of his memories back?

SHANNON

Who, Butch Cassidy?

Shannon shakes her head and walks over to Emily, putting her hands on Emily's shoulders.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

I thought you said you were a cop.

EMILY

I was. What does that - ?

SHANNON

Isn't the number one rule not to fall for your suspects?

Emily won't look at her.

EMILY

I'm worried about him.

SHANNON

No girl ever had a happy ending who went after a bad boy.

EMILY

But that's just the thing. Is it weird that...I liked him as James, but I don't know what he'd think of me as Nathan?

Shannon shrugs.

SHANNON

Well. There's only one way to find out, isn't there?

Emily nods, thoughtful.

INT. STARBUCKS, BOSTON - DAY

Emily sits down at the table with her coffee, blowing on it. Across from her is Caroline.

CAROLINE

I went and saw him the other day, my Nate. They let him have visitors.

EMILY

Is he progressing?

CAROLINE

Some. They said he's starting to remember world events - he remembered September eleventh, and when the Sox won the pennant.

EMILY

Any personal events?

CAROLINE

RPI. He remembers college. And I think they said he remembered the name Vince, so there's that too.

EMILY

I was sorry to hear about the loss of your father. I wish Nathan could have seen him again.

CAROLINE

Yeah, well. Not like he'd even know who it was, would he? I've been over to that nuthouse four times already now and he still doesn't -

She cuts herself off, her face twisted in pain and sadness. Emily reaches across the table and takes her hands and squeezes them.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I mean God! Come on already! I'm his fucking mother!

(sobs)

I'm his mother. My baby doesn't even know me from Eve.

Emily keeps holding her hands, though she herself is close to tears.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE BOSTON - DAY

Emily drives out of the city and out to one of the suburbs. She checks her directions a few times, then gets off in a sleepy little town.

She drives straight through the town, staying on the main road.

At last, she pulls up to a boxy gray building surrounded by a high fence. The sign reads "CHRISTIE INSTITUTE FOR THE MENTALLY DISABLED." She drives right through.

INT. CORRIDOR, CHRISTIE INSTITUTE - CONTINUOUS

An ORDERLY escorts Emily down the corridor, to an open room filled with sunshine and light. Several other patients are there, performing occupational exercises with other orderlies.

Nathan is seated at a table alone, reading a 'Modern Science' magazine. He looks up as Emily and the orderly approach.

ORDERLY

Visiting hours end at six today.

EMILY

Thanks.

The orderly leaves them. Emily stands for a moment.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Mind if I sit down?

NATHAN

Go ahead.

She smiles a little and takes the chair across from him. Nathan studies her with polite interest.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You haven't been here before.

EMILY

No. I haven't.

NATHAN

You're going to have to remind me who you are, then.

Emily offers her hand.

EMILY

Emily. Emily Warren.

He shakes it, frowning slightly.

NATHAN

You...were in the trial?

EMILY

I found you. In Buffalo.

NATHAN

Ah, okay, sorry. I don't remember Buffalo at all.

EMILY

We went to a Sabres game together.

NATHAN

Sabres? Isn't that their...hockey team?

EMILY

Yeah. You said you liked them.

Nathan chuckles and shakes his head.

NATHAN

I don't know the first thing about sports. I don't even know if Boston has a hockey team.

Emily sags slightly in her seat, despondent.

EMILY

We went sightseeing. You showed me all of Buffalo.

Nathan shakes his head.

EMILY (CONT'D)

(tearfully)

You helped me pick out the best brand of beer.

NATHAN

I'm not a big drinker.

Emily nods and takes a moment to regather herself. She looks up at him, studying him carefully.

EMILY

(laughing)

I don't even know why I'm here. You don't remember the first thing about me.

Emily stands as if to go.

NATHAN

You know...if you wanted to, you could stay and help refresh my memory.

She turns back and looks at him. She looks towards the way out, then back to him.

Emily sits down.

EMILY
The Bruins.

NATHAN
The Bruins what?

EMILY
The Boston Bruins. That's the name
of our hockey team.

Nathan smiles at her and pushes aside his magazine. They start to talk.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

Capstone Reflective Essay

I have always loved history. What most of my classmates found dull and dry, I found fascinating, a world hidden between the pages of my textbooks that was begging to be set free. I watched the movies, read the books, researched tiny details about different events – and when it came to choosing a topic for my Capstone Project, it was a given that history would in some way be involved. It was merely a matter of choosing one of my many favorite eras and seeking a story there. Since high school, one of my historical obsessions has been the Wright brothers and their airplane, so of course I chose to write a thrilling biopic about the process of their invention, with all of the sweeping, epic grandeur such films seem to require. My script would show the human side of the Wright brothers, their family life, small triumphs and major setbacks, the other inventors racing to beat them to the skies. I knew just what books would be best for my research, the framing of the story, how to characterize Orville and Wilbur – everything. It only remained for the screenplay to actually be written.

Which was, unfortunately, easier said than done. Though I attempted several times to start the script, real life and other schoolwork got in the way. And, as it usually is with film scripts based on actual events, the Wright brothers' story, while exciting, was spread out over too many years to be taken as is. But how was I to condense it? What events would need to be left out? Should I make up anything? The task proved too much for me with my busy schedule, and the times

that I was able to actually sit down and work out the plot kinks were too few and too far between. I wanted to linger over the events, reread the part where Orville almost died of typhoid fever years before they ever made their plane, relive the airfoil testing they did in the back of their bicycle shop. But lingering required time, a commodity I did not have much of this past semester. I was only six pages into the script when I met with my advisor and told him that I just couldn't finish. He agreed that I could work on another script, one I had already written for a previous class with him, and I changed my project thesis.

Thus the unfinished script *Twelve Seconds* – a reference to the length of Orville's first powered flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903 – was set aside and laid to rest. It died a quiet, peaceful death. (see Appendix)

* * *

David Fitzpatrick, a twenty-five year old British man, was not what you'd call a model citizen. His relationship with the love of his life had fallen apart, leaving him estranged from both her and the young daughter they had together. He drank too much, partied a little too hard, and sponged money off of his friends and family. He seemed to be going nowhere fast. But on December 4, 2005, David found himself standing on the pavement in front of Kings College Hospital in London, and he couldn't remember where he had just been minutes earlier. In fact, he couldn't remember anything at all about where he had come from, where he was, or even *who* he was. All that sounded familiar to him was a single street address – which turned out to be the house of an old football coach, who was later

able to help the Kings College staff find the Fitzpatrick family. They managed to contact David's family and reunite them, but no one looked familiar to him. For all he knew, they were perfect strangers. He had never seen them before in his life.

This sounds like the start of some wildly dramatic movie or mass-market paperback book, but David Fitzpatrick's story is just more proof that sometimes the truth is stranger than fiction. What happened to David that day is one of the rarest forms of memory loss, a kind of personality disorder called a psychogenic or dissociative fugue. From what psychologists have been able to tell, the fugue state comes without warning, brought on by intense emotional trauma, and causes the brain to essentially reboot itself as a defense mechanism. To use a computer analogy, it's like a full, unexpected hard-drive wipe by a deadly virus. The mind is so anxious to protect itself from emotional trauma and the accompanying stress that it removes itself from the problem and takes itself away. A person who enters a fugue state suddenly picks up and travels far from where they were to add physical distance to the event as well – some cases in the United States have had victims wind up several states away. During this period the person takes on a completely different persona, a new identity, for days, weeks, sometimes even months. And when it's all over, there is often nothing left of the victim's pre-fugue state memories. David Fitzpatrick could remember nothing of his life before his dissociative fugue save his football coach – not his parents, siblings, friends, or even his own daughter.

But how did David's life intersect with mine? On January 22, 2007, Britain's television station Channel Five broadcast a documentary on David Fitzpatrick's quest to restart his life. The program was a part of their television series *Extraordinary People*, and it followed him as he went to his grammar school, watched old home movies with his mother, and talked with his football teammates. In an interesting set of coincidences, I happened to be sick with a pretty miserable cold that night, and had stayed in my student housing assignment in London to watch TV. Being a Television, Radio, Film major, I was flipping through the few terrestrial channels we got in our flat looking for a taste of "real British television" and not another old episode of *CSI: Miami*. I found David instead. David Fitzpatrick's story is the kind of thing that I as a writer look for all of the time – the kind of news story, event, person, rare illness, whatever, that can spark story, characters, and plot. Because once the credits had rolled on the documentary, which was enticingly titled "The Man With No Past," it was like being hit by lightning – I needed to know more about this man and his condition, more than the details the documentary had included for dramatic effect. How devastating would it be to lose everything in the blink of an eye, caught unawares? Would his mother ever really be a mother to him again? Would he ever feel comfortable in his own skin, or would he always feel like he was merely attempting to live someone else's life? I looked again at the way David had lived before the dissociative fugue, and tried to imagine losing everything the way he did. I researched him on the Internet and found not much else besides the

information from the documentary; searching for dissociative fugues and other known victims brought up equally little. I couldn't be content with these mere scraps – so I decided I needed to write about this illness, in order to satisfy my hunger for knowledge.

I don't know how other people's minds work, but this is the way mine does. My imagination is always gunning full speed ahead whatever the occasion, creating dramatic situations about just about anything. An offhand comment I overhear in Schine while eating lunch could turn into an emotional relationship saga, or if I'm at home and someone in my family is out past the time they expected to be back, I'm more likely to think that they've been carjacked or in an accident than that traffic just happened to be bad. News stories I read become the seeds for novels, or short stories, or, as is the case with David Fitzpatrick, a screenplay for a feature film. If there is such a thing as a storyteller gene, I have it, because everything I see around me turns into a story or appears in one. Since a young age I've been fabricating stories – I remember as a child telling my mother these incredibly fanciful tales that were more fiction than fact. I realize now that I probably sounded like I was lying directly to her face, but I had no ill intentions, and I wasn't trying to hide any bad behavior. Whatever had actually happened was just too boring or mundane for me, and for whatever reason, I felt the need to spice things up a bit and make them more interesting. Of course, the truth would come out eventually, but my mother almost always got two versions of the same events every time she asked. In the end it was my mother who inspired me to use

my powers for good. When I was four or five years old and just learning how to use our desktop computer, I would take books and copy them, word-for-word, onto the outdated DOS word processor we had, and then print them out. I had this idea of being like a writer, or a publisher, just like the writers and publishers who made the books my parents read to me at night. There was such power in pressing the 'print' button and seeing words that *I* had typed come out onto the page. Who cared that I hadn't actually written what I was typing out? Was it an interesting use of time and waste of paper? Of course. My mother thought so too, obviously, because as she watched me spend hours and hours copying out these stories that had already been written, and leave papers lying everywhere around the house, she finally – and understandably – got fed up with me and said, “Sarah, why don't you try writing your *own* stories?” The rest, as they say, is history. I followed her well-meaning advice and sixteen years later, I'm still following it.

By the time I was twenty years old, then, and staying in London for my spring semester and learning about David Fitzpatrick's fascinating tale, I had more than a little experience finding pearls like this one and manipulating them into stories. I've already said that lots of my story ideas come from things in the real world around me, and David Fitzpatrick's story is no exception to that. But how did I get from a British television show to a feature-length screenplay? To describe the process of how ideas are formed is kind of like trying to explain sunlight to a blind man, but I'll try my best. Once I watched “The Man With No Past,” I had that indescribably amazing feeling of sheer inspiration. It's like the

proverbial light bulb switching on in your head, and everything before you becomes suddenly, startlingly clear – here is a story. Here is a story I *need* to write. And “need” truly is the operative word – there is no other way to describe the itch in my fingers and the jittery legs I get when I go too long without writing something. It is my drug, and the only drug I will never give up. I knew instantly I had a story idea on my hands, and that I couldn’t let it slip away from me as so many other story ideas have before. So I started with a single question: I knew David’s life hadn’t been that great before his fugue state, and in the documentary he was shown saying how he would take his dissociative fugue and utter lack of memories as an opportunity to start over again, to try to make something of himself. He would come to know his daughter, get a steady job, and become an independent and productive member of society. His intentions were good, and wherever he is in the world today, I wish him the very best of luck in getting his life back on track – but hearing that made me ask myself: what if he did something that couldn’t be so easily swept under the carpet? What if he had, for example, done something illegal? Committed a crime? Would he – and could he – still be held responsible for something he had no recollection of doing?

Asking myself questions like that is usually how I come up with plots for my novels and screenplays. Something in the news, on television, in a book, in a conversation, catches my attention and lingers with me. I turn it over in my mind, examining all the facets and possibilities, narrowing it all down to one essential question or fact. From that germ of an idea, then, a fully-formed story can grow.

Every plot I've ever written has come to me differently – some actually do fall into my lap, complete entities unto themselves, and don't require any tweaking or reworking because they are essentially finished and in their final form. I dream them more often than not, though these plots are the ones most likely to be forgotten simply because of the difficulty of clinging to dreams when you awake in the morning. Most plots require development before they become coherent and make sense. This script, my David Fitzpatrick story, was mostly the latter: my initial question led to another – what if he stayed in his fugue state for months? – which led to even more, until I had worked out an entire plot based on the answers to those questions alone. And there it was: a plot without characters. This process might seem like it took a relatively short amount of time, but it didn't. I saw the documentary in late January of last year, and all of the necessary plot basics weren't in place until September, almost nine months later.

I have read countless books about writing in the past ten years, however, and the way I go about developing my stories is actually against everything they say. Characters are supposed to be more important than plot because characters are what readers or viewers root for, and sympathize with, or hate. A character's decisions or lack of action is what makes a plot go forward – but I go backwards in my pre-planning process. The plot comes first for me, and upon learning about David Fitzpatrick's strange condition that plot was this: a man commits a crime. He then feels so guilty that he enters a fugue state and forgets the crime, leaves the scene, and cannot be found. An investigator runs into him by chance and

brings him back, but she is torn – she knows he is guilty, but she also sympathizes with him and his helplessness. She does not know which way she wants his criminal trial to go. I had two “characters” but all I knew about them was their gender. I didn’t know what they looked like, how they sounded, or where they lived, but one thing I knew right from the start was that this would be a love story. There was never any question in my mind that one character was male and one was female, and that the female would feel trapped by her job and her feelings for the guilty male. Perhaps it came from the documentary, seeing David Fitzpatrick’s mother in tears at the fact that her own child did not recognize her, which made me realize that when a person suffers amnesia, they are not the only one affected. The documentary did an excellent job of touching on David’s personal contacts, and how he was striving to rebuild these deep, meaningful relationships from the ground up. While it would obviously be frustrating for him, trying to develop feelings for people he was “supposed” to care about, it would be equally difficult the other way around. How is a mother supposed to treat her son when he has no idea who she is? Does she treat him the way she always has, or should she step back a bit and be more gradual with their relationship? I watched in fascination as David talked about a childhood he couldn’t remember with his parents and siblings, and knew that I had to raise the issue of relationships in my story, both new ones and old. The simple crime drama in my head became a love story.

There was also no question for me that the person who committed the crime in my story was a man, and the investigator was a woman. Though I altered

several elements in the basic plot, that arrangement never changed. Having seen nearly fifty movies in theaters last year, I had noticed a depressing trend of stories featuring all-male casts or mostly male protagonists, with women being reduced to supporting roles. Think *Ocean's Thirteen*, which came out last summer – the thirteen are all men. *American Gangster*, *Half Nelson*, *I Am Legend* – all films with male leads and few, if any, women. Being a woman, and poised to enter the film industry, I was dismayed to say the very least. The gender gap in the industry, both behind the scenes and in front of the camera, is a dilemma I wish I could solve single-handedly, but I am only one person. With this upsetting trend in mind, I set out with the goal of creating a female lead for my script who was not a stereotype or a cookie-cutter character, but a three-dimensional woman who was strong and sure of herself while also vulnerable and prone to doubt. I wanted a character an actress would want to play, something different from the rest of the roles out there. While I won't deny that there are many good – and even great – male screenwriters in Hollywood, I am still not completely sold on the idea that they know how to write convincing female characters. They can come pretty close, but isn't there an old saying that men will never understand the way women's minds work? Into this mess of expectations, goals, and hopes, then, Agent Emily Warren was born.

I have always taken the business of naming my characters seriously – maybe too seriously. As a child I was obsessed with names, and for fun I would read my parents' baby-naming books to look at the names in them and learn their

meanings. Each time I approach the creation of a new character I have this massive ready-to-access database of names stored in my head. For Emily, I wanted a name that sounded feminine, unlike so many female characters who have manly nicknames or male names, but not too little-girlish. When I have a hard time coming up with a name off the top of my head I'll sometimes look specifically for names with certain meanings, depending on the role the character will play in the story, but in this case I knew just the right one from the start. I had known a girl in high school named Emily and liked the name – it wasn't exotic or unusual, but nor was it very common. The Emily I had known was brilliant, witty, athletic, and accomplished, so in my mind the name had come to be associated with all of those traits – traits I wanted my character to have too. Since she was going to play a detective, formerly a police officer, my mind went almost instantly to Dick Tracy, specifically the 1990 film version starring Warren Beatty. Then, it was just a matter of deciding that Emily Warren sounded better to me than Emily Beatty, and I had my female character. The way I've described it above makes it sound as though I went through this whole methodical process of choosing names, for Emily and for the rest of my characters, but the truth is that it is all really hit or miss. Emily Warren *felt* right, in that strange, indiscernible way that certain elements of a story just seem correct for no identifiable reason at all. Emily might have ended up with a completely different name had I been in a different room, or had I never met the girl in high school, or if I had not spoken to the same people that day – there are a million factors that affect fiction writing, and it is impossible

to pin them all down. When it comes down to it, with my processes at least, there is little or nothing reasonable about the way I write. If I like something, it stays. If I don't, I cut it and try something else. There is no quick and dirty formula for writing convincing characters and engaging plots – but if someone ever does come up with such a formula, they would be a millionaire.

I went through the process of choosing names for the rest of the characters in similar fashion, pulling names from my personal database, as well as from my life and the people around me. Once I had come up with this complete plot and the characters who were to inhabit this world, however, I left the story and did nothing with it. The names, though I put thought and care into choosing each one, were little more than glorified placeholders, so that when I thought about the plot I could think about Emily and Nathan, not Female Lead and Male Lead. But I first saw the documentary on David Fitzpatrick, as I said above, in January of 2007, and I did not start writing anything pertaining to the related plot until September, nine months later. When I come up with story ideas I have this odd habit of not jumping up at once and putting pen to paper – or, more appropriately, fingers to keyboard – but letting the story gestate and mature in my head without writing down a single word. No matter how much time and thought I put into new story ideas, it seems wrong to start writing them immediately. Even with this story idea, which had me more excited about writing than I had been in a long time, and the amount of detail and preplanning I had put into the story basics, I didn't want to start writing until I was good and ready. It's a kind of selfishness, I suppose: the

act of creation, for me, is an always surprising, rejuvenating experience, one I want to savor and enjoy for as long as I can. As soon as I start writing things down, all these thoughts and characters and motivations and plots enter the world and no longer belong just to me; they belong to everyone who reads my script or watches a filmed version. They are no longer *mine*. I will be the first to admit that I am possessive of my characters and stories, and hold them close. I need to be persuaded to part with them, and though I feel rewarded afterwards when I hear what people think about my stories and how they can relate to the characters, the initial separation is painful. My writing and everything I create is a part of me that I am just giving away to others.

Then what happened during those nine months when I had this wonderful, fantastic, exciting idea, but was not acting on it? Life happened. If art is meant to be a distilled version of the world in which we live, then it makes sense that I – or any writer or creative person, for that matter – would try to live as much as I could, if only to have more fodder for creation. I took a fiction workshop with George Saunders my sophomore year at Syracuse, and though he told me that I was a technically sound writer, and that he could see me getting a Master's in creative writing, grad school was not something I should jump on the second I finished my Bachelor's degree. My aunt, an English professor in Rochester, agreed with him. They both have a point, one which I can now clearly see: I am only twenty-one years old, and have spent seventeen of those years in institutionalized schooling. Just about everything I know comes from what other

people have told me or what I have read in books. My world has been mostly restricted to the suburban paradise of Amherst, New York – literally one of the safest towns in the country – and the surrounding area. What, then, do I really know about *anything*? Sure, I can sit in a classroom and learn about writing more realistic, well-rounded characters, but that’s still knowledge filtered through someone else and their point of view and their experiences. I believe in learning things for myself, viewing them and participating in things firsthand. That, perhaps, is why there is usually such a significant lag time between the conception of a plot idea and the physical process of writing. While I did not try to induce a dissociative fugue, and I certainly didn’t commit a crime just to see what it felt like, I believe that each day has a writing lesson to it. Each day I learn something new about the million little nuances in a relationship between two people, or the way a person would react to hearing really good news, or how to describe the way young children play together in a sandbox. I needed to learn what it felt like to feel utterly alone in a strange, unfamiliar place – so I went out into London by myself and walked for hours through Parliament Square and St. James’ Park. When I returned home, I drove to places I’d never been to before without anyone else, to take charge of my own destiny and make my own decisions without anyone else’s input. To list them all here would take pages and pages, but I lived in those nine months and I remembered what I lived, often coming up with the words to describe the experience as I was in the moment. I worked and reworked the words in my head until they sounded good, and touched on what I had lived

time and again, just to be sure I hadn't forgotten anything. The closer a writer can get to describing actual experiences is all for the better – I cannot remember how many times I've read a book and found something that is just so *true* that it makes my heart leap. I want the same kind of reaction from my audience, the excitement that comes when you realize that someone else sees the world just as you do.

For nine months, then, I plotted and planned, and at the end of those nine months I began to write. But how do you talk about something like writing? For all that I've spent the vast majority of my life doing it, I've never really talked about what it's like. Writing is one of the most solitary, lonely things there is. You sit in a room, an office, a quiet corner in a library or cafe, or wherever's comfortable, and you let what's inside of you manifest itself on a piece of paper or on a blank computer screen. It's not like with the artists we see in movies, getting paint on everything and flinging things at their canvases, creating something that is instantly apparent on the wall of an art gallery. We aren't sculptors hacking away at blocks of marble, or composers banging away at pianos – for the most part, it is a quiet process. All you can hear is the sound of your own breathing or your fingers on the keyboard of your laptop. When your concentration slips, or a character isn't being cooperative, or the right words just won't come, only then can you hear the outside world around you. But you spend most of your time alone, focused on the words in front of you, the people living inside your head and the world they live in – and you can visualize them all so perfectly clearly that it's astonishing, almost devastating, when you realize that they aren't alive

and don't actually exist. A writer is never done with his or her writing – if they're not careful, they could work on editing and revising the same thing for the rest of their life. All of my stories exist in a perfect, pure form in my head once they become solid, and all that is required is that I spend my time wrestling with my mediocre writing ability trying to translate what's up there into tangible words and phrases.

But it will never be exactly right. Never. That's one of the hardest things I've had to accept as a writer, that I will never be as good as I want to be. There eventually will come a point in the writing process, though, when I know I can add nothing more, take away nothing else, because whatever I've written has reached its apex. It's as good as it's going to get. And I have no choice but to be done with it and let it loose into the world at large.

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Appendix

Below are the six pages I had written of *Twelve Seconds*, my original Capstone Project. It is fun, of course, to imagine where this screenplay might have gone and how it might have turned out had I continued writing it – but this is all that currently exists.

“Not within a thousand years will man ever fly.”
– Wilbur Wright, 1901

EXT. POTOMAC RIVER, NEAR QUANTICO, VA – DAY

A small houseboat sits in the middle of the Potomac River south of Washington, D.C., rocking gently with the waves. Two canoes are lashed to the sides, oars resting within them.

Atop the houseboat is an intricate catapulting mechanism loaded with the Aerodrome Number 5, a steel frame glider that looks like a giant dragonfly. Four men stand on the houseboat securing the Aerodrome, checking the mechanism.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE: May 6, 1896

A short distance away, on a narrow dock, is SAMUEL PIERPONT LANGLEY, 62, the inventor of this flying machine. He is watching the preparations with more than a little irritation. Beside him is his friend ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL, and a few steps away is a nervous PHOTOGRAPHER.

LANGLEY

No dallying this time, now. The moment Mr Reed launches the Aerodrome, you will take the picture.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Yes, sir.

BELL

Go easy on the boy, Sam. There wasn't enough time with number 6, it went right into the water.

LANGLEY

But how are we to document our testing for the Smithsonian if there is no photographic evidence?

Langley raises his arm in the air and catches the attention of the men on the houseboat.

LANGLEY (CONT'D)

All right, Mr Reed!

Reed waves back and then goes to turn on the engine.

With a great groan, the Aerodrome's steam engine roars to life, filling the air with noise. Langley waves his hand again.

Three of the men on the houseboat climb down from the launching platform, but Reed stays up on the scaffolding to trigger the catapult.

The mechanism springs to life, shooting the Aerodrome down a short, steep pair of railings. It heads right for the river -- but then, miraculously, stays airborne just above the surface of the water. The four men on the houseboat, and Langley himself, are struck speechless. Everyone watches in stunned awe as the Aerodrome gains some altitude, before turning gracefully in the air and coming back to circle around the houseboat.

BELL

You've done it, Sam! You've done it!

LANGLEY

By God, she flies!

The men on the houseboat shake each other's hands and continue to gaze up at the Aerodrome, which soars through the air, Virginia stretching out behind it in the distance.

The photographer, remembering himself, puts eye to camera and snaps a picture of the Aerodrome. The camera flashbulb goes off

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CUT TO:

EXT. SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN, INDIANA – DAY

A wagon sits nearby on the sandy dunes of the lake shore, and some distance away are four young men and one old one: OCTAVE CHANUTE, 64, a French engineer with a thick accent. He is a bit on the heavy side, with a Van Dyke beard and sparse gray hair.

Two gliders lie on the sand: one is the Albatross, a great big thing that looks like a cross between a bird and a boat; next to it is the Katydid, a giant ungainly glider with four wings.

SUPERIMPOSED TITLE: August 29, 1986

The group focuses on a third glider, made with a "two-surface" design. AUGUSTUS HERRING, a handsome young man with a somewhat arrogant bearing, points out various attributes of the new glider to Chanute.

A gaggle of nosy reporters are some distance back, watching everything going on on the beach, while photographers take loud, smoky pictures.

HERRING

The triplanes have too much lift in front. And I hate to say it, but that might be what contributed to Lilienthal's death last month.

CHANUTE

God rest his soul. We can stand on his shoulders and achieve what he will not live to see: powered, manned flight.

HERRING

I am ready whenever you are, sir.

CHANUTE

Let us get you up into the air, mon garcon.

EXT. SAND DUNE, SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN – CONTINUOUS

Two assistants hold the wings of the "two-surface" glider steady as Herring gets a good grip on the handlebars in the middle. They are standing atop one of the taller sand dunes on the beach.

Two dogs play in the sand behind and next to him, but Chanute whistles them back and they come to him. Herring pays attention to

the wind around the dunes. When the moment seems right, he nods to the assistants, who start running with him and push the glider into the air.

It is not nearly as loud as Langley's test with the Aerodrome, but it is equally as exciting to see Herring high up in the air, floating down on a gentle decline. The photographers nearby all furiously change their flashbulbs in order to get as many pictures as they can.

Herring touches down some three hundred feet away, down the beach. As the assistants jog towards him to help bring the glider back in, he raises his clenched fists in victory.

One photographer, determined to get some good shots, turns his camera on the grounded glider. He takes his picture with a burst of bright light --

EXT. MAIN STREET, DAYTON, OH - DAY

-- and there is a black-and-white photograph of Chanute and Herring's glider in the newspaper, beside a photo of Otto Lilienthal, who died in a glider crash earlier that month. These stories, however, are relegated to sidebars in favor of more important local news: Dayton's centennial celebration.

A stack of newspapers sits on the sidewalk, surrounded by other stacks, and a newsboy stands nearby, shouting to passersby about the headlines.

A number of passersby stop to buy papers, and walk away talking about the upcoming parades and pageants for the anticipated event.

WILBUR WRIGHT, 29, a tall, thin man with light blue eyes and tanned skin, dressed in a dark, plain suit, approaches the newsstand and buys a paper without a word. He continues walking down the street.

EXT. WRIGHT CYCLE CO, DAYTON, OH - CONTINUOUS

The Wright Cycle Shop is a neat little red-brick building, with black-and-white striped awnings over the windows and a neatly painted sign above the left window. Wilbur walks up and into the store, paper tucked under his arm.

INT. WRIGHT CYCLE CO, DAYTON, OH - CONTINUOUS

Inside, the place hardly looks like a workroom where bicycle parts are made and assembled. Everything has its place, the floor is pristine, and morning sunshine filters in through the clean windows.

CHARLIE TAYLOR, the shop assistant, finishes a sale at the brand-new cash register with two young ladies. On their way out they nod to and greet Wilbur, who politely tips his hat to them.

CHARLIE

Another Van Cleve in the hands of a happy customer.

WILBUR

How are we doing for parts?

CHARLIE

I had to order new sprockets and pedals, since I had to replace a few last week.

Wilbur runs his finger along the top of the counter and checks it. It meets his approval.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Everything's under control here, Will. Go home. It'll all still be here when Orv's well again.

Wilbur gives him a strained smile and looks around.

WILBUR

I just like knowing things are running smoothly.

CHARLIE

Go home, Will. I haven't burned the place down yet, have I?

WILBUR

And I'd advise you not to, as I don't think we have insurance against that.

Charlie laughs as Wilbur grins and heads out.

EXT. HAWTHORNE STREET – DAY

Wilbur passes a couple out taking a walk with a baby pram, and stops briefly to talk to them before moving on. He walks up to number 7, a beautiful white house with pale green shutters and a wrap-around porch. He enters through the front door.

INT. ORVILLE'S BEDROOM, WRIGHT HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

KATHARINE WRIGHT, 22, Wilbur's sister, is a pretty brunette dressed in the style of the Gibson Girl. She is dozing in a chair beside Orville's bed. ORVILLE WRIGHT, 25, is lying unconscious in the bed, his face flushed with typhoid fever.

A light tap at the door, and then Wilbur enters the room, paper still under his arm.

WILBUR

Kate.

She frowns and blinks her eyes open. Wilbur extends his hand to her and she takes it, slowly coming to a stand.

KATHARINE

He awoke last night to have some water, but...

WILBUR

He's still the same. Get some rest, you look exhausted.

KATHARINE

Take care of my Bubbo, Will.

WILBUR

As best I can.

Wilbur smiles as Katharine yawns and walks out of the room. He takes Kate's chair and draws it a bit closer to the bed.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

Morning, Orv. Glad to see you looking so hale this morning.

No response. Orville is still deeply unconscious. Wilbur nevertheless pretends to hold a conversation with him.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

Why thank you, I think I look rather smart in this suit too. Let us discuss the news of the day, shall we?

He unfolds his newspaper and studies the front page with care.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

Well, William Jennings Bryan is tallying up more miles on his campaign. Some say he might become our youngest president, you know. Will you be voting for him in November?(pauses)Mm, yes, I think I'll have to go with McKinley too. Can't go wrong with a man from Ohio.

Wilbur scans the rest of the front page, humming a church hymn under his breath, before turning the page and looking at the inside stories.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

Then there's the Dayton Centennial, which I'm afraid it looks like you're going to miss.(pauses)That's your fault for drinking from a contaminated well, isn't it? It's like I've always told you...

Wilbur's voice trails off as he looks down and sees a picture of Octave Chanute and his gliders at Lake Michigan. Wilbur lays the paper across his lap, and reverently traces the curve of the wings with the tips of his fingers.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

They're getting closer, Orv. Any day now it'll be in all the papers. "Man conquers the air."

Wilbur looks up at Orville and sees him the same as ever, then looks back at the paper. He heaves a giant sigh.

Written Summary of Capstone Project

This Honors Capstone Project is a screenplay for a feature-length film, meaning that in terms of length, it falls between the rough limits of eighty to one hundred twenty pages generally deemed sufficient to shoot a commercial film for theatrical release. The title is *Two Hundred Days of Innocence*. Unlike the screenplays I have written in my Newhouse classes, what sets this particular script apart is that it can be considered the final, most polished draft. In my other screenwriting classes, what I turned in at the end of the semester must be considered a first draft, as I had only taken one pass through the text and edited it. This script, by contrast, has been thoroughly and carefully read and edited, revised, and polished into a more marketable state in order to attract the attention and financial interest of professional Hollywood studios and producers. When I graduate, I hope to take this script with me when I embark on my career in the film industry.

The cast includes a leading role for a female, Emily Warren, with many male supporting parts including the lead character's brothers, her associates at the police department, an ex-lover, and the criminal she has been charged to

apprehend, Nathan Altsher. Nathan, the computer systems manager for the First Bank of Boston, has never done anything against the law in his life. But when his grandfather becomes ill and the cost of medicines and hospital visits becomes too much for him to handle, he decides to rob the bank with two of his fellow employees. They work out the details, everything goes without a hitch, and they each get a fairly substantial chunk of money – but then Nathan vanishes into thin air. The two other bank robbers are caught and sentenced to jail terms, but no one can find Nathan. Six months after the robbery, the case is still open but it is, for all intents and purposes, a cold one. The police are no longer actively hunting for the third bank robber, and the First Bank is now trying to collect on its insurance policy. The insurance company's new claims investigator, Emily Warren, also tries her hand at finding Nathan, but she fails where everyone else has – until she goes to Buffalo to visit family and runs right into him at a convenience store. She knows this man has to be him – he matches the photographs they have, he has a slight accent, the dates all match up – but he doesn't *act* like Nathan Altsher. There's something off about him, something not quite right. She has him arrested and brought back to Boston, where he insists that they have the wrong man, but instead of convincing them of his innocence the police – and Emily – just get even more confused. Then, while on the witness stand in his own criminal trial, Nathan – who has been calling himself James Palmer – suddenly has a break down, and does not know where he is or why he is on trial. A psychologist confirms that Nathan has suffered a dissociative fugue, which has wiped clean his

memory. Instead of going to jail like his co-conspirators, Nathan is sentenced to time in a mental hospital, where they hope that one day, he will be able to regain some of his past and live a full life again.

My intention was to write this screenplay as a vehicle for a young actress who would be strong enough to carry the film through to its end; I also think that it could serve as a film to jumpstart or boost a career. I believe there is a definite lack of good, meaty parts for actresses in the current Hollywood, as the trend nowadays seems to lean towards the Judd Apatow formula: a group of males in an explicit sex comedy, with women only in supporting, broadly-drawn roles. Though I cannot hope to change the film industry overnight, nor single-handedly, I hope that the gender gap in Hollywood will someday soon be rectified – there are too many incredibly talented actresses out there for this to not become a reality.

The basic storyline originally came to me inspired by a British television documentary I watched while studying abroad in London, during the spring semester of my junior year. The documentary followed a young man named David Fitzpatrick, who suffered from an extremely rare form of amnesia and completely lost his memories. My script also features a character that falls victim to the same condition – called a dissociative fugue – and at first, my storyline centered on him. It was my advisor, however, who made me realize that Nathan's story was not nearly as interesting as Emily's, the insurance claims investigator who is on his case and finds him. Nathan's situation is pitiable, of course, especially since he

does not even recognize his own mother and dying grandfather, but he is a victim of fate in the overall arc of the story. Plot elements happen to him, and he is carried along by these and the actions of the characters around him, not by his own decisions. Emily, meanwhile, begins the story as a jaded ex-cop, starting out at a new job and uncertain about her future. She has a much bigger impact on how the story turns out, and grows much more as a person by the end of the story. With my advisor's help, I was able to retool the screenplay plot to center on Emily and her plight, and the story is all the better for it.

The story I came up with required a certain amount of research in order to gain the necessary amount of realism. For one, I am not a psychology major or minor, so I knew nothing about personality disorders or the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). There is relatively information out there about dissociative fugues as well, so most of the information relayed through the script came from the documentary I saw. I also had no knowledge of how criminal trials are conducted aside from what is shown on television shows like *Law and Order*. Both these subjects required as much research as I could conduct, and at least on the topic of criminal trials, I believe I learned a great deal. Dissociative fugues, on the other hand, still remain mostly a mystery to me, but I don't think I'm alone on that. From what I understand, psychologists are still unsure why dissociative fugues happen and what causes them to happen in some but not in others. Perhaps someday this area will be better understood than it is now.

There was also the question of settings when I was deciding where to put my story. The two main locations needed to be a significant distance apart, but not too far. To ensure that I would be able to describe the cities as accurately as possible, I decided to set *Two Hundred Days* in the city I know best: my own hometown, Buffalo, New York. The rest of the story takes place in and around Boston, which I have visited in the past. I think I was able to get the right feel of the city, despite not knowing it as well as I do Buffalo.

As far as the actual writing of the screenplay goes, I petitioned the Honors Department for the funds to buy a copy of Final Draft, arguably the premier scriptwriting software available. The screenplay format is a very precise one, with specific margins, tabs, and structures, and in the past I have had to arrange my scripts to fit this format by hand – it is a process that takes a lot of time and patience, and one that takes up precious time better spent actually writing. Final Draft formats screenplays automatically, however, and so I thought it best for my own sanity and practical use of time to obtain the program to help me finish this project. My petition was approved, I bought Final Draft, and it has proven invaluable to the writing process. With it doing all my formatting for me, I was able to focus more on the actual writing and less on the technical aspects.

A screenplay like mine, based on a story “ripped from the headlines,” is significant in many ways. For one, I think that films inspired by real life events are this industry’s primary way of commenting on current events and what is going on in the world, in the same way that a newspaper might publish editorials

and opinion pieces or a writer might blog on the Internet. Of course there will always be outspoken celebrities drawing the public's attention to this cause or that, but movies reach a wider audience, and can frame morals within the structure of a three-act story with villains and heroes. It shows that the filmmakers are paying attention to what is going on around them instead of simply getting lost in their movies and fantasy celebrity worlds – a misconception, I believe, that is slowly fading away in the public eye. If art is meant to reflect life, then what better source of material for films than from the news.

This script is also significant to me on a more personal level. Until I came to Syracuse University and the Newhouse School, I had never even attempted to write a screenplay. My medium of choice was actually the novel, and I came to Syracuse with several complete and incomplete novels already under my belt. I was unfamiliar with the strict structures that govern the writing of a screenplay, and did not know what was expected in a script. I learned soon enough when I took my first screenwriting class – TRF 411, with Professor Moller, who later became my advisor – that the rules were almost completely different, but I was undaunted. I was determined that by the time I graduated, as I will this year, I would know not only how to write a sound, tight screenplay, but I would have at least one which was ready to shop around to Hollywood producers and movie houses.

Two Hundred Days of Innocence has come a long way, from being sparked by a British documentary in January of 2007, to being a feature-length screenplay

in May of 2008. It is the passionate work of over a year of research, story development, and hours upon hours of writing alone in my bedroom. My hope is that, one day in the not-so-far future, everyone who has read this screenplay during its creation will be watching it on the big screen.