

THE SUICIDE CIRCLE (PILOT)

By Arran McDermott

Genre: Sci-fi thriller

Logline: When a successful businessman blows his brains out in public, it leads an investigative blogger to discover that he was part of a secret society that has the power to travel back in time when they die and change history. Will she reveal them to the world, or join them?

FADE IN:

INT. SEEDY MOTEL - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A trail of cocaine on a glass table in a perfect circle.

The head of a balding man moves in and snorts the coke up through a straw.

This is COLIN McINTOSH, 50. His belly bulges slightly over the black briefs he is wearing, but otherwise he looks healthy for his age.

Behind him on the bed is CINDY, an attractive, perky blonde, 25. Like him, she's only wearing underwear.

Colin rubs his nose and grins at her. His hands are jittery.

Cindy shakes her head, amused.

CINDY
Coke is so 1980s.

He climbs on the bed and snuggles up close to her.

COLIN
You weren't even alive in the 80s.

CINDY
No, thank God. Have you seen those
shoulder pads?

COLIN
Yes. Over and over again.

He kisses her.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Want a quickie before I have to
leave?

CINDY
I gotta take a shower before my
next call. Sorry.

He sighs as she gets off the bed and heads for the bathroom. She blows him a kiss and closes the bathroom door behind her.

Colin stretches out on the bed. Suddenly there is the sound of someone knocking quietly on the front door.

He gets up and puts on a robe. Dances up to the front door, a goofy grin on his face.

He reaches for the chain and then thinks twice and leaves it on. He opens it a crack and stares out.

There is no one at the door.

He closes the door and takes the chain off. Opens it again and looks across the parking lot.

A SHADOWY MAN watches him from the other side. Only the glow of his cigarette is visible.

Colin's smile evaporates and he quickly closes the door.

Colin hurries to a closet and pulls out some clothes. He puts on a fancy suit, struggling to get his feet in the pant legs. We hear the shower running in the background. He pauses after putting on his jacket.

He opens a drawer near the bed and takes out a handgun. He fondles it for a moment and then slips it into his jacket pocket.

He leaves the room.

EXT. SEEDY MOTEL - NIGHT

Colin quickly walks to his car, looking around for the shadowy man.

He gets in.

INT. COLIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Colin takes a burner phone out of the glovebox. We see he has a whole collection of them in there. He punches in a text message.

ON PHONE

"They're onto me."

Seconds later, a reply appears from someone called HYTHLODAEUS.

"It's time to reset."

Colin looks sick. He rolls down the window and throws the phone out. Starts the car up.

EXT. COLIN'S CAR - NIGHT

The car reverses and then drives forward over the phone, crushing it to pieces. Colin drives off.

A black car follows him.

EXT. MCINTOSH ENTERPRISES HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Colin hurriedly parks his car on the street out front. He gets out and runs into the building just as the black car swings by.

INT. MCINTOSH ENTERPRISES HEADQUARTERS - EVENT ROOM - NIGHT

A large group of well dressed men and women are gathered in the brightly decorated room. There is a table laden with snacks and the wine is flowing freely. Cheesy pop music is playing.

A stage is set up at the back of the room. A banner hangs over it that reads, "McIntosh Enterprises' Best Quarter Ever!".

Colin walks into the room. The excited crowd members greet him and he gets several slaps on the back.

He walks up to a woman and kisses her. This is his wife, MAUDE MCINTOSH, 40's, dark hair.

He shakes several more hands, climbs up on the stage and walks to a podium. The music, and the crowd, goes quiet.

He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and unfolds it. He looks at his written speech for a moment and then crumples it into a ball and tosses it in a nearby trashcan. He breathes deeply before talking into the microphone.

COLIN

Thank you all for coming. Sorry I'm late.

(beat)

I hope you're all enjoying the party. The reason I invited you here was so we could celebrate our recent successes, together. I couldn't have done it without everyone in this room. Especially my lovely wife, Maude.

She smiles at him.

Colin forces a fake smile in return.

COLIN (CONT'D)

The opportunities I've had with this company have been beyond my wildest dreams. I love coming to work each day.

(beat)

But, unfortunately, it's all been a lie.

Happy faces turn to confusion in the crowd.

COLIN (CONT'D)

I'm a fraud. All my success has been achieved through inside knowledge. I don't deserve any of this.

He lets out a hysterical laugh. His hand starts to shake.

COLIN (CONT'D)

And there's only one way to make things right.

He reaches into his pocket and takes out the gun. He waves it at the crowd. People cry out in shock. Several make for the exit.

He suddenly places the barrel of the gun to his temple. Several people move up to the podium to try and stop him, but there is no time.

COLIN (CONT'D)

(speaking Latin)

Confringo orbis.

He pulls the trigger.

There is a loud gunshot and the top of his head disappears in a spray of blood.

His body collapses to the floor.

Maude screams in horror.

The blood around Colin's body spreads out, forming a circular shape.

EXT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - DAY

The two-storey Greek fraternity building sits on the outskirts of a large college. Students come and go outside constantly.

INT. FRATERNITY HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

The handsome and cocky young president, BOYD EVANS, sits behind his desk. He is wearing a colorful suit.

He is in the middle of being interviewed by SAM BERGSTROM, 28. She has short hair and glasses, and is very animated and upbeat. She is wearing tight-fitting business casual attire. There is a pen in her hand and a notepad on the desk.

Boyd seems to spend more time checking out her figure than looking her in the face.

SAM

So, could you tell me something about your fraternity's charitable work?

He flashes her a blinding white grin.

BOYD

Be happy to, Miss Bergstrom.

She waves her hand at him playfully.

SAM

You can call me Samantha.

BOYD

Well, Samantha, it's very important to me that we give something back to the community. That's why my brothers and I have organized a number of charitable events. Toys for tots, wounded warriors, anything we can do to help the people in need and we're all over it.

SAM

That's so great!

She leans in close and lightly brushes his hand with hers, before leaning back in her seat. Boyd loosens his collar.

BOYD

Is it hot in here or is it just me?

Sam giggles. She looks down at her notes.

She takes off her glasses, her face and demeanor suddenly turning serious.

SAM

Can I ask you one more question,
Mr. Evans?

BOYD

You certainly may. And it's Boyd.

SAM

Mr. Evans, do you know a sorority
sister by the name of Rachel
Blanding?

His smile disappears.

BOYD

Rachel Bland-Blanding? No, can't
say that I do.

SAM

How about Dawn Michelson? Or
Latreesa Owens?

He fidgets nervously.

BOYD

Nope, doesn't ring a bell. Are we
done here?

SAM

Not quite. The reason I'm asking,
is those three women, and several
others, claim that they were
invited to parties at your
fraternity, and drugs were slipped
into their drinks before they were
then gang-raped by your brothers.

Boyd stands up, his face twisted in anger.

BOYD

I'm going to have to ask you to
leave. I didn't invite you here to
throw wild accusations at me and my
fraternity.

Sam stands up.

SAM

No, you invited me here for a puff piece on how great and powerful you are. Well, I'm more interested in the women that have been sexually assaulted in this building. And before you deny it again, you might want to know that one of your fine, upstanding brothers uploaded video of one of the incidents to several porn sites. I was able to login to his account using his ridiculously easy password.

BOYD

I don't know who the fuck you are, but if you don't leave right now I'm calling campus police.

SAM

I'm just a blogger.

(beat)

Go ahead and call the police. I'd be happy to talk to them about their policy of turning a blind eye to campus rape.

Boyd roars and sweeps several items off his desk. He tries to shove her towards the door. Sam pushes him back.

SAM (CONT'D)

Touch me again and your penis is going bye bye.

BOYD

Get out of here now! Fucking cunt.

SAM

Can I quote you on that?

BOYD

You publish any of this, I'll fucking sue your ass.

Sam laughs.

SAM

Bring it on.

She walks out of the office, leaving Boyd fuming.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sam enters her apartment. She is now dressed in jeans and a baggy T-shirt and seems very different from the person we saw at the start of the interview.

SAM
I'm home!

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sam enters the kitchen to find her girlfriend, AMY CHEN, mid-20's, preparing dinner. Amy is already in her pajamas.

AMY
(big grin)
Hey!

SAM
What's for dinner?

AMY
Spaghetti.

SAM
Again?

AMY
I didn't know when you'd be back,
or I would have made something
else.

SAM
Okay. Let me go check my blog.

AMY
I read your story. So good. You're
so brave.

Sam looks uncomfortable at the praise. She exits.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits on her couch with her laptop. She has her blog open and is checking her posts.

Amy enters and puts a hand on her shoulder.

AMY
Dinner's ready. How's your latest
post doing?

SAM
Around a thousand hits.

AMY
Wow! That's amazing.

SAM
Yeah, that and five bucks will get
me a Starbucks coffee. A small one.

Suddenly, there is a beep as Sam gets an alert on her
computer. She opens an e-mail. She looks confused as she
reads it.

SAM (CONT'D)
Weird.

AMY
What is it?

SAM
I just got an anonymous email.

AMY
From who?

SAM
Someone called... Hiplodocus. Shit,
I can't even pronounce that.

AMY
What is it about?

SAM
They say they have a big story for
me to look into.

AMY
You think it's real?

SAM
Probably a scam.

Sam closes her laptop and stands up.

SAM (CONT'D)
Hey, let's go eat out. I feel like
getting out of the house tonight.

AMY
I just made spaghetti.

SAM

We can freeze it and eat it another night. Come on, get dressed. There's a great wine bar over on Olympic.

AMY

That's almost an hour drive!

SAM

Then we better hurry.

Sam rushes out of the room. Amy stands there, looking very annoyed.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Sam and Amy are lying in bed together. Sam sits up. Yawns. Stretches. She grabs her phone and walks over to the bathroom, wearing a Sailor Moon tee that falls down to her knees. Amy remains sleeping.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Sam sits on the toilet as she pees. She studies her phone.

PHONE

An email from Hythlodæus pops up. There is a link in it.

Sam taps the link.

PHONE

It opens a website with the news headline: "Millionaire CEO commits suicide at office party". She taps on another link.

A video opens. It shows shaky, cameraphone footage of Colin blowing his brains out.

Sam looks shocked.

SAM

Holy shit.

She swipes back to the email.

PHONE

"If you want to talk more, contact me on Signal at the number below. I will tell you about the Circle"

Sam flushes the toilet and stands up.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER

Amy wakes up to find Sam getting dressed.

SAM
Morning, sleepyhead.

AMY
Morning. What's going on?

SAM
I'm going to work.

AMY
(confused)
Work?

SAM
Yeah. I'm going to check out a story downtown. Some rich, white dude blew his brains out at a company meeting.

AMY
Why would you want to write about that?

SAM
Because he was obviously feeling guilty about something. I want to know what.

She gives Amy a quick kiss on the lips.

SAM (CONT'D)
See you later, babe.

Sam leaves before Amy can reply.

AMY
(to empty room)
Bye..?

She falls back on the bed.

INT. MCINTOSH ENTERPRISES HEADQUARTERS - RECEPTION - DAY

Sam is at the reception desk talking with the no-nonsense MALE RECEPTIONIST.

A TV is playing silently on the wall behind them. The news story is about President Helen Carter facing impeachment charges.

SAM

So I can't talk to anyone who worked with Mr. McIntosh?

The scared-looking man shakes his head.

MALE RECEPTIONIST

We're not allowed to talk to the press.

Unseen by Sam, a sinister Shadowy Man is watching her from the hall. The same one that was spying on Colin earlier.

Sam turns around and the man quickly steps into an elevator.

Sam smiles at the receptionist.

SAM

Thank you, for nothing.

She walks over to the elevator. She waits until the receptionist is distracted by a phone call and then quickly sneaks past him.

INT. MCINTOSH ENTERPRISES HEADQUARTERS - HALLWAY - DAY

Sam walks down the hall like she owns the place, smiling and making eye contact with people she passes.

Finally, she reaches a double door that is closed off with police tape.

She checks the coast is clear and then sneaks under the tape.

INT. MCINTOSH ENTERPRISES HEADQUARTERS - EVENT ROOM - DAY

The scene of the suicide is in darkness. Sam flips on the lights.

There is still splattered blood at the podium. She walks up to it and examines the scene.

She notices the trash can. She searches through it. She grimaces when she takes out a mouldy banana skin.

Then she finds the paper that McIntosh threw there.

She reads his abandoned speech. Shakes her head. No useful info.

Then she turns over the paper. She sees it is written on the back of a printout from an online hotel booking site.

The address of the hotel is on the paper.

Sam takes the paper and leaves the room.

INT. COFFEESHOP - DAY

Sam sits in a corner going through notes on her laptop.

Suddenly a notification pops up from the messenger app on her phone.

"Hythlodæus has sent you a message".

SAM

Hey, my new best friend.

Sam taps on it.

It starts to automatically read in a creepy, emotionless computer voice. Sam looks at the people around her, embarrassed, and slips her earbuds into the phone.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

Hello. I know you were at McIntosh Enterprises today. Thought you might need some help with your investigation.

Sam types a response: "You were spying on me?"

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

I wouldn't call it spying. Have you ever heard of the Circle?

Sam types: "No"

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

McIntosh was a member. I have arranged an interview for you with his widow. I will email you the info shortly.

(MORE)

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

Somewhere in his house is a laptop that has further information on it. You will need to take the information without revealing the laptop is missing. Remember, other eyes are watching you. Good luck.

Sam takes the earbuds out, stunned.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Sam is getting changed. She puts on a black dress. She stares in the mirror as she puts on makeup.

Amy enters. She looks like she wants to say something, but can't.

Sam slings a purse over her shoulder. She walks over and kisses Amy on the cheek, leaving a lipstick mark.

SAM

Bye. I'll call you when I get out of this interview thingy.

AMY

Bye.

Sam exits. Amy sits down on the bed and sighs.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

Sam walks up the driveway to the lavish home. The gravel crunches under her high heels.

She approaches the door and rings the doorbell. The door opens and she walks inside.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sam sits on a couch in the huge, extravagantly decorated room. Maude McIntosh, looking older than just a few days ago, pours a brandy from a decanter for both of them.

SAM

Thanks.

Maude sits down in a high-backed antique chair, facing her. Sam takes a sip and makes a disgusted face, then quickly smiles.

MAUDE

So how can I help you, Miss Arthur?

SAM

Well, I was hoping I could get some background on your husband's life. We all knew him from the generous contributions he made to our foundation through his company, of course, but I'd like to get to know him as a person. If that's okay with you?

MAUDE

Certainly. I haven't had any contact with anyone since his death. I just had to shut everyone out. But I feel like it's time to open up.

Sam nods.

MAUDE (CONT'D)

As for Colin, he was a good man. Everyone loved him. Which is why it's so hard to understand why he would do this.

She sobs quietly, dabbing at her eyes.

SAM

Did he have any hobbies?

MAUDE

He liked to play golf. And there was a club he went to nearly every week, but he wouldn't talk about it. Some old boy's club, I think.

SAM

May I use your bathroom?

MAUDE

You may. Third door on the right down the hall.

SAM

Thanks.

She exits, carrying her purse.

INT. MANSION - HALLWAY - DAY

Sam walks down the hall. She looks behind her to check the coast is clear. She carefully opens the door to the first room she comes to. She dismisses it and moves on.

She opens a door on the left. She looks inside and smiles. She steps inside.

INT. MANSION - STUDY - DAY

Sam walks up to a laptop sitting on a desk. She examines it carefully.

SAM
(whispers)
Thank God it's not a Mac.

She takes a screwdriver out of her purse and removes two screws from the side. She slides the hard drive out of the laptop.

She opens her purse and takes out several different hard drives. She picks one that matches the hard drive she removed and slides it into the laptop.

She places the stolen hard drive in her purse. She leaves the room.

INT. MANSION - HALLWAY - DAY

Sam hurries back down the hall. Maude suddenly appears and looks at her suspiciously.

MAUDE
Did you find the bathroom okay?

SAM
Yep.

MAUDE
Can we finish this up? I have some errands to run.

Sam nods.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sam is back on the couch with her notepad out.

SAM

If you don't mind me asking, did your husband leave a note or give any indication why he did it?

MAUDE

No, he did not. In fact, I've never seen him happier than he was the last few days before he--

Sam swallows nervously.

SAM

I hate to ask this, but do you think your husband could have been having an affair?

Maude stares at her, speechless.

SAM (CONT'D)

The only reason I ask, is that he checked into a hotel room the day he died. Later that night, a witness saw a young blonde woman leaving the same room.

Maude continues to stare.

SAM (CONT'D)

And you are not a young blonde woman.

Maude bursts out laughing.

MAUDE

Oh my dear.

SAM

So you don't believe she was his mistress?

MAUDE

Not that it's any business of yours, but Colin and I had an open relationship. I knew all about his hotel guests.

SAM

I see. I'm sorry if--

MAUDE

Who are you?

SAM

What?

MAUDE

Something about you felt off, so I called the Guiding Lights foundation while you were out of the room. They have no Samantha Arthur working for them.

Sam puts her notepad away.

SAM

I'm going to be honest with you. I'm a journalist. I thought your husband's death was an interesting story, and this was the only way I could think of to get an interview with you.

MAUDE

Interesting story? Are you a fucking sociopath?

SAM

I'm sorry. I'll leave.

Sam gets up to go. She is almost to the door when Maude speaks up.

MAUDE

You're right.

SAM

What?

MAUDE

There is a story. Someone knows why Colin killed himself.
(crying)
I hope you find them.

Sam stares at her for a moment, looking guilty. Then she leaves.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits at her computer. She has the stolen hard drive in a caddy that is plugged into her laptop. She browses through files and folders. She clicks on a file and her eyes open wide.

SAM

Fuck me.

AMY (O.S.)

Was that a request?

Amy saunters over to Sam and starts rubbing her shoulders sensually.

Sam is so engrossed in the screen she doesn't even notice.

SAM

This is freaky. That dead rich guy was in a club with a whole bunch of other rich guys. He called them the Circle of the Brethren.

She brings up a web browser window and types in it.

SAM (CONT'D)

They don't exist, according to Google. Holy shit, this is an actual secret society.

Amy looks unimpressed.

AMY

Are you coming to bed?

SAM

Yeah, in a little while.

Amy frowns and leaves. Sam keeps on working.

Suddenly an e-mail notification pops up on her screen.

POP-UP NOTIFICATION

"Hythlodæus has sent you a message".

Sam clicks on it and her computer voice reads the e-mail.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

Keep following the Suicide Circle.
You are on the right track.

SAM

Woodward and Bernstein eat your
fucking heart out.

She smiles and starts typing furiously.

MONTAGE

Sam pours through evidence from the hard drive.

News headlines about various celebrities and rich people.

Stories about multiple rich people killing themselves appear.

Sam talks into her microphone, recording her thoughts.

SAM (V.O.)

This story is turning into something fucking epic. There's a secret society right under our noses. Pretty much anyone who's anyone is a member.

Paparazzi photos of celebrities meeting on dark street corners.

SAM (V.O.)

So McIntosh's company did business with another one known as Circlecorp. Weird thing - no one knows anything about them. No website, no headquarters, no social media presence. But according to McIntosh they kickstarted his company.

Photos of a younger McIntosh meeting with mysterious people in suits, their faces hidden.

SAM (V.O.)

But there's more. McIntosh was also a member of this club called the Circle of the Brethren, or the Suicide Circle. They come from pretty much every successful sector of society. And guess what the leading cause of death is among this club?

(beat)

Suicide. Not all as obvious as the way McIntosh did it, but I only had to dig a little to find a whole bunch of drug overdoses, head-on car collisions and the like.

Among the photos is a picture of McIntosh with a handsome movie star in his early 40s.

Sam recognizes him.

SAM
Holy shit! That's... what's his
face?

END MONTAGE

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Sam bounds into the bedroom. She shakes Amy awake.

SAM
Amy, wake up!

Amy sits up.

AMY
(groggy)
What's going on?
(beat)
Did you stay up all night?

SAM
I slept on the couch for a couple
of hours. I didn't want to disturb
you. Listen, do you still know that
guy who knows that guy who works at
Fox?

AMY
I think so. Why?

SAM
Can he get me a press pass to the
premiere of the new Mike Cash
movie?

AMY
You want to go to a movie premiere?

SAM
Yeah, it's work-related. Can you
call him?

AMY
(sighs)
I'll see what I can do.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

The movie theater is bustling with activity. Thousands of fans crowd around the barriers to catch a glimpse of the stars on the red carpet.

Sam waits anxiously near the entrance as the celebrities approach. She is wearing a dress with Dr. Martens boots.

Suddenly there are some excited screams from the crowd. She looks up to see the star of the movie approaching. MIKE CASH, early 40's, handsome and charming. He is dressed impeccably and smiles warmly at everyone he meets. Flash cameras go off like crazy.

A MALE REPORTER thrusts his mike in his face.

MALE REPORTER

Mike, Mike! Do you think you have another hit on your hands? Seems like every movie you star in is a blockbuster.

MIKE

I guess I'm just lucky. But it's all about choosing a good script.

MALE REPORTER

Any comment on the rumor that you and young starlet Heather Weathers are dating?

MIKE

(winks)

We're just very good friends.

He stops to pose for a selfie with a FEMALE FAN leaning over the barrier.

He makes his way to the entrance.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Sorry, folks, I'd love to stay and chat but I only have time for one more question before the movie starts.

He gets hit with a barrage of questions. His eyes focus on Sam.

SAM

I have a question.

MIKE

Go ahead.

SAM

Is it true that you're a member of a secret society known as the Suicide Circle?

His smile disappears. He stares at her for a moment and everything goes quiet. Then he laughs.

MIKE

Sounds like a good idea. Send the script to my agent and I'll take a look.

He waves to the crowd and then disappears inside.

A GRUMPY REPORTER looks at Sam.

GRUMPY REPORTER

That was your one question? Fucking amateurs.

Sam slips away.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits in front of her computer in the dark room. The glow of the screen illuminates her tired, frustrated face.

A message pops up from Hythlodæus. Her computer speaks it aloud.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

How is the investigation going?

Sam smiles excitedly. She starts typing.

"The premiere was a bust. I could use some more help."

She waits for another message to pop up.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

I can tell you two things. Pay attention to McIntosh's last words. And the Circle is hiding in plain sight.

She types again.

"That's it?"

There is no reply. Sam closes the laptop and sighs.

Amy enters the room. She is all dressed up and her lipstick is smeared, but Sam doesn't seem to notice.

AMY

(nervous)

Hi. I didn't think you'd be back already.

SAM

I didn't stay for the movie. You know I hate that Hollywood bullshit.

AMY

Well, I had drinks with some friends from work.

SAM

Cool. Listen, I'm gonna hit the streets tomorrow. Try and dig up some leads, maybe see if anyone wants to buy this story. You didn't have anything planned, did you?

AMY

No. I'll just be sitting around the apartment. Alone.

Sam pats her on the back in an attempt to be reassuring.

SAM

We'll do something fun together soon, I promise. I just need to get this finished. It's like a--

AMY

Obsession?

SAM

I guess. But not in a bad way.

AMY

What time do you think you'll be home tomorrow?

SAM

I doubt it'll be before 5.

Amy nods and leaves the room.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Sam is walking the streets, a backpack slung over one shoulder. A light rain is falling. She talks into her phone, recording voice memos.

SAM

Cash knows something but he's not talking. But get this, I think McIntosh wanted people to know about his little secret group. That's why he killed himself very dramatically, very publicly. The last thing he said before he died was--

She quickly takes a note out of her pocket and reads it.

SAM (CONT'D)

Confringo orbis. It's kind of a shitty Latin translation but as far as I can work out it means break the circle. Circlecorp, the Suicide Circle. It all fits together, see?

She stops outside a chainlink fence. She looks through the fence to what appears to be an abandoned warehouse. She films it on her phone.

SAM (CONT'D)

This is the only address I could find for Circlecorp. But there's nothing here but an empty building.

She stops the recording. She looks at the building for a moment longer. A puddle of rainwater in a circle is on the ground in front of her. It ripples slightly. Sam shakes her head and walks away.

She suddenly has a thought and looks in her backpack.

SAM (CONT'D)

Shit! Where is that damn charger?

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Sam enters her apartment. We hear laughing coming from off-screen. Confused, she follows the sound.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Sam walks in to find Amy in bed. Naked. With an equally nude
GOOFY MAN.

SAM
Oh, for fuck's sake!

They both look at her, stunned.

AMY
You're home early.

Sam walks over to the bedside table and picks up a charging
cable.

SAM
Forgot this piece of shit.

GOOFY MAN
Before you say anything... this is
exactly what it looks like.

SAM
Whatever.

She walks back out.

AMY
Sam, wait!

She gets off the bed, throws on a robe and leaves the room.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amy catches up to Sam.

AMY
I'm sorry you found out like this,
but we need to talk.

SAM
What's to talk about? You want to
fuck someone else. It's over.

AMY
You don't even fucking care! See,
this is exactly what the problem
is!

SAM

I don't have a problem. And for your information, if you needed cock in you so bad, there are devices we could have used.

The Goofy Man wanders into the room, still naked but covering his penis with his hands.

AMY

This has nothing to do with cock, okay? It's not like he has some amazing penis.

GOOFY MAN

Hey, I'm right here!

AMY

(without looking)
Shut up!

Amy looks like she is about to cry and her voice is shaky as she continues. Sam remains cool and aloof.

AMY (CONT'D)

I needed someone I could have an emotional connection with. I've never had that with you. The sex was good, but I never felt you cared about me, or anyone.

SAM

Maybe that's because the people I care about usually end up dead.

AMY

I know you had a bad childhood, okay? I know your brother died. But that doesn't mean you have to shut everyone out. You're always trying to save the world. How about saving yourself?

SAM

I don't care about saving the world.

AMY

Then care about your part of it, at least. Because if you carry on this way--

GOOFY MAN

Amy's right. You need to check yourself before you wreck yourself.

SAM

Can you please tell swinging dick over there to put some clothes on and shut his fucking mouth?

Amy scowls at her boyfriend.

AMY

Stop trying to help me, okay?

GOOFY MAN

Sorry. I'll get dressed.

He turns around and walks away, giving them the rear view as he whistles a happy tune.

SAM

Okay, are you through psychoanalyzing me?

Amy just stares at her.

SAM (CONT'D)

Good. Discussion's over. I'll give you time to find your own place, or move in with this dope, or whatever you're doing. After that, I never want to see you again.

Sam goes into the bathroom and slams the door before Amy can reply.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Sam is eating breakfast at the counter, wearing only a T-shirt and underwear. Behind her, Amy is carrying a box.

AMY

Well, that's the last of my stuff.

Sam says nothing.

AMY (CONT'D)

For what it's worth, I am sorry. I wish it could have been different.

Sam continues to ignore her.

AMY (CONT'D)

Bye.

She leaves, tears in her eyes.

Sam yawns and picks up her phone. She makes a call.

SAM (INTO PHONE)

Hi, can I speak to Mr. Palmer?

(beat)

I'm Sam Bergstrom. He knows me. I emailed an article to him for publication.

(beat)

I'll hold.

(beat)

Hello?

(beat)

When do you think he'll be back?

(beat)

Okay, please tell him I called.

She disconnects.

SAM (CONT'D)

And to check his fucking email!

Sam opens her laptop. She searches through the files she retrieved from Colin's laptop. Something catches her eye.

EMAIL MESSAGE

"Dirk came by to see me again. He's still pissed that he got kicked out of the Circle for that concert stunt. I lied and told him I'd put in a good word."

SAM (CONT'D)

Dirk... Dirk... where do I know that name?

She does a Google search. She browses through several articles before finding one of interest.

NEWS HEADLINE

"Musician Dirk Overstreet arrested after drunken brawl at concert."

Sam reads excerpts aloud.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Stopped singing and attacked fans
 in audience... claimed there was a
 secret society controlling
 everything.

She opens a new tab and searches for Dirk Overstreet on a
 concert ticket website.

A concert in Hollywood is listed for that Friday.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Guess I better get my groupie vibe
 on.

EXT. GRUNGY BAR VENUE - NIGHT

Sam waits outside the seedy-looking venue. She is wearing a
 punky outfit - leather jacket and ripped jeans with fishnets
 underneath. A small group of people exit the venue. A YOUNG
 DUDE walks past Sam.

YOUNG DUDE
 Well that guy fucking sucked.

The group walks past Sam, leaving her alone.

Sam looks at her phone, trying to be casual.

DIRK OVERSTREET (30) exits the venue. He is a gaunt-looking
 man with wild hair. He staggers as if drunk.

Sam approaches him.

SAM
 Excuse me, are you Dirk Overstreet?

He eyes her suspiciously.

DIRK
 Who wants to know?

SAM
 I'm Sam. I'm a big fan of yours.

DIRK
 Oh yeah? What's your favorite song?

Sam pauses for a moment.

SAM
 Um, the last one you brought out.

DIRK
(shakes his head)
Fucking posers.

He starts to walk away. Sam grabs his arm.

SAM
Okay, I'll level with you. I'm a
blogger. I'm investigating a secret
society known as the Circle. Heard
you might know something about it.

Dirk's suspicion turns to fear and anger.

DIRK
Who sent you?

SAM
Nobody. Honest. I'm strictly indie.

Dirk looks around to check the coast is clear. Sighs.

DIRK
Okay. Let's go for a drive.

Sam claps her hands in excitement.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A beat-up sportscar screeches out of a parking garage,
scraping the bottom on the ramp.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Sam sits in the passenger seat, notebook out. Dirk's eyes are
on the road as he drives.

SAM
So what do you know about the
Circle?

DIRK
I was a member. Still am, I guess.
But they fucked me over. I used to
be the biggest rock star in the
world. Now I'm nothing.

SAM
No offence, but I don't remember
you being a big rock star.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

The only reason I know your name is that your band did a gig at my college once.

DIRK

That was another life. I brought too much attention to the Circle. So they demoted me.

SAM

That's harsh.

(makes notes)

So how does somebody join the Circle?

DIRK

You have to be invited. And by a member in good standing. So that rules me out.

EXT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

The car runs a red light. A vehicle coming the other way narrowly avoids hitting them. The other driver slams on the horn.

INT. SPORTS CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks alarmed.

SAM

You want to slow down a little?

DIRK

(oblivious)

They think they made me. I could be successful without them. They're the ones holding me back. Someone needs to bring the whole fucking Circle down.

He presses his foot down harder on the accelerator.

SAM

You can drop me off anywhere.

DIRK

(out of breath)

They offer you everything! But there's a price. Not your soul. But every fucking memory! They own it all!

EXT. SPORTS CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car screeches around a corner. Dirk drives into a deserted warehouse district.

INT. SPORTS CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sam sees they are headed for the side of a building.

DIRK

I'll fucking show them I'm the boss
of my own life! I'll show them all!

SAM

Stop the damn car!

Dirk looks over at her and seems to momentarily regain control. He slams on the brake.

SAM (CONT'D)

Here's good.

She opens the door and quickly gets out.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Sam steps away from the car. Behind her is a large warehouse.

Dirk leans over to look out at her.

DIRK

Sure you won't come with me?

SAM

Where?

DIRK

(smiles)
To the next life.

SAM

I'm good, thanks.

DIRK

Suit yourself.

He slams the door. The engine revs.

SAM

Wait!

The car takes off. It heads right towards another warehouse building at full speed.

Sam watches in horror as the car collides with the brick wall.

The entire front of the car crumples. Nobody could have survived.

The car catches fire.

Sam takes out her phone, seems to debate calling 911. Instead she shakes her head and leaves.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam arrives home, looking exhausted. She collapses on the couch.

Her phone beeps. She picks it up and looks at the notification. Swipes to bring up her e-mail.

"Dear Ms. Bergstrom. After careful consideration we have decided not to accept your submission. Please pay close attention to the articles we publish before submitting again."

SAM

Fuck!

She throws her phone down. It beeps again. She looks at it. She has a secure message. She swipes to read it aloud.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

We need to meet in person.

Sam taps on her phone excitedly.

"Where?"

She waits for a response.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)

Call me on this number. Make sure it's a secure line.

Sam writes down the number.

EXT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

Sam walks out of the seedy shop. She pulls a burner phone out of a brown paper bag.

She dials the number that she wrote down. She walks as she listens to the ringing.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The ringing stops. Sam keeps walking. There is silence on the other end.

SAM (INTO PHONE)
 Okay, enough cloak and dagger stuff. I just saw a guy drive his fucking car into a wall. Said he used to be a member of the Circle. So I need to know. Are you for real?

Hythlodæus answers in a similar modulated voice to the spoken text messages.

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)
 Yes.

SAM (INTO PHONE)
 So where are we meeting?

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)
 There's an all-night diner on the corner of Pico and Vermont. Meet me there in 20 minutes.

SAM (INTO PHONE)
 Pico and Vermont? That's like 40 minutes away!

HYTHLODAEUS (V.O.)
 Then drive fast. Don't call this number again. I won't answer.

The line goes dead.

Sam hurries to her car.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Sam rushes into the all-night diner.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

The seedy little diner has seen better days. Paint is peeling off the walls and the decor looks like it hasn't been changed since the 70's.

Sam walks towards the end of the diner. The place is almost empty and none of the patrons make eye contact with her. Finally, she stops at a corner booth.

Sitting in the booth is Mike Cash.

MIKE

Hi. I'm Hythlodæus.

He flashes her his movie star smile. Sam stares, lost for words.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Take a seat.

She sits down opposite him.

SAM

Sorry, you threw me. I had no idea how you pronounced that weird fucking name until you just said it.

He gives a small chuckle.

MIKE

Well I'm glad we can finally meet. In the flesh, so to speak.

A MIDDLE-AGED WAITRESS comes over to them, wearing a half-hearted smile.

MIDDLE-AGED WAITRESS

Evenin'. What can I get you folks?

MIKE

Earl Grey. Milk and two sugars.

SAM

Coffee. Black.

MIDDLE-AGED WAITRESS

You got it.

She walks off. They sit in silence for a moment.

SAM

So, why didn't you just tell me who you were from the start?

MIKE

Would you have believed me?

She shrugs.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Plus, I couldn't be seen to openly help you. And this way is more fun. Wanted to make you work for it.

SAM

Okay, so I worked for it. Now spill the beans. How does the Suicide Circle operate? I know some general stuff but I need specifics.

He laces his fingers together and studies her.

MIKE

First, let me ask you a question. Have you ever wondered why some guys have all the luck? They get all the fame, fortune, power or pussy they want, no effort required. While other people work hard and get nothing in life?

SAM

I don't really waste my time worrying about how much pussy other people get. Sorry to burst your bubble. And as for being rich and famous, who cares? Some people are just lucky. Like you.

MIKE

But what if it's not luck? What if it's all planned?

SAM

By who? The Circle?

Mike pauses as the Waitress brings them their tea and coffee.

MIDDLE-AGED WAITRESS

Get you anything else?

MIKE

We're good.

She exits.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You ever read Robert Louis Stevenson?

SAM

I think so? Treasure Island guy, right? Why, is the Circle a book club?

MIKE

No, but he did write a story called The Suicide Club. It was about a secret society that inspired the founder of our current group. A group that includes athletes, businessmen, authors, Hollywood celebrities, politicians and just about anyone who's achieved tremendous success in their field.

SAM

Let me guess. It's a group people are dying to join?

She laughs, but Mike looks dead serious.

SAM (CONT'D)

How does that work? You don't look very dead to me.

MIKE

I've actually died five times. It's not too bad.

Sam gets up.

SAM

Great story and all, but I really have to run.

MIKE

Sit down. Please.

She snorts derisively, but does as he says.

MIKE (CONT'D)

The Circle controls the world around you. No one achieves true success without our influence, even if they don't realize it.

She stares out the window at the nightlife, trying to take in this crazy story. Then she turns back to him.

SAM

If that's the case, what's with the suicides?

MIKE

Let's just say having ultimate power gets boring quickly.

SAM

Why are you telling me all this bullshit?

MIKE

Because I want you to join the Circle.

Sam laughs.

SAM

Right, you want me to join your all powerful boy's club. I'm sure that will go over well with the patriarchy.

MIKE

I don't care what they think. Every active member is allowed to invite one other person. And I choose you.

SAM

Why would I want it?

MIKE

Do you have any regrets in your life you'd like to fix?

Sam hesitates.

SAM

Well, I do wish I'd got to see David Bowie in concert. Don't think even your Circle could make that happen, though.

MIKE

You'd be surprised. But tell me, what does having control over your life mean for you? Be honest.

She thinks for a moment.

SAM

It would mean my brother not killing himself when he was fourteen. And stopping all the other bad shit happening.

MIKE

The Circle can make that happen.
You just have to want it.

SAM

No amount of wanting can change the
past.

MIKE

Join us, and find out. We know
everything that has happened. And
everything that will happen.

She drinks her coffee.

SAM

Say this is true, then why hasn't
your little club fixed history?
Stopped things like 9/11 happening?
Or that last season of Game of
Thrones?

Mike takes a beat.

MIKE

The President doesn't want to risk
it. Ch--

SAM

You have a President? Nice.

MIKE

Changing your own history is one
thing - that's just dropping tiny
rocks in a vast ocean of time. But
changing world events? There's too
much that can go wrong. What if we
prevented 9/11 and it somehow
triggered a nuclear war? That's why
we agree to only change things we
can easily control.

SAM

And once you join this club, you
gain all that knowledge?

MIKE

Yes. As long as you're a member,
your memories are shared with
everyone else's in a kind of neural
network.

(beat)

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Look, I don't want to pressure you, but you need to decide now. This invitation is very time sensitive.

SAM

Why?

MIKE

I can't say.

SAM

At least tell me why do you want me in the Circle. What do you get out of it?

MIKE

I just like to see people fulfill their dreams.

Sam looks doubtful.

SAM

If I do agree to join, not saying I will, how would I do it?

He looks round to check no one is watching them.

He takes a small case out of his pocket. He slides it across the table to Sam. She opens it and sees a syringe and a vial of blue liquid inside.

MIKE

You inject yourself with that. It will upload all your memories to the neural network. Once it's complete, you go to sleep and then a new life awaits you.

SAM

Will it kill me?

MIKE

Don't think of it as dying. Think of it as being reborn.

SAM

Reborn? It sound like you want me to OD. Fuck that. I don't want my mom finding me that way.

MIKE

It's not OD'ing. Your consciousness simply has to be shut off for you to join the Circle.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

This reality will then be washed away by the next one.

Sam studies the syringe. Smiles.

SAM

I kinda hate injections. Sure you don't have a red pill I can take?

MIKE

Sorry, this is the only effective way.

(beat)

After you take it, I've found that focussing on something in your life you want to change helps the transition.

She drums her fingers on the table.

SAM

This all sounds wonderful, but how can I know you're telling the truth? You have any evidence?

MIKE

Not with me.

SAM

So you give me the offer of a lifetime, but you have nothing to back it up?

Mike scratches his head.

MIKE

Wait, there is one thing. I remember tomorrow night, around 9 p.m. there's gonna be an earthquake. Not a big one, about a 4.5, but you'll definitely feel it.

SAM

That's it? You want me to go home and wait for an earthquake? We have them all the time.

MIKE

It's the best I can do. You feel the shake, you take the injection.

Sam stands up and throws some money on the table.

SAM
You know, you look a lot smaller in
real life.

MIKE
I get that a lot.

She leaves without another word.

MIKE (CONT'D)
See you in the next life.

Sam doesn't hear his last words.

INT. SAM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sam sits at her computer. It is the next evening.

We see she is typing up notes from her conversation with
Mike.

She looks at her watch. It's 9 p.m. No earthquake.

SAM
So much for that story.

Suddenly, the room starts to shake.

Books fall off her shelves.

A framed picture falls off the wall and smashes.

The shaking stops.

Sam closes her laptop and breathes deeply.

SAM (CONT'D)
Fuck me.

DISSOLVE TO:

LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sam sits on the couch, phone in her hand.

SAM
Hi Mom.
(beat)
No, nothing wrong. Just thought I'd
give you a call.
(beat)
I know, I'm sorry.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Work's been crazy lately.

(beat)

I will, I promise.

(beat)

I love you. Bye.

She puts the phone down.

She stares at a picture on the shelf nearby.

It is a portrait of her brother, ART, at age 12. He is smiling but there is a sadness in his eyes.

Sam starts to tear up.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll make things right, Art. I promise.

She takes the case out of her pocket and opens it up.

Takes out the syringe.

Fills it with blue liquid from the vial.

She pulls her sleeve up.

Thumps her arm to get a vein.

She takes a deep breath and then injects the full amount into her vein. She winces at the pain.

Nothing happens at first.

Then her body suddenly jerks as if she is having a seizure.

SAM'S MIND

Neurons and synapses firing.

Images of her early life are superimposed, almost too quick to make them out.

BACK TO SCENE

Sam stops convulsing. The syringe falls from her hand and shatters on the floor.

The room stretches out in front of her like some kind of optical illusion, forming a dark tunnel.

Above her, a GIANT BRAIN appears. It pulsates and crackles with electricity.

Sam reaches for it.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING ROOF - NIGHT

Sam is on the roof of her apartment, teetering on the edge of a ledge.

She wipes tears from her face. The droplets float upwards.

She spreads her arms.

Takes a swan dive off the building.

Sam hurtles towards the ground, a serene expression on her face. Just before she hits the ground she breaks through some kind of invisible barrier.

JUMP CUT TO:

DINER

Sam falls through the roof of the diner and lands on the floor. She is uninjured. She looks up and sees herself talking to Mike the previous night. No one appears to see her.

Suddenly, the floor shifts and she goes sliding towards a wall. She crashes through it.

JUMP CUT TO:

SAM'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Sam smashes through the wall and lands on the floor by the bed. Amy and the Goofy Man are in bed together. Again, they are oblivious to her.

The room flips over so the floor becomes the ceiling. Sam falls towards what was the ceiling and crashes through it.

JUMP CUT TO:

MANSION - HALLWAY

Sam bursts up through the floor. She sees herself from a few days ago walking down the hall.

The hallway suddenly turns vertical. She slides down it before crashing through the window at the end.

JUMP CUT TO:

MCINTOSH ENTERPRISES HEADQUARTERS - EVENT ROOM

Sam flies through the window. Instead of falling, her body sticks to the ceiling.

She looks down at the scene of the suicide. The dried remains of the blood are still there in a circle.

She suddenly falls towards the circle.

Images from even earlier in her life flash by, becoming a blur.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE-IN:

INT. HOSPITAL - DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

BABY SAM is born. A normal, healthy, wailing baby. Her mother, MRS. BERGSTROM (21), cradles her, crying.

SAM'S FATHER (30) watches, smiling.

SUPER: "1991"

FADE OUT.