

TRIDENT

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FADE IN:

INT. SMARTPHONE SCREEN - HALLWAY/BATHROOM - DAY (SILENT)

A handheld SMARTPHONE, aimed at the floor, sneakers stepping in and out of view. A GIRL'S hand holds the phone.

The girl raises the phone to eye-level, the screen filling with a series of PHOTOS as it passes by the THOMPSON FAMILY PICTURE WALL, a photo-collage of family - gets too close to ONE PHOTO so that it's a little blurry.

-- PHOTO: The THOMPSON FAMILY - LELAND (40), white, KADDY (38), Japanese, their DEAF daughter MIA (14) - posing in the parking lot of Journey Community Church after Sunday Service, lots of PARISHIONERS around, activity, big smiles.

The phone pulls away, swings across the hallway, stops at the BATHROOM. The door is open.

Leland fills the screen - very tall, strong body starting to settle into early middle age. Standing at the sink in pajama pants, torso bare. His back is covered in SCARS.

Hot water pours from the faucet, fogging up the mirror. Leland stares into it, dead-still. Then his head moves a fraction - as if he heard someone sneaking up behind him.

He wipes the glass and the faces of Leland and Mia appear in the mirror. He doesn't seem to recognize his daughter, vacant eyes giving her a 1,000 yard, PTSD INDUCED stare.

Mia holds the phone with one hand and waves at her father with the other. There's no discernible reaction from Leland, so she touches the smartphone screen and zooms in on his reflection.

As Leland's face fills the screen in fuzzy digital pixilation, the hot water pouring from the faucet fogs up the mirror, covering his features like he's not even there.

INT. KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - DAY (NORMAL SOUND)

Early morning - a happy birthday balloon with a smiley face floats above a chair, tied with curling ribbon. Leland sits in the chair, his wife Kaida/"Kaddy," by his side.

She is tiny compared to him, blessed with delicate features and eyes that radiate authority and warmth, but there's damage behind them - a camouflaged soul.

Adjacent to Leland is Mia. She's inherited her mother's beauty and the tall gene from her father.

Laptop and tablet on the table. The laptop's background is set to an image of the Navy golden Special Warfare insignia, the SEAL TRIDENT.

Leland looks from wife to daughter.

LELAND

OK... Let's do this. Before it gets any weirder.

He laughs. They laugh - awkward. He slaps his hands, rubs them together.

LELAND (CONT'D)

I'm so excited, ha, ha, ha. Bring it on.

Kaddy gives him a gift, an OLD BOOK. Mia aims a DIGITAL CAMERA at Leland as he brushes his fingers over the title.

LELAND (CONT'D)

Oh... wow.

(beat)

"A sweet and beautiful soul."

Mia snaps a picture - the frozen digital image appears for an instant: Leland's fingers gliding over the book's title, "The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow."

LELAND (CONT'D)

Ralph Waldo Emerson said that.
About Longfellow. At his funeral.

Mia gives him another present.

LELAND (CONT'D)

Oh, man. Another one? Geez.
Luckiest guy in the world.

He opens it. New SMARTWATCH. Slips it on.

LELAND (CONT'D)

Will you look at that? Calling Dick Tracy? Come in, Dick Tracy?

Mia frowns and shrugs: Huh?

KADDY

(speaking and signing)

YOUR DAD IS BEING SILLY.

Leland taps the watch screen.

KADDY (CONT'D)
Babe - Leland - no, soft... gentle.
Pretend it's me.

MIA
(signing)
I HACKED THE WIFI SD CARDS.

LELAND
You... you what?

KADDY
She hacked the WIFI SD cards,
honey.

LELAND
(struggling to sign)
WELL, THEN YOU CAN JUST GO AHEAD
AND... UNHACK...

KADDY
(speaking and signing)
God, you're hopeless. *YOUR FATHER
IS HOPELESS.*

Instead of signing, Mia TYPES on the laptop:

MIA
(typing on laptop)
"NO WORRIES, DAD."

KADDY
Hah. He'll worry one day.

MIA
(typing on laptop)
"YOU CAN JAILBREAK THE PHONES AND I
TETHERED YOUR CAMERA'S EYE-FI!"

KADDY LELAND
Wait. Isn't that bad? Leland? You did what to my camera?
Babe?

Mia rolls her eyes.

MIA
(typing on laptop)
"WATCH."

She SENDS the PHOTO to the devices, they BEEP and it appears on the smartwatch, laptop, and tablet at the same time.

KADDY
(speaking and signing)
OH. THERE. SEE. THAT'S...

MIA
(signing)
COOL.

KADDY
(speaking signing)
NO ONE ELSE CAN DO THIS, RIGHT?

MIA
(typing on laptop)
*"TOTALLY SECURE, MOM. ONLY THE
THREE OF US CAN PHOTO-SHARE LIKE
THIS. YOU'RE GONNA GET A LOT OF
STUFF, BIRTHDAY BOY, ALL DAY LONG
WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, HA!"*

LELAND
(struggling to sign)
I... DON'T. LIKE IT.
(beat)
Dammit.

Leland gives up, dropping his hands and hitting the table hard with them. Mia reacts, tears up.

LELAND (CONT'D)
*Now, hold on - what you did, Mia. I
meant, what you did to the camera,
to the phones, it's...*

Mia pushes away, storms out.

LELAND (CONT'D)
...it's...

KADDY
Stop. Just stop. Let her go.

LELAND
...risky.

KADDY
Well.
(speaking and signing)
*SHE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU
MEANT, DID SHE...? Typical morning
SNAFU in the Thompson Sector. Like
some eggs with that?*

EXT. THOMPSON HOUSE - DAY

DC INNER SUBURB, ARLINGTON, VA - single-story tract house. On the porch, Kaddy adjusting Leland's tie.

KADDY
Got to look like you know what
you're doing.

Mia pushes between them, backpack over her shoulder.

LELAND
Hey! Come on! Really?

She runs to the sidewalk, greets her friend, JILL (14).

MIA
(signing)
LET'S GO, MOM!

KADDY
(speaking and signing)
ONE MINUTE, MIA! HI, JILL.

Jill waves, then she and Mia sign together, talking fast.

KADDY (CONT'D)
Take a breath, big boy. Bigger.
That's what fourteen-year-olds
do...

LELAND
Now you tell me.

KADDY
...when dad screws up. She'll get
over it. Focus. Focus on me.

Kaddy pulls Leland's face toward her. He jerks away.

KADDY (CONT'D)
OK... don't.

She finishes messing with his tie.

KADDY (CONT'D)
There. Now. We can do this. Babe?
Leland...?

LELAND
We can do this.

KADDY
Together.

LELAND (CONT'D)
Together.

KADDY (CONT'D)
Go get 'em, Ace.

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

The Washington Post - busy SEVENTH FLOOR newsroom packed with cubicles, STAFF hustling back and forth.

Leland keeps in step with his assistant editor, CLAYTON JACKSON (55), black, frazzled, got a deadline.

CLAYTON
You're asking and I'm telling.

They pass a REPORTER in a cubicle sucking an unlit cigarette.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
Take that outta your mouth,
Ferguson! Stop asking and do. Do,
do, do.

LELAND
Do what?

CLAYTON
What you're told to do, not what
you're not told to do. And fix your
tie. It's embarrassing. I'm
embarrassed for you. Oh my god.

Clayton skids to a stop, enters the coffee room.

INT. COFFEE ROOM - DAY

He waves Leland in. Pours a coffee.

CLAYTON
How long we known each other, huh?
Ow, damn, that's hot.

LELAND
Long enough.

CLAYTON
To know we got no time for
bullshit, right?

Clayton gives the coffee to Leland.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
Sugar? Cream? Look, you don't owe
me anything.
(MORE)

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
You're doing fine here. I'm glad
you're with us and blah, blah,
blah. So...

Clayton points to a REPORTER sitting in a cubicle in the
newsroom: GEORGE KELLY (35), black, short.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
...kiss that short, arrogant
Canadian's ass and then go home and
forget about it. That's an order,
mister. You understand that?

Leland gives Clayton a casual two-fingered salute. His
smartwatch/smartphone BEEP and a SELFIE of Mia appears.

-- PHOTO: Mia holding a happy birthday sign.

Leland shows Clayton the photo on his watch. They squint at
the small image, so he shifts to his smartphone.

LELAND
Mia jailbreaked, uhhhh - got the
phones - got everything - to do
this.

CLAYTON
Cute and smart. Hoo-boy, are you in
trouble. How you two doing
anyway...? That good, huh?

LELAND
It's -

CLAYTON
Don't say it. Coming from you, it
sounds stupid. Coming from me?
Wise: Anything worth doing is hard.
That's my gift to you. Happy
freakin' birthday, Leland. Now go
to work and leave me alone.

He crosses to the door.

CLAYTON (CONT'D)
Shit. Where's my coffee?

INT. NEWSROOM - DAY

Leland looks out a window, over the edge.

GEORGE
Afraid of heights?

LELAND

Falling.

George laughs.

LELAND (CONT'D)

It's a trigger.

GEORGE

For what?

Leland keeps his mouth shut and smiles.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Uh-huh. And that explains why
you're standing at the edge,
looking down. Sometimes I worry
about you Leland, but not really.
Come on. The children are waiting.

INT. NEWSPAPER MEETING ROOM - DAY

The Capitol can be seen through big picture windows. Interior windows reveal the busy Post newsroom. Wall-mounted TV and a long table with chairs.

George and Leland address five high school INTERNS - taking notes, listening, attentive eager beavers.

GEORGE

OK, so, you all know me: George
Kelly. Who doesn't, eh? But do any
of you know Leland?

Dead silence, blank stares.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He's like you, only older. But
seriously, behind every great
investigative reporter there's
someone like him. Now, as reporters
- as future reporters -

LELAND

It's our job to tell the truth and
let the cards fall where they may.

GEORGE

I was going to say, learn how to
program or be programmed. As
reporters, you better damn well
know how to write code. Don't be a
tool.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Control the technology or it'll sneak up behind you and kick you in the ass. And in case you didn't know, our very own Leland Thompson here starred in "All the President's Men." Take a bow.

LELAND

You have somewhere to go, right?

GEORGE

Don't be fooled. What you're smelling isn't just bullshit. It's unicorn bullshit.

HIGH SCHOOL INTERN

Uh, Mr. Kelly?

GEORGE

Yeah?

HIGH SCHOOL INTERN

What's "All the President's Men"?

Leland's smartwatch/phone BEEP. VIDEO FEED.

KADDY (V.O.)

Live from the supermarket, it's the Mia and Kaddy Birthday Show! What kind of cake you want, babe?

Leland scrambles to mute the phone, the watch, make it stop.

GEORGE

I've got real work to do. I leave you in Leland's capable hands.

EXT. WASHINGTON POST - DAY

George exits the building, Leland chasing after.

LELAND

George! Hey...!

GEORGE

Aw, come on. Didn't the kids wear you out? They were supposed to.

LELAND

This is important.

GEORGE

You know, every time you say that - this is important? - turns out, not so much. But if it'll get you off my ass so that I can eat the best damn hoagie in this town? Alone? Without you? You got from here to the car to pitch it. Go.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

George walks to a convertible sports car.

GEORGE

And the source?

LELAND

She's solid. Inside. Deep.

GEORGE

Inside what? A bagel? Linda Lovelace? God, what's with the code-speak? It's like talking to a cartoon. Guess you guys never leave that shit behind, eh?

LELAND

She's mid-level NSA.

George unlocks the car, swings the door open.

GEORGE

Spying on the citizenry and sexpionage is old news, Leland. No one gives a crap. 'Sides, what's your NSA whistleblower got that none of mine got...? Ah. That's what I thought.

George slides into the car, pulls at the door, but it won't close. Leland holds it.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Let go. I'm hungry.

Leland releases the door. George starts the car.

LELAND

She took a helluva risk. I'm telling you -

GEORGE

You're telling me? You're telling me? What's she got? The smoking gun? Well, let me tell you something, pal, it doesn't exist anymore.

George reverses, then hits the brakes.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I'm regretting this already. Fine. You can pop your cherry. Set it up. Be careful. Be smart. And if this goes anywhere - anywhere - it's mine. We're a team, remember, Woodward and Bernstein, but don't be a douche bag. You work for me.

George hits the gas and drives away, tires squealing.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leland rifles through dresser drawers, smartwatch on.

LELAND

Kaddy...? Seen my recorder? Was here... somewhere...

A big FAMILY BIBLE and his new copy of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poetry sit on the dresser-top. Smartphone and digital camera on the bedside table. Kaddy in the bathroom.

LELAND (CONT'D)

Got a... meeting tomorrow. George's given me an opportunity. Can't screw this up. Kaddy!

KADDY (V.O.)

Don't yell at me. Top left drawer.

LELAND

Batteries?

KADDY (V.O.)

Bedside table. Turn the lights off.

LELAND

Bedside...? Which bedside, honey - what?

KADDY (V.O.)

Lights. Turn off the lights.

LELAND
But, sweetie, come on.

KADDY (V.O.)
Lights!

Leland hits the switch, sits on the bed.

Kaddy steps out of the bathroom in a Gartered Teddy covered in flashing LED lights that spell HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Wearing SIX INCH STILETTO HEELS, a burning SPARKLER in hand.

LELAND
Wow...

KADDY
What...?

LELAND
Nothing. Just, wow.

KADDY
Too much? It's too much, isn't it?

LELAND
No. Wow means wow. I *am* the luckiest guy in the world.

She takes slow, deliberate steps, singing "Happy Birthday" like a drugged up Marilyn Monroe.

KADDY
Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, Mr. President...

Stumbles, loses her balance, almost falls over.

KADDY (CONT'D)
Oh! ...happy birthday to you.

The sparkler burns out with a smoky fizzle.

KADDY (CONT'D)
That... wasn't easy. Want a piece of cake, Mr. President?

Leland quotes President John F. Kennedy, imitating his voice.

LELAND
"My fellow Americans, ask not what your Kaddy can do for you, ask what you can do for your Kaddy."

KADDY

I love it when you talk JFK to me.

Kaddy straddles Leland. They kiss and then... Leland's smartwatch and smartphone BEEP! The cheesy 1981 New Wave song "Happy Birthday" by Altered Images plays from the devices. He struggles with the phone. Kaddy goes for the smartwatch.

KADDY (CONT'D)

This... was a bad idea.

She pulls it from his wrist.

KADDY (CONT'D)

Oooh... look.

She shows Leland the smartwatch screen.

-- PHOTO: Mia holding a sign that says "CELEBRATE!"

KADDY (CONT'D)

She loves you. We love you. God. So much. And we know it isn't easy - did you take your meds? Today? Babe?

Kaddy stretches to Leland's bedside table, opens the drawer and pulls out a prescription bottle.

LELAND

No, I did not take my selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor today.

She shows him the bottle.

KADDY

This is not a joke. How are we going to make this work if you don't take your meds?

LELAND

Sexual union between a male and female involving insertion of the penis into the vagina? Maybe?

KADDY

I need you here. I need you present.

LELAND

Maybe not.

KADDY

Mia needs you. She'll be eighteen in four years. Four. I don't know where you go when you go away, but you cannot afford to not be here, do you understand me?

(beat)

And it's time to bone up on your signing skills, babe. 'Cause, let's face it. You suck. I'm serious. It's embarrassing, and shameful.

(beat)

But you're off the hook tonight. Only because it's your birthday.

She kisses him once, twice, three times...

KADDY (CONT'D)

You better start practicing, mister. And I will be testing you.

LELAND

Did you say bone up?

KADDY

Leland.

LELAND

I think I can do that.

They kiss and embrace.

INT./EXT. LELAND'S CAR - DAY

WASHINGTON DC - summer day, gathering STORM CLOUDS in the distance.

Leland's beat-up compact is stuck in traffic. Smartwatch on his wrist, digital recorder and camera on the passenger seat, the WASHINGTON MONUMENT visible through the cracked windshield. He grips the wheel, keyed up.

BANG!

Backfire from a nearby car. Leland overreacts, PTSD hitting hard: Shaking, sweating, shortness of breath. He fights it. Traffic starts moving. HONK! Car behind him.

HONK! HONK! HONK!

EXT. WASHINGTON MONUMENT - DAY

Leland stands at the entrance, looking up. The back of his shirt is soaked with sweat.

LELAND
Opportunity. It's an opportunity.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

Elevator doors open, TOURISTS pile out, Leland the last to exit. He sees the whistleblower: SUSANNAH FIELDING (35), staring out the north window at the White House.

Her body is silhouetted by the outdoor light, a sensual outline. Leland can't help but notice, then averts his eyes.

He crosses to her, stops by her side, shoulder to shoulder - she's almost as tall he is. He follows her gaze out the window, reacts by shutting his eyes tight and letting out a long, controlled breath. Her eyes stay on the White House.

SUSANNAH
Sorry. This just seemed right
somehow. For me. Not you. I'm such
a selfish bitch.

She reaches for his hand. He pulls away.

LELAND
All right, Susannah. What do I need
to know?

They focus on the White House. Storm clouds are sinking over the city.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Leland and Susannah ride the elevator down, surrounded by TOURISTS and a TOUR GUIDE. Her eyes on him. He looks hard at the floor.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

Windy. An eerie orange twilight hangs over the city.

Leland and Susannah walk toward the intersection at 15th Street and Jefferson, the Monument and clumps of TOURISTS in the background. Some of them check for rain.

An INTENSE MAN (30s) follows close behind - acting like a tourist. Unconvincing, close shaved haircut, ear plug.

INT. CAMERA LENS - DAY

A high-powered ZOOM LENS/CAMERA takes multiple photos - snap, snap, snap! - of Leland and Susannah walking to the intersection.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

Leland and Susannah reach the intersection. Heavy traffic, noisy street.

LELAND
Susannah, I can't promise -

SUSANNAH
Don't.

She silences him by touching his lips with a fingertip.

INT. CAMERA LENS - DAY

The camera takes a series of shots - snap, snap, snap! - of Susannah with her finger to Leland's lips.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

Leland moves Susannah's hand away. Tourists and the intense man assemble behind them.

LELAND
George'll give you a platform, the
Post will back him up, but if this
goes live...

SUSANNAH
It doesn't matter, Leland.

LELAND
If your identity is discovered...

SUSANNAH
It won't be. I'm no hero.

LELAND
I will do everything in my power to
protect you.

SUSANNAH
Do I have your word?

Susannah gives Leland a THUMB DRIVE encased in metal.

INT. CAMERA LENS - DAY

The camera lens zooms in on the drive.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

SUSANNAH
Do what I can't, Leland.

The intense man touches his ear, steps forward, knocking into Susannah. He tries to snag the drive. Leland goes into action - pure instinct and training. He pushes Susannah away and bends the intense man's wrist.

The man CRIES OUT. A nanosecond passes as they size one another up. Then: A sudden blur of rapid punches, forearm blocks and kicks, the two men going at one another like MMA cage fighters.

Tourists scream and scatter.

It's brutal, punches crazy-fast, expert, lethal. Over almost as soon as it began:

The intense man lays a hook to Leland's ear, knocking him toward the Mall. But Leland kicks out, a powerful rib shattering Muay Thai front-kick, launching the man off the curb and...

...into a bus, his body pulled beneath the tires. Vehicles hit the brakes and collide - SCREECH OF TIRES, CRUNCH OF METAL, SHATTERED GLASS - a pile-up in the intersection.

Sudden SILENCE - Leland stunned by the punch. Blood flows from an ear. He shakes his head to get his wits back.

A HIGH PITCHED BUZZING SOUND drowns out everything - BZZZZZZZ! Leland reacts to the sound.

Susannah breaks into a run. BZZZZZZZ!

The buzzing fades and NORMAL SOUND RETURNS: Shrieks, distant emergency sirens, a crack of thunder.

Leland looks for Susannah, locates her beyond the carnage, running for her life.

EXT. 15TH STREET - DAY

Susannah runs across 15th Street.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

LELAND

Susannah! Stop! Come ba...

Leland falls to a knee, reeling from the blow. The impending PTSD episode hits hard and he fights for control. He opens his hand, the thumb drive quivering in his palm, then he closes his fist around it.

EXT. NATIONAL MALL - DAY

A blonde haired WOMAN looks through a CAMERA VIEWFINDER.

INT. CAMERA LENS - DAY

Focused on Leland, kneeling, fist held out and trembling. The lens pans over the crowd. Locates Susannah. On the run.

EXT. NATIONAL MALL - DAY

The woman lowers the camera, showing her face for the first time: ANGELIKA KRUGER (30), white, German, soulless blue eyes that reveal an ice pick heart.

EXT. SMALL PARK/JEFFERSON DRIVE

Beyond the chaos at the intersection, Susannah runs by a small park on Jefferson Drive, about to cross the intersection at 14th.

EXT. NATIONAL MALL - DAY

Angelika gives the camera to a MAN next to her: OSKAR ADLER (30s), white, German, face carved out of fractured granite, wearing an ear plug. She SPRINTS toward Leland.

OSKAR

Angelika!

EXT. MALL/INTERSECTION - DAY

Angelika runs hard and fast, fists pumping like an Olympian sprinter, closing in on the intersection, eyes on Leland.

He sees her coming.

Their EYES CONNECT - total lock-on - and in return she gives him a lethal, sardonic smile.

But she blows past Leland and the crowd, running straight to a black Mercedes-Benz G class SUV caught in the snarl of vehicles, engine running.

She throws the DRIVER out, jumps in. The SUV lurches forward.

A jumble of vehicles block Angelika's way, so she drives onto the sidewalk and PLOWS through a group of gawking SPECTATORS. They fly in the air like bowling pins. A body hits the windshield, shattering the safety glass.

Angelika turns the SUV in Susannah's direction, bounces over the median, gives it gas. Clear path to Susannah. The vehicle takes off. Leland chases after.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Susannah runs down Jefferson Street, the United States Department of Agriculture building on her right.

She passes two American flags displayed in front of the building and in that moment the flags droop - instantaneous, pre-storm calm.

ROAR of the SUV's engine - coming for Susannah! She looks over her shoulder. Pure terror, a wild animal on the run. The SUV is almost on her and she's got nowhere to go.

The SUV knocks into a parked car right behind her, Angelika behind the wheel, and not far behind, Leland in pursuit.

The engine revs. The SUV accelerates. Susannah turns and extends an arm like a traffic cop, as if she can stop 5,700 pounds of supercharged steel. The SUV RAMS INTO HER.

INT. SUV - DAY

Angelika LAUGHS as she DRIVES OVER Susannah.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The black SUV speeds away as Susannah's bloodstained body rolls and then comes to a stop - on her back, face looking up at the stormy sky. Leland in the distance, running toward her - reacting.

THUNDERCLAP!

A single drop of rain falls on one of Susannah's eyeballs, then drips down a cheek like a tear. Another drop, another - and then the rain falls, Susannah unblinking, unmoving, dead.