

TV
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BVG
BLACKSTAR VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

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TEASER

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. CORPORATE OFFICE - EVENING

A very swanky, open-plan third floor office, clearly within the corporate sector - clean, tidy, newly furnished and decorated but nothing in the way of soul.

WASHINGTON D.C

7:37PM

We pan across toward a cluttered CONFERENCE TABLE towards the far end, where we see four slick-haired, early-mid 30's CORPORATE SUITS are eating Chinese while chatting casually.

Strewn about the table, amidst the cartons of food, are papers and files - these guys are kicking back after a meeting that's dragged on.

SUIT #1

(in the middle of a tale)

So Gottlieb eventually turns up, after making the entire wedding party wait for well over twenty minutes. And what is he wearing?

SUIT #3

His girlfriend?

Suits #2 and #4 - the latter we'll come to know as GORDON WALTERS - laugh as they tuck in.

WALTERS

Well, we all know she drapes herself over anything.

Suit #3 laughs suggestively, while a smiling Suit #1 is still waiting for quiet.

SUIT #1

He's wearing the most hideous suit you can possibly imagine. Everyone else is decked out in Armani, but this guy...

SUIT #2

Cheap knockoff?

SUIT #1

Let's just say, it was less Armani, more Sergio Giorgini or some other Italian riff you'd find in some bargain basement tailors.

Suit #1 scoffs as the others chuckle, while ravenously eating far too much food than necessary for four guys.

SUIT #3

That's what the market can do to people. Gottlieb was one of the unlucky ones.

WALTERS

(laughs)

The guy wasn't unlucky, Rob, he was stupid. He played the stocks, went for broke, but bet on the wrong horse.

(shakes his head)

Guy just didn't have what it takes to survive this cut throat world.

SUIT #2

C'mon, guys, let's try not to get too overconfident.

(beat)

I mean, what happened to Gottlieb could happen to any one of us.

SUIT #1

Not according to Gordon.

The others chuckle as the conversation focuses on Walters - who's pretty much the smuggest of a smug bunch.

WALTERS

(grins)

Like I said, it's about knowing how to play the system.

(eats a quick rice mouthful)

Us guys. We're pros. We know how to survive this world. Gottlieb? He was plankton in a shark tank.

SUIT #3

What does that make you? A piranha?

The suits laugh, but Walters is unaffected by the banter.

WALTERS

We all came off well from Gottlieb's mistake. He pretty much lost everything, but we made almost twice as much over. One man's loss is another man's gain.

(MORE)

WALTERS (CONT'D)

(smug smile)

And I don't intend to stop gaining
until I'm in a wooden box.

Some of the Suits clearly don't entirely agree with his philosophy as Walters finishes his carton and stands - grabbing his jacket and putting it on.

But they laugh along - not disagreeing enough to pick him up on it.

WALTERS (CONT'D)

And on that note, gentlemen, I'll
leave you to your Asian persuasion.
I got a date with that new jacuzzi
I had fitted last weekend.

(mocking)

Oh, did I mention that?

SUIT #2

Get outta here!

SUIT #3

Choke on it!

Walters laughs as he grabs his sleek grey BRIEFCASE and makes for the lift happily, at which point we CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

The view of a tall set of very plush apartments angling alongside the Potomac - only affordable by the upwardly mobile.

8:19PM

An ostentatious red PORSCHE drives up at speed towards the gates into the underground block parking garage.

Inside is Walters - who swipes a KEYCARD into a machine near the gates, at which point they electronically open quite slowly.

He soon drives in and down underneath, the gates slowly beginning to retract.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Speeding through, the Porsche eventually comes to rest in a reserved space not far from a LIFT.

Walters exits the car and locks it with a quick BEEP on a keychain - walking towards the lift.

As he moves, we begin to PAN up behind him - cutting out from the shadows and with increasing speed towards his back - a slight crescendo of music building.

Walters reaches the lift, and presses for it - he waits as we stalk up behind him with increasing speed.

And...stop.

The lift doors open and Walters calmly gets inside, turning as he presses to go up. The doors close on him, and us.

INT. WALTERS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

A spacious bachelor pad, replete with balcony windows looking out to the Potomac river, equipped with plenty of mod-cons but no warmth or soul. Much like the office we saw earlier.

The door is unlocked and Walters enters - looking without a care in the world - and throws his keys into a BOWL on the table by the door.

Moving in, he grabs a TV remote and activates the TV - starting to flick through the endless midnumbing channels that make up US TV.

But he stops, suddenly remembering something.

WALTERS
(sighs)
Damn it! Briefcase!

Throwing the remote on the leather couch, Walters grabs his keys and heads back out, slamming the door as he leaves.

The plasma-screen TV blares out a live BASKETBALL game, as we CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE

The lift doors open and an irritated-looking Walters strides out, heading for his car - which he unlocks with his automated keychain.

He opens the passenger side of the Porsche and reaches in - the briefcase is on the back seat.

Again, we PAN in towards Walters' back as he fumbles in his car. He eventually finishes, pulling out with the case and shutting the door.

Walters locks up the car with beep and turns, just as:

A MALE HAND

thrusts into his neck, pinning him against the car. Walters, terrified, chokes as an unseen FIGURE pins him.

We pan down and see, in the shadowy Figure's other hand, a large grey serrated BLADE is held tight.

It vanishes as the Figure drags the choking Walters swiftly into the shadows, at which point we...

CUT TO:

A computer screen as an Internet Explorer browser appears.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

An average, modern-day bedroom in any suburban house - bed, closets, cabinets, and a unit containing a home personal COMPUTER.

10.02PM

Sitting at the computer now, in her nightdress, is COLLEEN AUBREY (50's) - an unremarkable housewife.

Colleen types at the keyboard in a Google BROWSER, and soon brings up an Internet AUCTION SITE, one of the many out there.

This is called 'eBid'.

DANIEL (O.S.)
(calling from downstairs)
Honey, are you coming down? It's just about to start.

COLLEEN
(a little irritated)
Gimme five minutes.

Ignoring her husband's calls, Colleen goes back to the screen - beginning to type into the search bar 'NEW AND USED VACUUMS'.

When, suddenly, a sparkly BOX MESSAGE pops up in front of her. Colleen, curious, leans in to read. It says:

'CONGRATULATIONS! YOU ARE THE PRIVILEGED WINNER OF LOT 1013. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR SPECIAL PRIZE?'

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
(chuckles)
Lot ten thirteen?

An option of 'Yes' or 'No' is at the bottom of the message box.

Colleen smiles a little as she moves the mouse and presses 'Yes'.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
(shrugs)
What the hell?

A beat. The box message disappears.

Another beat. Colleen waits, putting on a pair of GLASSES as she leans in again for a closer look.

The screen slowly but surely begins to REFRESH, bringing up a new page that overlays the main eBid website.

We begin to see it's a scanned PHOTOGRAPH image.

And as the page refreshes down, before a dark background, the top of a MAN'S HEAD begins to appear...followed by leathery skin and eyes rolled BACK.

Colleen gasps, jumping back from her chair, as the screen fully refreshes - showing us the bloodied, newly-severed head of Gordon Walters, lying on top of a SCANNER.

It's off Colleen's shrieking scream of terror in the background as we focus in on the gruesome sight, that we...

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

GO TO MAIN
TITLES

MILLENNIUM

"THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE"

starring

Lance Henriksen

James Badge Dale

created by

Chris Carter

Guest Starring

Michael Emerson

Wendy Crewson

Gillian Barber

Dan Butler

Paul Raskin

Theme by

Mark Snow

Art Director

JT Vaughn

Co-Producer

Angelo Shrine

Producer

Brendan M. Leonard

Producer

Jeremy Daniels

Written by

Anthony J. Black

ACT ONE

Over BLACK we SUPERIMPOSE:

"The love of money is the root of all evil."

-- Timothy, 6:10

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

Grey clouds cast over a reasonably busy Washington freeway, we focusing on a HIRE CAR which drives vertically in our elevated direction - passing underneath our view.

INT. HIRE CAR

We cut to the sight of a police photo image of Walters' severed head inside a file folder, images being observed carefully by someone riding shotgun.

LOCKE (O.S)

Victim's name was Gordon Walters.
Worked out of the New York Stock
Exchange as a broker.

The someone observing the images is FRANK BLACK, sitting very focused as he reads and listens to BRAD LOCKE, who drives the car.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Seems Walters had made a sizeable fortune from the market over the past few years. Affluent. No debts beyond the usual credit cards. Didn't exactly have friends given the work he was in, but had no significant enemies either.

(beat; Frank nods)

Last seen with several colleagues earlier that night. All have alibis, none fit the profile. They're not under suspicion.

FRANK

Where did the image come from?

LOCKE

Just after ten, not long after we think Walters went missing, a woman named Colleen Aubrey was surfing the Net on eBid.

FRANK

(looks at him)
eBid?

LOCKE

(beat; shrugs)
What do I tell ya? These online auction sites all look the same to me.

(beat)

When she logged on, Mrs Aubrey received a message informing her she'd won something she didn't even bid for. Turned out to be the worst kind of surprise when Walters' head popped up on her desktop.

Focused, Frank looks closer at the severed head image as his fingers touch it.

FRANK'S INTERNAL POV:

- The serrated blade.
- SLASH!
- Walters screaming!
- SLASH! BLOOD!
- A scream over tumbling money!
- SLASH!

RESUME SCENE

Frank reels from the disturbing images he's just seen.

FRANK

Has the head or the rest of Walters' body been found?

LOCKE

Not yet.

FRANK

(studies the images)
It won't be.
(beat; Locke glances at him)
The killer was clean. Methodical. The rest of the body has no significance for him. The head is a trophy. Symbolic. A declaration. That's why it ended up on the auction site.

LOCKE
Symbolic of what? What's he trying
to declare?

FRANK
(shakes his head)
I don't know yet. I think that'll
come clear once we know more about
the victim.

Locke nods a little - accepting Frank's wisdom as they drive
on and we CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MORNING

The hire car pulls into a vacant spot outside a large, almost
ostentatious modern office complex.

eBID HEADQUARTERS

Frank and Locke emerge from their car and exchange a glance
as they observe the building, before heading inside.

INT. RECEPTION LOBBY - eBID

The sparkling reception lobby, a paean to style over substance
mixed with a tacky ode to classical, is entered by Frank and
Locke.

They begin to approach the reception desk, but a sharp-suited
employee approaches them - his name is RICHARDSON (late 20's)

RICHARDSON
(to Frank)
Good morning. Detective Locke?

FRANK
(motions toward Locke)
Ah...

LOCKE
(draws and shows his
police badge)
That'd be me.

RICHARDSON
(smiles)
Excuse me. You sounded older on the
phone.

Locke looks toward Frank a little darkly upon hearing this.
Frank doesn't take the bait.

LOCKE
This is Frank Black. He's a
consultant with Washington PD.

RICHARDSON
(shaking both their hands)
Arvin Richardson. I'm special
assistant to the executive partners
here at eBid.
(beckons toward the
stairs)
Please...

Richardson heads off up the stairs, Frank and Locke following.

INT. eBID OFFICES

The staircase gives way to open plan offices - much like the corporate ones from the teaser - where rows of drone EMPLOYEES sit at computers ensuring eBid runs like clockwork.

Richardson walks before Frank and Locke, both taking the place in as they follow.

RICHARDSON (CONT'D)
I'd just like to say, for the record, how appalled and horrified we are at the discovery made last night. To think our company is being exploited for such criminal activity is abhorrent, and eBid intends to cooperate completely with law enforcement on this matter.

LOCKE
Good.
(beat; deadpan)
Last thing you want is bad public relations.

Locke glances at Frank with a slightly raised eyebrow, and though Frank can see through Richardson's BS, he doesn't comment.

INT. RICHARDSON'S OFFICE

A fairly expansive sub-office within the eBid hub of activity and computer systems, Richardson entering and powering up his computer system as Frank and Locke watch.

FRANK
Has the severed head lot been removed from the website?

RICHARDSON
(nods)
We removed it the moment we were informed of it's presence by Mrs Aubrey.
(MORE)

RICHARDSON (CONT'D)

Who, incidentally, has been offered counselling at eBid's expense.

LOCKE

Did anyone else see the image?

RICHARDSON

Not to our knowledge. It appears to have been directed solely at Mrs Aubrey's ISP.

FRANK

It was. He targeted her specifically.

LOCKE

(looks at Frank)

In order to get access to ISP's through the eBid site, he'd have to some kind of account or proxy with the site.

Frank nods and Locke turns to Richardson.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

We're going to need all records and information about the account that image was sent from.

RICHARDSON

I'll get you everything you need.

The computer then fully finishes loading and Richardson gets to work on the eBid system, as Frank and Locke wait for results, and we CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - AUBREY RESIDENCE - MORNING

The clasped, still nervy hands of Colleen Aubrey - panning up to show her face as she sits listening to someone before her.

COUNSELOR (O.S)

(mid-spiel)

We understand how difficult a time this must be for you right now, Mrs Aubrey. Witnessing such a horrific image, it can't have been easy.

We see Colleen sitting on a chair in her homely, fair-sized lounge - a sympathetic yet still oddly corporate COUNSELOR sitting opposite. She hasn't removed her coat - she fully intends her visit to be brief.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

eBid just wants you to know, Colleen, that you are not alone in this. We like to think of our customers as family.

(MORE)

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

And we respond accordingly when a member of that family needs our help.

COLLEEN

(politely)

That's very nice.

COUNSELOR

If you want to talk about the experience, in the strictest of confidence, we are here.

Colleen nods a little - she's clearly a fairly weak woman who could do with a listening ear - but she snaps up when both she and the Counselor hear the front door SLAM shut.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Honey, it's me. Where are you? Are you o---

Her husband, DANIEL AUBREY (50's), enters the lounge and stops - he's a fairly small, balding guy, but one possessing strength and confidence. He frowns upon seeing the Counselor.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Colleen, who is this?

COUNSELOR

(stands, before Colleen can respond)

Mr Aubrey, I represent eBid. I stopped by to offer counselling services for your wife in case she needs to talk---

DANIEL

She won't be needing your services, thank you. I'm here - she can talk to me.

The Counselor glances at Colleen, who nods with a smile - though she clearly just wants to keep the peace with Daniel.

COUNSELOR

Remember what I said, Mrs Aubrey. I'll see myself out.

Grabbing her bag, the Counselor makes for the door, passing the still-frowning Daniel as she goes.

Once the front door seals shut, Colleen looks up towards Daniel as he paces over to her.

COLLEEN

I'm sorry, Daniel. I told her I didn't need outside help, but she just kept---

DANIEL
(sits by her)
Hey, hey! It's okay.
(smiles disarmingly)
But we don't need anyone else
interfering in our lives. We have
each other.

COLLEEN
(nods)
Maybe, though...
(sighs)
Maybe I do need...to talk about
what happened...

DANIEL
(holds her hands in his)
What happened, honey, was
horrifying. I know. The kind of
thing no human being should have to
see.
(beat)
But you can get past it. The police
will find whoever did this and
justice will be done. You can't let
this turn you into a nervous wreck.

COLLEEN
I just---

DANIEL
(cuts her off)
Tell you what. Let me cook dinner
tonight. I'll make us something
special. And we can put all this
horror in the past. Where it
belongs.

On that, Daniel kisses his wife briefly on the lips and heads
off to make dinner preparations - leaving an unsatisfied,
nervous Colleen with a look of anguish as we CUT TO:

INT. RICHARDSON'S OFFICE - eBID - AFTERNOON

The desk is now occupied on the computer side by Locke - who
sits accessing the purchase accounts - while Frank sits
opposite going through paper trails.

Richardson, thankfully, has left.

LOCKE
(frowning)
News travels fast on the Net. After
Colleen Aubrey received the head
image, servers were picking it up
on other networks. People were
finding out a severed head was
being sold online.
(MORE)

LOCKE (CONT'D)

(shakes his head)

There was a disturbing amount of bids coming in before eBid removed the lot. Who would want such a thing?

FRANK

The world we live in today, Brad, is one of intense voyeurism. Nothing is sacrosanct, or private. Not even death.

LOCKE

(beat; ponders)

Maybe we should check out all these bidders. Could take a while given the number, but I could ask Danner for extra firepower.

FRANK

(shakes his head)

Don't bother. The killer isn't one of, or concerned with the bidders. If he were, he would have put the head up for general bid.

(beat)

He sent the image to Mrs Aubrey for a reason.

LOCKE

But what reason? Before we left this morning, I did some background and found no evidence connecting her to Walters. There was no significance in who's head it was for her.

FRANK

(ponders)

Maybe that's the point?

Locke looks at Frank for further explanation, as Frank begins getting up from his seat.

A distraction comes for Locke when his computer search BEEPS. He checks it.

LOCKE

Looks like we might have an ISP for the account behind the image. With that, we can get an address.

Locke, on instinct, picks up the desk phone.

FRANK

(heading for the door)

You should check it out.

LOCKE

What are you doing?

FRANK

(stops by the door)

I told you I'd understand what the killer wants when I got to know the victim.

(Locke nods, remembering)

Well, there's more than one victim here. And one of them is still alive.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - AUBREY RESIDENCE - EVENING

Colleen, as she sits upstairs on her bed, staring at the shut off computer system in the corner - clearly reliving the horrifying experience in her mind.

DANIEL (V.O.)

(from downstairs)

Colleen? Dinner is almost ready.

COLLEEN

(shouts back)

I'll be right down.

It's night now, darkness pouring through the nearby windows - until car HEADLIGHTS cast illumination through.

Colleen approaches the window and sees the hire car coming to a halt in the driveway - and Frank stepping out, approaching and knocking the door.

Curious, Colleen approaches the bedroom door as she hears the door open.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Can I help you?

FRANK (V.O.)

Mr Aubrey, my name is Frank Black. I work with the Washington police department.

(beat)

I was wondering if I could speak to your wife.

Hearing this, Colleen reacts - with both fear and hope.

INT. DOORWAY

We see a frowning Daniel, cooking towel draped over his shoulder, facing Frank as he stands at the door.

DANIEL

Don't you people think my wife has gone through enough? If it's not police, it's psychologists!

(beat)

We don't need anyone's he---

COLLEEN (O.S.)

I do.

Daniel turns - to see Colleen now hovering at the bottom of the stairs, looking at Frank.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)

I'd like to hear what Mr Black has to say.

A little embarrassed, and frustrated, Daniel looks away as Colleen smiles a little at Frank.

INT. LOUNGE

Sitting in the same seat as earlier, Colleen faces Frank - who sits where the counselor did. Daniel sits on a chair across the lounge, sulking.

We slowly pan in towards Colleen as she speaks.

COLLEEN

(describing her experience)

I was looking for a new hoover. The one I've got, I've had for years, it was time for a change. I'd used eBid before. I thought I knew what I was getting.

(beat)

Then I get this message telling me I'm a winner and do I want to accept my prize. Anyone would press 'yes' with these things, so I did. And...that's when I saw it. The...head...

(weeping)

This person...dead...on my screen. I didn't know who, or why...it just was...

FRANK

His name was Gordon Walters. He was a stockbroker.

(softly)

According to our records, neither yourself or your husband had any connection to him. Is that right?

COLLEEN

I'd never seen him before.
(beat; looks at Daniel)
And Daniel, he's...he's a charity
worker on fundraising projects.
He's not involved with the stock
market.

Frank glances at Daniel - who's look confirms what she's
saying, but he's still not happy about all this.

At that moment, Frank's mobile rings.

FRANK

Excuse me for a moment.

The tearful Colleen nods as Frank gets up and answers his
phone, moving away slightly.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(into phone)
Frank Black.

LOCKE (V.O.)

It's Brad. We got lucky.

CUT TO:

INT. SQUAD CAR - EVENING

We find Locke now riding shotgun in a WPD squad car heading
down a highway at speed, flanked by several OFFICERS.

LOCKE

The account checked out, gave us an
ISP. We've tracked it to an address
in Arlington. I'm heading there
now. SWAT are on their way.

(beat)

Play our cards right, we could have
this guy and be home in time for
Jeopardy.

FRANK (V.O.)

(frowns)

He wouldn't be this sloppy, Brad.
He's left nothing to chance so far.
He'd only let us find him if he
wanted to be found.

LOCKE

You're saying we're looking in the
wrong place?

CUT TO:

INT. LOUNGE - AUBREY RESIDENCE

As before. Frank standing, framed by the sitting Aubrey's.

LOCKE (V.O.)
Then where should we be looking,
Frank?

FRANK
Colleen Aubrey.
(beat; serious)
The next victim.

Frank turns and ominously looks at Colleen - who glances back at him worriedly, while sitting apart from the stone-faced Daniel, as we CUT TO:

EXT. BUSHES - AUBREY RESIDENCE

A large amount of overgrown shrubbery covers a shadowy Figure who appears, watching the rear of the Aubrey household.

Panning down, we see the Figure holding a clean serrated BLADE in his hand. It's the KILLER - and as he glides out of view, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. DINGY FLAT - NIGHT

BAM!

The door is bashed through by a police battering ram, at which point half a dozen armed SWAT OFFICERS burst through the smashed door.

SWAT COMMANDER
WPD!! GET ON THE FLOOR!!!

As the SWAT rush in, Locke appears behind - wearing a black protective vest over his shirt, gun safely clasped in his hands.

Moving through the flat, it is soon revealed as a small, dingy hole - bereft almost entirely of light, closed curtains encasing a mess of scattered clothing, food and DVD's.

Locke sees at the centre of all this stale mess - quite an array of computer systems, complete with gadgets and gizmos. A SCANNER, among them.

He finds the SWAT guys cuffing a GEEK on the floor.

GEEK
What's going on?! I didn't DO
nothin!

LOCKE
(beat)
Get him out of here.

The SWAT team drag the stunned, fearful Geek onto his feet and begin carting him out of the flat.

Locke watches them go, a pang of doubt they've got the right guy on his face, as we CUT TO:

EXT. AUBREY RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A fairly discreet WPD SQUAD CAR pulls to a stop outside the Aubrey house on the street - two OFFICERS stepping out and approaching the front door, as we see it open.

INT. DOORWAY

Frank opens the door, revealing the two Officers approaching as a concerned Colleen stands behind him.

COLLEEN
What's going on?

FRANK

I asked this detail here for your protection, Mrs Aubrey. I've arranged to them to mount round the clock surveillance of the house.

COLLEEN

(concerned)

Why? You don't...you don't think whoever killed that man would come--

FRANK

Mrs Aubrey, I won't lie to you. I believe your life may very well be in danger from whoever sent you the image of Gordon Walters' severed head. This killer could be targeting you.

COLLEEN

(horrified)

But...why?!

FRANK

(frowns)

I don't know yet.

(beat)

But I would suggest, for your own safety, you not leave your house until we have this man in custody.

Colleen looks horrified - shattered - by this revelation.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I have to go. But I'll be back in the morning to check everything's okay.

On that, Frank begins to depart.

COLLEEN

Mr Black.

(Frank stops; turns)

Thank you for being honest.

With a hint of a smile, Frank nods and continues on - briefing the Officers as he goes, who follow him.

Colleen shuts the door on the outside world.

INT. LOUNGE

Walking slowly into the lounge, Colleen looks somewhat in shock - not looking at Daniel as he sits where he sat before, having heard everything.

DANIEL

You don't seriously believe this?

COLLEEN
(looks at him)
What?

DANIEL
This. This insane suggestion your
life is in danger.

COLLEEN
How is it insane? There's a killer
out there! Someone taking people's
heads. That's real!

DANIEL
(gets up suddenly)
And it has NOTHING to do with us!
(beat)
You said yourself - we didn't know
the guy who was murdered. It makes
no sense for anyone to come after
you, not without reason.

COLLEEN
There's always a reason, Daniel.

Looking exhausted at events, Colleen sits down.

COLLEEN (CONT'D)
And whatever it is, Mr Black and
the police will find it.

DANIEL
(laughs)
That's exactly the problem! We
don't need these damn cops!
(sighs)
Do these people not think I can
take care of you? That I can't
protect my own wife?!

COLLEEN
This isn't about YOU!
(frustrated)
And what IS it about cops being
around you hate so much, Daniel?!
Is there something YOU'RE failing
to mention?!

This really annoys Daniel - and he backs away.

DANIEL
Fine! You stay here, let Columbo
and his boys protect you!

He begins heading off towards the back of the lounge, the
access room to the garage.

COLLEEN

(sighs)

Daniel, stop!

DANIEL

(turns)

No! You've made it pretty clear you don't trust me to take care of you. So there's no point me being here.

(nods toward kitchen)

Dinner is in the oven. Lasagne - your favourite.

And with that, Daniel is gone - leaving Colleen, a little in tears over everything, to sit with her head worriedly in her hands.

INT. GARAGE

Slamming the door shut from the lounge, Daniel has a face like thunder as he smacks the nearby wall.

He then activates the garage DOOR release and it begins electronically retracting as Daniel gets into the family Lexus and powers it up.

We watch as the Lexus drives out of the garage, passing the squad car, as the garage door starts retracting closed.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN - POLICE HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

An exterior shot of the police headquarters building in downtown Washington, night covering it as traffic passes - a distant wailing siren heard.

INT. MONITORING ROOM

A one-way mirror connects a typical police interrogation room which now holds a WPD DETECTIVE and the Geek - who sits under the questioning microscope, looking pretty damn terrified - and a monitoring room.

Locke stands watching and listening through the mirror to the interrogation.

DETECTIVE

(forceful)

What did you do with the body, Andrew?!

GEEK

What body?! I don't know what---

DETECTIVE

You know what body! Gordon Walters!

GEEK

I don't know any Gordon Walters

DETECTIVE

You better start---

The interrogation continues in the background as Locke notices Frank enter the monitoring room - joining him by the window.

FRANK

Is that your guy?

LOCKE

(nods)

Andrew Wiggins. Freelance software programmer and self-confessed adult entertainment junkie. Claims to use his five gigabyte system to store porn, nothing else.

(beat)

Gives a whole new meaning to the term hard drive.

FRANK

What else?

LOCKE

(checks file folder)

No rap sheet. No clear connection to either Walters or Colleen Aubrey. No previous convictions.

(closes folder)

Guy's clean.

FRANK

(nods)

It's not him.

With that, Frank turns away from the window - Locke doing the same.

LOCKE

Facts speak for themselves here, Frank. ISP traces back to Wiggins' system. He has to be involved somehow.

FRANK

You and I both know if someone has the means and know-how, ISP's can be faked. Ghosted. It's not the killer.

(ominous beat)

He's still out there.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

A very small gas station on the outskirts of the neighbourhood - surrounded by bushes and very few places of living - pretty much deserted at this hour.

We see the Lexus pull off the quiet road into the gas station, turning off the engine. Deep frown on his face, Daniel steps out.

As you do, he unscrews the gas tank cover and reaches for the pump, placing it inside and filling the tank up with gas.

While he does, we see Daniel sigh, closing his eyes. He's going through everything in his mind, looks anguished.

The tank reaches the limit a moment later, and oil spills out a little onto Daniel's hand.

DANIEL

Damn it!

Placing the pump back on it's rack, Daniel seals up the gas tank and pulls out a handkerchief, attempting to wipe the oil off his hands in frustration.

Until suddenly:

THE KILLER

appears behind him, partially obscured by Daniel's frame, but he's certainly male.

He reaches out wearing gloves and uses a CHLOROFORM stained handkerchief on Daniel's face, wrapping it around his nose.

Before Daniel's muffled shouts can really be heard, the substance knocks him out - and he goes limp, allowing The Killer to begin dragging him out of sight.

And it's off the eerily still sight of the Lexus, driver's door left wide open, that we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASEMENT

Near darkness as we PAN to the right.

We can hear the sound of a great deal of computer equipment, primarily the churning of a SCANNER in operation.

Couple that with the strains of 'Money for Nothing' by Dire Straits emerging from a distant speaker system.

Panning across, we begin to see a peek of light emerge and then, slowly - the completely shadowed/oblique sight of the back of a human HEAD, though no sign of torso below.

Once we're clear of it, we observe from a distance the Killer - not fully visible, but he appears to be a thin man with jet black hair - as he sits surrounded by very advanced computer equipment, bringing up a refreshed IMAGE on the screen.

We PUSH IN towards the screen past the Killer and focus on it - as the refreshed image reveals itself to be the newly scanned severed head of Daniel Aubrey.

MATCH CUT TO:

A PHOTOGRAPH

Inside a file-folder, it is unmistakably the police photo of Daniel Aubrey's severed head, just as it appeared on the killer's computer screen. We are now

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - SOME TIME LATER

Frank is sitting at a desk in the bustling, working core of the Washington PD, looking at the new file-folder with a furrowed brow.

Behind him, we see the geek, Andrew Wiggins, being led through the desks by two OFFICERS and Locke, to the discharge desk. Wiggins looks very unhappy at his treatment, while Locke appears embarrassed.

This isn't noticed by Frank - who continues studying the file.

FRANK'S INTERNAL POV

- SLASH!
- Daniel being grabbed from behind at the gas station.
- A scream!
- The serrated blade; blood!
- SLASH!
- More tumbling money!

RESUME SCENE

After getting these images, Frank frowns - he hasn't entirely made sense of them yet.

Looking suitably admonished, Locke approaches the desk.

LOCKE

We've been monitoring all the auction sites, so we got this new one pulled pretty fast.

(beat)

Wiggins has been released without charge. Nothing to hold him on now, unless he's an accomplice.

FRANK
(focused on folder)
He's not.

LOCKE
(nods)
Says he's filing a lawsuit against
the department for unfair arrest.

No response from Frank, and Locke walks around him to get a
view of what he's looking at.

LOCKE (CONT'D)
I spoke to BargainBid. The auction
site Daniel Aubrey's head was
floated on. Like eBid, they're keen
to cooperate. They don't want the
bad press.

FRANK
I'm not sure us tracing endless
ISP's is the way to go about this.
He's gotten around us that way
before.

LOCKE
Well right now it's about all we
got.

Frank nods, somberly rubbing the tip of his nose.

LOCKE (CONT'D)
(sensing)
Frank, you can't blame yourself for
Aubrey's death, if that's what
you're doing. We had no way to know-

FRANK
I knew. At least, I thought I knew.
(sits back; sighs)
But it was never Colleen who was in
danger. It was always Daniel.

LOCKE
Question is why?

FRANK
This is about his victims - the
Killer's. The image of Walters'
head was never meant for Colleen.
It was meant for Daniel.

LOCKE
But the Killer addressed it to
Colleen. He sent it to her account,
not Daniel's.

FRANK

Daniel didn't have an eBid account.
If he used the site, he used
Colleen's. The Killer knew he could
reach Daniel that way. His next
intended victim.

This conclusion makes Locke even more curious - and puzzled.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I need you to look into the
victim's backgrounds, Walters and
Aubrey, in detail. Their work
specifically. It may be the key to
understanding what the Killer is
trying to communicate.

Frank takes a BEAT, considering everything, before
remembering the most obvious question.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Have we traced the latest living
victim yet?

LOCKE

What do you mean?

FRANK

Who was the image of Daniel's head
sent to?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MANGOLD RESIDENCE

We are CLOSE ON an expensive computer desktop, flat-panel
widescreen monitor as someone works a mouse and CLICKS onto a
webpage for 'BargainBid'.

We move closer to favour the text at the centre of the page
which reads:

"Welcome Mr/Mrs Mangold.
You have 1 item you need to pay for..."

We wait for an ominous beat, knowing what is coming while the
innocent victim does not, and

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. DOORWAY - MANGOLD RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON

Frank and Locke are standing waiting when a large, expensive oak door is opened by a demurely attractive WOMAN (50's), dressed well with a pleasant smile.

FRANK
Clara Mangold?

We see Frank, serious expression on his face as ever, stands at the door facing the woman - CLARA MANGOLD.

CLARA
(smiles)
Yes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MANGOLD RESIDENCE

An expansive, near lavish fitted KITCHEN at the heart of what is clearly the home of some very wealthy people.

Clara now stands pouring coffee for Frank and herself - it's apparent she knows who he is and knew he was coming.

CLARA
Obviously, to say it came as quite a shock was an understatement. But...I've seen my fair share of horror in life, Mr Black. I worked as a nurse during the first Iraq conflict. And the things I saw there, well...
(beat; finishes pouring)
Let's just say, they steeled me in some respect for what happened last night.

She hands the steaming mug of coffee to Frank - who smiles his thanks.

FRANK
Did BargainBid offer you counselling?

CLARA
(laughs)
No! I think they realise my husband is twice as wealthy as their entire company so they don't deign to pay anything towards my wellbeing.
(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

(smiles)

I'm better off without corporate shrinks telling me what they think I want to hear.

FRANK

(slight smile)

Did you have any connection to Daniel Aubrey or Gordon Walters?

CLARA

(shakes her head)

None. I'd never even heard their names until this morning.

(beat)

With respect, Mr Black, I went through all of this late last night with the police department. Why exactly are you here?

Frank takes a final sip of the coffee, and lays it down before focusing on Clara.

FRANK

I'm here because I believe something the police necessarily don't. That your receiving the image you did means danger.

CLARA

To whom? Me?

FRANK

To your husband.

Clara chuckles a little at the suggestion.

CLARA

Mr Black, my husband is CEO of one of the leading computer chip manufacturers in the United States. For a serial killer to target Edward would be the first mistake he ever made. It would be hard to find a more high-profile target in the private sector.

FRANK

Which could be the exact point.

(beat)

Mrs Mangold, the Killer has a pattern. He killed Gordon Walters, a man himself of some wealth, to deliver a message to Daniel Aubrey. And I believe he then killed Aubrey to deliver that same message. Not to you, but to your husband.

It becomes clearer to Clara that Frank really does believe this.

FRANK (CONT'D)

And so far your husband has refused to talk to the police, cooperate in any way with our investigation.

(beat)

I'm here to ask you, as his wife, to make him understand the gravity of the situation - that he's a target. And that we can't protect him, unless he protects himself.

Hearing this, seeing the seriousness on Frank's face, Clara nods and we CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

The sight of Locke sitting back in the chair at his cluttered desk in the middle of the bustling department - he's on the phone.

He turns in his chair as he listens, seeing, Frank entering the department office - approaching.

LOCKE

(into phone)

...yeah, can you get me that? The entire file?

(beat; nods)

Thanks, Danny...yeah, I'll be here.

On that, Locke puts the phone down as Frank reaches him.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Frank, looks like you were right to go more in-depth with Walters and Aubrey's work activities.

FRANK

What do you have?

LOCKE

Pretty much conclusive evidence both of them were as corrupt as they come.

(handing a file folder to Frank)

Walters had been involved in quite a complex stock market scam, capitalising on the collapse of numerous businesses. He'd made a tidy sum in the process.

(beat)

And Aubrey wasn't quite the charitable saint everyone thought.

(MORE)

LOCKE (CONT'D)

He'd spent the last ten years embezzling an increasing percentage of funds made from his charity work, stored in several offshore bank accounts in the Caymans, Switzerland. A nice little nest egg.

Hearing this, reading the details in the file folder, Frank furrows his brow.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Didn't take much digging to drag all of this to the surface, with the FBI's help. These guys hadn't covered their tracks as professionally as they thought.

(beat)

And if both were still alive, they'd be the ones facing charges.

Frank nods and as he reads the file folder:

FRANK'S INTERNAL POV

- A flash of tumbling money and a scream!

RESUME SCENE

Locke sees a look of recognition, or realisation, on Frank's face.

LOCKE

What? What is it?

FRANK

The killer. He's trying to send a message to his future victims. And to the world at large.

LOCKE

(fully attentive)

What message?

FRANK

He's outraged at the global obsession with money. The arrogance of capitalism and accumulation of wealth. He's focused on one sin: greed. And that's why he's been attempting to make those he's about to kill purchase the severed heads of his previous victim. He's determined to make the world right by laying the irony directly upon them.

This is all digested by Locke with fascination.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Walters' head was always meant for Daniel. The image is an indicator, of whom the killer is to strike at next.

(beat)

And he's taunting us to stop him, but not until his message is fully delivered. He's reaching the apex, the very point of his point. His next victim will be the final one.

LOCKE

Edward Mangold?

Frank looks uncertain - which Locke picks up on.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

You're hesitating.

FRANK

I've been wrong before.

(nods)

We need to make certain this time.

Off Frank's look of determination to get this right, we CUT TO:

INT. FOYER - MANGOLD RESIDENCE - EVENING

The large oak door opens and EDWARD MANGOLD (early 50's) strides into his home - a fairly unremarkable-looking man, though one with great confidence and self-assuredness, who reeks of affluence.

Edward secures the door and begins removing his long coat, hanging it on a nearby hook - as Clara approaches him from upstairs.

CLARA

Edward! At last. I've been trying to reach you all day!

EDWARD

I had the meeting with Frans Koffrie today, in case you'd forgotten. When one of our major European investors makes the trip all the way from Rotterdam, the red carpet treatment is necessary.

With that, Edward strides off toward the kitchen - Clara follows.

INT. KITCHEN

Going to the tall freezer, Edward begins pouring himself some fruit juice from a carton.

CLARA

(sighs)

I need to talk to you. It's important.

EDWARD

Is this about what happened last night? The image on the computer?

CLARA

Yes. Honey---

EDWARD

(cuts her off)

I thought we agreed not to make a big deal out of it?

CLARA

I wasn't. But... the police came back this afternoon. A consultant. He believes the image was a sign. A sign that you're in danger.

Edward laughs at this as he sips the juice.

EDWARD

Don't be absurd. A lunatic like that would know better than to target me. Not someone who has 24-hour surveillance and his own personal security detail.

CLARA

I didn't believe it either, but this man was very convincing. They just want you to be prepared...

EDWARD

(sensing)

And?

CLARA

(awkwardly)

And answer a few questions they have.

EDWARD

(shakes his head)

No. I am not letting the Washington PD harangue me like some sort of timid witness, or worse a criminal. Not about something that doesn't even involve me.

Clearly not wanting to discuss it further, Edward exits the kitchen. And frustrated, Clara pursues as we CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

A very hi-tech desk filled with advanced equipment surrounding a computer terminal, at which MANN, a laid-back WPD technician sits - flanked by Frank and Locke.

MANN

With help from the IT staff over at BargainBid, I've been able to set up a proxy tracking program that will allow us to track the ISP account the second image was sent from if it's activated. According to records, the account logs in at the same time every day - eight PM.

Locke glances at the nearby wall-clock. It's on 7:59pm.

ANGLE ON

The clock, as the hand ticks round...and it hits 8pm.

Back on the screen, a PINGING is heard.

MANN (CONT'D)

We've got activity. Regular as clockwork.

LOCKE

He's online.

(thinks)

Will he be able to detect us tracking his ISP?

MANN

(shakes his head)

Not with this software.

On the screen, we see a map of the United States appear as a blue LINE draws the signal of the ISP, trying to connect to it's server.

FRANK

What's happening?

MANN

The tracking program is trying to get a lock on the correct ISP. Looks like he's set up more ghost servers to throw us off the scent.

LOCKE

Like Wiggins.

(Technician nods)

It has to track somewhere here in Washington.

MANN

We'll soon find out.

A tense moment as the line continues zipping across the map of the US, tracking to different locations.

MANN (CONT'D)

(reading from the screen)

San Diego...Little Rock...
Illinois...Baltimore...New
Jersey...

LOCKE

Getting closer.

A beat. The trio watch the line flit around locations on the Western Seaboard, until it stops in Washington DC.

MANN

We got it! Washington. It's
extrapolating a location.

Quickly, Locke moves over to an adjoining computer, starts tapping away.

LOCKE

Let's see if we can get an address.

MANN

(confused)

I don't get this...

FRANK

(frowns)

What?

MANN

Looks like a message has been
encoded within the ISP server for
Washington.

FRANK

(realises)

It's him! Can you decode it?

MANN

(taps away)

I can try...

Frank then turns as he hears Locke slam the desk nearby in frustration.

LOCKE

I got an address, but it
corresponds roughly as the middle
of the Potomac. He had us again.
Damn it!

FRANK

He knew we'd trace this ISP, but
the address isn't what we're here
to find.

Curious, Locke returns to the other computer, standing near
Frank - both watching Mann work furiously at the system.

MANN

Decoding it now. Looks like it's
one word.

FRANK

Can you bring it up?

Mann nods and a message box appears on screen, overlaying the
US map. Letters begin slowly appearing in it:

A...R...A...

Beat.

LOCKE

ARA.

(thinks)

Does that stand for something? An
acronym?

MANN

Wait, there's more. It's not done
processing.

Another beat. Before the A..R..A appears:

C...L...

Which makes:

FRANK

(disturbed)

Clara.

LOCKE

(realising)

Clara Mangold.

FRANK

(urgent; realising)

She's the target. It's not Mangold.
This is the killer's final act. His
apex. His test.

On that, Frank hurries away and - going with the flow - Locke
pursues as we CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MANGOLD RESIDENCE - EVENING

The very large main bedroom in the house, replete with massive storage space, ornate furniture and a huge four-poster bed.

Edward enters with his fruit juice, and begins loosening his tie, removing his shoes - kicking back, basically. But Clara isn't done, and follows him in.

CLARA

You're wrong, Edward. This does involve you, whether you like it or not.

(beat)

Mr Black, the consultant, believes that you could be this killer's next target.

EDWARD

Why? Because some lunatic is selling a severed head? He probably sent the same message to two dozen other people!

CLARA

The police are trying to protect you!

EDWARD

No, the police are trying to exploit me!

(bullish)

A man of my position, my stature, breeds resentment. These people just want to paint me as a victim, as part of their agenda.

CLARA

(frustrated)

Who do you think you are?!

This gets the nonchalant Edward's attention - he turning with a sharp gaze.

CLARA (CONT'D)

You're not invincible, Edward. For all your money, you are just a man.

(beat)

And you have just as much to lose as anyone else.

The look in Edward's eyes, however, is one of arrogant defiance. And seeing this, Clara sighs in frustration and storms out of the bedroom.

And suddenly: THE LIGHTS GO OUT.

Darkness.

EDWARD

Damn it!

(shouts)

Clara, are you near the lighting board? We've got a power cut up here.

No response. Nothing.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Clara?

(nothing; louder)

Clara?

INT. UPSTAIRS LANDING

Moonlight from the window at the top of the spacious landing casts an eerie glow as Edward carefully walks out from the bedroom, his eyes adjusting to the dark.

He edges along the landing - the silence is deafening, and it's creeping him out.

EDWARD

Clara?

With trepidation, Edward continues walking carefully along the landing - in the direction of the staircase.

As he does, we PAN right slowly away from him, through the darkness, hearing increasing terrified BREATHS as we go.

Focusing in, we find Clara is standing near one of the guest room doorways - the heavy breathing emerges from her, as a strong MALE HAND clamps over her mouth, coming from a shadowy figure behind - the Killer.

Tilting down, we see the serrated BLADE is being held with the Killer's other hand - before both he and Clara vanish into the shadows of the room.

INT. FOYER

Carefully reaching the bottom of the staircase, the house is complete darkness, Edward is now himself breathing heavily - he's not afraid, but nervous.

He jumps as suddenly THE LIGHTS FLICKER ON!

And jumps again when the BELL RINGS - a two-chime sound.

Nervously, Edward hastily answers the door - finding Locke, Frank and two Officers from a SQUAD CAR parked outside at the door.

LOCKE
Edward Mangold?

EDWARD
I...I can't find Clara. My wife.
The power went out and---

LOCKE
(to Officers)
Search the house.

As the Officers do as ordered, Locke draws his weapon and enters after Frank - who begins looking around, walking up the staircase.

EDWARD
(frowns)
What's going on?!

LOCKE
Mr Mangold, I'm Detective Locke.

EDWARD
Where's my wife?!

INT. LANDING

Heading to the top of the staircase, Frank begins edging across, taking everything in. He touches the banister.

FRANK'S INTERNAL POV

- A muffled cry
- Clara is grabbed from behind by the Killer
- Heavy, terrified breathing

RESUME SCENE

Frank approaches the door to the guest bedroom and kneels down, looking closely - BLOOD is on the carpet.

FRANK
(calls down)
Brad?

Locke appears at the top of the stairs with Edward in tow very quickly - and they see Frank looking down.

LOCKE
What is it, Frank?

FRANK
He was here.
(beat; gloomy)
She's been taken.

Edward looks away, disturbed, as Locke realises things just got much more complicated. And it's off Frank's grave look, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. MANGOLD RESIDENCE - DAWN

Next to Locke's desk, a worried-looking Edward - still in last night's suit clothing - cradles a coffee as Frank sits next to him.

FRANK

I know this is a very difficult time. Believe me, I've been there.

EDWARD

(shakes his head)

None of this makes any sense. Why would anyone want to abduct her? My wife is...

(looks at Frank)

It's like you told her. I should be the target.

FRANK

None of this is about Clara. It's about you. The killer is trying to get your attention.

EDWARD

(gallows laugh)

We'll he's got it! I just don't understand what he wants.

Edward shakes his head, sipping his coffee. Frank looks awkward as he tries to broach a subject.

FRANK

Mr Mangold, I need to ask you a question. And I need you to answer me truthfully.

(Edward looks at him;
beat)

Your wealth, your fortune, your position as a CEO. Did you acquire it...through honest means?

EDWARD

(frowns)

I beg your pardon?

As he asks this, Locke appears and stands nearby - listening.

FRANK

I'm asking you if your wealth was acquired illegally. At someone else's expense.

EDWARD

(angry)

I can't even begin to fathom what relevance my personal financial business has to do with you, Mr Black, or the abduction of my wife by a psychopathic killer! Which should be your sole concern, instead of suggesting I'm a criminal!

Edward stands, furious - Frank knowing right now it's pointless to try and reason with him.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(turns to Locke)

Ensure your consultant concentrates on his job, Detective. And make sure you find my wife safely. Because, trust me... I'm not an enemy the police department wants to make.

On that veiled threat, Edward storms out of the desk area - Frank standing as he and Locke watch him go.

LOCKE

Well, you're sure doing wonders for police relations, Frank.

FRANK

(shakes his head)

He's afraid of the question. Because he knows the answer is yes.

LOCKE

(beat)

What if it's him? Behind all of this. The killer. He could have known Walters and Aubrey. Perhaps he had a stake in their money.

FRANK

No, he's not behind this. But Edward Mangold is what this whole thing is really about.

(turns to Locke)

And the only way to save Clara is to make him realise that.

Off the sight of Frank and Locke standing together, pondering this, we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOCKE'S DESK - POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A few hours later, Frank sits at his former student's desk. He wears his reading glasses as he works at and studies the computer screen - looking into records of some sort.

ANGLE ON

The screen, where we see a series of financial records corresponding to the name 'EDWARD MANGOLD'.

The desk phone then rings and Frank picks it up, half still engrossed in the screen.

FRANK

Yeah?

LOCKE (O.C.)

It's Locke. I'm with Mann, and we just caught a major break.

INT. TECHNICIAN'S DESK

MANN, the previously seen Technician, is working away at his own terminal as Locke stands nearby using his phone.

FRANK (O.C.)

What did you find?

LOCKE

A second ISP, on the same server the tracker cracked earlier. The Potomac address was his final bluff it looks like. We got an address. A property in a pretty unremarkable neighbourhood in Silver Spring, Maryland. I'm about to head out with armed response now.

(beat)

This could be it, Frank.

INT. LOCKE'S DESK

Any sign of pleasure is muted by Frank as he listens, still scanning the financial records.

FRANK

If this really is his location, that means his work is coming to an end. Which gives us less time to save him from leaving one final victim.

LOCKE (O.C.)

Hopefully we'll get there before he gets chance to.

(beat)

I'll keep you in the loop.

FRANK

Okay.

The call then ends, Frank replacing the handset as he leans into the screen a little more, having found something.

He focuses on a signature from Mangold and underneath one from a 'JOE CRANER' - a name highlighted by a curious Frank, as we CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT

It's almost pitch-black as usual within the gloomy basement lair of our killer - the continued whir and hum of computer equipment audible, 'Money for Nothing' continuing to play on a loop.

A light flickers on - a weak bulb spotlight under which we now see a tied and bound Clara. She's tethered to an old metallic-looking chair, absolutely terrified.

Several cuts mark her arm where the blade touched her during the abduction.

Clara watches, breathing heavily, as the still fully-unseen Killer appears and sits at his vast array of equipment - as if she's not even a few metres behind him.

CLARA

(exasperated)

What...what is it you want from me?

No response. The Killer doesn't acknowledge her, just begins tapping at his computer.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Do I know you?! Did I...did I do something to you? Offend you? Hurt you?

(nothing)

Please!...

She's now openly crying, at the end of her tether.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Just tell me...tell me why you're doing this?!

And finally, we see the Killer turn - but we only ever see him from the torso upwards - it's almost as if his head isn't there.

He approaches the chair but passes Clara - proceeding to switch on a row of different TV SCREENS concealed by the darkness near where Clara is perched.

She can't help but watch as each screen shows a different news broadcast or documentary on corruption - be it by a business or just a person.

THE KILLER

Money for nothing? Chicks for free?
And I think to myself - what a wonderful world.

He begins pacing around the terrified Clara, who listens quietly.

THE KILLER (CONT'D)

I don't think so. A damned nightmare of avarice. The wealthy corrupt, and the poor die. The fat cats get fatter and fatter while the Africans starve. You know what I'm talking about. Them yo-yos. People here flaunt their arrogance to the whole damned world, believing our way is the right way. Our society is the right society. The just. The fair. The democratic.
(beat)

It's all a load of crap. There's no fairness. No justice. No democracy. No right. No wrong. There's no honesty of spirit. We used to have honour, now there's only avarice. And what am I doing? I'm bringing them to heel, baby, the ones who believe they're blameless. The ones who look their fellow man in their eyes and see dollar signs. Capital. Opportunity. Not anymore. Time to pay for their arrogance. Oh yeah. That's the way you do it.

He rushes over, and pulls Clara's hair back with a yank - and she YELPS as he speaks loudly into her ear.

THE KILLER (CONT'D)

I want my MTV, Clara.

(beat)

And my show's gonna live on beyond the ones who have been sacrificed. The punishment of avarice.

On that, the Killer produces from his pocket the serrated BLADE which we see sprinkled in blood - and it's off Clara's expression of abject fear, we CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY AREA - AFTERNOON

The door is thrust open by a storming Frank - a look of thunder on his face - as he enters the expansive lobby area of a corporate building.

SILVERCHIP INC.

Frank snakes through the maze of corporate suits before reaching the RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST
(puts down her phone)
Good afternoon, sir. May I help
you?

FRANK
I need to see Edward Mangold, right
now.

RECEPTIONIST
I'm sorry, sir, he's in a meeting
right now.

FRANK
Which floor is his office?

RECEPTIONIST
Nineteenth.

And Frank is off, making for the nearby staircase.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
(leans over the desk)
Sir? Sir, you can't just---

But Frank is already gone - launching toward the elevators
and out of sight.

CUT TO:

INT. MANGOLD'S OFFICE - NINETENTH FLOOR

A highly executive office on the top floor, extremely large -
almost vast - with a breathtaking view of Capitol Hill and
other landmarks.

Around a conference table towards the back, Edward sits
engaged in a corporate meeting with two senior PARTNERS in
the company - though while he's discussing business, his mind
is clearly elsewhere.

PARTNER #1
Grosse profit margin projections
predict a serious turnaround in
sector 16-A, corresponding with the
Browning report file on
manufacturing---

The corporate speak is interrupted, suddenly, as the door
opens with a jolt - and Frank enters.

FRANK
Mr Mangold. We need to talk.

Edward looks startled at the intrusion, while the Partners
automatically shift to concerned.

PARTNER #2
(grabs a phone)
I'll call security.

EDWARD
(after a beat)
No.

Partner #2 stops in his tracks in the midst of dialling - seeing Edward now staring at Frank, who returns it with a glare.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
I'll hear what he has to say.
(looks to Partners)
Thank you, gentlemen, that'll be all.

Though uncertain, both the Partners get up and leave the room, after exchanging a glance. A beat of silence once they've gone.

EDWARD (CONT'D)
If you're wondering what prompted that meeting, it was me taking police advice. Trying to go about things as---

FRANK
(cuts him off)
Don't.
(nods)
You had that meeting because you wanted to. Because it involved your first love: money.

Edward's anger begins resurfacing as he approaches Frank's grounded position.

EDWARD
Mr Black, I would think VERY carefully before you start making further suggestions that I'm not---

FRANK
I know about Joe Craner.

This stops Edward in his tracks - the anger immediately turning to concern.

EDWARD
(carefully)
What about him?

FRANK
I know he was your former business partner.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

You ran Silverchip together until his demise in a car accident. Or so the press would have us believe.

(beat)

Regardless, you inherited a fortune from his death. To say it was profitable for you is an understatement.

EDWARD

I know what you're suggesting. How DARE you?! Defamation of character is an extremely serious off---

FRANK

Drop the act, Edward, we both know better.

(beat; Edward stops)

You were responsible for Joe Craner's death. You certainly did nothing to prevent it.

Edward walks away from Frank, looks troubled - but soon recovers.

EDWARD

(turns; full of bravado)

I have one hell of a lawyer, Mr Black. So if you're here to arrest me, you might want to---

FRANK

I'm not here to arrest you. I'm here for Clara.

EDWARD

(frowns)

What do you mean?

FRANK

(gets face to face with Edward)

Your wife was taken because the man who killed Gordon Walters and Daniel Aubrey sees you as the ultimate personification of the avarice he has come to despise greater than anything. He's testing you, testing the human condition itself.

EDWARD

Testing me? Testing me about what?! I don't know what it is he wants me to DO!

FRANK

He wants you to prove that money, power, status... greed, isn't all that defines you. That you care as much about your wife as you do about your possessions.

EDWARD

And how exactly do I do that?

FRANK

(beat)

You give it all away.

Edward frowns at the simplicity of the statement.

EDWARD

(disbelieving)

You mean this?

(re: office)

My business.

FRANK

I mean everything. Your house, your car, your business, your finances, your possessions. Everything.

Edward just laughs, shaking his head as he moves away. Frank follows.

FRANK (CONT'D)

If you don't do this, Edward, I am certain he will kill your wife. It all rests on you.

EDWARD

Suggesting I give everything away is INSANE!

(sighs)

I worked for this. ALL of this. I may have cut corners, lied and cheated a few people.

(beat)

Sacrificed... those who didn't deserve to be where they were. But I've spent my whole life getting to where I am now. And this...lunatic just expects me to throw it all away!

FRANK

He wants to believe that he's wrong. That greed isn't the driving force behind our lives.

(beat)

And if he's proved right, he'll have no reason to keep Clara alive.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
He'll kill her out of rage. Only
you can prevent that.

As Edward considers this, Frank's cell phone begins to ring -
he answers it.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Frank Black.

INT. SQUAD CAR - AFTERNOON

The passenger seat of a racing squad car holds Locke as he
presses the phone to his ear.

LOCKE
It's Locke. We're about to hit the
address we believe the killer's at.

INT. MANGOLD'S OFFICE

The words are heard by Edward as they carry through the
phone, and he turns to look as Frank.

LOCKE (O.C.)
We'll know soon if we were right.

FRANK
I'm with Mangold now. Let me know
how it goes.

LOCKE (O.C.)
Will do.

The call severs and Frank turns to look at Edward as he
clutches the phone, waiting.

EDWARD
(telling himself)
They'll get to him. They'll get to
him before he has a chance to hurt
Clara.

FRANK
You'd gamble on your wife's life?
(imploring)
Mr Mangold---

EDWARD
NO! No, Mr Black. I will not give
everything away I've spent thirty
years trying to achieve.
(nods; assured)
They'll save her.

It's clear in the expression on Frank's face, however, he
fears it may already be too late, as we CUT TO:

INT. DOORWAY - AFTERNOON

BAM!

In a repeat of the earlier scene, a police BATTERING RAM blasts through the door of a suburban house - heavily-armed SWAT team bursting in.

Locke is behind them, again in protective vest and bearing his gun - and he moves into the house.

We TRACK with him as he heads through - the sound of the SWAT team bellowing as they enter each room in the background.

Locke moves through what we find is a very unremarkable suburban dwelling. Clean, sparse in it's furnishings. It doesn't look lived in.

Despite the light, it has an air of gloom - all the curtains are drawn, blocking natural daylight.

INT. KITCHEN

Moving into the fairly-sized, average kitchen, Locke spies a BASEMENT DOOR in the corner and approaches it.

Gun raised, he reaches out with the other hand and YANKS open the door quickly - prepared for resistance.

INT. BASEMENT

Low light pierces into the pitch-black basement - the sound of computer equipment still audible - as we see Locke by the door at the top of the stairs.

Carefully, he begins edging his way down the wooden staircase - each step creaking as he moves.

 LOCKE
 (calls out)
 Mrs Mangold?
 (no response)
 Clara? Can you hear me?

Again. Nothing. Locke continues edging down the staircase.

 LOCKE (CONT'D)
 This is Detective Locke, I'm with
 Washington PD.
 (beat)
 If you can hear me, Clara, tell me
 where you are.

No response again. Locke reaches the bottom of the staircase.

It's gloomy - on the low bulb illuminates what Locke sees. The advanced computer equipment, still churning away.

And to his left, a now empty old chair under the bulb. Locke approaches it and takes a closer look - seeing fresh BLOOD on the seat and the floor below.

PAN quickly behind Locke as someone approaches him with speed.

As Locke senses this and turns, we see the Killer pounce from behind - knocking away the gun Locke pulls up to shoot, before sending the detective crashing to the floor!

Locke hits the deck and the Killer climbs on top - pinning him with one hand as he pulls out the serrated blade with the other, dripping with blood.

THE KILLER

(disturbed)

I was right. I was right!

He raises the blade - intending to do to Locke what he did to his previous victims.

Desperately, Locke scrambles for his gun - which lies on the floor, just ahead of him.

But it's too far - he can't reach it!

Almost as terrified as his victims undoubtedly were, the Killer lowers the blade and moves it towards Locke's throat, when:

BANG!

A bullet strikes the Killer in the back and he slumps down onto Locke. Bleeding. Dead.

The shooter, a member of the SWAT TEAM, heads fully down the staircase followed by two other team members, who begin scouring the basement.

Locke rolls the Killer off him, leaving him sprawled out on the basement floor.

And as the disturbed, out of breath Locke gets to his feet, aided by the SWAT member, he looks down at the man who just tried to kill him.

We see the Killer fully for the first time - he's thin, fortysomething, slightly bearded face. There is nothing remarkable about him whatsoever.

As Locke looks at his dead form, another of the SWAT TEAM approaches.

SWAT MEMBER

Detective?

LOCKE

What is it?

SWAT MEMBER

(ominous)

Mrs Mangold.

Off Locke's concerned look, we CUT TO:

INT. MANGOLD'S OFFICE

The sight of Edward looking out of the window at the Washington vista below his office - resolute and staunch he made the right decision.

Behind him, Frank stands listening on his cell - his look is grave.

The call soon ends and Frank says nothing as he cuts it, pocketing the phone and looking towards Edward.

He turns from the window and stares at Frank. The look between them communicates everything - Frank says what he's just been told with his eyes.

More than anything, Frank looks disappointed in Edward's decision and Edward knows this as he realises what Frank has just been told.

As Frank shakes his head a little, sighing a breath, he walks slowly out of the office.

He leaves Edward to stare in his wake - a man looking utterly defeated, off which we slowly...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASEMENT

A rather solemn Locke standing in the heart of the basement staring down as FORENSIC OFFICERS finish going over the entire crime scene.

Behind him, Frank appears down the staircase - taking in the surroundings - before appearing beside him.

A beat of silence. Both are looking out at something in the near distance. Though Frank has just seen it for the first time, his expression doesn't change.

LOCKE

Did you tell Mangold?

FRANK

I didn't have to. He realised. Only when it was too late.

LOCKE

(beat)

Why would a man do this, Frank?

A beat. Frank ponders the question.

FRANK

I think the real question is: will
he truly turn out to have been
right?

(beat)

Will greed... encompass us all?

Leaving the question hanging in the air, Frank walks off into
the basement.

After a moment to ponder, Locke follows him.

But we PAN across the other way, over to where they were
looking, to the sight that filled their vision.

Clara Mangold's recently SEVERED HEAD sitting atop the
computer scanner, off the sight of which we...

FADE TO BLACK.

Executive Producer
James Jordan

Executive Producer
Anthony J. Black

TRIPLE FIVE
PRODUCTIONS