

312

# BREAKDOWN

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"Frame 313"

Written by

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FADE IN:

VIDEO FOOTAGE

The presidential motorcade rounds the corner onto Elm Street. Grainy, 8mm footage. The infamous Zapruder Film.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY and the first lady, JAQUELINE wave to onlookers from the convertible Lincoln Continental.

They pass behind a street sign.

As they emerge on the other side--

The president reaches up with both arms, grabs his throat.

Concerned, Jaqueline grabs his arm. He grips his throat.

Stillness, calm, then--

President Kennedy's head explodes in a mist of red.

A flap of scalp folds back as his body goes limp.

Jaqueline climbs onto the back of the car, away from the lifeless body. A secret service agent rushes to her, jumps on the bumper. She reaches out.

PAUSE. The footage freezes. A pause icon appears at the bottom.

REWIND, then PUASE at the moment before the kill-shot.

PLAY, Kennedy's head explodes.

PAUSE. The mist of blood frozen in the air. Timecode in the upper right corner: "313"

THE ARTIST (V.O.)

My dad always told me believe none  
of what you hear and half of what  
you see. I think even that's being  
generous.

SUPER: "BREAKDOWN: FRAME 313"

FADE TO BLACK.

THE ARTIST (V.O.)

The project started like all the  
rest. A packet of instructions  
along with the raw footage.

A thick metal hatch atop a steel, cylindrical container opens to reveal a thick manilla envelope and 8mm film canister.

THE ARTIST

I'd only done simple shots up until this point. You know, embellishing war footage with some added explosions, a few more bodies to up the intensity. This one was different.

FADE TO BLACK.

A strip of film zips across the screen, then the stops at the first frame of footage.

THE ARTIST

The raw footage wasn't much different than the final product, except that the president was never shot. Was never even there.

The Zapruder film footage, but with the Kennedy and The First Lady missing from the car.

Fewer people in the lawn. Less grain on the footage.

The footage plays forward

THE ARTIST

I shot plates of actors on a green screen stage. Matched the camera moves.

In the upper corner, green screen stage footage appears. A man in a suit, a woman in a dress sit on green boxes. The camera moves to match the angle of the car in the Zapruder footage.

The footage pauses. The Kennedy actor frozen in a wave.

The green fades to transparent. The footage slides into place, the two figures now in the back of the car. The video plates merged.

THE ARTIST

We needed more witnesses, so I threw some crowd members in for good measure.

Digital people fly from off screen into place on the grass.

A woman with a camera flies in.

## THE ARTIST

This lady with the camera. Just misdirection. They'll look for her to verify the authenticity of the footage when the only evidence of her existence is the inauthentic footage. Half of what you see...

The footage plays. The Kennedy actor holds his throat.

A gray 3d model of Kennedy's head appears in the lower left corner. Spins.

## THE ARTIST

Luckily the president was handsome, so there was plenty of reference to assemble a convincing model for face replacement.

The face turns into position, flies onto the actor's head. Blends in. It's now Kennedy.

The same happens with Jacqueline's face.

## THE ARTIST

The last bit was the kill-shot.

The footage stops as the actor jerks his head back.

A blood mist element fades in on top of his head.

## THE ARTIST

The mist kind of just explodes. From no particular direction. The idea was to make it vague so they would have flexibility in fabricating the story, at least that's what I assume. They wanted it gruesome, though.

A digital skin flap appears on the head.

Gray matter chunks materialize in the air.

## THE ARTIST

Kennedy was never actually killed. In fact, I'd never heard of the Zapruder film. It didn't exist. Not in my timeline.

The footage rewinds. Plays. Kennedy's head explodes.

## THE ARTIST

I didn't know what I was doing. My previous work didn't change anything... I... I don't know.

The footage pauses on the exploding head. The footage glitches out in VHS tape static.

SMASH TO BLACK.

## THE ARTIST

Anyway. I finished up with a grain pass to hide any flaws, not that my work ever has any.

A reel of film appears. It spins, winds up.

## THE ARTIST

My film guy transferred it onto the requested eight-millimeter Kodachrome Two safety film. Twenty six point six seconds at eighteen frames per second. Frame three thirteen. I touched every one of those four hundred and eighty six frames, but frame three thirteen was the one that changed everything.

The sound of a gunshot rings out, as the last of the strip sucks into the reel.

FADE TO BLACK.

The metal hatch of the cylindrical container opens. Empty.

A arm places the reel of film at the bottom. Closes the hatch.

FADE TO BLACK.

A digital control face on the front of the cylinder appear. A date types out in digital script: "11/21/1963"

The machine rumbles. A loud hum fills the air. Light spills from the cracks around the hatch.

A loud pop. Then it settles.

Smoke rises from the hatch.

FADE TO BLACK.

A Google Search screen flashes on. Text types out in the search bar: "Zapruder Film"

Click.

The page flashes, reloads: "No Results"

THE ARTIST

This is the way it was. Then--

From nowhere, search results flood in reading:

"Zapruder Film - Wikipedia"

"What does the Zapruder film tell us"

"Zapruder Film: How the world changes in 26 seconds"

A video module appears at the top of the results. Linked to YouTube. The video shows Kennedy's head exploding. The frame number in the corner. Frame 313.

THE ARTIST

When I first saw Jurassic Park, I was terrified. I thought the dinosaurs were real. My dad explained to me how an artist drew the dinosaurs onto the frames. Believe none of what you hear and half of what you see. From that moment, I knew I wanted to be a visual effects artist.

(sighs)

Look at me know, dad.

FADE OUT.

THE END