

Fading Numbers

By

Sean Ryan

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Contact: seansshack@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A small recording device stands on a wooden coffee table. Seconds tick past on the recorder's display.

DAVID (O.S.)
Please tell me anything you can
remember.

ALEXANDRA MEYERS, 79, sits in a chair. She stirs a cup of cocoa. The sounds of dogs barking, shouts and gunshots snap to the tinkles of the spoon as it connects with the cup.

Alexandra looks across at DAVID MULLER, 35, who sits at the opposite side of the coffee table.

Alexandra gazes into her cup.

ALEXANDRA
You have his eyes...

INT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK/POLAND/1941

A younger ALEXANDRA, 11, wakes up suddenly.

The room is overcrowded with people asleep on makeshift beds. The sounds of restless sleep fills the room.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)
If my memory serves me well, it was
Peter's seventh birthday. Which
means I would have been eleven.

Alexandra looks down at PETER, 7 and thin. He sleeps soundly beside her. She brushes the hair back from his dirty forehead with motherly care.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)
But for my brother, it was just
another day.

Peter grips something in his right hand as he sleeps.

Alexandra eyes start to roll as she falls back to sleep.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
German soldiers!

Alexandra snaps awake and jumps to her feet, terrified.

Everyone scrambles in different directions. People fall and are trampled in the panic.

The crowd sweeps Alexandra up and drags her from her brother.

She lunges for Peter and their fingers touch. But Alexandra loses her grip and the crowd drags Peter away.

PETER

Alexandra!

ANNA LUCEK, 38, picks up Peter and runs.

YOUNG ALEXANDRA

Peter!

Alexandra runs towards her brother but JOSEPH BLOOM, 55, grabs her wrist and drags Alexandra from the building.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Alexandra grabs hold of the door frame, but the rotted wood breaks under the strain, as Bloom pulls her into the street.

She catches a glimpse of Peter and Anna at the opposite end of the small alley.

Peter calls to Alexandra but she can't hear him over the chaos. The sounds of trucks, dogs and soldiers with whistles from the far end of the street drown out his cries.

Alexandra trips and falls to the ground and Bloom tries to drag her back onto her feet.

JOSEPH BLOOM

Get up!

Alexandra stays on the ground and ignores the panic.

YOUNG ALEXANDRA

I can't leave my brother.

Bloom looks at the girl and then in the direction of advancing dogs and soldiers.

JOSEPH BLOOM

Go child. Find your brother and don't look back...

Alexandra runs in the other direction towards the last place she saw Peter.

A gunshot rings out behind Alexandra and she stops terrified by the sound.

She shakes off the fear and runs from doorway to doorway.

YOUNG ALEXANDRA

Peter!

She almost reaches the end of the street.

PETER (O.S.)

Alexandra?

Alexandra looks back down the street. Soldiers drag people from several different locations. Dogs attack a middle aged Man on the ground.

GEFREITER BECKER, 20, drags Joseph Bloom from a building by the collar.

LIEUTENANT SCHMITT, 25, beams with satisfaction.

Bloom waves his hands as he begs for his life.

JOSEPH BLOOM

Please sir... I...

Schmitt kicks Bloom hard and knocks him on his back.

SCHMITT

Becker, I believe this is your first, is it not?

BECKER

Yes, sir.

SCHMITT

An important day then. Dispose of this rapid dog.

Becker leans down and picks Bloom up by the hair.

Without hesitation, Becker raises his pistol to Bloom's head and fires.

SCHMITT

Well done. One less to deal with.

Schmitt slaps Becker on the back.

Alexandra freezes, terrified by the sight. She blinks and snaps back to reality, as she runs inside a small doorway.

INT. SMALL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark but Alexandra can just make out the small familiar shadow of Peter. Peter embraces her.

WOMANS VOICE (O.S.)

Run children. Run...

Alexandra grabs Peter's hand and they run into the street.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The soldiers continue to advance up the street.

A small broken medal falls from Peter's hand and hits the ground. Peter reaches for it, as Alexandra pulls him away.

She looks down the street toward a German Soldier, LUCAS MULLER, 17. Their eyes meet and Lucas lowers his weapon.

The wall beside Peter's head is hit by a bullet and the stone wall shatters with the impact.

Alexandra grabs her brother and tries to drag him.

Peter's fingers slip away from the medal.

PETER

No!

Peter breaks from Alexandra and snatches the medal from the ground. Alexandra grabs Peter and they run from the street.

EXT. NARROW STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Alexandra and Peter run into a narrow street and find themselves trapped. Soldiers are advancing in all directions.

Alexandra notices a narrow open window and pushes her brother inside. She then quickly climbs in after him.

INT. LOWER FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The room is dark and badly damaged, the furniture and contents all but destroyed.

They run through a large hole in a wall, towards a staircase. Alexandra pushes Peter up the stairs.

PETER

I'm. I'm tired...

Alexandra pushes Peter harder up the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The second floor of the house is also battle damaged.

Alexandra and Peter run into a room and huddle in the corner. Alexandra kisses her brother's head as she holds him tight.

The main door of the house is kicked in. Alexandra and Peter huddle into the corner of the room.

Peter starts to shake as panic floods over him, so Alexandra holds him tighter and whispers in his ear.

YOUNG ALEXANDRA
I'm here little brother.

They listen to the soldiers downstairs.

HANS GERBER (O.S.)
Where's that damn dog gone?

BERNARD KUEFER (O.S.)
God knows. You sure you saw someone
come in here?

HANS GERBER (O.S.)
I think so. Go find that dog and
I'll check the others rooms.

BERNARD KUEFER (O.S.)
Hurry up. There's money on who can
bag the most.

Alexandra holds her brother tighter. The sounds of boots on the wooden floor from downstairs.

She looks across the room and notices a large bed in an adjoining room.

Alexandra stands up and leads her brother slowly towards the room, as they watch the top of the staircase.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A floor board creaks and Alexandra stops in her tracks.

She takes a deep breath and pushes Peter under the bed and into a collection of shoes. She follows Peter under the bed.

The two children edge along the floor, towards the far wall. Alexandra pushes shoes and boots around the floor, to hide both of them. She peeps through a hole in the sole of a boot.

A flashlight beam lights up the top of the hall. The staircase creaks as the soldier climbs up the stairs.

Both Peter and Alexandra look wide eyed toward the hallway, as the beam of light from a flashlight grows brighter.

HANS GERBER, 23 and well built, walks into their line of sight. He makes his way down one end of the hallway.

Alexandra puts one hand around Peter's mouth to silence him. The floor underneath the two grows wet, as Peter wets himself out of sheer terror.

Peter's shakes worsen and Alexandra gently blows on his hair to relax him.

Gerber enters the room and sits on the bed. The bed sinks under his weight.

Alexandra holds her breath, afraid to make any sound.

Suddenly the blade of a bayonet is thrust through the bed. The long blade pierces the mattress easily and almost digs into the floor, just inches away from Alexandra's face.

Gerber pulls it out and stabs the mattress again and again, in different locations.

The blade slices Alexandra's arm, just below the elbow. She doesn't make a sound or move a muscle. A single tear rolls down her face and she grows purple from holding her breath.

She looks up at the end of the mattress and waits for the blade to cut through it again.

BERNARD KUEFER (O.S.)

Hey are you going to play up there
all day? We found a few hidden next
door.

HANS GERBER

Coming. Keep you pants on.

Gerber stands up and the bed above them rises.

Alexandra watches him walk to the other side of the room. He stops at the doorway for a second before he turns and leaves.

Alexandra counts each step as the Gerber leaves the house. She slowly leaves out a deep breath and hugs her brother.

Alexandra stares deep into Peter's eyes, as they lay on the dirty, wet floor. The sounds of dog barks, screams and death from outside.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)
We stayed under that bed. Waiting
for it to be safe...

Alexandra hugs her brother and kisses him on the forehead.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A shocked looking David stares at Alexandra.

DAVID
Did... Did you escape?

Alexandra takes a sip from her cup.

ALEXANDRA
For a while.

EXT. FARM YARD - DAY - FLASHBACK/POLAND/1941

Alexandra and Peter carry buckets of water. Peter smiles wildly as he struggles under the weight.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)
A nice German lady took us in.

Alexandra gives her brother a hand.

They look toward the farmhouse and their smiles disappear.

KATE BAUM, 32 slaps the face of MICHAEL BAUM, 36.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)
But her brother hated us...

Michael shows Kate a roll of money and she slaps him again. He punches Kate and she falls to the ground.

A truck of German soldiers parks a few feet from the couple.

Kate clutches her face and looks over at Alexandra and Peter. Her tearful eyes meet Alexandra's horrified gaze.

Peter turns to run, but Alexandra grabs his arm.

YOUNG ALEXANDRA
No! They will shoot us.

One of the buckets falls over and the water pours out.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alexandra puts down her cup.

ALEXANDRA
It was weeks before I saw him
again...

She runs her hand over a row of tattooed numbers on her arm.

David's pencil breaks and he reaches for another.

ALEXANDRA
We were taken to a small camp and
reunited with our mother...

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT - FLASHBACK/POLAND/1941

Lucas walks slowly past large storage sheds.

SASHA (O.S.)
Lucas? Lucas Muller? Is that you?

Lucas walks over to one of the sheds. SASHA, 41, looks out through a small hole in the wooden door.

Lucas looks through the hole and steps back. The smell from the container makes him gag, so he covers his mouth and nose with his hand.

He looks back through the hole to see Sasha with Alexandra and Peter. All three look tired and hungry. Their ragged clothes hang loosely on their thin bodies.

LUCAS
Sasha? What are you doing here?

SASHA
We're not sure. We've heard
stories. But no one really knows.

LUCAS
Your family. Your mother, your
father. Are they here too?

SASHA

This is all that is left of my family.

She pulls her children in closer to her.

SASHA

Can you help us? Our families were friends once. We have done nothing wrong. Please Lucas...

LUCAS

I can't. They will...

SASHA

Kill us? We're already dying. I talk to someone one day and the next day they're gone. Please...

Sasha grips her children tighter. Lucas looks down at the two children, but quickly looks away.

LUCAS

But they will kill me.

Lucas can't look at Sasha or the children, but instead looks at the ground.

He looks up and into Alexandra's eyes, she looks terrified.

Peter holds up his medal to offer it to Lucas and Alexandra looks surprised.

SASHA

Please take it. We have nothing else...

Lucas takes the medal from Peter's hand and examines it, before he hands it back to Sasha.

LUCAS

I can't. I just can't.

Lucas turns away.

SASHA

We don't have much time left.

Lucas walks and doesn't look back.

Sasha presses her mouth up against the hole in the gate, as she drops the medal to the ground.

SASHA

Please Lucas. I beg you...

Alexandra picks up the medal and hands it back to Peter. He smiles and grips it tightly.

Sasha kneels and hugs her two children.

EXT. CAMP - MORNING

Lucas stamps his feet in an attempt to warm them up. His breath produces white vapors as he blows into his hands.

A whistle blows and Lucas joins other soldiers, who form a line parallel to the sheds.

An SS Officer, ALDER HOCH, 33 and overweight, approaches the soldiers and blows his whistle.

The doors of the sheds are opened and the occupants start to walk outside. All are dressed in worn, filthy clothes and share the same look of fear.

The Soldiers charge at the people and start to divide up the woman and children. The sounds of screams and cries fill the cold morning air.

KATE ABRAMS, 27, pushes a YOUNG SOLDIER, 17, to the ground.

She runs towards her Son, ALBERT ABRAMS, 8.

ALDER HOCH

Shoot her!

Lucas raises his weapon and aims it. His hand shakes badly.

ALDER HOCH

I said shoot her!

Hoch looks both frustrated and annoyed, as he walks over to Kate. He takes out his pistol and without an inch of hesitation, he places the gun to her head and shoots.

Her head flies backwards and she falls to the ground dead. Blood hits Hoch in the face and the crowd screams.

ALDER HOCH

Shut up!

Hoch shoots twice into the air and the crowd goes silent.

He takes a handkerchief from his pocket and wipes his face. He starts to put it back into his pocket, but looks at the blood with utter disdain and he drops it to the ground.

The soldiers start to look concerned by the unsettled crowd.

Hoch grabs Albert and points the pistol at the boys head.

Albert stares at his dead mother's body.

SASHA (O.S.)

No! Don't...

Sasha steps from the crowd. A look of anger and defiance on her face. Alexandra and Peter stand a few feet behind her.

A SOLDIER, 23, rushes over to push her back, but Hoch raises his hand to let her pass.

ALDER HOCH

I'm sorry. What did you say?

Hoch raises a hand to his ear and mimics that he cannot hear her words. The crowd goes silent.

SASHA

I said no! He is just a child. A child who has just seen his mother murdered.

Hoch smiles and walks over to Sasha.

ALDER HOCH

Do you think you can tell me what to do? Do you know what you are?

Sasha stares straight into Hoch's eyes.

SASHA

I'm a human just like you.

Hoch starts to laugh.

The other soldiers look at each other confused, before they also start to laugh.

ALDER HOCH

Just like me? Just like me?

He raises his gun and places it to Sasha's head. His smile fades as he cocks the pistol.

ALDER HOCH

You are nothing! Not even human...

Peter breaks from Alexandra and runs at Hoch.

PETER

No. Mama!

Hoch turns quickly and shoots Peter without aiming his gun.

The life drains from Peter's face as he falls dead on the ground.

Both Sasha and Alexandra collapse to their knees with shock.

SASHA/YOUNG ALEXANDRA

No!

Sasha gets up and runs to her boy. She drops to her knees and hugs the now lifeless body of Peter.

Hoch walks over and puts his gun to the back of Sasha's head.

SASHA

Shoot me! Please kill me...

Hoch tilts his head slightly and lowers his gun as he smiles.

ALDER HOCH

I think you need to learn what you are. A bullet would deprive you of that...

Hoch places his gun back into its holster.

ALDER HOCH

What wonders we will show you.
You'll wish I had shot you...

He raises his hand and two Soldiers drag Sasha from Peter.

ALDER HOCH

You will all learn the true power
of the master race.

The crowd is now totally silent.

ALDER HOCH

Move them onto the trucks!

The soldiers separate the children from the adults.

A shocked Alexandra is dragged from Sasha and she starts to scream. The sounds of screams from both children and parents fills the air.

Hoch walks over to Lucas.

ALDER HOCH

Next time I'll have you shot.

Lucas doesn't look at Hoch, but remains transfixed by Peter's body.

He raises his head and looks straight into Sasha's eyes. Lucas quickly drops his head in shame.

Sasha is dragged away by two Soldiers, as she looks around for Alexandra.

SASHA

I love you. Remember I love you!

YOUNG ALEXANDRA

Mama! Mama!

Sasha is pushed onto one of the trucks.

Hoch blows his whistle and the truck departs the camp.

Sasha waves to Alexandra and she waves back, as tears stream down her face.

The whistle blows again and Alexandra is led towards another truck with the other children, as it starts to rain heavy.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)

I lost my family that day. My brother. My mother...

Alexandra watches as Peter's body is dragged away.

The medal slowly falls from his hand. It lands next to the officer's bloodied handkerchief.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)

... Everything.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

ALEXANDRA

Sometimes when I sleep, I can still hear that whistle...

David stares silently at Alexandra through tear filled eyes.

ALEXANDRA

None of us knew the real horror was yet to come.

He tries to write but his hand shakes.

DAVID

Wh... What was it like?

Alexandra looks deep into David's eyes.

ALEXANDRA

Auschwitz?

Alexandra gazes at David with an unfocused stare. She looks past him, she looks through him.

A rapid collection of sounds; screams, children's cries, dogs barking, gunshots. Sounds that convey utter pain and suffering. Sounds that only Alexandra can hear.

Alexandra slowly blinks and the sounds fade.

ALEXANDRA

Worse than you should ever imagine.

David looks shocked as he examines Alexandra's face.

Her expression holds a lifetime of pain and suffering. Her face is now revealed as a tortured soul, haunted by the atrocities she has been forced to witness.

DAVID

Do you hate them? Him?

ALEXANDRA

At first I did. Now I just feel pity... sorrow. It's hard to explain.

David folds his arms.

DAVID

Do you miss him... Peter?

ALEXANDRA

Every single day. He sometimes visits my dreams. I wonder what he would have been like... as a man. But to me he will always be a boy. My little Peter.

DAVID

Sorry that was a stupid question.

ALEXANDRA

No don't apologize David. It was...
is important to remember. For
people like you to tell our
stories. To tell Peter's story.

David smiles as he looks at Alexandra's face. Her expression
now softened by the memory of her brother.

DAVID

I have something for you. I wasn't
sure when to mention it...

David reaches into his pocket and takes out sometime wrapped
in cloth. He unwraps it and hands her the small broken medal.

Alexandra's gasps and starts to cry as she takes it.

EXT. CAMP - MORNING - FLASHBACK/POLAND/1941

The blood stained small broken medal is pounded by heavy
rain. Lucas reaches down for it.

DAVID (V.O.)

He said it had meant so much to the
little boy.

Rain pours down his face as he examines the medal. He looks
at Peter's blood stain, as it washes away in the heavy rain.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

DAVID

Before my grandfather died, he
asked that I try to find the boy's
family.

Alexandra holds the old medal to her lips and kisses it.

ALEXANDRA

It was our Father's medal. He had
been such a proud soldier. Peter
cherished it so much. Thank you...

Alexandra smiles as she grips it tightly.

ALEXANDRA

Thank you.

David drops his pen and wipes his eyes.

DAVID

I'm sorry for my questions. Sorry
for my grandfather. That he was so
weak... Alexandra I...

Alexandra leans forward and grabs both of David's hands.

ALEXANDRA

Don't be foolish David...

EXT. CAMP - MORNING - FLASHBACK/POLAND/1941

Lucas looks down at the blood stain in the mud.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)

He was just a boy.

He removes his rifle and helmet and drops them to the ground.

ALEXANDRA (V.O.)

... What could he have done?

He steps over the rifle and slowly walks away from the camp.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

ALEXANDRA

Some believe this part of our
history is best forgotten. But I
believe what these events taught us
about ourselves... About the evil
of man, needs to be remembered.

Alexandra holds out her arm to show David the tattooed
numbers on her skin.

ALEXANDRA

But there are so few survivors
left...

Seconds continue to tick past on the recorder's display.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)

... I fear these lessons will fade
along with us...

FADE TO BLACK.