

DISCONNECTED

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LOGLINE: A brilliant mathematician faces the unexpected consequences of her own discoveries.

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OPEN ON:

A smudged LAPTOP SCREEN, we're scrolling through endless formulas and numbers. A post-it covers the built-in camera.

On the screen an ALERT abruptly pops up - "Update software?"

INT. ELEGANT MODERN HOME - PRE-DAWN

Pull back to show LAUREN KELLY(40s, business chic with nerdy glasses) hunched in a mathematical trance. Her home office is totally dark except for her laptop's screen glow.

Without reading it, she clicks "OK" on the dialogue box.

She checks the time - 5:25am.

LAUREN  
(kind, but firm)  
Lily! Devon! Five minutes till your  
dad's here!

Lauren expertly toggles between scanning the spreadsheets almost virtuosically and tweaking a presentation entitled "Data Mining Insights."

Racket from the main room - the unhappy sounds of a sibling scuffle. Lauren sighs as running footsteps clomp toward her.

Bursting open the office's door, DEVON (7, sensitive) appears, sleepy-eyed and distraught.

DEVON  
Mom! Lily got Sam all knotted up!

Devon holds out a plush WOLF MARIONETTE PUPPET (Sam) whose strings are very tangled.

Just as Lauren's focus shifts to Devon, a NEW POP UP appears on her screen. This one looks more intense - "**Allow Remote Administrator Access?**"

Lauren gently takes the puppet without noticing the alert.

LAUREN  
Here, let me work on him.

As they talk, Lauren tenderly unknots the toy. The pop up on her screen looms, unseen.

We notice her SMARTPHONE, plugged into her computer, syncing.

DEVON

Is this a long one or a short one?

LAUREN

Today's a short trip - you'll sleep at your dad's tonight because I won't fly home till late, but you're back with me tomorrow.

Finished untangling, Lauren operates the puppet, making the fuzzy wolf do a quick silly dance. Devon beams and manipulates the puppet, making sure it "works."

DEVON

Thanks, mom!

Lauren returns to her work, scans the new alert quickly, and hovers her cursor over "Deny access."

Just then, LILY (4, a ball of energy) bursts in.

LILY

I didn't mean to!

Reacting to Lily, Lauren pivots and accidentally **CLICKS** "Allow access."

Ominous drone music fades up.

LAUREN

I know, honey. Now - get your bags, your father is on his way.

The kids scamper away as Lauren turns back to her screen - a mess of numbers again - and continues working. Then, from the other room...

DEVON (O.S.)

LILLLLLYYY! STOP!

LAUREN

Come on, you guys!

Turing back from addressing the kids, Lauren's screen is dark except for a strange-looking prompt asking for her password.

On autopilot and annoyed, she types the password which shows up as an anonymous string of asterisks. Before hitting enter, she's distracted...

LILY (O.S.)

I'm not doing anything!

Lauren turns toward the noise and her hand leaves her mouse.

LAUREN

You should be getting ready - now!

Suddenly, her **CURSOR MOVES** without her touching it.

A musical sting - the drone sound is now more threatening.

Still unnoticed, the cursor moves and clicks the "show password" button.

Lauren turns to looks out a window - it's drizzling.

As she speaks, the **password** is **fully visible** for a beat.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

And grab your rain jackets!

Seemingly on its own again, the cursor clicks "hide password" just before Lauren looks back at the screen and hits ENTER.

A DOORBELL rings.

An ALERT appears on her phone - it's a fish eye image from a doorbell camera showing a MAN (40s) at the front door.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Your dad's here!

Lauren gets up and leaves. We stay on the computer.

The cursor just blinks.                      And blinks.

Then...

Suddenly a FLURRY of on-screen activity! The cursor whips around. Files begin uploading and downloading.

Dialogue boxes open and close rapidly and some kind of SOFTWARE starts to install.

Lauren's PHONE, still plugged into the laptop, lights up.

We hear the muted shuffle and voices from the main room where the kids are being ushered out the door.

In the office it's now clear that **some outside force has total control** over Lauren's **laptop** and **phone**.

Hurried footsteps. As Lauren reenters the room WE see:

" \*GEPPEPETO\* INSTALLATION COMPLETE ;) "

Just as Lauren turns to sit, the disembodied cursor re-opens the presentation so everything looks undisturbed.

Lauren glances at the screen, then at the clock: 5:45am.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Damn. He's always late.

She unplugs her phone and uses the UBER APP to order a ride to the airport. "Confirmed." Her ride is three minutes away. Lauren taps her laptop shut and slides it into a bag.

We follow as she hastily gathers herself before leaving. We pass numerous **connected devices** - a smart THERMOSTAT and LIGHTS, internet SPEAKERS, wifi CAMERA looking down on a BACKYARD POOL - this place is a technophile's dream home.

Cut to black.

Ominous music fades, we hear traffic splashing through rain.

EXT. AIRPORT - EARLY MORNING

Now looking polished in a full business suit and fresh makeup, Lauren braces against the rain as she steps out of the Uber car. As she does, her phone DROPS, bounces, then splashes into a PUDDLE.

LAUREN

Shit! No!

She snatches her phone from the puddle. Hurrying into the airport, she inspects the phone for damage.

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - A LITTLE LATER

Plopping into her seat (First Class), Lauren inspects her phone one last time - phew, seems fine. She puts it in **airplane mode**, leans back, and lets her eyes close.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

As her eyes close we snap to an unknown dark space. We're looking at a digital map of an airport on some kind of screen. There's a pulsing digital dot that moves to just beyond an airport gate, pauses, and then, the **dot disappears**.

Black again as the music surges.

New traffic sounds fade up.

INT./EXT. AN UBER CAR - LATE MORNING

Hours later, Lauren, now looking a bit weary, is in the back of another Uber in a new sunny location.

The car pulls up to an imposing TECH COMPANY - "ORCHARD, INC." The DRIVER looks very apologetic as Lauren exits.

LAUREN  
(to the Driver)  
It's really OK, have a good day.

EXT. ORCHARD, INC. CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Two enthusiastic GREETERS wearing suits hurry toward Lauren, who perks up as they escort her toward the entrance.

GREETER #1  
Dr. Lauren Kelly, welcome!

LAUREN  
So sorry I'm late - my Uber went to the wrong address.

GREETER #2  
No worries, you're just in time.

LAUREN  
Just...?

GREETER #1  
Didn't you get my messages? They moved up your presentation.

Lauren looks down at her phone - no unread messages.

LAUREN  
What? No. I'm so sorry. I dropped my phone in a puddle this morning, it's been acting a little weird.

GREETER #1  
Sorry, but they moved you up - you start in 15 minutes.

Lauren looks briefly worried, but steels herself.

GREETER #2  
As long as your algorithms are intact, I'm sure you'll be fine!

LAUREN  
 (with a friendly smile)  
 Yeah, luckily math is waterproof.

They all share a smile. Lauren gives her phone a concerned look as they enter the massive corporate headquarters.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

A drone music sting. Again on a screen, the pulsing dot moves into a large building - Lauren is being **tracked** again.

The screen changes, flashing reams of data before us, the kind we saw Lauren examining earlier. Only this is clearly **her personal data** - social security number, phone numbers, addresses, purchases made. Everything about her. Music cuts.

INT. ORCHARD, INC. HEADQUARTERS (AUDITORIUM) - ONE HOUR LATER

Executive-looking, with a quirky bowtie, GREGORY (50s) sits across from Lauren on a large stage. He listens intently, impressed, as Lauren addresses the crowd.

LAUREN  
 Right, Gregory, everyone loves talking about mining "big data" - huge swaths of information about consumer behavior. But it's really about mining deeper data.

Lauren glows with confidence, fully in her element.

Slides projected behind her, she taps her laptop to advance to a slide we saw her tweak earlier - "Data = Power."

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
 (quickly, excited)  
 The deeper the information about a consumer's habits, needs, wants - the more we can aggregate, run regressions, and even let machine learning take the wheel!

GREGORY  
 (attempting a joke)  
 For those of us without Mathematics PhDs from Stanford - what does that... mean?

The hundreds of suit-wearing employees in the audience chuckle along with Lauren and Gregory. They have a friendly rapport and the audience is absolutely with her.

LAUREN  
Haha, yes. Well, it's simple...

GREGORY  
(interrupting, joking)  
Is it...?

LAUREN  
(with a guilty smile)  
...No.  
(slowly, with new weight)  
Big data is just big noise without  
big math.

GREGORY  
Your algorithms...

LAUREN  
Yes. And with the right math, even  
noise starts to sound like music.

Smiles and warm nods of understanding abound. She's crushing.

GREGORY  
Final question - what do you say to  
those who suggest your techniques  
are invasive and could even be used  
to control consumer behavior?

Lauren shifts uneasily and rests a hand near her laptop.

LAUREN  
I love that question, actually. Let  
me put it this way - your mom knows  
all about you, right?

GREGORY  
Maybe not ALL about me.

The audience laughs. Lauren gestures too close to her laptop,  
she accidentally knocks the post-it covering her camera.

LAUREN  
But as a kid - your parents knew  
you better than you knew yourself.

GREGORY  
Sure, I follow - they knew  
everything - all my "data."

LAUREN  
Exactly. And that's why parents are  
able to perfectly control their  
children at all times...?

The audience chuckles, she has made her point. Gregory nods.

Lauren's phone **BUZZES**. She glances down.

A text from an unknown number "**HI LAUREN.**"

Confused, Lauren discretely dismisses the text alert.

The audience is still laughing. Too long. Something is off.

We switch perspectives - soft focus, tinny audio and staring up at Lauren. **We're looking out of her laptop's camera.**

We're back in the room and see Lauren's FACE PROJECTED huge and awkward on the screen behind her.

The audience laughs uncomfortably now as Lauren twists and notices the giant laggy version of herself.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Whoops! Sorry folks!

She leans over and fixes the post-it. Her image disappears.

Lauren laughs, but can't hide that she's a little shaken.

GREGORY

Let's give a hand for Dr. Kelly.

Gregory leads applause. Lauren smiles awkwardly.

INT. ORCHARD, INC. HEADQUARTERS - LATER

"Tech Support" is emblazoned on a wall next to a bar where a friendly TECH SUPPORT WORKER (20s) stands, examining a concerned-looking Lauren's laptop and phone.

TECH SUPPORT WORKER

I wouldn't worry. Usually these glitches go away on their own or after the next OS update. Are you diligent about strong passwords? Two-factor authentication?

LAUREN

Definitely. Always.

TECH SUPPORT WORKER

(re: her laptop)

Then there's no way someone got in here unless you let them in.

Lauren nods appreciatively, looks mostly reassured.

INT. AIRPORT BOARDING GATE - LATE AFTERNOON

Lauren stands in line to board, fiddling with her phone. Something still seems a little off, she's not sure what. She pulls up a digital BOARDING PASS on her phone.

She shuffles ahead and places her phone on the SCANNER. A BUZZING sound. Red lights. She tries again. Same result.

Lauren looks at the GATE AGENT, confused. The ominous music returns.

GATE AGENT

Sorry, ma'am, your boarding pass was **already scanned**.

Lauren's face drops. For the first time, she's scared.

GATE AGENT (CONT'D)

Could another member of your party have mistakenly used yours?

LAUREN

No, I'm... alone.

GATE AGENT

Name, please?

Lauren begins looking around apprehensively. It was not all in her head. **SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG.**

QUICK CUTS:

Seconds later - we see the Agent print a paper boarding pass.

In the JETWAY, Lauren cranes to examine other passengers.

In the front of the PLANE she looks toward her seat. Looks down at her ticket. Looks back to her seat. PANIC.

A MENACING MAN.

Bulky athletic build, sunglasses, 50s. He's sitting in what is definitely her seat scowling towards Lauren.

Sound desaturates and we only hear Lauren's breath and the escalating drone music now.

Wide-eyed, Lauren breathes heavily, woozy. Wobbles forward.

Arriving at her row, in a terrified whisper, she asks the man...

LAUREN

What do you... want?

MENACING MAN  
A fucking martini.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT swoops in.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Sir! I asked you to take your seat.

The Flight Attendant points toward coach. The man moves.

Lauren looks RELIEVED, but drained, tries to shake it off.

INT./EXT. AN UBER CAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Exhausted after her flight, in the back of yet another car, Lauren double checks the route in the app. It's correct.

She shakes her head, maybe it was all in her imagination.

The car pulls up to her dark house. She smiles weakly toward the driver, walks to her front door and types in the code on a keyless entry pad. It whirs as the DEADBOLT unlocks.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

On the creepy screen - Lauren's tracking dot arrives home.

INT. LAUREN'S HOME (KITCHEN) - MOMENTS LATER

Exhausted, glass of wine in hand, Lauren leans against her kitchen island, scrolling through emails on her laptop.

She's cold. She goes to the thermostat, it's set at 52. Weird. She clicks it up to 70. A tiny beat.

Then the thermostat's digital face flashes "manual override" and the temp drops. Lauren has no patience for this. She twists it up to 70 again. The temp drops again, she throws her hands in the air, and walks back to her laptop.

The lights dim on their own. She doesn't notice because she's staring at her laptop.

**A word processing DOCUMENT has opened.** In huge letters it says **"HI LAUREN."**

Lauren looks at it with a start. Drops her glass of wine. It SHATTERS on the floor.

TERROR on her face, Lauren frantically looks at her computer, at her phone, at the thermostat.

Wide-eyed and sweating, she has finally put together the connection between the day's tech "glitches."

LAUREN  
(meek whisper)  
What? Who's there?

More text appears: "Devon... and Lily."

Lauren's phone PINGS a doorbell camera alert which shows a PICTURE OF HER KIDS out front.

More writing appears in the DOCUMENT: "I'll let them in."

We hear the WHIR of the front door's deadbolt unlocking.

The kids burst in, behind them we see a car (driven by their Dad) backing out of the driveway.

LILY  
Mommy! We couldn't wait to see you  
either!

DEVON  
Dad said you sounded really mad!

Lauren is too stunned to move. Suddenly she comes to.

LAUREN  
(frantic)  
Stay back! Mommy dropped a glass!  
GO TO THE CAR, NOW!

The kids, confused, automatically react to her panicked tone and slink towards the garage. Lauren gathers herself.

More text appears in the document: "I may have sent some messages on your behalf. Your ex is PISSED. Also. You just took out a new mortgage. In Singapore."

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
What do you want!? Stop this!

DOCUMENT: "NO. How does it feel to have YOUR data used against you? How does it feel to be MY puppet?"

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
I don't know you! LEAVE ME ALONE!

DOCUMENT: "But you know everything about me."

Still on her laptop screen, an image POPS UP - a screen shot of data Lauren studied earlier.

DOCUMENT: This was Me. But now I control YOU.

Lauren's smart speaker starts BLARING "I've Got No Strings" from the movie *Pinocchio*.

**LAUREN HAS FINALLY HAD IT.** She violently yanks the smart speaker from the wall, silencing it. She SLAMS the laptop shut, grabs it and her phone and rushes away!

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Lauren flies outside to the concrete patio ringing the pool. She throws the phone and laptop to the ground and STOMPS. CRUNCH. CRUNCH. She KICKS the smashed devices into the water.

INT. LAUREN'S CAR - SECONDS LATER

Kids belted in back, Lauren frantically backs out of the driveway. She peels away, the front door still hanging open.

Hard to black.

Drone music surges. A beat. Silence.

INT. MODEST OLDER HOME - MONTHS LATER

In a warm, wood-trimmed home office, Lauren, looking more relaxed than we've ever seen, sits down at a new laptop.

She pauses. Her face stiffens slightly as she logs in - using a fingerprint scanner, carefully following security prompts.

A cautious beat after logging in - yes, everything is normal. She nods approval and relaxes, her whole face smiling.

A jubilant kid RUCKUS emanates from the adjacent living area.

Lauren smiles mischievously... and heads to join the fun.

We stay on her unattended computer.

The cursor just blinks.       And blinks.

And then...       ever so slightly...

...it moves.

Hard to black.

THE END.