

SHORE SCRIPTS

COVERAGE REPORT

Title:
Writer:
Form: Short Film
Length: 6 pages
Genre: Sci-Fi

Location:
Circa: The future
Budget: Low
Coverage Date:
Reader:

Logline: A teenager tries to impress his parents with news about a job opportunity playing a virtual reality game.

Grading/Verdict:

	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
PREMISE	X			
STORY		X		
CHARACTERS			X	
STRUCTURE		X		
DIALOGUE			X	
MARKETABILITY		X		

COMMENTS:

Premise

The plot is hugely current, with advancements in VR technology spurring a resurgence of interest in RPG themed stories, standing this script in very good stead. Shorts often rely on a strong plot twist or reveal to create a memorable impact, and you have a good one here. The play on reality works well but the reveal that the dining room scenes are actually the virtual reality moments perhaps need a little bit more explanation to create a more powerful conclusion. If the dining room scenes are VR, there's the indication that that the supermarket scenes are real life, but there's a few questions that the viewers may be asking here. If the supermarket is real life, why is Nolan using a VR device when he's in the middle of a shoot out? Even if he's using the VR helmet after the shooting, it still seems like a strange (and unsafe) place to be using it. Is the helmet in the bag the thing he's been looking for and finds when "He stops. Finds something" on p1? If so, this is something you need to make more clear as it's a pivotal moment that helps explain a lot of things.

Would it be worth including any small clues as to what is really going on within the dining room scenes? Could you be making the two worlds more connected in some way? Again, it comes back to making things more visual. Could there be any items that feature in both worlds? Could something on the supermarket shelf ignite Nolan's memory? Would showing us that the meal that Nolan's being served is something he's greatly missed be one way to subtly hint that he's looking back from the present etc.? When Nolan's time runs out when he's using the helmet, he's clearly upset at being torn away from his parents, but do you also need to show us that he's revelling in their company a little, while he's with them too?

Character

The dining room scene does well to create a familiar environment that none of us will suspect as being out of the ordinary. Clearly, it's not only a comforting memory of home but it's the moment when Nolan makes his parents proud of him. The video game conversation not only throws us off the scent, it's provides a nice parallel to the premise too. There's some nice subtle conflict between Mum and Dad and Nolan is a relatable and likeable teen. Remember that scenes are usually shot out of sequence so try to be more specific when telling us who's in a scene. Take "He pulls:" on p5 for example. Make sure the members of a production crew know exactly who "He" is by changing it to "Nolan".

Dialogue

The dialogue works well to portray an ordinary, naturalistic dinner conversation between a teenager and his parents, but there's still room to trim out a few lines that although add to the realism, are still characters talking just for the sake of talking. "Yeah" is a prime example of this and it's something that could potentially be removed and/or be replaced by a look (you already have Dad "eyeballing" his wife on p2). Are there any lines that if removed, wouldn't really harm the plot? If so consider cutting them. Also watch out for characters repeating words unnecessarily. "Yeah", "What?" and "Right" are again, not really moving the story forward, so are also potential cuts.

Structure/Pace

At present, the story paces out very neatly with the major reveal coming in at the best possible place. Placing the titles at the end of the script is also effective and works well to indicate that this short may be an introduction or appetiser to a bigger piece. While six pages is a good length, aim to get this script down to five pages if possible, not just to tighten the story but to access some short festivals that offer a discount for shorter pieces. Cutting back on the use of parentheticals is one way to help trim the script down,

as you'll find that many, if not all of them, aren't particularly needed. "(placing the cooking pot on the table)" on p1 for instance, is an action direction that needs to be written in the scene description rather than in a parenthetical. "(screams)" could easily be indicated by writing your dialogue in capitals and is already implied with the use of an exclamation mark. Instances such as "(excited)" and "(bugged)" are emotions that are also already implied by the context of the conversation, while instructions such as "(talk-to-your-son-like)" are more confusing than helpful, so look to remove as many of the parentheticals as you can.

Conclusion

This short could easily be a teaser at the beginning of a pilot TV episode, making it appeal to producers by showing that your concept has legs. Very minor adjustments are needed here. Remove any unnecessary dialogue and reword sentences so there are no lines with just one or two words to try and reach a five-page script. Possibly highlight the *mise en scène* to link both realities more visually together. And create a clearer picture regarding this post-apocalyptic futuristic world. Show us why Nolan is willing to put himself in danger to grab a few minutes in the VR helmet and why he chooses that particular dinner scene to go back to.