

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

SIGNAL LOST

3 Male (M + M + M) | Genre: Sci-Fi/High-Concept | Runtime: 6 - 9 Mins

OFFICIAL STORY LOGLINE: A remote observatory's night shift turns into a temporal trap when a mysterious signal begins predicting the crew's own words, revealing a warning from their future selves about a transmission that could erase them. As the room closes in around them, three men must decide whether to trust logic, fear, or the desperate voice coming through the speaker.
DIRECTOR'S DRAMATIC VISION & TONAL CONCEPT: • Visual tone: claustrophobic sci-fi realism, with a metallic, lived-in control room that feels more like a sealed organism than a workplace. • Thematic depth: fate versus free will, the terror of receiving a warning too late, and the emotional shift from scientific certainty to human trust. • Pacing: slow-burn tension at first, then escalating interruptions, then a sharp reveal cascade, ending in a quiet, unsettling freeze. • Performance style: restrained, naturalistic reactions that gradually fracture into fear, disbelief, and reluctant belief. • Camera language: observational at first, then increasingly intrusive as the signal becomes personal and impossible to ignore. • Atmosphere: monitor glow, blinking LEDs, moonlight slashes, and silence used as a threat rather than relief.
CAST AT A GLANCE & CHARACTER ARCS: • character: Dr. Ishan Rao age: 42 look: Rumpled shirt, tired eyes, scientist's fatigue, grounded and slightly disheveled from long hours. dramatic_arc: Begins as the rational anchor of the room, then confronts evidence that breaks his scientific certainty, and finally chooses trust over logic when he becomes the one who must act. • character: Neil age: 34 look: Practical jumpsuit, grease-stained hands, physically active and technical, always in motion around the console. dramatic_arc: Starts as the hands-on problem solver, moves into defensive disbelief, and ends in stunned helplessness as the room's systems become part of the threat. • character: Vivek age: 29 look: Casual jacket, skeptical expression, headphones around the neck, coffee mug in hand, dry and observant. dramatic_arc: Begins as the sarcastic skeptic, then gets unnerved when the signal targets him directly, and finally becomes genuinely afraid of what the future is trying to prevent.
FESTIVAL & AUDIENCE TARGET: Ideal for Short Film Festivals, Indie Showcases, and YouTube Creator Channels. Focus on tight performances, sound design, and authentic Hinglish dialogue delivery.

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ART, WARDROBE & PROP MASTER

1. SET DESIGN & SPATIAL DEPTH PLAN: The control room should feel dense, cramped, and technologically overgrown, like a metallic cave packed with radios, screens, signal logs, cables, and a coffee mug that becomes a key story object. Build layered depth with foreground cable tangles, midground consoles, and background monitors so the room feels visually crowded from every angle. Surfaces should be brushed metal, worn plastic, dusty glass, and slightly oily control panels. The narrow window must cut a thin moonlit line across the room, emphasizing isolation. Equipment lights should blink irregularly to create visual rhythm. The space should allow actors to move in tight paths around the console, under the desk, and between stacked equipment, reinforcing the sense of confinement.
2. COSTUME & WARDROBE CONTINUITY: • character: Dr. Ishan Rao costume: Rumpled shirt with a tired, end-of-shift look; sleeves slightly worn from long use. continuity_notes: Shirt should remain visibly wrinkled and unchanged through the scene; no wardrobe reset that breaks the overnight realism. • character: Neil costume: Practical jumpsuit suited for technical maintenance work, with grease on the hands and a utilitarian feel. continuity_notes: Grease-stained hands must remain consistent, especially during console work and the mug/key reveal. • character: Vivek costume: Casual jacket with a skeptical, off-duty night-shift vibe; headphones around the neck, radio headset used when needed. continuity_notes: Headphones start off the neck and are put on after the signal addresses him; keep this progression clear.
3. HERO PROPS MASTER CHECKLIST (PRACTICAL ON-SET ASSETS): • prop: Tablet details: Held by Ishan, used to scan deep-space signal logs and later reveal the hidden indicator; screen must show waveform and log interface. • prop: Satellite console details: Physical workstation under and around which Neil checks cables; should look functional, worn, and packed with switches. • prop: Cables details: Numerous visible cables across the room and under the console, creating a cluttered technical environment. • prop: Radio headset / headphones details: Vivek's headphones sit around his neck before he puts them on; headset is part of the frequency-monitoring setup. • prop: Coffee mug details: Plain mug on the control room surface; the key is hidden underneath it and must be physically lifted to reveal the object. • prop: Tiny metal key details: Old manual override key stuck under the mug; label must read TRANSMISSION LOCK. • prop: Signal logs details: Physical or digital logs on the tablet/screen, including the old six-month-old entry with the handwritten note. • prop: Satellite maps details: Displayed on Neil's screen to show the signal bouncing from a dead satellite cluster.
4. PRACTICAL SFX & MAKEUP (MUA): Keep makeup naturalistic and fatigue-driven: under-eye shadows, slight skin dullness, and subtle sweat from the enclosed room. Ishan should look mentally strained with a pale, shaken reaction when he recognizes his own handwriting. Neil should have grease on hands and a slightly sweaty technical-work look. Vivek should transition from dry skepticism to visible unease, with facial tension and widened eyes as the signal targets him. No heavy SFX required; the main effect is emotional distress reflected through skin sheen, blinking, and breath control. Lighting should react on faces with monitor glow and moonlight to enhance pallor and contrast.

ACTOR MASTERCLASS & HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES

STORYDILSE PRODUCTION BIBLE

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ACTORS & CASTING DIRECTOR

STANISLAVSKI SUBTEXT & CHARACTER DRIVERS:

- **Dr. Ishan Rao:** {'super_objective': 'To understand the signal scientifically and protect the team from the unknown.', 'subtext': 'He wants certainty, but the evidence forces him to confront that knowledge may not save them; beneath his calm is fear of being unable to control the outcome.'}
- **Neil:** {'super_objective': 'To fix the system and keep the observatory operational.', 'subtext': 'He trusts mechanics and procedure, but each new revelation makes his practical confidence collapse into helplessness.'}
- **Vivek:** {'super_objective': 'To survive the shift without being dragged into something irrational.', 'subtext': 'He hides fear behind sarcasm, but once the signal speaks directly to him, his jokes become a defense against genuine panic.'}

CANONICAL HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES (CLIMACTIC SCENE):

VIVEK*((dry))*

Agar aaj bhi same static nikla na, main resign kar dunga.

NEIL*((without looking up))*

Tu har raat resign karta hai.

SIGNAL*((V.O.))*

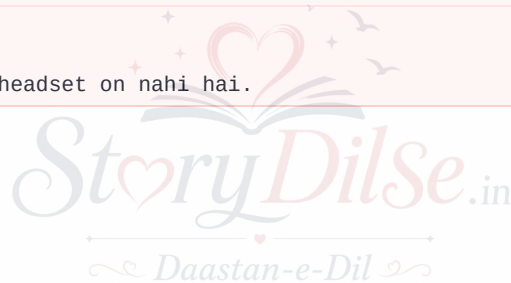
Neil, left relay ko mat chhedna.

NEIL*((startled))*

Maine chhedna bhi nahi hai.

SIGNAL*((V.O.))*

Vivek, abhi joke mat kar. Tumhara headset on nahi hai.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: CINEMATOGRAPHY & SOUND DEPT

1. CINEMATOGRAPHY CONCEPT & LENS PALETTE:

Use a restrained, intimate camera style with 35mm and 50mm lenses for most dialogue coverage to preserve realism and claustrophobia. Favor medium close-ups, over-the-shoulders, and tight inserts on screens, hands, the mug, and the key. Begin with mostly static framing and subtle push-ins; as the signal escalates, introduce slower creeping dolly moves and slight handheld instability to mirror psychological destabilization. Keep compositions layered with foreground cables and equipment to trap the characters visually inside the frame. Reserve the most dramatic close-ups for the handwriting reveal, the key under the mug, and the final silent freeze.

2. 3-TIER LIGHTING SCHEMATIC:

Tier 1: Establishment - monitor glow as the key base, with practical blinking LEDs and a thin moonlight slash through the narrow window; overall cool, low-key, and metallic.

Tier 2: Signal escalation - increase contrast on faces using screen spill and selective edge light; let the room feel more hostile as shadows deepen and the monitors become more dominant.

Tier 3: Final reveal and blackout - brief dimming of practicals during the key turn, then monitors go black and the room falls into near-total darkness, leaving only residual moonlight and the dark speaker presence.

3. SOUND DESIGN & FOLEY ATMOSPHERE:

Build a constant acoustic bed of fan hum, equipment buzz, radio static, and faint room tone. The signal should enter as a distorted burst, then become unnervingly clear with delayed, layered voices. Use silence as a weapon after the key turn, with the door lock thunk and the final whisper landing in near-empty space. Foley should emphasize mug lift, key scrape, console clicks, cable rustle, and the metallic lock engagement.

4. COLOR GRADING LUT & PALETTE:

Use a cool, desaturated LUT with steel blues, monitor greens, and muted gray-black shadows. Skin tones should remain slightly pallid under screen light, with occasional cold highlights from moonlight. The signal moments can carry a subtle cyan-white intensity, while the final blackout should crush the image into deep blacks with only minimal residual highlights.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: PRODUCER & LINE MANAGEMENT

TIME	ACTIVITY / SCENE BLOCK	KEY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED
08:00 - 09:30	Load-in, art dressing, cable layout, monitor placement	Art, Grip, Camera
09:30 - 11:00	Lighting rig and practicals test for monitor glow, LEDs, and moonlight slash	G&E;, Camera
11:00 - 12:00	Blocking with actors around console, under-desk, and mug/key positions	Director, Camera, Cast
12:00 - 13:30	Shoot dialogue setup and signal interruption beats	Camera, Sound, Cast
13:30 - 15:00	Shoot reveal inserts: handwriting, satellite maps, key under mug, hidden room indicator	Camera, Props, Art
15:00 - 16:30	Shoot final key turn, blackout, lock thunk, and whisper ending	Camera, Sound, G&E;, Cast

LOCATION HACK & BUDGET SAVING TIPS:

Use one highly dressed room and vary tension through lighting, lensing, and sound instead of multiple locations. Build the control room density with borrowed cables, old electronics, and layered practical props. Simulate monitor content with simple screen graphics and playback rather than custom VFX-heavy builds. Keep the signal voice effect minimal and eerie rather than expensive. Shoot the final blackout with practical dimming and sound design instead of visual effects. Prioritize strong performances and precise inserts over elaborate sci-fi set pieces.

• **Mandatory Licensing:** Completely free for student/commercial production with on-screen credit: 'Story & Screenplay by Story Dil Se (storydilse.in)'.

