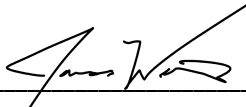


Those Who Remain (2024)

by

Amelie Nail & Christabel Green

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation as an Honors Scholar at Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California on 11 March, 2024.

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Date ____ 11 March 2024 _____

Those Who Remain: A Student Short Film

By

Amelie Nail & Christabel Green

An Honors Scholars Project

Point Loma Nazarene University

April 2024

Abstract

This Honors Scholar project is a fifteen-minute short film that examines paranoia and loss of identity via the genre of a supernatural thriller. Created by following the three stages of filmmaking – conceptualization in pre-production, material production, and editing through post-production – *Those Who Remain (2024)* represents college students trying to figure out the strange events that have been happening in their personal lives. The process in which this film was created was identical to a standard professional film production including the use of professional organizational documents, software, and technical equipment. This project was completed after spending a semester studying with the film studies adjunct program, the Los Angeles Film Studies Center, which prepared the filmmakers with the materials necessary to make short films with professional standards in terms of pre-production, production, and post-production.

Summary

Those Who Remain is a 15-minute short thriller film that follows Allison Kline, a college student whose life is suddenly turned upside down. She lives with her two roommates, Lauren, an unwilling and self-centered nursing student, and Shelby, a bubbly chatterbox. Allison comes home from a date with her recent boyfriend, Caden, to find Shelby unconscious in front of the bathroom mirror. Allison and Lauren try to wake her, only for Shelby to suddenly regain consciousness and completely disregard her roommates in a strange fashion. Shelby gets a nosebleed and looks at her reflection in the mirror “claiming she’s just fine” and exits. Two days later, Allison talks to Caden about how strange Shelby has been acting since the incident, claiming her personality feels completely forced and disjointed. Caden suggests they might be

the effects of brain trauma and recommends getting her to a doctor. Back at the house, Allison asks Lauren if anything strange happened to Shelby before she lost consciousness and Lauren remarks that earlier that night Shelby said the reflection in her room wasn't following her.

Allison begins to call health clinics to see if she could make an appointment for a friend but is denied help. Her suspicion that something is "off" with Shelby only grows as she witnesses her strange obsession with mirrors and unusual behavior. Allison goes to the school library to research psychological conditions that could be related to Shelby's erratic behavior. In her search, she reads an Reddit article about someone's reflection not following them in the mirror, realizing that this may be a shared experience for some. Back at the house, Lauren comes home and begins her chores. While cleaning in front of the bathroom mirror, she realizes her reflection isn't following her. The reflection smiles at her before grabbing her hand from the mirror.

Allison returns home to find Lauren in a trancelike state in front of the mirror in her room. Recognizing that there's something terribly wrong, Allison tries to leave the house but runs into Shelby who calmly reveals that she isn't really Shelby, just a "mimic" of her, and soon the same fate will befall Allison and the rest of the world. Allison leaves in a panic and goes to Caden's house, who's a skeptic of her story. He lets her use the guest bedroom and as Allison falls asleep, a hand begins to emerge from a covered mirror in the corner of the room.

The next day, Allison and Caden have lunch together, where an unusually receptive Allison claims that everything she told him the night before was a misunderstanding. Caden leaves to get more food and Allison watches him leave, blood running from her nose, revealing she's met the same fate as her roommates.

Pre-Production

Pre-production is the very first stage in creating a film as it consists of each step a filmmaker needs to take before the first day of shooting in the production phase. This step encompasses writing and finalizing the screenplay, scouting and contacting locations, acquiring actors and crew, storyboarding and creating the film schedule, and lastly, gathering equipment. This project's pre-production phase began in June of 2023 and lasted until November of 2023.

Finalizing the Screenplay- Amelie began writing the first draft of the fifteen-page screenplay in June with the Hollywood-standard professional screenwriting software, Final Draft 12. While writing, she revolved her story choices around the resources she and Christabel had available to them as student filmmakers. She set the story in accessible locations with college students as all of the characters to make the film manageable to produce. From June through October, she took the script through seven different drafts after receiving feedback from the committee and her director to ensure the script was polished and ready to be produced. Some of the changes included removing scenes, changing dialogue, and even the removal of an entire character. The final draft was finished two weeks before the first day of filming.

Scouting and Contacting Locations- As producers, Amelie and Christabel began the process of scouting locations in July to find the best and most accessible locations to film in. The locations required by the script were: a college campus, a library, a beach, and a private household. The producers contacted Point Loma Nazarene University and received permission to film on campus and within the library. They also contacted the city of San Diego to acquire permission to film on

Shelter Island beach. Lastly, they contacted a private residence for permission to film a three-day shoot. All locations were secured by October of 2023, two weeks before filming.

Acquiring Actors and Crew- Starting in September of 2023, Amelie and Christabel began spreading casting and crew calls around their campus by designing and posting informational posters, advertising in campus wide newsletters, posting calls for cast and crew on social media, as well as sending out an announcement to fellow film students who may be interested in gaining experience with acting and being a part of the film crew. This production was reserved solely for students of Point Loma Nazarene University to inspire future Point Loma filmmakers so the producers tried to reach the maximum number of students possible through these advertising efforts. This was a challenging process as there were not many students that were interested in acting, but a cast was primarily secured two weeks prior to filming.

Storyboarding and Film Schedule- The process of storyboarding began in September of 2023. There were a total of twenty-one scenes and one-hundred and thirteen shots in the entire short film, therefore Amelie and Christabel drew one-hundred and thirteen storyboards. Storyboarding is a process often skipped in student films, but is a crucial element of filmmaking as it visualizes the film before production begins and helps maximize time on set. The producers began creating the film schedule in August of 2023, even before the script was finalized, in order to get a head start on organizing the shots. The film schedule included a detailed list of what scenes will be shot on which days, in which locations, and with what characters to ensure time was maximized on set. In addition to the film schedule, they created a multitude of documents to ensure organization such as a project schedule, a script breakdown, audition forms, a master shot list, a

master sound list, and call sheets for each day of production. They finished storyboarding in October of 2023 and completed the film schedule and additional documents a week before production.

Gathering Equipment- Gathering equipment consisted of the production designer, Amelie, designing the costumes, set, and props for the film and researching the least expensive ways to acquire those materials as this film did not have a budget at the time. She began this process in September of 2023 and gathered all of her materials by November of 2023, one week before filming. In this process, Amelie and Christabel additionally rented out camera and audio equipment from the school's media resources for the two weekends of filming and secured it the night before the first day of production.

Production

Production is the second phase of filmmaking and the most labor intensive stage. Each day of filming consisted of three steps: setting up the shots, scenes, and location, filming the scenes, and tearing down the equipment and sets. The production phase lasted four days in November 2023 and December 2023, with each day ranging from fourteen to sixteen hours.

Setting Up- Each day of production, every crew and cast member prepared for the “first picture,” which is the first shot the camera films. As the production designer, Amelie readied the set with props, costuming, and other artistic aspects bringing the film to life. The cinematographer and camera assistants (AC1, AC2) built the camera configuration and positioned the lights. The audio operator put together their field recorder and mics and the first

assistant director prepared the cast for filming. At this point, the director, Christabel, would give her final instructions and checks to ensure everything is in place. Traveling to the locations is included in the set-up process. There were four locations in total that needed to be traversed as discussed in pre-production. Day one of filming consisted of all four locations: “the school campus” (the balcony in front of PLNU Crill Music Hall), “the library” (a study room in PLNU Ryan’s Library), “the beach” (Shelter Island, CA), and “a household” (a private residence in El Cajon, CA). The following three production days remained solely at the El Cajon location. Therefore, with this being a PLNU centric cast and crew who resided in Point Loma, CA, many students had to travel forty to sixty minutes to film. The set up time also included the time between shots and scenes that were taken to reposition and change certain elements, such as the camera angle, lighting, or set design. With all these steps to complete, set-up was estimated to collectively last three to four hours each day.

Filming- Filming occurs when the clapboard is clapped and the director calls action. Each shot requires vocal setup by the director, first assistant director, cinematographer, and audio operator, ensuring that cameras and microphones are recording. This prompts the actors to begin their rehearsed scenes and will roll the scene until the director calls “cut,” queuing visual and audio recordings to stop. The assistant camera two will take notes on the specific shot, and the script supervisor will keep an eye for continuity if or when the shot is reset. This production followed all of these steps, therefore this repeated process took about twelve to fourteen hours each day.

Tear Down- This step consisted of packing all the equipment, props, and other materials away to either be prepared for filming the next day or to be returned to the PointTV Studio. This process was estimated to collectively take one to two hours each film day.

Post-Production

Post-production is the last phase of filmmaking. This is where all of the editing occurs and any final loose ends are dealt with. This last step consists of reviewing the footage, creating a rough draft of the film, having a test screening, producing a final cut, communicating with the composer, as well as final producer tasks. The post-production phase for this project lasted from December 2023 to March 2024.

Reviewing Footage- After the last film shoot in December, the editor, Christabel, reviewed footage and audio from over four-hundred and fifty files. She developed on the AC2's notes from the set and labeled each file for easy access in editing.

Rough Cut Editing- Using Adobe Premiere Pro, Christabel made four versions of the rough cut in preparation for the test screening. The first initial edit of the fifteen minute film took sixty hours to create and each sequential version took six to ten hours. The editing process is incredibly detail oriented, precise, and technical, as attention needs to be paid to both visual and audio aspects. The visuals had to be color graded to ensure each shot was congruent with the former. Adobe After Effects was additionally used for two specific special effects: green-screen and split-screen. Green-screen is an effect that uses program processing to create an empty space wherever there is solid green coloring to allow a cut out/overlaying of one picture on top

another. This effect was used in the film when Allison, one of the characters, stares at her reflection in the water. The second effect, split-screen, is a tool that uses pieces of two or more clips. This was used for Lauren, another character, when her reflection moves differently than her own. To achieve this shot, half of one shot and half of another were lined up and combined into one clip. Moving to audio, the phone calls in the film have an effect used in Premiere's "Essential Sound" window that transforms an audio recording to one that appears to be "over the phone." Other editing processes and effects with audio include audio leveling, finding sound effects to create artificial sounds not in filmed scenes, and using reverb and diffusion effects on some of the voices to make them echoed or compressed. The total span of editing ranged from December 2023 to February 2024.

Test Screening- A test screening is the best way for a filmmaker to know the aspects of their film that works and does not. On February 22, 2023, a test screening in the ARC at PLNU occurred. About twenty people attended and were asked to take a survey in response to the film that asked questions such as rating specific aspects like "pacing". These greatly helped the producers in the editing and decision process of their film as it allowed them to see what were effective decisions they made in the filmmaking and editing process.

Final Cut Editing- From the test screening in February 2024 to March 2024, six versions of the final cut were made. Each cut was reviewed extensively by the producer, Amelie, and the scholars' committee to create the best final cut for the Honor's Scholar Conference on April 12th, 2024.

Communicating with the Composer- *Those Who Remain (2024)* includes a composed score by PLNU students Michaela Schuler and Aiden De Guzman. Throughout the post-production process, Amelie and Christabel sent cuts to the composers to produce the best possible music score. A picture lock (where the visual aspect of the film is permanently set) was completed after the test screening which allowed the composers access to the concrete timing of the film. Once a final cut of visuals and audio levels was set, the composers were able to finish their piece. Their physical composition work for post-production began from January 2024 to March 2024.

Final Producer Tasks- In the post-production phase, Amelie, as a producer, finalized all aspects of the film administratively. This meant contacting crew and cast, advertising for the test screening, communicating with the mentor (Dr. James Wicks) and committee members (Dr. Breeann Kirby & Prof. Nathan Gibbs) for the project, and other administrative tasks. This consisted of the total four month span of post-production.

Conclusion

Those Who Remain (2024) took a total of ten months to complete and just over \$200 to produce out of pocket since school equipment was borrowed. It achieved the goal of maintaining a PLNU-centric cast and crew and hoped to inspire other filmmakers at PLNU to pursue an honor's project level of visual-audio storytelling. As Christianity has historically been viewed as a faith tradition that views the horror film genre with disdain, this film intends to effectively cross divisive boundaries as this is a horror film created, produced, and premiered at a Christian university. The film was also made completely by human hands and completely excluded the use

of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at a time when the boundaries of AI in film production are still being defined.

The fifteen minute film premiered at the PLNU Honors Scholars Conference April 12th, 2024. As of April 2024, the film is going through its 2024-2025 film festival run allowing Amelie and Christabel a start to their filmmaking careers. The film had already been accepted and premiered in April at the film festival “SonScreen” and they plan to send it to at least six more festivals, as of now, centering on horror and student film genres.

Link to the Film: <https://youtu.be/Kh5hqzClAS8>

Notice: Viewing is not to be shared publicly. Must remain privately between family and friends