

21 DAYS - SCRIPT NOTES

LOGLINE

After receiving a government letter predicting the day of his death, a computer engineer must find how to save his life before time runs out.

CHARACTERS

- **Olav** feels like a workaholic and not very likable. It's okay, but we need to care a little bit for this guy as an audience. Otherwise, if he dies – who cares, right? He can be a good friend, a loving boyfriend, a dedicated son... whatever you want to make him. But he needs to do something that makes us feel he deserves to live. Suppose Olav is too narrow-minded and focused on solving problems with the computer. In that case, you need to counterbalance this with Tania's creativity. At the moment, he's calling all the shots.
- **Tania's** character seemed a bit passive on the page. If her boyfriend will die in X days, she needs to worry more and try to help him -- especially if she's a nurse! Either she's a very resourceful, incredibly skilled nurse, knows people inside the government, or ... she doesn't like him at all and wants Olav to die. If this is the case, it would be interesting to think of a new dramatic role for Tania. It could be revenge, he cheated, and she wants to kill him, or she's a gov. agent, and her job is to make sure people die after receiving the letters. Or maybe she is part of the VR gang, and she's just playing the game and winning... just throwing some ideas at you...
- **Raj** doesn't appear physically in the script. He calls Olav, but we also don't hear his voice. I think you don't need him at all. What is his role? Is he helping Olav in what way?
- The **Doctor** serves the plot, but I think there's room to dig deeper. If Tania is a nurse, he probably knows her? Do they work in the hospital together? Are they plotting against Olav? Or are they legitimately trying to help? Either way... you can add a mysterious flair to his character by increasing his dramatic role. Feels better than Raj, in my opinion. It's not bad to have a triangle -- Olav, Tania, Doctor -- it increases the power dynamics between characters, resulting in more conflict and drama.

PLOT & STRUCTURE

We start with a bang when Olav tries to commit suicide. The first sequence is about a guy who doesn't want to live. The second is about a guy who wants to live. It's too much of a change without enough exposition. You could start with a bang but make Olav read the letter in the beginning, so we know what's going on! It will clarify his problem to the audience and his "want": find why and how to survive. Also, eighteen days to live feels "long". Why not make the ticking clock more urgent? For example, if he arrives home after a trip away, he would have a stack of unopened envelopes from the last months or weeks. So when he reads the Gov. Letter, Olav has only one day left. It raises the stakes and makes the situation much worse for the protagonist. Your first act should introduce your protagonist and his problems. Why is this letter so bad? What's the government's role? You can also think about the VR storyline here too... give us a hint of this big brother world.

The second act starts when Olav and Tania leave the hospital. We understand his challenge and what he must pursue. Here is where you show how Olav is tackling the problem in his own way. He's a computer whizz, so he discovers how he will die but what else? Maybe the problem is much bigger? He finds inside information on what the government is working on? The VR thing? It's a small win, and he's confident that he has a plan to save his own life, BUT something must go wrong right after that! The heart attack in the hospital is too predictable. Olav needs to struggle more so Tania can come in and help him with her own skills and ways of dealing with the problem. If Olav recognizes the importance of his girlfriend and that there are other ways of fixing his problems, his mindset starts to change OR not – he could still behave selfishly and remain the same afterwards. But this choice needs to be clear for him and the audience.

The third act starts with Olav thinking he beat his own death. But he's wrong... why? Because he didn't change his attitude towards life, big brother or gov. Surveillance. In fact, he can't change, right? If he is a chess piece in a game, he cannot control his destiny. So how can we get a sense of that? How does a protagonist who thinks he has control over his life end up being just a cog in the big brother machinery? The masturbation and his death felt a bit forced. The fine printing revelation on the letter about the day of his death not being accurate displays a glitch in the machine. And he missed that. The computer expert didn't see that coming. We also have the revelation that the whole thing is a game someone is playing. Unless you want the film to be a series pilot or prototype, I think you need to close the end. That means trying to answer these questions.