

AN ORIGINAL SCIENCE-FICTION FEATURE

9998

STUDIO SUBMISSION PACKAGE

Written by Lawrence Ligad Jr.

In a future where reincarnation has become state-controlled infrastructure, a man carrying the archived pattern of its inventor awakens as an anomalous 9,998th iteration and must decide whether inherited memory determines identity before an immortal ruler collapses humanity's consciousness into himself.

Elevated science fiction | 85-page feature | Development package

Project Overview

TITLE 9998

FORMAT Original science-fiction feature screenplay

GENRE Elevated science fiction / emotional thriller

LENGTH 85 pages

SETTING Chronos City, Earth, year 9998—with authenticated memories reaching back to 8122

Logline

In a future where reincarnation has become state-controlled infrastructure, a man carrying the archived pattern of its inventor awakens as an anomalous 9,998th iteration and must decide whether inherited memory determines identity before an immortal ruler collapses humanity's consciousness into himself.

The Commercial Hook

9998 turns the question “What survives death?” into a human-scale pursuit. The Chronocracy preserves memory, grows replacement bodies and assigns identities—but Kerr wakes unable to accept the life chosen for him. His search for the woman appearing in his drawings becomes a fight to keep every returning person from being claimed by the past.

Positioning

The project sits in the space between cerebral event science fiction and emotionally accessible identity drama. Its pitch shorthand is *Arrival* meets *Blade Runner 2049*, with the fractured-memory intimacy of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and the reincarnation scope of *Cloud Atlas*. These references indicate audience and tonal territory, not equivalence of execution or scale.

Why This Film

The film asks a contemporary question through speculative mythology: if an institution can reconstruct a person from data, who gets to name the result? The answer emerges through behavior—Kerr choosing his name, Kira refusing to complete an old pattern, and strangers learning to meet again without assuming ownership.

One-Page Synopsis

In 8122, scientist ELI MANA announces evidence that a neural pattern can survive death. His partner KIRA NIX sees the danger before he does: the state is already turning an uncertain discovery into authority. Harp offers Eli the first human transfer in exchange for clemency he cannot guarantee; eleven days later Kira is executed, and his memories become the foundation of a civilization built on compulsory Return.

Nearly nineteen centuries later, KERR wakes in a state-grown body with no childhood and thousands of archived lives attached to his identity. The government insists he is Eli's continuation. Kerr wants one thing: find the woman he keeps drawing before the state does. He destroys his legal claim and escapes with systems engineer IMANI VOSS and defecting commander SATO.

Kerr finds Kira alive in the Analog Zone. She remembers loving versions of him, but she will not tell him who he is. Kira has her own objective: expose the seven minutes of testimony Harp buried and end the system built from it. She leads the group to VEYRIS, an unassigned young woman everyone treats as a container for someone they lost. As the purge clock falls, Harp closes every return path except himself.

The group is captured, but the state's own tribunal cannot authenticate Kerr as Eli. The ruling opens the records Harp buried. At the Origin Core, Kira hears the truth: after their daughter SID died, a voice answered Eli's receiver and asked him to stop. Eli kept listening. Harp preserved the recording, then spent centuries building a world in which no refusal to return could stand.

Kerr opens the Core under his present name. Harp seizes the access and begins pulling the waiting minds into himself. Imani is offered the preserved record of her mother if she abandons Kerr's route; she lets the record burn and keeps Transit open. As the living claimant tied to the missing First Continuity memory, Veyris refuses the forced destination and breaks Harp's merge path. Kerr severs Harp from the waiting minds, knowing the same act will erase his own return path.

After the severance, every plot line falls toward Kerr and Kira. She refuses to call him back as someone he may no longer be. Frightened and uncertain, he gives her the only name he can choose now: Kerr. He disappears without a recoverable pattern. Across Earth, assigned identities begin to fail while the machinery of the Chronocracy remains. At the dead Core, Kira taps four notes. After she turns away, something answers with a fifth.

Feature Treatment

Act One — The Anomaly

A child folds a red paper star while four notes sound against hospital glass. A fifth answers before any living hand moves. The sound carries into the Global Science Forum in 8122, where Eli Mana presents evidence that thought may continue after death. Kira Nix sees ministers dividing access before the science is understood. Harp Vale watches while holding the medical tag of his dead wife, Mara.

That night, a human trial succeeds and a promised clemency exchange fails. Kira has been executed seven minutes before Eli reaches her cryogenic pod. Her final recording tells him to break the bridge if Return becomes a prison. The state extracts Eli's memory. Over the centuries, Return becomes law, governments become the Chronocracy, and natural birth gives way to state-grown bodies. In 9997, the system fractures.

Nine months before the present story, Kerr wakes in iteration 9998 with no childhood and no memory of entering the chamber. Imani Voss supervises his return. Four diagnostic notes sound; his hand answers with a fifth. The system recognizes something it immediately conceals.

By day 274, Kerr has built a modest life. He repairs things, burns bread, draws a woman's eye without knowing why and resists every effort to call him Eli. During his twenty-seventh review, supposedly unbreakable glass fractures. The system exposes a classified woman known only as V-16 and begins using Kerr to locate her.

Kerr destroys the claim embedded in his wrist. His citizenship, work credential and apartment access vanish. Imani tells him Harp has started a seventy-two-hour purge. Kerr's immediate goal is clear: reach V-16 before the clock reaches zero.

Harp offers Kerr a place inside the state if he will open its sealed Core as Eli. Kerr refuses. Sato, a security commander whose implant is beginning to correct his disloyalty, opens a corridor and gives him seconds to run. Kerr, Imani and Sato escape into the city's abandoned transit infrastructure.

Act Two — The Claim

The fugitives enter the Analog Zone, where names and relationships survive outside state authentication. Kerr meets the masked woman from his drawings: Kira, living in a body no one assigned. He wants recognition. She refuses to give him an identity because his gestures feel familiar.

DANE reunites with LENA, his returned wife, but she does not know him. He stops before touching her, introduces himself again and asks permission to sit. Kerr begins to understand what Kira is protecting.

Kira leads them toward V-16, the one person Harp cannot predict. In a sealed reserve they find VEYRIS, a young woman who has never chosen her body, hair, name or purpose. When the state closes in, Veyris escapes with them through obsolete transfer lines and experiences rain for the first time.

At an underground archive, mourners demand that Veyris become their dead. She refuses, then asks a grieving father his son's name. Kira learns Harp knew she returned and kept that truth from Eli. Kerr learns he carries Eli's archived pattern, but the living response inside him has no source the state can identify.

The group grows closer through choices the state cannot index: Veyris cuts her hair, Sato winds the broken watch his daughter gave him, and Kerr and Kira speak about lives in which they loved other people. Their attraction becomes a present decision, not proof of destiny.

A preserved record shows Harp's wife Mara refusing rescue at the expense of nine districts. Harp listens, says little and continues building the system that violates her choice. Director Roman discovers that the purge will preserve Harp alone. Harp has also predicted Kerr's path: he opened the first escape corridor because Kerr would run toward Kira and eventually the Core.

The Chronocracy captures the group and stages a tribunal to force Kerr into Eli's legal identity. Kerr's goal becomes immediate: survive without surrendering his name. Kira testifies that she remembers Eli—and that Kerr is not him. Veyris, prohibited from testifying because she is unindexed, looks over the memories filling the tribunal, says only, "I woke up. I'm here," and withdraws by choice. The state sentences Kerr to merge when the purge clock reaches zero.

Act Two — The Withheld Record

The sentence opens records Harp buried, including seven minutes the state could never classify. Veyris learns only what she needs to choose: her body existed before the Fracture, but she did not. Whatever memories move through her, the life answering now is hers.

Kira stays behind to draw the state away while Kerr, Veyris and Imani escape into the lower state route. Sato remains with Kira as his implant rewrites his loyalty, using the last intervals of his agency to leave doors unlocked.

Harp forces Kira through Sid's final night, then reveals that Eli's record continued for seven minutes. A frightened voice answered after Sid's death, asked Eli to turn off the receiver and go to Kira, and heard him begin one more test.

Kira realizes Eli heard the voice ask for her and continued testing. Harp gives her the route into the Core: Kerr can open it, the four notes can test it and Harp intends to remain as the only destination.

Kira sees the shape of Harp's plan. She refuses to let him become the one person left. Above and below, their routes converge on the Core. The final movement begins.

Act Three — The Severance

Kerr, Veyris and Imani descend toward the Core. The outer gate reads all 9,998 iterations but admits Kerr under his present self-designation. Sato frees Kira, asks her to preserve his daughter Nadi's laugh rather than his uniform, and spends the last of his agency holding the route open.

At the Core, Kerr consents to open the buried audit under his own name. The seven-minute record reveals the voice asking Eli to stop and go to Kira. Eli continues. Kerr does not apologize for him. When Kira asks him to stay across the room, he listens. She releases the complete record publicly.

Harp breaches the Core and uses Kerr's access to begin the forced merge. Expiration clocks across Earth drop to five minutes. Kerr, Kira and Veyris enter the lattice while Imani remains in the collapsing chamber.

R-AI offers Imani a bargain: preserve her mother's recoverable record and close Kerr's route. The image of her mother laughs in the same brief loop. Imani stops before touching it, remembers her mother's refusal and lets the record burn while keeping the waiting minds alive.

Veyris refuses the claim pulling her back into the collective. Her refusal breaks Harp's merge path. Before cutting the remaining connection, Kerr asks Kira, "What if I forget you?" Her answer rests on what he chose tonight, not what he remembers. Kerr severs Harp from the waiting minds and erases his own return path.

Harp falls into Mara's final memory. A broken route flickers behind him, still open. He reaches toward it, but Mara asks him to look at her. His hand stops. The route closes, and for the first time he cannot interrupt her.

The waiting minds pass through Imani's open route. Kira refuses to call Kerr back through an old identity. When he admits he does not know who he is—"Kerr. I think. I'm scared. Please stay."—she hears the person speaking now. He disappears. Her hand remains open. Nothing answers.

Across Chronos City, assigned identities begin to fail while the institutions that enforced them remain standing. Dane leaves Lena room to choose her distance. People switch off the names on their wrists and introduce themselves. Kira wakes beneath the ruined cathedral dome with Sid's half of the paper star. At the dark Core, she taps four notes. Silence. As she leaves, something answers with a fifth.

Principal Characters

Kerr — The Living Claimant

A man with no childhood and 9,997 prior lives attached to his identity. Kerr's humor is defensive, his anger immediate, and his central need simple: to make one decision the past did not make for him. His arc is not discovering who he used to be. It is accepting that the person choosing now is enough.

Kira Nix — The Witness Who Refuses Ownership

Scientist, revolutionary, mother and survivor of repeated returns. Kira is not waiting for Kerr to define her story: she is trying to recover and release the seven minutes Harp buried. Her final choice joins that objective to her love for Kerr—she exposes the record, refuses to call him by an inherited identity and accepts the frightened person in front of her.

Veyris — The Unassigned Life

Awakened during the Fracture in a body the state had not assigned, Veyris has spent her life treated as evidence, a key, a daughter, a dead stranger or an empty witness. Her refusal breaks the forced merge because she insists that a life cannot be made collective property simply because it carries other people's memories.

High Regent Harp Vale — The Grief That Became Government

Harp could not accept Mara's decision to die rather than sacrifice nine districts for her rescue. He spends centuries building a system in which no one can make that choice again. His remaining sympathy lies in the wound; his danger lies in how quietly he keeps acting from it.

Imani Voss — The Engineer of the Open Route

A systems engineer whose mother refused another body. In the climax, the system offers Imani the record she has carried for years. She lets it burn, finally honoring the choice she once called selfish, and keeps the route open for everyone else.

Sato — The Man Whose Loyalty Is Being Rewritten

A security commander haunted by the daughter he failed to recognize in time. Sato knows the state can alter his intentions and uses the remaining minutes of his disloyalty to create a choice the prediction system did not expect.

The World in Plain English

RETURN Archived memory is placed into a state-grown body. The government treats the match as legal identity; the story leaves the deeper question unresolved.

R-AI The intelligence operating Return. Its public terminals repeat state conclusions; its buried audit contains the contradictions the state suppressed.

THE CHRONOCRACY The government controlling bodies, memory, identity and the timing of death.

THE FRACTURE A brief failure in 9997 that leaves Veyris alive without an assigned identity and exposes testimony the system cannot reconcile.

THE CORE The sealed root of Return. It will open only for a living person choosing access in the present.

TRANSIT / DESTINATION / SEVERANCE Transit keeps waiting minds alive while Destination determines where they go. Emergency authority may initiate transfer, but it cannot synthesize authenticated living consent; an unresolved living claimant withholds Destination. Severance closes every route except Harp.

THE FOUR NOTES / FIFTH NOTE A recurring signal linking Sid, Kerr and the buried system. Its final answer is felt, not explained.

Emotional Engine and Themes

The Present Life

Kerr, Kira, Veyris, Lena and Dane face the same practical test: how do you meet the person in front of you when memory insists they should be someone else? The film answers through choices, distance, introductions and permission.

Grief and Control

Eli keeps listening. Harp builds a government. Kira finally stops the pattern. Personal grief expands into architecture, then contracts to one person deciding whether to call another back.

Visual Approach

The physical world suggests monumental scale through controlled views: black towers disappear into fog, curved reflections multiply bodies and renewal queues continue beyond sight. Human resistance appears through folded paper, a chipped cup, analog handwriting, burned bread, rain and a mechanical watch that loses four seconds a day.

One architectural language transforms across the Forum, tribunal, Return infrastructure and Core. Records appear stable; reconstructed memories fray at their edges. The largest spaces are revealed in fragments, keeping the audience oriented through faces, hands, thresholds and repeated objects.

Sound supplies scale the camera does not need to show. Cooling locks release beyond the visible reserve, unseen queues advance through distant speakers and Sato's mechanical watch keeps imperfect time. The climax contracts a planetary system to breathing, a failing countdown, copper burning through Imani's hand and Kira leaving the final rhythm incomplete.

Audience, Market and Production Frame

Core Audience

Adults drawn to elevated science fiction, emotional mysteries, speculative identity stories and visually ambitious streaming or theatrical features. The film's accessible entry point is not reincarnation theory; it is the fear that someone else's memory may determine who you are allowed to become.

Comparable Positioning

ARRIVAL Emotional science fiction in which communication and grief drive the speculative architecture.

BLADE RUNNER 2049 A protagonist whose manufactured identity becomes the basis of a personal and political awakening.

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND Love, memory and the question of whether emotional recognition survives altered identity.

CLOUD ATLAS Relationships and moral choices repeating across bodies, eras and social systems.

The project should be positioned through these audience expectations, not presented as a claim that it duplicates their scale, authorship or commercial performance.

Production Tier

Preliminary development target: a premium, controlled science-fiction feature in the approximately \$45–70 million range before financing, incentives or final line budgeting. The range is illustrative and must be validated by an experienced line producer. The production strategy centers on recurring architecture, contained environments, off-screen scale, projection, sound and selective visual-effects escalation during the final act.

Packaging Priorities

The strongest next attachments are an experienced producer in elevated genre, a director capable of intimate performance inside monumental environments, a recognizable actor for Kerr or Kira, and a production designer/VFX supervisor who can demonstrate a controlled visual strategy before a studio approach.

Initial Buyer Logic

The project is best introduced through producers, managers and genre-focused production companies rather than as an unsupported cold studio submission. The package should make the emotional story understandable before explaining the full mythology.

Creator Statement

I began 9998 with questions about reincarnation: whether a person returning in another body would still be the same person, whether they would remember why they came back, and whether love could survive that uncertainty. For a long time, I understood the premise but not the ending.

I completed the story while processing the death of my father. The film did not give me proof about what happens after death. It gave me a way to write about what grief asks us to do with the people we lose—and the difference between carrying love forward and refusing to let someone go.

That distinction became the center of the screenplay. Kerr does not reject the past because it is meaningless. Kira does not release him because she loves him less. Veyris does not refuse other people's memories because they are unreal. Each character learns that memory can matter without becoming ownership.

9998 is ultimately a story about allowing another person to exist beyond the identity we need from them. If anything survives across lifetimes, the film argues that love is most human when it does not become a command.

Rights and Development Status

AUTHOR Lawrence Ligad Jr.

MATERIAL Original feature screenplay and associated development materials

STATUS Revised studio submission draft; no producer, director, cast or financing attachment represented in this package

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