

The Veiled Eye: Director's Treatment

Synopsis:

Sylvan, a blind man, moves into a seaside home and meets the ghost of an old sailor. He tries to help free the sailor from his torment, in the hopes that doing so will cure his blindness. He discovers that the sailor's wife has been haunting the garden outside the house and reunites the two of them, but is left alone afterwards. He then accepts his blindness and the fact that he must live through his other senses, and takes in the sea nearby using them.

A breakdown of the themes and goals of the film

The film's main goal is to showcase how one learns to accept and adjust to a new kind of life. Both of the lead characters are stuck in a purgatory of misery, where neither can get what they want in life. As director, I want to portray the wants and needs of the characters, as well as themes of stillness of time, grief, and frustration, through the visuals, production design, lighting and sound design more so than dialogue and exposition. I aim to have many subtle decisions and details to lead the audience to the broader meaning of the film as well as the words on the page. Every aspect of the film should have its own characteristics.

Sound design

The sound design conveys the mental state of the characters and tone of the scene. The most prominent example of this being the sound of the waves. We aim for the waves to not only give a strong sense of place for the environment of the film, but also to reflect the emotions of the sailor ghost. Whenever he is angry, the waves shall be loud and volatile, and whenever he is either not present or is melancholic or despaired, the waves shall be calm and ambient.

Another essential character in the sound design is that of the clock in the house. It rhythmically ticks throughout every scene in the house, but gradually slows to a halt whenever the sailor is near or present. This is to emphasise the timeless nature of the ghost, as he is stuck in his time of death.

Visuals

There will be a few shots from Sylvan's perspective in which we will blur to create the effect of cataract blindness, but will use a combination of effects to put the image of the ghost back in focus whenever he is present, to show that Sylvan can see him clearly.

Golden lights, brightened by the lighting equipment, will stick out amongst other visuals which will typically be darker or blurry. They are meant to stick out as they are typically key characters or objects in the narrative, representing unfinished business and the life that remains in the dead.

We aim to match lighting and production design changes to the sound design and narrative. for instance: Sylvan first meets the ghost in the house's sun-room, which darkens and

changes to a nautical aesthetic which resembles that of an underwater shipwreck. The room will change to the sound of the clock slowing and the waves rising; as the ghost creeps forward, the lights dim, and parts of the set design shall float down (using wires and fishpoles).

For two of the scenes, we aim to create a sense that a single room has been transformed into another place: one scene being a sunken ship, another being a ship trapped in a sea storm. Production design, haze effects, and darkened, murky blue lighting will be the main components to create the nautical effect of the first room. The house we are filming in has a shed full of old tools and sailing gear, which shall be decorated and dispersed into the room. Our production designer is also aiming to create ship-wear (like an old steering wheel) to put into the scene.

To create the sense of the sea storm, we aim to give off the illusion of the room shifting and moving, by filming close up's of the bed shaking, different props falling over and shaky handheld camera shots following a bed mattress as it rises up (through crew members lifting it). this shall hopefully create the effect of the bed itself being flipped on its side.

Bright flashes from the lighting equipment in the room shall hopefully give off the effect of lightning crashing within the room as opposed to outside.

To create a sense of distortion and nausea in scenes either from the ghost's perspective (when he first meets Sylvan) or where Sylvan is uneasy or isolated, we aim to utilise wider lenses and low and high angles between spaces in the setting, which will give off a sense of being watched from afar and from an uncanny perspective, and a general feeling of nausea.

Characters

Sylvan: Sylvan is a study of someone struggling to accept change in their life. He was not always blind, and clearly misses being able to see, which is conveyed through his yearning to see the ocean waves. He hopes that helping the ghost will cure his blindness, as he views the fact that he can see the ghost as a sign that he must do something for it.

Rather than expositive dialogue, his motivations will be shown through visual subtleties. Sylvan still relies on sight despite the fact that he is visually impaired, and so he refuses to use his white cane, and constantly squints at images to make them out instead of using his other senses such as touch to define them.

The Sailor: The Sailor is characterised through his grief and despair. He has a deep depression after losing not only his life, but everything in it, being forced to live in his old home alone and staring out to the sea. He died at sea and so seeing it constantly tortures him. Unlike Sylvan, he refuses to look and acknowledge what is right in front of him.

The Pale woman: the pale woman represents the unfinished business and forgotten aspect's of life. She has been waiting in the garden for her husband, the ghost, to return to her ever since

their deaths, but the sailor has never looked outside to notice that she is there. She shines brightly, like the gold ring and lights in the sea, as she is the life that yet lives in the dead.

Detailed Story Outline:

In the dead of the night, on a beach near a seaside house, two golden lights shine in the sea: they are the ghosts of sailors lost at sea, unable to escape the depths.

The next day, Sylvan, a young man who has contracted cataract blindness, enters the house, which he has just bought. Sylvan has bought the home, knowing that there is a ghost residing in it. Since he has gone blind, ghosts have been the only thing Sylvan can see, whilst the rest of the world remains a blur. He misses his sight dearly, especially being able to look out to the sea and watch the waves, thus, he latches himself to the only thing he can see, and actively seeks out ghosts to communicate with them. Deep down, he hopes that the ghosts may be able to cure his “curse” and restore his sight. He does not even use his white cane to help him walk, not wanting to accept that he has to rely on his other senses, and still squints his eyes constantly to make out images.

He enters the home and begins to look for the ghost. The house has a few moving in boxes, which Sylvan has not unpacked. It seems this is the first time he has actually entered the house since buying it, presumably it has been around half a day since the moving process finished. The house (notably the living room and hall, which Sylvan passes through) is, however, partially furnished, with some old dusty couches, framed sketches and paintings on the wall, and antiques like an old clock (still ticking) and wood carvings (of ships and women dancing). The couches are arranged quite poorly, squint in their placement of the living room, as if they were hastily placed there.

Sylvan eventually hears the lapping of waves and squints his eyes towards the sound of them. he notices a bright light, which leads him to the sun-room of the house. The most plain and empty room, with a large window overlooking the garden and sea. Sylvan does not notice that the clock’s ticking has slowed down.

The ghost of the house has awakened: it is the ghost of a dead Sailor from years ago (roughly the early 1900s), who was swallowed up by the sea, cursed to remain in his home in front of the sea that took his life. He is alone, not even the ghost of his wife resides here. He wants nothing more than to never have to see the ocean again, and would rather he did not exist at all than have to linger here. So somebody intruding on his home, and looking out to the sea with yearning, angers him immensely.

The clock stops completely. Whenever the clock stops, the sailor is near, as for him time has stopped.

The waves get more violent outside. The waves reflect the sailors emotions, his fury when they are violent, his calmness (or in most cases, his lack of presence, or his depression) when they are still.

As the sailor glides into the room, the room changes: it now looks as if it is stuck at the bottom of the sea, haze covering the walls and floors, old rusty tools and driftwood and an old steering wheel, all of them floating. The sailor can manipulate the spaces he resides in, forcing them to take the form of his death site. Sylvan notices the rooms chape change and turns. The sailor then leaps towards him before disappearing in an attempt to scare Sylvan, who falls onto his bottom, extremely startled. He hyperventilates as the room seems to change back to normal. The clock ticks at a steady pace, though the waves still roar

Later that day, Sylvan sits in the now plain again sun-room. Startled and contemplating if he should stay in the house with such a seemingly hostile ghost within it. but he looks out to the sea again, and wonders if this place, and this ghost, could be how he can restore his sight.

That night, Sylvan braces himself for whatever scares the ghost might put him through and gets ready for bed. His bed linens are all different colours, as colour differentiation helps him to organise and distinguish items with his blindness.

As he sleeps, the clock stops. The ghost then torments Sylvan in his sleep. He makes Sylvan dream of how he died, but putting Sylvan in his place. The bedroom crashes and jolts as if it were a boat at sea, and Sylvan is thrown off his bed. He feels as if he is drowning, but notices a bright gold light outside his window. This light, like the ghost, is clear to him. He tries to make it out more, but neglects to steady himself in the chaos and falls again. Sylvan does not use his other senses, clinging to sight even though it is lost. When he falls, briny water appears below him and rises up, entering his mouth. This is the moment of death for the sailor, when the sea water entered his lungs and killed him, and Sylvan feels it fully. He gags, trying to get the water out, and only then does he suddenly wake up. The room is back to normal.

Sylvan gets no sleep for the rest of the night, but still resolves to not leave the house. He must stay here, if not to cure his blindness, then out of pity for this ghost, who he now knows the immense pain of. He understands that the ghost, like him, is stuck in purgatory, not able to escape his worst fear. for Sylvan, he is forced to live a life without sight. For the ghost, he is forced to always stare at and hear the thing that killed him, the sea.

The next morning, Sylvan walks back into the sun-room and waits for the ghost. The clock stops, but the waves are quiet. For the first time, the ghost enters the room without tormenting Sylvan, choosing to sit down across from him, but refusing to look out to the sea. The two are opposites in that sense, Sylvan desperate to see it, the ghost desperate to be rid of it. the ghost asks him why he refuses to leave, and Sylvan, mulling over the right words to say, simply tells him that he stays because he can see the ghost. The ghost hears this and thinks that Sylvan has nothing else in his life apart from this, but he does not believe that Sylvan could ever help him. He is stuck here. he rubs at his ring finger, where a mark where he used to wear his wedding ring is still present. He tells Sylvan to give up on helping him.

Sylvan goes for a walk near the beach for the remainder of the day, stumped on what to do. That night, however, when he enters the garden to get back to the house, he notices that gold light again. This time he follows it.

Standing in the centre of the garden, in a white dress, is the ghost of a woman, around the same age as the sailor. She is his wife, whom, after the sailor's death, had waited for him to return in this very garden until her passing. She is still waiting for her husband to come back, but the two have never seen each other: as the sailor refuses to look out to the sea, and the woman always looks out to it. She notices that Sylvan is here and can see her, and directs him to a patch of plants near the garden wall. Sylvan struggles to get over there in the dark with no shapes, even blurred ones, to make out, but he eventually crawls over to it. he digs away at the ground until he feels something cold, solid and wet.

He holds it up to the moon and tries to make out its shape, but it is covered in mud and he cannot make it out. He rubs the dirt away and feels at its shape, and realises that it is a ring. It is the sailor's lost wedding ring, which shines gold once the dirt is rubbed off. Sylvan realises now how to help the

sailor: he can give him back his ring, and allow him to see his wife. However, when he turns to thank the woman, and tell him of his plan, she is gone. She has gone to sea, to look for her husband.

Sylvan comes back into the house and places the ring in the sun-room. He then leaves, and waits for the ghost to reappear and check the room. He does so, and when he sees the ring, realising what it is, he collapses to the floor and sobs. He has finally found the one thing from his life not associated with the sea, the memory of his wife and marriage. The sailor then looks out to the garden for the first time, realising that his wife is out there, waiting for him. All he ever needed to do was be brave enough to look. Sylvan tries to comfort the ghost, but cannot bring himself to touch him.

Sylvan rests peacefully that night, and the ghost of the old sailor thanks him, before leaving. The ghost cannot restore his sight, but he knows now that Sylvan must brave the same thing he did, accept what is in front of him.

The next morning, Sylvan wakes up and tries to look for the ghost, but cannot find him. He eventually sees a pair of fading gold footsteps walking down to the garden. Anything that shines gold; the sailor's badge, his wedding ring, the lights in the sea, all of them are signs of unfinished business, the life that remains in the dead. Now that the sailor has found his wife, he leaves behind his unfinished business, as it leaks out of him in the form of his steps until they disappear.

Sylvan follows the footsteps to the base of the sea on the beach. He tries to make out the sea again, but still cannot see it. He feels totally lost, the ghost being gone, leaving him alone and blind. He completed his mission in saving the ghost's soul, but what he really gain from it?

He feels the waves at his feet, and in that moment, he decides to brave himself and walk knee high into the sea, and give up on trying to see it again. He closes his eyes and listens out to the sounds of the waves, gulls and wind. He feels the cold water nip at his legs, and eventually warm them. he takes in a breath and smells the salty ocean air.

He then takes a few steps back, and sits cross legged at the shore, letting the waves travel up to meet him. After embracing his senses, he opens his eyes, and it is as if the world is clear again. He is blind, still, but he can now envision the sea.

And in a way, he can see again.