

DEAD SIGNALS: PROJECT BRIEF

Format

Feature Film

Genre / Tone

Coming of Age Drama / Queer Analog Love Story

Pump Up the Volume meets *Ghost World*.

Recognition

Honorable Mention: Finish Line Script Competition

Budget / Buyer Lane

Low budget / contained indie drama with a music forward identity

Soundtrack costs would depend on licensing strategy

A24, Topic, Killer Films, MUBI, FilmNation lane

Core Hook

Two alienated young women start a pirate radio station from a Cold War bunker hidden inside an abandoned mall, but as Vee becomes the voice the town needs, Elara has to face the fact that she has never really been listening to the person beside her.

One Sentence Pitch

When two isolated best friends launch a secret radio station from an abandoned mall, their private world becomes a lifeline for strangers they never see, forcing Elara to confront her fear of losing Vee and forcing Vee to decide who she is when she is no longer hiding in Elara's shadow.

Why It's Timely

It speaks to loneliness, young adulthood, queer longing, anonymous intimacy, dying towns, analog nostalgia, and the difference between being heard by strangers and being truly seen by the one person who matters.

Main Characters

Elara: Sharp, funny, guarded, and controlling. She builds the station as an art project and a hiding place, but panics when Vee starts becoming the heart of it. Elara loves Vee in a way she does not know how to name, so she tries to control the space between them instead.

Vee: Quiet, empathetic, and hidden inside her oversized hoodie. As "Echo," she discovers that listening to people may be the first thing she is actually good at. She is in love with Elara, though she has spent years hiding that feeling inside their private language of jokes, music, and avoidance. Her journey is not simply about being seen by Elara. It is about becoming someone separate from her.

The Callers: The lonely voices of Ashdale. We never really enter their lives. They exist as pressure on Elara and Vee's private world, pulling the girls toward truths they are not ready to say out loud.

The Fans: The listeners who turn the station into a myth. They matter less as people than as a force that threatens to expose the secret room Elara and Vee built for themselves.

The Confessio: The hidden Cold War bunker inside the abandoned mall. It is not just a setting. It is Elara and Vee's world, the one place where they can speak without having to be seen.

Music / Sound

Music is central to the movie's identity. The station, mixtapes, static, dead air, and song choices all carry emotional

weight. The film can stay visually contained and low budget, but the soundtrack would need a smart plan, either selective licensing, emerging artists, original tracks, or a mix of all three.

Story Snapshot

1. Elara and Vee spend their summer inside their own private orbit: the Galaxy Diner, the abandoned Metro Galleria Mall, and a shared language of jokes, music, and avoidance.
2. They discover a Cold War bunker hidden behind a collapsed RadioShack shelf and turn it into a private headquarters called The Confessio.
3. They launch a pirate radio station as Static and Echo. Elara wants it to stay cool, detached, and controlled. Vee starts actually listening to the callers, and the station becomes more intimate than Elara intended.
4. As the broadcast grows, Elara becomes jealous and afraid. Vee is finding a voice of her own, while Elara keeps trying to control the station, the audience, and the feelings between them that neither girl has fully named.
5. After a fight nearly destroys the station, Elara finally understands that she has been so afraid of losing Vee that she stopped listening to her. When fans discover the mall, the girls make one final broadcast together, not as a brand or a myth, but as two people saying goodbye to the world they built.

Ending / Final Image

Instead of stepping outside to be worshipped or exposed, Elara and Vee make one final broadcast. They tell their listeners to stop looking for them and go live their own lives. In the dark, after the generator dies, they finally come together for one honest, fragile beat. But Vee does not stay inside the moment. At dawn, she leaves to begin a life of her own, while Elara remains behind with her headphones, finally listening to something she made for herself.

Theme in One Line

Being heard is not the same thing as being known.

Positioning

It's an intimate queer analog love story about two girls who build a secret radio station so they can hide from the world, only to discover that growing up means learning how to listen, how to let go, and how to love someone without keeping them trapped in the room where you found them.

Materials Available

One-pager and full screenplay available upon request or through the private script library.

RYAN CLARKE

Screenwriter & Playwright | Albuquerque, NM

His screenwriting recognition includes Grand Prize Winner, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*#FightForNoah*); Semifinalist, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*The Trencherman*); 2026 Top 10 Finalist, ISA Table Read My Screenplay at Cannes (*A Walking Shadow*); 2026 Quarterfinalist, Finish Line Script Competition (*#FightForNoah*); two-time Semifinalist, ISA Emerging Screenwriters Competition (*Flashbang* and *Ghost of the Highway*); and four additional 2026 Honorable Mentions from Finish Line (*The Finalists*, *How to Be a Human: A Musical with No Songs*, *Ghost of the Highway*, and *Dead Signals*).

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