



WE CAN NEVER GO BACK

a dramatic proof of concept

THE LOGLINE

In a cabin on the high desert, two men seek refuge from a terrifying mass-extinction event. With one desperate to go back for his family, and the other pushing them towards a utopian new world, they must overcome their diametrically opposed plans for survival if they are to emerge from the crisis with their humanity intact.

THE TEAM

Our production team is headed by an impressive collection of industry professionals with an average of 30 years filmmaking experience, working with major Hollywood studios and in independent cinema.

THE ASK

This is a 12-minute proof of concept for a full-length feature film. It is budgeted for a 4-day shoot at \$20K. We are now accepting donations via our fiscal sponsorship 501(c)(3), with the potential for profit-sharing investment in the feature.

THE STORY

In front of a blazing fireplace, ZIG stares at a photograph of a woman and her 13-year-old daughter. Meanwhile, on a desolate road, DEAN trudges onwards until he arrives at Zig's remote cabin on the high desert. Startled by Dean's arrival, Zig draws an axe before his old friend convinces him that he's not 'infected.'

Dean's tales of survival and loss paint a picture of a world no sane or healthy person would go back to but Zig, irrationally convinced that his wife and daughter are still alive, awaits word to drive back and rescue them.

Unable to convince Zig to take his car to a safe zone on the coast, Dean attempts to steal the keys, leading to a confrontation that threatens to bring a violent end to this parable, but instead offers a resolution that is much more nuanced and heartfelt.

With Zig forced to face reality and take the first step towards healing, both men resolve to leave the past behind and venture into a new and uncertain future together.



CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR / PRODUCER / CO-WRITER - AMINAH HUGHES

An accomplished visionary whose award-winning projects have screened in festivals across Europe, the United States and Australia, Aminah became a member of the Australian Directors Guild in 2020. She now lives in Los Angeles, where she has worked on features for Paramount, Universal, Disney, MGM, Lionsgate, Warner Bros. and Sony Pictures.

LEAD ACTOR / PRODUCER / CO-WRITER - DYLAN KUSSMAN (ZIG)

A member of the WGA since 2005, Dylan's screenwriting experience ranges from production writing on *Mission: Impossible Rogue Nation* and *Fallout* to a 'screenplay by' credit on 2017's *The Mummy*. As an actor, Dylan has worked alongside such luminaries as Denzel Washington, Benicio Del Toro and Tom Cruise, although he's probably best known for his role as Richard Cameron in Peter Weir's *Dead Poets Society*.

Aminah and Dylan have collaborated previously, including on the music video *What Are We Fighting For (If It Ain't Love)?* directed by Aminah and focused on the issue of gun violence in America.



KEY COLLABORATORS

ACTOR - ALLELON RUGGIERO (DEAN)

Allelon has worked in the entertainment industry for over 30 years as an actor, director and post-production supervisor. He has held positions at various production companies, mainly the Artists Company and Quentin Tarantino's A Band Apart. He has performed in numerous film, television, commercial, and theatre productions and is best known for his role as Stephen Meeks in *Dead Poets Society*.

CINEMATOGRAPHER - RACHAEL KLIMAN

Rachael Kliman is an LA based cinematographer. She has a BFA from NYU and an MFA in Cinematography from AFI. A Local 600 member, she has filmed several shorts and two features - *We're Glad You're Here*, starring Lindsay Burdge and *When I'm Ready*, featuring performances by Dermot Mulroney and Lauren Cohan. As a Camera Operator, she has shot several shows, such as *Project Runway*, *Top Chef* and *America's Top Model*.

SCREEN COMPOSER - ASH GIBSON GREIG

An Australian composer, Ash has won countless awards for his work in theatre, feature, documentary, and television projects, including an ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers) Award for his work on the National Geographic series *Drain the Oceans*. Aminah and Ash have been collaborating for 27 years, including on the game, *Battlestar Galactica: Deadlock*, based on the popular NBCUniversal Television Series, with Aminah as vocalist. Ash's most recent game credit is *Warhammer 40k: Battlesector*.



THE CHARACTERS

ZIG

Zig is quiet, contemplative, determined and headstrong. When Dean arrives, Zig is distrustful and full of fear. Under normal circumstances, he'd give him the shirt off his own back, but these are different times.

There's a degree of sentimentality to Zig - a nostalgia for what once was, and a fierce determination not to betray his devotion to his family. You can't fault him for holding out hope for their survival. But as Dean's entreaties fall on deaf ears, you begin to suspect that he's lying to himself.



DEAN

Dean is soft-spoken, humorous despite his dire circumstances, and hardened by the horrors he has seen and his months of solitary travelling on foot. He has held onto a dream of a better future, albeit far away from here.

Dean has a deep love for Zig and his family. He's the kind of guy who could never get a girl in high school and always longed for what Zig has. It breaks his heart that he can't seem to shake his old friend from his stubborn irrationality and see the truth that's right in front of his face.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Trauma recovery has been the focus of my creative work and, at its heart, *We Can Never Go Back* is a trauma recovery story. It is an allegory about our increasing sense of isolation and waning ability to trust one another, even in the face of collective trauma.

Like French director, Celine Sciamma, I am interested in working within feminine modes of storytelling and exploring male characters through a feminine lens. I am drawn to the wide-open landscapes and muted tones of Jane Campion's *The Power of the Dog*, the spaciousness contrasting with the warmth of human connection in Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven*, and the softening of masculine men in the presence of a young girl in *True Grit*.

Filming on an Arri Alexa Mini with Master Anamorphic lenses will allow us to place the characters in their environment, evoking a sense of isolation, and to create emotional and physical distance between Zig and Dean, even in a two-shot. The lenses are warm, which will contribute to the sense of refuge as the men sit around the camp fire, and serve as a cinematic juxtaposition with their stark surroundings.

WHY NOW?

We need stories about genuine human connection now more than ever.

We are living in a polarized world where many people, particularly men, are feeling cut off from one another and unable to express their true selves. This film is meant to serve as a roadmap for all of us who want to connect with one another on a deep and meaningful level.

In life and art, we are inspired by true heroism – those who face their fears with honesty, courage, and resilience. Unlike so much current cinema, in which toxic masculinity abounds, it is important to us as writers that the conflict between Zig and Dean reaches a peaceable, non-violent resolution.

The tone of this film is driven by our recent collective experience with Covid and the accompanying feelings of isolation, scarcity, loss, and disconnection from family that we all faced. We simultaneously empathize with Zig's fear of loss and Dean's urge to reconnect with community.

Raw, honest and brave, *We Can Never Go Back* is a tale of friendship, healing and hope, that reminds us of our immense capacity for resilience.

STYLE





OPPORTUNITY

We Can Never Go Back is a 12-minute, proof-of-concept drama with tension, danger, friendship, and heart, and starring two of the original cast members from *Dead Poets Society*.

It is aimed at the international festival circuit and functions as the opening 12 minutes of the feature film.

Sky Woman Productions and Dyligent Pictures are looking to cultivate strategic partnerships with individuals and organizations who are in alignment with our purpose.

Filming of *We Can Never Go Back* will take place in June 2024.

It is budgeted for a four-day shoot, with a \$20k budget, inclusive of marketing and festival submissions.

We have been awarded fiscal sponsorship with From The Heart Productions, a registered 501(c)(3) charity and are currently accepting fully tax deductible donations.

Details on how to contribute via check or PayPal are at

www.aminah.com.au/wecannevergoback

See below for donation tiers and rewards.



DONATION TIERS

Friendship (\$25)

Social Media shout-out when the movie comes out

Supporter (\$50)

The benefits of Friendship plus 'special thanks' on the movie's website page

Backer (\$100)

All the benefits of Supporter plus 'special thanks' on the movie's end credits and IMDb

Access (\$250)

All the benefits of Backer plus receive an exclusive email with a behind the scenes story and photos from the set.

Participating (\$500)

All the benefits of Participating plus a movie poster signed by Dylan and Allelon.

Opportunity (\$1,000)

All the benefits of Access plus an invitation to the cast and crew screening in Los Angeles (travel and accommodation costs not incl.)

Legend (\$2,500)

All the benefits of Opportunity plus a 30 minute virtual coffee with Dylan and Aminah

Prestige (\$5,000)

All the benefits of Legend plus an in person lunch in Los Angeles with Dylan and Aminah

Angel (\$10,000)

All the benefits of Prestige plus Executive Producer credit on the film







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