



## **Sentient Australia Pilot – Formula guide**

By David Steinhoff  
Presence Global Entertainment

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### **Summary – About Sentient**

Sentient is a new Sci-fi TV series being developed by Presence Global Entertainment. The same story is being developed by teams in USA, Germany, The UK, Russia and Africa for production in those countries.

### **Inciting incident**

A Navy Diver wakes in a recompression chamber to discover Sydney engulfed in a terrifying red storm and the inhabitants of the city, vanished.

### **Australian Synopsis**

When an alien holocaust is unleashed on humanity, a Navy diver takes command of the survivors to fight back against an ever evolving, ever more frightening, newer version of us, the 'Sentient.'

## Teaser Act

Recommended page count: 2 -10 pages

### Guide

- The opening image must immediately draw us into the story.
- Establish a sense of time, place and tone (the world of the story).
- Introduce your protagonist and their special skill.
- You may choose to introduce an inciting incident or ghost for the protagonist, (a seed that will grow throughout your story and will be something that requires redemption).
- Introduce the central conflict. If not here, then ASAP.
- Introduce the theme if possible. This may spill to Act One.
- Create mystery by loading clues from the Day One storm.
- The protagonist may begin to explore the new world in the Teaser.
- Introduce an interpretation of events by the protagonist.
- The protagonist's interpretation may be ~~partially right but is flawed.~~
- ~~First look at the Sentient – shroud it in mystery – for now they live in the shadows.~~
- The protagonist may meet another character. The other character may act as another set of eyes, a different perspective on the event.
- End on a shocking reveal. Seeing the storm or the aftermath or?

### Must-See Content

- Day One – Arrival of the storm **or**
- After Day One – Wake in fright **or**
- The protagonist's inciting incident (a crisis in their life leading up to Day One), then either 1 or 2
  - Whichever 1, 2 or 3, the protagonist wakes up in a new world.
  - The protagonist does not know what has happened, but they may make a presumption.
  - Day One mindsets might presume terrorism, war, invasion, chemical or environmental disaster, act of god or religious view of rapture or end of the world, etc.
- Create mystery. Start loading clues, like the protagonist discovering a stack of holocaust-style bodies, piled up against an exit, then make them disappear. The audience is unable to discern whether or not the protagonist is hallucinating. They will take the journey with them because they, like the protagonist, want to know what the hell is going on.
- ~~Your protagonist should get a first look at the Sentient, but keep them in the shadows and keep it brief. This is a WTF moment then~~

~~move on but ensure that your protagonist recognises it as a threat,  
make their reaction instinctive, create fear.~~

## Act One

Recommended page count: 12 -15 pages

### Guide

- Your protagonist lives through the aftermath of the Teaser act's shocking reveal.
- Intro the new world, your abandoned and damaged city.
- Discover the new world through your protagonist and characters.
- Afflict your characters with temporary physical and mental problems from the Day One storm, (blindness, deafness, dementia, anaphylactic shock, paranoia, disorientation etc.)
- Kick-in with your A-story: Your protagonist pursues their external goal based on their interpretation of the Day One event.
- Kick-in with your B-story: Your nemesis, will interpret the event completely differently and frustrate the plans of the protagonist
- Intro C through D stories. **These are 'newborns' to this world and their experience will show us more of what has transpired. They will be damaged by the storm and bewildered by what they see.**
- Featuring the A and B story the most and C and D least.
- Continue the exploration of your theme. Pit the protagonist and the nemesis against one another. Explore their values through conflict.
- End on a cliffhanger to shock your audience.

### B through D stories might include:

- The nemesis who knows better, interprets the events completely differently and frustrates the protagonist's plans
- An opponent-ally (Someone combatant to the protagonist but who is really their ally)
- The ally-opponent (Someone friendly to the protagonist who is really their opponent)
- A mirror character to the protagonist (someone who faces same challenges but makes different decisions)
- A love interest
- Other

Each of these storylines will feature a character, discovering and coming to grips with what has just happened then pursuing a line of action based on their interpretation of events.

Whoever you introduce will be on a line to intersect with your protagonist and the A story either during the pilot or in the following episode.

Ensure conflict.

**Include:**

- Clues (set-ups that get the audience wondering and speculating) OR
- Advance or reveal more of your clues
- The beginning of your mythology. Every unexplained event, piles of bodies that disappear, burnt human ash, humming phones and so on, all contribute to the growing mystery and mythology

There is no need to spell it out to the audience. Hint at it and let them leap into the gap of the unknown with their own theories.

- A hint of the full season arc, (where we are headed)
- The theme explored through conflict

**Theme**

Introduce your theme.

Integrate it into the protagonist's journey.

The theme of Sentient-Australia is leadership and abuse of the patriot.

It's about the smartest people in the room making well thought-out decisions that are all wrong and their insistence that their patriots, in this case Dowd and the military, should carry-out their orders.

**Your theme is your choice.**

**Must-see content**

1. Survive the Day One storm – Show the survivors' experience and how they are afflicted
2. Show the state of the abandoned city/world
  - No power
  - No communication
  - The storm has smashed windows and caused mayhem
  - A red haze hangs over the city
  - Planes **may** circle your city

Note the jet airliners circling the city are a device that allows characters to speculate on their meaning. Why don't they land? Each character has their theory.

**If you choose to use this story device,** those planes will eventually come in to land but as they hit the red haze over the city, will flame out and crash.

In the Australian series they set the city on fire. That fire poses a risk to a massive toxic chemical dump. The fire will burn throughout the first season.

An assessment will be made by the smartest people and determine there is no risk of the chemical dump going up in flames.

**You may choose to use this device differently or to employ another device or not to employ this device.**

3. Meet a character who provides another reference point
4. Intro the B - D storylines

### **Remember**

The global inciting incident of the arrival of an alien life form is the defining event however whilst the audience knows this, your characters DO NOT.

For example; When you first watched, 'The Walking Dead', the genre made it clear this was a zombie story. The protagonist didn't know that. They had to take that journey and discover it. Rick Grimes was also given another set of eyes, a mirror character, Morgan, who provides some insights to Rick as to what has happened.

## **Act Two**

Recommended page count: 6 -10 pages

### **Guide**

- The Act One reveal, introduced a new reality. Have your protagonist take stock.
- Escalate the conflict, turn the screws on your protagonist.
- Your protagonist faces their first trial, skirmish.
- The first casualty, (some damage received or inflicted).
- Realization or loss of innocence (generally the protagonist stating to another character, this is the cost of achieving the goal, get used to it).
- Protagonist makes a key decision to save the day but this decision has consequences later, (normally by the last acts).
- Protagonist determines a new goal to achieve plan of action.
- The goal has a time-hack, (a clock is ticking and they must achieve the goal asap).
- The ticking clock propels them into the next act.
- Add new complications for the storylines.
- Intersect storylines, introduce characters.

### **Must-see content**

- **A rain of human ash begins to fall over the city. The characters may not yet know what it is but one should speculate**

## **Act Three**

Recommended page count: 8 -12 pages

### **Guide**

- **Intersect the storylines (They don't have to meet. You can employ a common point of reference such as the circling jetliners)**
- **Escalate the conflict**
- **Increase the time pressure. Time is running out**
- **Ensure two clean, conflicting lines of action, based on assumptions of the protagonist and the nemesis**
  - **Both the protagonist and nemesis will:**
    - **Take charge**
    - **State the facts**
    - **Rally the troops**
    - **Call upon their supporters to serve their objectives**

**The two courses of action should be in conflict.**

### **Must-see content**



## **Act Four**

Recommended page count: 6 -12 pages

### **Guide**

- The protagonist and nemesis will enact their plans of action with very clear objectives, (in conflict)
- An observer character **may** discover the invaders are already here but says nothing
- Advance C and D stories
- ~~Advance the mythology by focusing the Sentient on children~~
- The protagonist and the nemesis will realize their presumptions were all wrong, all is lost
- What shall we do now?

## **Act Five**

Recommended page count: 2-8 pages

### **Guide**

- The surprising climax and resolve.
- BC and D stories advance to a stop.
- **End on a cliffhanger**
- ~~Enhance the mythology with a curious connection between a child and the Sentient~~

### **Must-see content**

- ~~First real look at one of the Sentient realised by a child~~