

The Effect of Post-Production on Storytelling
in Narrative and Documentary Filmmaking

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Abstract

Documentaries and narrative films both tell stories in different ways. A common saying states that narrative filmmakers write one movie, shoot another, and edit a third. In post-production, timelines are rearranged, montages are created, new dialog and voiceovers are written, and the score can alter the mood and meaning entirely. Documentaries can change even more over the course of their creation. Usually, the script of the documentary is not written until the edit, after most of the interviews and B roll have been shot. This paper examines whether documentary post-production makes more or less use of storytelling techniques than does narrative post-production, as exemplified by the author's completion of three proof-of-concept documentary videos and one narrative short film.

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Rationale for Creative Thesis

While many programs of collegiate study focus heavily on theory and study of literature, successful training in cinema requires a much greater emphasis on praxis and experimentation. Although important, a student's knowledge of the theory behind screenwriting, visual aesthetics, directing actors, and editing, etc., matters little if s/he cannot use that theory effectively in film production. Furthermore, a college diploma does not guarantee anyone a job in the film industry. The industry cares much more about an individual's ability to do her job well than about her GPA or whether she went to college at all. Pursuing a creative honors thesis allows the student further opportunities to experiment with and develop skills in various forms of storytelling. Specifically, this honors thesis involves the post-production process for three proof-of-concept documentary shorts, which provides a valuable comparison and contrast with the narrative film process taught in the Cinematic Arts degree program.

Introduction

This paper will discuss the different uses of certain storytelling techniques in the post-production processes of documentary and narrative films. As the final stage of the filmmaking process before the film's release to the public, post-production has a crucial and highly visible effect on the final portrayal of the story. Despite the meticulous work of the screenwriters, director, cinematographer, and actors, the story of the film never remains static throughout the production process. This paper will examine the post-

production storytelling techniques related to chronology, pacing, montage, point of view (POV), music scoring, and scripting. Besides a review of literature on these techniques, specific instances of their application to the author's current narrative and documentary projects will be discussed. The anticipated result of this discussion is the observation that, while narrative films have more flexibility to rework the story in post-production, a greater percentage of a documentary's overall story development occurs in the post-production phase than in its earlier phases.

Projects' Synopses

Before beginning a review of the literature regarding narrative and documentary post-production, synopses of the above-mentioned documentary and narrative film projects will be made to put the discussion in context.

Documentary Proof-of-Concept Films

In 2016, the author and one of her colleagues were commissioned to fly to Kosovo and interview Scottish missionary Alastair Barr, who in his younger years had worked with Open Doors to smuggle Bibles into closed, Communist countries. Rather than wrestle the resulting eleven hours of interviews into a 90-minute feature length documentary, the completion of three, short, proof-of-concept videos was undertaken. These documentary shorts are achievable given the author's current resources and are also ideal for use in pitching to potential investors and distributors.

The Trombonist. Alastair sketches the church culture in Scotland in the 1960s, his self-centered, rebellious young adult life as a motorcyclist, and the unlikely way he was drawn to the Gospel of Jesus Christ at a concert.

One Hundred Russian Bibles. In 1972, Alastair and his prayer group attempt to take one hundred Russian Bibles across the Hungary/Soviet Union border, where the Bibles are discovered and confiscated. Alastair later learns that the Bibles eventually reached committed believers from the far reaches of Russia via the black market.

Flight to Manila. The Open Doors office sends Alastair suddenly from Holland to the Philippines with no information about the project. After an intriguing string of cryptic instructions, Alastair and his colleague are introduced to a plan to deliver one million Bibles to China's mainland by boat.

Narrative Short Film *No Strings Attached*

As a major component of completion of the B.S. in Cinematic Arts, the author wrote, produced, directed, and edited a narrative short film, which is in the final stages of post-production at the time of this writing. *No Strings Attached* tells the story of a young girl rescued from domestic slavery in India and adopted by an American family. Ruth struggles to earn her new family's love by applying herself obsessively to doing chores around the house. One night, after staying up late to clean, she accidentally breaks the family's heirloom violin, waking the family. Ruth tries and fails to fix the violin, then locks herself in her bedroom. As her father patiently explains that she is not in trouble, Ruth slowly realizes that her family's love for her is unconditional.

Creative Theory: Storytelling Techniques in Post Production

While every decision involved in the making of a film should intentionally serve the story, some choices have a greater effect on the story than others. Several specific

aspects of storytelling native to the post-production process will be defined below, with examples of how these techniques are used in documentary and narrative films.

Chronology

The chronology of the film is decided in the edit. Editor Emma E. Hickox explains that she reads the script as little as possible, saying, “It’s rare that the original story stays in the same order on film as it did in the script, especially if you’ve got flashbacks and time shifts” (Oldham 181). Some films, especially documentaries like *Thin* and *The World According to Sesame Street*, follow multiple storylines and cut between them (214—15). Narrative films like *Pulp Fiction* and, more recently, *Arrival*, are famous for being non-linear. However, non-chronological techniques such as flashbacks and *in medias res* (starting to tell a story in the middle of the plot before jumping back to the beginning) are commonly used in more conventional films to create intrigue and deliver powerful moments of realization. Documentary also makes use of nonlinearity, often by moving from a moment in the chronology to shots that represent a theme, feeling, imagination, or memory (Rosenthal 212). Editor Kate Amend explains that a variety of chronologies can work, as long as the editor “set(s) up a particular convention for a film, and the audience feels you are guiding them through the story with a clear vision and goal,” otherwise confusion can “essentially take them out of the story” (Oldham 204).

Pacing

The compression and expansion of time via editing affects the pacing of the film, creating more emphasis on certain scenes and sequences and less on others. Pacing also

varies the intensity and mood of the film and must cater to the desired audience. When Emma Hickox screened *The Jacket* for American and European audiences, for instance, she found that a faster pace was needed for the American market (Oldham 189). Because the events of most films cover a timeline longer than two hours, film editors compress time in a variety of ways. The most common method is the understood time gap between most scenes, ranging anywhere from a few minutes to many years. Montages (series of different images that illustrate and associate ideas) and other editing techniques also convey the compression of time. In other instances, films expand or stretch time for special emphasis. A prime example is slow motion, which, when used properly, allows the viewer to absorb the full impact or implications of a critical moment.

Montage

Popularized by Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, montage remains one of the oldest editing techniques. As Bill Nichols writes, “Montage stressed shaping events from fragments, or shots. By juxtaposing shots that did not ‘naturally’ go together, the filmmaker constructed new impressions and insights” (*Introduction*, 139). Both in documentary and narrative film, the meaning of a given shot may change depending on the shots placed immediately before and after it. As a whole, montages can also serve to “distill an idea into its purest essence and make it move as fast and entertainingly as possible,” which is a satisfying and valuable method of time compression (Oldham 21). Because montages do not follow the rules of match action like regular narrative editing does, they open up a much broader range of editing possibilities.

Point of View

The choice of point of view carries enormous power and countless implications. Through whose eyes are the audience viewing this story or issue? In editing, the overall perspective of a film can be shifted. In some instances, editing can remove entire characters from the film or change which character is the protagonist. Mark Lavolsi, the editor for *The Devil Wears Prada*, admitted to “executing” a human resources lady from that film (Oldham 28). In other films, different scenes or subplots are portrayed from different points of view. In Guerric DeBona’s analysis of David Lean’s film adaptation of *Great Expectations*, he describes how the camera angles portray the Magwitch plot subjectively from Pip’s point of view, while the portrayal of the Miss Havisham plot develops from a subjective, childish point of view into an objective, omniscient point of view (DeBona 80—81). The result, DeBona argues, is that the Magwitch plot is represented as realistic, while the Miss Havisham plot morphs from a child’s recollection into a fairy tale (80—81). On the surface, the point of view of stereotypical documentaries often appears to be controlled by the commentary. Patricia Aufderheide notes that, ironically, the 1960s trend against narration “allowed viewers to believe that they were being allowed to decide for themselves the meaning of what they saw (even though editing choices actually controlled what they saw)” (12). Harkening back to the power of montage, the arrangement of documentary footage can support, color, or contradict the interviews and commentary.

Music

Film scores have the ability to provide insight into the characters' minds and hearts, can function to set the mood for a film or scene, and may also help to place the audience in the world of the film, whether that is another nation or another world. However, music must be handled carefully, or it can become "manipulative in a bad way," according to Mark Livolsi (Oldham 25). Different films have different needs for and relationships with their music. Some films feature heavily edited dramatic musical montages, while others exercise great restraint and simplicity (25, 74). Regardless of the amount of music in a film, composers usually use repeated themes and motifs to create connections of meaning throughout the film.

While many documentaries use music sparingly, in order to maintain a realistic presentation, some rely quite heavily on music, depending on the subject matter. Historical documentaries, for instance, tend to "use music galore, so that Russian tanks go into battle accompanied by Tchaikovsky, while Polish partisans work wonders to the music of Chopin" (Rosenthal 219). Songs that convey the time period of the documentary work well "in moderation," as long as they are not "used as a crutch" for weak visuals and have a proper relationship to the mood and material of the film (220). "Bottom line," as Livolsi emphasizes, "I don't want to *create* emotion with music as much as I want to underscore and uphold the emotion that hopefully is already in the footage" (Oldham 25).

Scripting

Although, for most films, the vast majority of script writing occurs before and during pre-production, post-production often involves some level of scripting as well,

especially in documentary. For both narrative and documentary, voiceovers and narration can be completely created or rewritten in post. In narrative, dialog can be added for background characters or changed through ADR (automated dialog replacement) for speaking characters. Occasionally, even the ending of the film can change, as in the case of *The Jacket* where the original script's ending was developed into four "vastly different endings" in post based on feedback from test screenings (Oldham 181).

In the context of documentary, transcriptions of all the interviews are made and an editing script is compiled from those, reflecting what was actually filmed (Rosenthal 212—15). In all reality, the story of a documentary is discovered and shaped in post-production. The themes, structure, arc, resolution, and conclusion of the journey are identified and organized here, before and during the editing process. In fact, editor Kate Amend asserts, "A couple of directors have given me a writing credit or costory credit on their films. I have cut fiction and it is fun, but to me, the real challenge is finding the story in a documentary" (Oldham 202).

Praxis of Storytelling Techniques

Whereas the previous section addresses each technique theoretically or as practiced by a career editor, this section provides specific examples of how these aspects of post-production were handled in the author's projects.

In Documentary Shorts

Chronology. The chronologies of *The Trombonist* and *Flight to Manila* are straightforward, with the events described in the order they occurred. The only slight deviance occurs in *Flight to Manila*, when Alastair draws on his knowledge of what

actually happened during the Bible delivery and uses those specifics to explain the plan he was told at the beginning of the whole project. This minor confusion of plan and execution result naturally from telling the story years after it happened, and should not cause much confusion. On the other hand, *One Hundred Russian Bibles* intentionally uses the *in media res* technique by opening with a short, condensed account of the Bibles being discovered by the Soviet border guards. The video then fades to black and begins again some time earlier, when Alastair and his friends first hear Brother Andrew speak and begin to pray for the persecuted church in Eastern Europe.

Pacing. Because the documentary material covers the span of Alastair's entire life, pacing and condensing time becomes especially important. The rather slow pacing of *The Trombonist* contains a fair amount of exposition at the beginning to set the stage for this one crucial moment in Alastair's life. Because the actual event really only occurs over the course of one evening, there is time to describe the events in some detail with quite a bit of tangential information.

In *One Hundred Russian Bibles*, the pacing becomes more involved. The opening, as mentioned above, is fast-paced, but the video proceeds to slow somewhat as background information is given on Alastair's first encounter with Brother Andrew and the formation of the prayer group. In his interviews, Alastair described the process of the trip (which probably took a week or so) in much more detail, but several side stories and detailed explanations were cut out to streamline the video and quicken the pacing of the Bibles being discovered and the team getting interrogated. This makes the situation seem more gripping and lends emphasis and poignancy to those details that are relayed.

The actual events described in *Flight to Manila* (not including background information) occurred over a longer period of time than those described in the other videos. Alastair's original telling of the whole Chinese Bible delivery story took an hour and a half; the final video is about ten minutes long. In order to decide which material to include, priority was given to those events in which Alastair had a direct part. This eliminated two massive sub plots about obtaining the tugboat and printing the Bibles. Then, the decision was made to use the video as a trailer of sorts for the entire story, ending with the crew's prayerful decision to risk facing a typhoon on the open sea in order to make their delivery date. This eliminated all the events of the actual delivery from the timeline of the video. One of the primary difficulties in condensing time in this story was the fact that Alastair rarely summarized anything. He explained everything in extreme detail, especially in the technicalities of the barge design and delivery plan, so piecing together a coherent but concise overview was a challenge.

Montage. Although a common tool in documentary, montages are not used to great effect in these documentary shorts. Due to the shortage of B roll currently available and the overall length of the videos, there is not really enough material or space to make up a proper montage of any length. There are, however, miniature montages, or cutaways, from interview footage to pictures or clips that illustrate Alastair's story. Ideally, or with more funding, there would be plenty of appropriate B roll for all three of the videos. *The Trombonist*, which currently has no B roll at all, would support a lovely montage contrasting 1960s Scottish motorcyclists and stiff Presbyterian churchgoers (this of course would require archival footage/photographs or quite a bit of reenactment), and

another giving an inductive recreation of the mission concert, showing details of people singing and praying, Bibles lying open on laps, the trombonist playing, and feet walking down the aisle to the front.

Point of view. On the whole, these documentary shorts unfold from Alastair's point of view. After all, he is the one telling the stories, and they are true stories of his own life. However, given the decades that have passed between the events described and the telling of them, his storytelling perspective has become slightly more omniscient, or at least broader than the usual limited first person point of view. Alastair analyzes and comments on broad aspects of Scottish society, like the Presbyterian Church, in *The Trombonist*, relays information about the future destinations of the *One Hundred Russian Bibles* that was unknown at the time of the (supposedly) failed Bible delivery, and incorporates elements of the actual Chinese Bible delivery into his explanation of the original plan in *Flight to Manila*. Although the topics and events he relates are inherently weighty, with people's freedom, lives, and salvation at stake, Alastair's countenance and tone of voice while telling each story remain relatively cheerful and even humorous. He does become rather adamant and solemn at times, but having seen God's guidance and protection play out repeatedly and undeniably over the course of his life, he tells these high-stakes stories with an easy mirth that almost seems flippant. To attempt to change this point of view in the edit would be to violate the integrity of the story.

Music. At the time of this writing, music had not yet been scored for the documentary shorts. However, given the large volume of spoken words, the music would need to be very subordinate, providing an overall atmosphere without having a strong

voice of its own. For *The Trombonist*, a traditional instrumentation of a hymn well known in the 1960s would be appropriate, or music of a similar style. In *One Hundred Russian Bibles*, music with an almost playful suspense would be appropriate, capable of building intensity without becoming too dark or heavy. For instrumentation, stringed instruments and piano would work well, evoking some of the atmosphere of *Schindler's List* but several shades lighter. Then, for *Flight to Manila*, something percussive, rhythmic, and driving would aid the “James Bond story” feel that Alastair himself describes, as the top-secret, highly technical smuggling mission unfolds.

Scripting. In order to script these documentary shorts, all eleven hours of interviews were transcribed. From these transcriptions, selections were arranged into three A/V scripts (a two-column format commonly used in television, with one column each for audio and video). These scripts were used as a starting point for editing the videos and can be found in Appendix A of this paper. Prior to the filming of the documentary, only a few of Alastair's stories were known to the filmmakers. Based on what they learned through conversation over the first few days of knowing him, they assembled a roughly chronological list of the events of his life and used it during interviews to prompt Alastair to tell the next story. Spanning six decades of life, the stories proved difficult to align thematically and too numerous to tell sequentially in a feature-length documentary. Instead, smaller proof-of-concept videos have been created to share glimpses of Alastair's life with those who can aid in the completion of telling these stories through multiple works, possibly of different formats. The full story of

Flight to Manila, for instance, would make a captivating audio drama but would require input from more sources than just Alastair.

In No Strings Attached

Chronology and pacing. The chronology for this short is linear and straightforward, uninterrupted by flashbacks or dream sequences, although all of the above were considered in the rewrite process. Thus, the chronology does not draw attention to itself. The story is not about warping or manipulating time. However, a great deal of care was taken in the pacing of the edit. The story spans about two years, showing glimpses of Ruth's journey, from slavery to rescue to adoption and her gradual acclimation to living with the family. All this, plus the lengthier scenes surrounding the breaking of the violin, fit into 14 minutes of screen time. In order to compress time, the scene where Ruth is locked in the closet contains slivers of the action more or less jump cut together instead of matching action. This quick cutting builds the intensity of the scene, especially in contrast to the long, slow shots after her rescue. Next, a dissolve from Ruth's bruised face to a similar shot in a different room without the bruise conveys a significant passage of time. Later in the film, time is noticeably compressed while Ruth cleans the house at night by fading quickly between identical wide angles, with Ruth cleaning in a different room each time. However, time is expanded slightly when Ruth first arrives at her new home. The long Steadicam sequence was filmed in slight slow motion, lending additional weight and gravity to the moment and showing the large house through the eyes of an overwhelmed and wary orphan trying to analyze every detail.

Montage. Part of the middle of the film is a loose montage, or at least a collection of miniature scenes with no dialog, each communicating a certain piece of information. Lasting from Ruth studying Josh's chore chart to her spying on the violin lesson, this little montage shows different stages of Ruth's adjustment to living with the family, how she sees herself in relation to them, and what she wants most. Her eyes drive the montage, determining the meaning of each cutaway by her expression, whether of curiosity, surprise, servitude, duty, intrigue, or fear.

Point of view. Another very intentionally controlled technique is the film's POV. The film was shot and edited to show every scene from Ruth's perspective. When two other characters are having a conversation, rather than cutting to their reaction shots, Ruth's reaction is shown. She only speaks in one scene, but care was taken to focus not on what she (or anyone) says but rather on what Ruth sees, thinks, and does. As a result, only the parts of each scene that matter to Ruth are shown. When she fixates on the violin, for instance, no wide angles of the scene are used. When Ruth is lying in bed waiting for her parents to get home, no shots from their perspective at the door are used. This renders the parents' entrance in the background as vaguely ominous. Near the end of the film, the camera remains at Ruth's eye level, showing the details of her room that most express her family's love as they appear from where she's sitting on the floor. The final shot of Ruth leaving the room and hugging her father is done at her eye level, which results in his face eventually getting framed out, leaving the focus squarely on her.

Music. While the cinematography and editing carefully hold to Ruth's POV, the music goes a step further, giving us a glimpse into her emotional response to every

situation. For instance, when Ruth walks down the hall to her room for the first time, the reality of the situation is quite positive: she has a wonderful home, her own room, and a family that loves her. But Ruth's perspective on the situation has been warped by her past abuse. She sees the house as a potential prison and enters it cautiously, searching for clues about the family, possible dangers, and any hiding places or escape routes. The music reflects this tense wariness. The whole point of the film is that Ruth interprets everything wrong, but because the audience cannot read her mind, the music helps by coloring each scene the way Ruth colors it.

Scripting. For *No Strings Attached*, only minor scripting occurred in post-production. During filming of the India scenes, there was no actor on set for the policeman who leads the rescue. All of those lines were added afterwards, recorded in Hindi by a voice actor in Florida. The lines spoken by the man who abuses and hides Ruth were added afterwards as well. In order to create a realistic exchange between the two, research was done into the Indian laws governing police searching homes under suspicion of child slavery. However, because this entire dialog occurs in a non-English language and not all of it is subtitled, the specific words are less important than the overall emotions portrayed. The script for this interchange is included in Appendix A.

Findings

Having addressed pre-existing literature on each post-production storytelling technique and examined specific examples of each in the author's documentary and narrative shorts, this paper will now compare and contrast the usage of each technique in documentary and narrative film. However, every film is different, and a wide variety of

creative choices, methods, and styles are possible within the narrative and documentary formats. Therefore, this discussion will remain focused on the specific examples at hand and not attempt to address the usage of these techniques for narrative and documentary films in general.

Chronology and Pacing

The primary difference between the handling of chronology and pacing in the documentary and narrative shorts lies in what drives the plot. In the documentaries, Alastair's verbal account of the events identifies and orders the timeline. In order for the accounts to make sense, they have to unfold in that order with very little deviation. There is some more flexibility with the pacing, but only so much information can be cut out before confusing gaps appear in the account. On the other hand, the narrative film relies much more heavily on visuals, which can be more easily manipulated and reordered. The chronology as edited is straightforward, but it could easily have been rearranged. The opening scenes could have appeared exclusively as flashbacks, or the entire meaning of the film could have been changed by rearranging the order of events. Thus, for the purposes of these two examples, the narrative film has far more flexibility and range in terms of chronology than the documentaries. However, the narrative film was written and shot with the pacing taken into account, whereas the documentary footage covered many more events than are mentioned in the videos. Therefore, the documentaries have more options for pacing than does the narrative.

Montage

Neither the documentaries nor the narrative contain typical montages, although both could have to great effect. In the narrative, the loose montage of mini-scenes that does exist serves to convey character development and condense time, whereas the mini-montages in the documentaries serve to illustrate details or situations described in the interviews. If these films were longer, they all could have used more extended montages to greater affect. This would have provided more opportunity for emotional poetry, especially in the narrative, and for visual exposition and emphasis, particularly in the documentaries. Either way, they would have provided respite and variety from the regular scenes and interviews. Documentary and narrative seem about equally well served by montage.

Point of View

The POV of the documentaries was locked in from the beginning because only one person was interviewed. Every story was told from his point of view; there is no other viewpoint to cut to or convey. On the other hand, given the coverage of various actors in the narrative film, maintaining Ruth's POV required deliberate care in editing. Other characters' reactions and angles from their point of view were filmed and could have been used. Therefore, given these specific films, the narrative provided more options and control of point of view in post-production.

Music

As the music for the documentary films has not been scored yet, a comparison here is difficult. However, Alastair's voice does limit the range of possibilities the music

can have. The music must not overwhelm the sound of his voice, and it would be a poor (even unethical) choice to use the music to contradict his tone. Meanwhile, in the narrative film, many more possibilities open up. Certain musical choices may be stronger or more effective than others, but due to the lesser amount of dialog and the greater reliance on visuals in the narrative, the music plays a much stronger role in shaping the audience's interpretation of each scene than it would in the documentaries.

Scripting

Post-production scripting in the documentaries consisted mainly of selecting which parts of the story would make it into the short videos. It would have been possible to construe these selections in such a way that colored the intent and obscured the audience's understanding of the events. For instance, all mention of God and His hand in these various stories could have been eliminated. However, scripting here does truly only consist in rearranging pre-existing material. This documentary project does not have (or need) a separate voice-over narrator guiding the audience through the material, so no original material was created in the post-production scripting process. Meanwhile, in the narrative film, an entirely new section of dialog between the Indian man and the police who break into his house was scripted and recorded in post-production. This worked because the whole conversation occurred off camera; it would have been much more difficult to rewrite portions of the film where the speaking characters' faces appear on camera. Another option could have been to add a voiceover of what Ruth is thinking, which could potentially change the meaning of the film entirely. Clearly, post-production scripting has the potential to reshape the meaning and interpretation of the film. In

narrative film, such reshaping falls to the creative decisions of the director and her team within the restrictions imposed by the producer and other practical considerations, but could quickly become unethical and even false in documentary film.

Conclusion

Summary of Creative Theory

Post-production contains infinite possibilities and choices regarding the shaping and presentation of the raw material. First, the editor and director decide the chronology of the film, shaping the order of events and orchestrating when crucial information is revealed. The chronology, whether linear or non-linear, should make sense within the context of the story and guide the audience through the various storylines without ultimately confusing them. The related technique of pacing affects the intensity of the film by condensing or expanding time, placing greater emphasis on certain moments and scenes while skimming over other periods of time entirely. Montage, one of the most famous editing techniques, can serve both to convey meaning by associating diverse shots and to condense time by showing consecutive, indicative glimpses of events within that time period. One of the more powerful storytelling techniques, the chosen point of view determines the bias of the story or scene and can often be greatly altered in the edit. Music can carry this bias even further by manipulating the audience's emotions or remain in the background as a mere aesthetic enhancement. Finally, while elements of narrative films can be re-scripted in post-production, even to the point of adding alternate endings or new scenes, the post-production scripting process is where the overall story, theme, and structure of the documentary actually takes shape.

Summary of Praxis

In the documentary shorts, the elements of chronology and pacing provided more options than did most of the other post-production techniques. The miniature montages would have required more overall length and B roll to be truly effective, the point of view was limited severely to that of the single storyteller, and the music will have to support the verbose and rather lighthearted telling of the stories rather than have a voice of its own. In the scripting, however, great care was taken to abridge Alastair's accounts without distorting or misrepresenting them. The events were selected for maximum intrigue and impact before being whittled down to the necessary details, while maintaining the important themes and spiritual elements in each story.

In *No Strings Attached*, the most impactful post-production techniques were point of view and music. Chronology and pacing certainly played an important part, with a two-year time span condensed to fourteen minutes, but the process was relatively straightforward, without elaborate time-warping tricks. The loose montage in the middle of the film does not feel much different than the rest of the scenes. Meanwhile, the deliberate choice to emphasize Ruth's point of view in every scene draws the audience into her perspective. The music further enhances the audience's interpretation of Ruth's warped view of the world by conveying the unreasonable fear and stress she feels. Finally, the post-production scripting was limited to a single, off-camera, foreign-language interchange that communicates emotion and stakes but little real expositional information.

Summary of Findings

Considering only the four short films at hand, the narrative film has greater flexibility in manipulating its chronology, while the documentaries (due to the greater volume of material) have more options for pacing. While none of the films contained full-fledged montages, they were (or could have been) about equally served by this technique. Because only Alastair was interviewed, the documentaries are limited to his single point of view. On the other hand, *No Strings Attached*'s POV could have shifted between several of the characters, but was deliberately restricted to Ruth's unique perspective. The music for the narrative film, which also supports and enhances Ruth's POV, has much more creative freedom and prominence than the documentaries will allow. Likewise, although the shape and content of the documentaries were determined in the post-production scripting process, care had to be taken to summarize each story without misconstruing them. Nothing crucially important to the narrative story was scripted in post, but there were more options available without crossing ethical lines. Taken as a whole, the narrative film had slightly more storytelling options in post-production, due largely to the need to maintain integrity to Alastair's real-life accounts in the documentaries.

Questions for Future Consideration

Each of these storytelling techniques takes the events of a story and crafts the presentation of those events in such a way as to persuade the audience to feel, think, or act a certain way, thus engaging in some form of manipulation. No film, even the most academic documentary, can be completely objective. But at what point does this

manipulation cross the lines between good storytelling and unethical manipulation?

While this boundary can appear quite fuzzy and gray in the world of narrative films, for documentary films, the ethical standard and stakes rise much higher. Years of scholarship and discussion exist on the definition, truthfulness, and good faith practices of documentaries and how they represent reality. Patricia Aufderheide sums up current audience expectations for documentaries as follows:

Viewers expect not to be tricked and lied to. We expect to be told things about the real world, things that are true. We do not demand that these things be portrayed objectively, and they do not have to be the complete truth. The filmmaker may employ poetic license from time to time and refer to reality symbolically.... But we do expect that a documentary will be a fair and honest representation of somebody's experience of reality (*Documentary Film 3*).

Further analysis of the ethical considerations connected with various post-production storytelling techniques in narrative film as well as documentary should prove intriguing and fruitful.

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Appendix A

Documentary Scripts

The Motorcyclist and the Trombonist

The Life of Alastair Barr

Documentary Proof-of-Concept #1

Transcribed by

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| Audio | Visual |
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| <p>ALASTAIR: By that time I had become a motorcyclist. You know. Black leather and—</p> <p>There was still a legacy of Christian morality and there wasn't a total tear away, I have to say, but I was a motorcyclist, and we were... in the 60s motorcyclists were kind of the pariahs of society.</p> <p>Everybody hated us because we had a bad reputation, but our particular group was a group of lads who were... we were all pretty well educated... but we chose, we just liked technical things, we just liked motorcycles.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: Although I sketched the background of the Presbyterian church as being sort of bit of a lost cause, really, there were exceptions. Every major city in Scotland at the time - all the University cities - had an evangelical preaching center.</p> <p>Now these were Presbyterian churches, but in the evening they would open the doors to all the local Christian students or the people who were sort of cerebral about their faith, you know.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And what happened</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>was, those churches held a summer mission every year. Usually at the beach.</p> <p>Now Scottish beaches - the word suggests something quite pleasant, but often it was perishing cold and just miserable. But we would take over a church hall in a beach town and invite the people who were on holiday to come and listen to the preaching or listen to the singing and normally there would be a concert on a Saturday night.</p> <p>And my sister prevailed on me to come and visit this concert. And it was remarkable because I laid off all of my black leather and found some rather sort of sheik clothing and got dressed up and cleaned up and tidied up and found myself in the back of my mother and father's car on the way to the beach. To this concert.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And I mean I was amazed at the time that this was actually happening because... I was living a life of my own really.</p> <p>We were motorcyclists, and therefore rejected and branded by the rest of the world as being socially undesirable. You know. So here was this metamorphosis that took place, this kind of changing, you know.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>ALASTAIR: And what happened was that there was an absolutely dreadful singer. He was absolutely dreadful, but he was actually the speaker, but he was also the vocalist, but he was dreadful! He was completely off key.</p> <p>But there was a guy playing the trombone. And I looked at him because he was so happy. The man totally radiated joy and contentment, and he was blowing like fury into this trombone you know, and the whole guy was just really loving it, he was just enjoying himself.</p> <p>And I thought, you know, that guy's really just having a great time out there, you know. And I don't remember a single word of what the preacher said, except that I was constrained really – you know the word constrained? Paul says the love of Christ constraineth us, you know – and I felt constrained to go and speak to someone after the service. And his name was Alastair, too, as it happened, and a friend of my sister's, and he led me to the Lord that night.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: It was a Rubicon; it was a watershed, you know. It was a passing from darkness into light. But it wasn't any particular thing –</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>no particular word or scripture that had been used it was this guy this trombonist who – I think we're... I think we're essentially selfish. Even in coming to Christ, we want something that we lack. You know. God uses those things to call us and even though we're – there's no higher motive than mere envy or selfishness or desire, you know, yet God was pleased to take me on those terms. I mean, humbling, really.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And I do remember for the next two weeks walking around in an utter euphoria. I just – I was reading the New Testament and I was just so – I mean, I don't want to use the word happy, but I was deeply contented. Suddenly I had found essentially what had been lacking all along, you know.</p> <p>And I can't really say, in all honesty, that that euphoria lasted. It's in the nature that it's a transient thing, you know. But I got plugged in to the Bible study and around that time my grandfather died.</p> <p>And what happened was we'd had a prayer meeting, and the folk in the prayer meeting just gathered round, you know, and they were just effusive in their sympathy</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>and in their real concern. They felt my pain, you know, they felt what I felt on losing my grandfather.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: That's something that the motorbike guys just couldn't really replicate, d'y'know what I mean? And I found them giving me up, quite honestly. Of course I gained new friends.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

NOTE: This script does not contain many visual notes because we were unable to gather B-roll that relates to this portion of Alastair's story. We have good A-roll of him telling this story, from two angles that we can cut between, and he is a very animated story-teller, but we would need additional funding to collect appropriate B-roll for this particular story.

One Hundred Russian Bibles

The Life of Alastair Barr

Documentary Proof-of-Concept #2

Transcribed by

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| Audio | Visual |
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| ALASTAIR: Six of us set off in a VW bus. | FADE IN. A-roll of Alastair |
| ALASTAIR: And we set off from Glasgow, travelled all the way down through England of course, crossed into France and down through Germany, Austria... you know, the usual route into Hungary. | Birds-eye view of a 1960's era map of Europe, moving roughly from Scotland down towards the Hungary/Soviet Union border. |
| ALASTAIR: Going into Hungary we were subjected to quite a rigorous search. They take everything out of the van and we lay it out on long tables and they look through everything that we had. | A-roll of Alastair |
| ALASTAIR: So we travel across Hungary. And then you've got the very same thing at the border with the Soviet Union. | A guard stands at a barricade. |
| ALASTAIR: And this time, the very first case that he opens has got 100 Russian Bibles in it. | A-roll of Alastair FADE TO BLACK. |
| ALASTAIR: So this guy Brother Andrew came to Glasgow to our church, and the place was jammed to the doors - there was a queue outside the church waitin' to get in! Now that was quite unusual! It wasn't really normal that people would queue to get into church. | FADE IN. A-roll of Alastair Archival footage or photograph of Brother Andrew. |
| ALASTAIR: And he preached in a way that really appealed to young people. He had these fabulous stories about how | |

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| <p>God had delivered them at the borders and how he'd met up with the church and how God had led all of that, and he had committed himself to getting Bibles to these - because one thing that they really needed more than anything else.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: We formed a prayer group - I think initially there were about a dozen of us, but about six of us became the core group - praying for Eastern Europe. And in the course of meeting and praying, we discovered that, with having contact with the organization called Open Doors, the opportunity existed for teams to travel to deliver Bibles themselves. And this was the very thing that we had been praying about! But gradually it dawned on us that, you know, wouldn't it be great to go ourselves!</p> | <p>B-roll of 2 young men and 4 young women praying together.</p> <p>B-roll of Bibles.</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: Now the 60s and 70s were the eras or the decades of the VW bus, yeah? And six of us slept in this thing; it was a 4 berth, but we managed to get six of us into it. And we set off from Glasgow, travelled all the way down through England of course, crossed into France and down through Germany, Austria, you know, the usual route into Hungary.</p> | <p>Archival photo of VW bus</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p>Stock footage/B-roll of tires, roads, and countryside.</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So leaving Austria was no problem; going into</p> | <p>B-roll of border guard</p> |

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| <p>Hungary we were subjected to quite a rigorous search. They take everything out of the van and we lay it out on long tables and they look through everything that we had. The Bibles were in one suitcase - they looked into all of the other suitcases and found nothing, and the suitcase with the Bibles in - they said, "Nah, that'll be OK," and they moved on to the next thing. And this of course for us was a revelation, because this was exactly what Brother Andrew had been talking about, this was exactly the way that God works at these East European borders!</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So anyway. We went on our way rejoicing of course, and we thought, "This is great!" So we travel across Hungary. And then you've got the very same thing at the border with the Soviet Union. You've got an exit from Hungary, you've got a mile or so of no man's land, and you've got an entry into the Soviet Union. And this is kinda like the big one, yeah.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p>Birds-eye view of 1960's era map showing Hungary and the western Soviet Union.</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: They know you're coming because you've applied for a visa. They know exactly where you're going to be every night. And again the procedure at the border is everything out of the van. So we say to 'em, "Well, no, we just had that - they just did that at the other side," -</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>everything out of the van, no arguments. So we lay everything on these long tables at the side of the road.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And whether they noticed - 100 Bibles is heavy -so whether they noticed that we were struggling particularly with this suitcase, but that was the first one they opened. And the vision is clear in my mind at the moment. He opened the lid and it was so full that all these plastic-covered slippery Bibles began to cascade out of the suitcase and scattered around on the table, fell off the table, on the floor all 'round us.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: There's two guys at the border - well by this time they had phoned somewhere - and a very angry major of the KGB has shown up by this time. He's huge. He's got bright red hair and the man is utterly just beside himself with rage at the temerity of these Scottish people bringing Bibles into his country.</p> <p>But the translator is the kinda good cop figure. He's saying to us, "Look let's just be reasonable, let's just talk about this, just tell us where they came from. That's all we want to know, just tell us where they came from." And it happened that</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>we had ordered them from the British and Foreign Bible Society and they were posted in packages to my home in Glasgow. So I said to the man quite truthfully, "They came in the post!" "Well where did they come from?" "Well, they came in the post!"</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And they wanted to know who had sent us. Well, that was easy to answer because the answer is, "Jesus sent us," you know! - "No no no no, we don't want we don't... The organization... who's behind all this?" - "Jesus," it's the church, you know. "The church is behind it, the church is here also in the Soviet Union. Our brothers and sisters are here; what more can I say?"</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And of course - so they took us separately, and each one was grilled separately, and any slight discrepancy in the story was investigated further; it took a long, long time. They took all the film out of our cameras. They stamped our passports as being undesirables and we were banned for 3 years, but they did allow us to carry on into the country. But of course we abandoned all the plans we had to visit individual people and so on and so forth, and just acted as tourists. We were followed for most of the way, on that occasion.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p>B-roll/stock photo of 1960's cameras.</p> <p>Stock photo of 1960's passport</p> <p>Map of western Soviet Union, with approximate course marked.</p> |

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| <p>ALASTAIR: The border guards, of course, were feeding the Black Market with their confiscated Bibles. That was the first link in the chain, as it were.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So people were coming from deep over in the Eastern part, traveling days and spending money and so on so forth. The Bible at that time was costing about 100 dollars - 100 US - in the Bible Belt. So these people were saving their money and taking these long journeys in order to buy a Bible illegally on the Black Market.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p>B-roll of believer reading Bible in secret</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: We might have handed those out on the street indiscriminately. We might have given them to some addresses that we had, but, God is at work, and (this is figurative so don't take it too literally) He entrusted us with the Bibles as far as the border and at that point He said seemingly - it seems like He said - "Ok, that's far enough, I'll take over now."</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p>B-roll of door opening</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And through this process of, you know, black marketeering and illegality and all that, the Bibles finally got into the hands of the ones who were committed and who were hungry and who needed them. In a way, which, to our parsimonious thinking was a long way round, but in</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>God's economy that worked, you know.</p> | <p>FADE TO BLACK.</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: There is a sequel to that story though. (~00:00:02:00)</p> | <p>FADE IN. A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: Whenever you're banned, your passport's stamped and it's for a period of time, in our case three years. (~00:00:06:00)</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So I reapplied in Vienna for a visa, and from the Vienna embassy they gave me one, which meant that my three years had been you know was up and I was free to travel again. But they gave me a visa for the same itinerary as we had had in '72. (~00:00:15:00)</p> | <p>Map of Austria, Hungary, and the portion of the Soviet Union that is now Ukraine, with rough itinerary marked.</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So we get to the border and I'm looking out the van, and would you believe it - it's the same interpreter! The same guy, same shift, he's on duty again - I recognize him immediately. We'd spent 8 hours with the fella three years previously, you know, it's imprinted in your memory. (~00:00:15:00)</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: He said, well, he said, "I just, you know, I just love the Brits, and I look forward to them, and I - but I don't remember you at all!"</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| Audio | Visual |
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| <p>ALASTAIR: Well in the middle of a normal routine kinda week in the garage, I was called into my boss's office. And he asked me two questions: The first one was, "Can you swim?" And I said, "Yes, I can swim." He said, "Have you ever had any experience with boats?" And I said, "Well my experience is a bit limited to just to rowing on the pond, you know."</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">FADE IN.</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And he said, "Look, we've had a request from the Asian office for practical people to take part in a project that they're running. And I can't really tell you the details of it, but here's what I want you to do. I want you to go back to - (I was in Holland at the time) - I want you to go back to Britain, go to the Philippine embassy in London, and get yourself a long-term visitor's visa. And here's a list of the shots that you need to get before you leave." He said, "You can go tomorrow, because you're</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>flying out of Schiphol airport on Tuesday morning on a flight to the Philippines, to Manila."</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: Oh. Now this was kind of characteristic Open Doors behavior. You know, your life go on in the even tenor of its way, and suddenly someone would announce you were going off to some other remote part of the world to do something. Normally you were told really what it was, but in this particular case we weren't told.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So I went to London and I got my shots and I got my visa and I got all that stuff, and I was on the plane with my colleague, Cor, on Tuesday morning, and we were speculating - it's a long journey to the Philippines - and we're chatting about this and that, and we didn't really know what the project was. We had no idea what was going to happen."</p> | <p>Birds-eye view of map, from Holland to London to Holland to Manila.</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: We landed in Manila, and it's a bit like a James Bond story, actually. The instruction was to book in to the Philippine Village Hotel at the airport and after 3 days you will receive a phone call. That was the only instruction that we had.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So they, the phone call came and they said, "Tomorrow morning we'll pick you up. We have a 4-hour</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>journey by car and a 4-hour ferry journey." So we were picked up and we were taken in the car. For 4 hours we drove the car and nobody told us anything about what was going on. We just sat in the back of the car and we ended up at the ferry port, we got on the ferryboat, and we ended up on a beautiful tropical island in the Philippines called Mindoro - Mindoro Island.</p> | <p>Stock footage of Manila and the Philippine islands.</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And there a certain Captain Bill Tinsley had his base. And he met us at the dockside and he took us to his floating home in a dugout canoe, a Philippine kind of a banca it's called. And all of all of these were new experiences for us, of course, you know. And so we got there and he welcomed us and we had some dinner, and he said, "I'm going to tell you now what the project is about. But I asked them in Holland to make sure you had return tickets in your pocket, so if there's anything about this that you don't feel sure about, or it worries you in some way, you're under no obligation whatsoever to participate. You can - we'll put you back on the plane and no recriminations."</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So we were agog of course to hear the story. And he said, "Here's what we're going to do. We've received a</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>request from the house church movement in China. And they have assessed their needs. We asked them, 'What can we do for you?' And they have assessed their needs and come to the conclusion that they currently need, and quite urgently need, 1 million Bibles to satisfy the needs of their house church fellowships that they're in fellowship with."</p> <p>And he said, "I've worked it out: a million Bibles is 2 hundred and 32 tons."</p> | <p>B-roll of believers praying</p> <p>B-roll of believer with Bible.</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And he wondered about the just - the logistics really - of getting 232 tons from the ship onto the shore without docking at a dockside somewhere. This is Communist China we're talking about. Where the church is persecuted and forbidden and people meet in secret and they have no access to Bibles and their pastors are put in jail, and this is the kind of context in which we have to take this vast quantity - I mean think of a tennis court about 6 foot deep in boxes - that's what a million Bibles looks like. It's just a vast amount of material.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p>Archival photos/footage of Communist China</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: Now, my friend Cor and I are both quite technical, and we get this and we're really really excited about this... we kind of see this is really creative and really original and it might even work you</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>know. We're just excited about this.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: But at this point we have very little money. We certainly have no barge, no tugboat, we have an idea, yeah? And we're in at the beginning, and so he's saying to us, "If you don't like it you can, you've got your plane ticket, you can go back home, and no questions asked." And we said, "Oh, we love it! This is great! What a great idea!" So he was enthusiastic about it, we were enthusiastic about it and one or two other people in the Manila office of Open Doors were in on it. The vast majority of the staff knew nothing about what was going on at all.</p> | <p>B-roll of boat blueprint</p> <p>B-roll of thank-you card from Chinese believers</p> <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: We were there for I think about 2 months, doing all kinds of preparation. And during that time the Captain was kinda looking for potential crewmembers.</p> | <p>Picture of Project Pearl crew</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So but these men were all administrators or fundraisers or... you know, the 20 crewmembers. They trolled through the Open Doors offices all over the world to find people who could sort of take part in this project. But none of them were seaman or in the least bit kind of you know suitable. I once had a friend years ago who said to me, he said, "You know, I'm completely handless, I'm</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |

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| <p>just a bungler, if George ever achieves anything," he said, "God gets all the glory." And in a sense that would become our kind of motto, you know.</p> | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So while we were busy with hardware and printing Bibles and getting ships ready and so on so forth, the Chinese church on the inside were preparing to distribute the Bibles. Theirs was the bigger job, possibly, and so what they decided to do was to arrange a youth conference in that in that part of the country.</p> | <p>Map showing Manila and Hong Kong relative to South China.</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And that was scheduled for March the 18th, but the there were some holdups - the barge was behind schedule, and there were other administrative holdups that actually at the very last minute - we couldn't get a message through, and so they were all there, but we didn't show up, on the March 18th date.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: And so the next confluence of high tide and full moon was on June the 18th. And we were quite determined that nothing would stop us from making that date.</p> | <p>Stock footage of full moon</p> |
| <p>ALASTAIR: But sadly that takes us into what they call the typhoon season. Typhoons are unpredictable; they can just show up and you really - and the only thing to do is</p> | <p>Stock footage of typhoon in the tropics.</p> |

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| to wait them out. | |
| <p>ALASTAIR: So we're all up in the bridge having a prayer meeting and deciding. The captain is very very reluctant to impose his will on the group - it's the only democratic crew ever in the history of the maritime, you know, it just doesn't happen! The captain's word is final, and all you do is do what you're told. But we're a bunch of Christians and we have this... I don't mean to be facetious but it's quite remarkable that he deferred to the faith of the group rather than depend on his own kind of desire at that point. But fortunately we all agreed that, typhoon or no typhoon, we were going to give it our best shot.</p> | <p>A-roll of Alastair</p> <p style="text-align: right;">FADE OUT.</p> |
| <p>MUSIC CONTINUES OVER BLACK, FADES OUT.</p> | |

No Strings Attached Post-production Script

ENGLISH SUBTEXT FOR SCENE 2

POLICE

(in Hindi)

This is the police! Open up! We are here to search your home based on reports of child slavery and abuse. Open up!

Meanwhile, the man quietly hustles Ruth into the closet.

POLICE (CONT'D)

If you do not open the door, we will break it down! Open the door!

From the other room, crashing ensues as the police break down the door.

MAN

(in Tamil)

What are you doing? Why are you here?

POLICE

Hands up, hands up! Are you the owner of this home?

MAN

Why are you here?

POLICE

Where is the girl you keep as a slave?

MAN

What do you want?

POLICE

Search the flat.

MAN

What are you looking for?

Police open the door.

POLICE

Come here! I found her!