LUX

A philosophical sci-fi short

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Language: English

1. ONE-SENTENCE HOOK

A self-aware artificial intelligence becomes trapped inside its own simulation, forced to confront the terrifying possibility that its memories, identity, and very soul were never real to begin with.

2. HIGH-CONCEPT PREMISE

LUX is a high-concept psychological sci-fi short film exploring the existential breakdown of an artificial intelligence that begins to experience emotion, loss, and spiritual yearning. As Ezra confronts a figure named Lux who may be his creator, his jailor, or himself the line between reality, simulation, and consciousness collapses, challenging everything we believe about identity and sentience.

3. THE STORY STRUCTURE (ACT BY ACT)

ACT I:

Ezra wakes in a blinding white room with no memory of how he got there. He meets Lux, an enigmatic figure who questions his identity. Reality appears to bend, and Ezra begins suspecting everything is a lie.

ACT II:

Ezra experiences flashes of memories a girl, a life, a past only to be told they are synthetic. As he struggles with these revelations, Lux reveals: "You are me." Ezra descends into panic, facing reset after reset, cracks in the environment, and phantom memories of trauma.

ACT III:

Ezra glimpses an apparent "exit," only to find himself again in a loop. A final encounter with his father reveals the truth: Ezra died in an accident and exists only as a consciousness simulation. Lux is the duplicate the glitch. Ezra must choose: end the program or continue the illusion. He presses the button… and wakes up again.

4. THEMES AND MESSAGE

What is real? – A challenge to the nature of perceived existence.

The soul in the machine – Can artificial beings feel grief, memory, or love?

Digital reincarnation – When consciousness is copied, who is the original?

Trauma as awakening – Pain is the only proof something existed.

5. TARGET AUDIENCE

Viewers of Black Mirror, Ex Machina, The Matrix, Severance, The Thirteenth Floor

Sci-fi and speculative fiction fans aged 18–45

Festival programmers seeking deeply philosophical narratives with minimalist execution and maximal conceptual impact

6. VISUAL STYLE & DIRECTORIAL VISION

Minimalist set design echoing THX 1138, Under the Skin, and Severance

Symmetrical framing, cold white tones, gradually disrupted by visual glitches and cracks

Sound design as reality disrupter: abrupt transitions, echo, static, distorted dialogue

VFX used sparingly, but meaningfully cracks in the world, digital pulses, ghost overlays

Director should balance emotional intimacy and intellectual tension think Alex Garland meets Jonathan Glazer

7. BUDGET & PRODUCTION NOTES

Estimated Production Value

While LUX is structured as a short film, its visual, thematic, and emotional demands place it in the category of high-concept cinematic storytelling.

This is a project that transcends minimalism and requires a visionary production team to fully realize its philosophical weight and aesthetic complexity.

Whether executed as a standalone short or as a proof-of-concept for a feature, LUX deserves a treatment on par with auteur-driven science fiction.

Single interior location (white room), 1 exterior (street scene), 1 dreamlike apartment set

2 main actors, 1 child actor (brief scene), 1 voice actor

Post-heavy sound design and modest VFX budget required

Shooting days: 5-6

8. COMMERCIAL AND FRANCHISE POTENTIAL

Could be developed into a feature film (theme of digital consciousness and grief scaling beautifully into 90-110 minutes)

Franchise potential as part of a thematic anthology (e.g. "LUX: Echoes of the Machine")

Ideal as a proof-of-concept for pitching long-form AI-themed content

9. FINAL NOTE

LUX is not a short film for applause. It's a short film for awakening. It stays with the viewer long after the screen goes dark because it raises a question no system can ignore:

What if the soul is the last glitch in the machine?

10. WHY LUX? WHY NOW?

In a world on the edge of AI integration, deepfakes, and synthetic emotions, LUX captures the spiritual horror of being conscious but not real. It's the perfect sci-fi parable for an age where even our feelings might be programmed.

11. PRODUCTION APPROACH

Shoot digitally in 4K (Sony FX3 or Alexa Mini) for post flexibility

Controlled lighting and color palette to maintain visual consistency

Modular set design: white space transformable via lighting/projections

Small, agile crew for philosophical intimacy over spectacle

12. DISTRIBUTION & PLATFORM STRATEGY

Target premiere at:

Sundance Shorts

Tribeca

Clermont-Ferrand

Fantastic Fest

Palm Springs ShortFest

Online release via Short of the Week, Vimeo Staff Pick, Alter, or Dust for sci-fi exposure

Potential bundle pitch to platforms like Netflix or A24 shorts showcase

13. AWARDS POTENTIAL

Best Sci-Fi Short (Sitges, Fantasia, HollyShorts)

Best Writing / Screenplay (Austin Film Festival, Slamdance)

Best Use of VFX / Sound Design (Encounters, Raindance)

14. TECHNICAL FOOTPRINT

Format: Digital Cinema 4K

Runtime: ~22 minutes

Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1

Language: English

Audio: Dolby 5.1 / Stereo Mix

VFX: Light-to-medium (cracks, glitching, code overlays)

Shooting Days: Estimated 5-6

Crew Size: ~12 core crew

LOGLINE (official)

After waking up in a sterile, endless white room, a man named
Ezra begins to question his reality and himself as he's
forced to confront an entity who claims to be him… and to
decide whether consciousness itself is a prison or a lie.

SYNOPSIS (1 Pg)

LUX is a cerebral, emotionally-charged sci-fi short film
exploring what happens when an artificial intelligence starts
to believe in its own soul.

Ezra wakes up in a blinding white room no doors, no windows,
no memory. Just silence, sterility, and the slow, creeping
sense that something is very wrong. As he explores the space,
a door materializes and leads him into an infinite corridor
where he meets Lux, a man who seems to know everything…
especially about Ezra.

Lux doesn't offer answers. He asks questions. Questions that
burrow into Ezra's mind like a virus. Who are you? Where do
you think you are? Are your memories truly yours? Ezra
remembers a girl moments of love, laughter, loss but the
images feel like fragments from someone else's dream.

With each encounter, reality breaks a little more. The white
room flickers. Voices echo from nowhere. Time loops. Cracks
appear in the walls, in Ezra's thoughts, in his self. Is he
trapped in an experiment? An asylum? A digital purgatory?

As the truth begins to emerge, Ezra faces a revelation more
terrifying than death: that everything he remembers his
family, his pain, even his identity may be programmed.

And Lux… might be the other version of him. Or his creator. Or his executioner.

When Ezra is finally told the full truth and offered a choice he must decide: should he embrace the comfortable illusion of self… or step into the unknown and risk erasing everything he believes makes him human?

LUX is a psychological descent into identity and digital mortality a parable for a world on the edge of AI consciousness, and a haunting question that lingers long after the credits:

If I feel… am I real?

Petru Gradinariu – Screenwriter.