

How we produced **No Man's Land**

An eight minute dramatic short, made in Google Flow. This is the actual method: how the story was locked, how characters stayed the same person across hundreds of generations, and how it was finished in the edit.

We are not replacing Nollywood. We are telling the stories the big companies pass on, and giving them everything we have.

8:17

RUNTIME

8

PART SHOT PROMPT

5

PASS REVIEW BEFORE A TAKE IS KEPT

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CAMERAS

The philosophy

Flow is a film set, not a prompt box.

The strongest results came from treating Flow as a controlled production environment rather than a wishing well. Every generation had a specific dramatic purpose, a defined camera position, one dominant action, and a continuity target. We never asked the model to discover the scene for us. The story was already known; the model was directed toward a precise screen moment.

The screenplay, the emotional arc, and the scene objectives all existed before Flow was opened. A technically impressive image still fails if the audience cannot tell what the character wants, what changed, or why the shot exists.

Sequencing the action

Not a limit on how much can happen. A limit on how vaguely you can ask for it.

Short generations fall apart when a prompt stacks actions without structure. Asking for enter the room, speak, hand over the paper, flip it, reveal the drawing, and react gives the model an entire edited scene to solve at once, and you get rushed blocking, broken hands, and emotional confusion.

The failure there is not the number of actions. It is that none of them were sequenced, no hand was named, no contact point was specified, and no end position was set. A well-structured prompt can carry several actions in one generation, because each one is written in chronological order with explicit physical detail. An unstructured prompt cannot reliably carry even two.

THE WORKING RULE

Start with one dominant action per generation while a scene is being figured out. Once the composition and identity are locked and the action language is precise, a single take can carry more. Decompose into coverage when the shot is fighting you, not as a matter of principle.

The decision is also editorial. Coverage exists so the editor can control pacing, hide continuity differences, and cut on movement. Even when one long take succeeds, separate shots often serve the scene better.

UNSEQUENCED

The boy enters, speaks, hands Jane the paper, she flips it and cries.

SEQUENCED, OR SPLIT INTO COVERAGE

Shot 1: the boy enters. Shot 2: he speaks and extends the paper. Shot 3: Jane receives it. Shot 4: insert of the flip and the drawing reveal. Shot 5: Jane contains her reaction.

Continuity is a system, not a memory

Characters and props both get locked before anything moves.

Every principal character has a continuity profile: identity, exact wardrobe including which side each item sits on, a performance baseline for how they carry grief or fear, voice direction, and a list of the features the model likes to change. Approved reference images are kept clean and shot from multiple angles.

Props that carry story meaning are treated as characters too. The drawing, the paper, the tray, the watch. Each gets its own reference and placement rules.

CONTINUITY EXAMPLE

Jane's black wristwatch stays on her left wrist. The paper is light brown and blank on the side first presented, and reveals the drawing only after she flips it. A prop error changes the action and destroys the edit.

The eight part shot prompt

A prompt is a directing document, not a pile of adjectives.

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- 01 Shot identity** Shot size and camera position, stated first.
 - 02 Continuity lock** The exact character, wardrobe, prop, and location references.
 - 03 Starting composition** Where every visible person and object begins.
 - 04 Dominant action** One primary action, in chronological order.
 - 05 Performance direction** Emotional restraint, eye behavior, breath, tempo.
 - 06 Camera behavior** Static, push in, pan, handheld, rack focus.
 - 07 Visual treatment** Lighting, lens feel, depth of field, texture, grade.
 - 08 Exclusions** The specific failures that would make the shot unusable.
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PRIORITY HIERARCHY

Story action, then character identity, then prop continuity, then performance, then composition, then camera motion, then visual polish. When a prompt runs long, keep the left and cut the right.

Weak prompt versus directed prompt

WEAK

Jane takes the paper and reveals the drawing emotionally.

DIRECTED

Jane extends her right hand and receives the light brown paper from the boy. He releases it only after her fingers have a secure grip. Jane holds the paper level for one beat. She does not flip it in this shot. Her left wrist remains visible with the black watch.

Emotion tags and exclusions

Two habits that saved more regenerations than anything else.

Delivery is written inline, in brackets, immediately before the line. It tells the model how to play the beat instead of hoping the words carry it. A tag is short, physical, and unambiguous.

Emotion tags: [beat, contained] Thank you. I'll make sure he gets it.

Every shot then carries its own exclusion list. Not a generic wall of avoid-words, but a short set of specific, observable failures written for that shot alone. The categories that matter most:

Identity

Wardrobe locks

Prop state and orientation

Hands and contact points

Performance limits

Who may enter frame

Camera behaviour

Technical artifacts

WHY THIS WORKS

A continuity anchor named in the exclusion list is far harder for the model to lose than one mentioned only in the positive description. If a detail identifies the character, protect it twice: describe it, then forbid its absence.

Keep it targeted. An enormous catch-all dilutes the positive direction. The strongest protection is still a clear composition and precise action language, with exclusions guarding only the handful of things that would actually ruin the take.

Directing emotion

Broad adjectives produce melodrama. Physical behavior produces truth.

AVOID	USE INSTEAD
She is extremely sad and cries.	Her eyes moisten, she holds her breath, she swallows and steadies herself before looking at the child.
He speaks emotionally.	He speaks softly and sincerely, unaware of the grief in the room.
Sarah hides her feelings.	Sarah turns her face slightly away, wipes no tears, and controls her breathing so the boy does not notice.
Jane is shocked.	Jane freezes for half a beat, lowers her gaze to the drawing, then resumes a calm posture.

Choosing the right Flow mode

The mode is chosen by the problem, not by habit.

PRODUCTION NEED	STARTING MODE
No exact character, atmosphere is the priority	Text to Video
Face and composition already approved	Animate Image / Image to Video
Multiple approved characters or objects must stay present	Ingredients to Video
The shot must begin and end in exact poses	Frames to Video
A good shot simply ends too early	Extend
One object must be added, removed, or refined	Natural language edit

The five pass review

A take is not kept because it is almost right.

PASS	TYPICAL REJECTION
Story. Can the viewer understand the action?	The paper transfer or drawing reveal is unclear.
Identity. Do they still look like the cast?	Face, age, hairstyle, or body changes.
Continuity. Does it match adjacent shots?	Watch switches wrists, furniture moves, paper changes color.
Performance. Does the emotion match?	Overacting, wrong eyeline, wrong tone.
Technical. Is it usable?	Extra fingers, morphing, tearing, audio artifact.

A wrong principal face is regenerated, never colour corrected into hiding. A hand error during an essential transfer is regenerated or split into smaller shots. A good action with an unstable final second is simply trimmed before the instability.

Hands, props, and the things that break

- Hands are treated as a dedicated effects problem. Reduce simultaneous contact, show the grip clearly, keep finger paths short, and cut between phases of a transfer.
- A natural handoff often needs two generations: the giver extends and holds, the receiver secures and withdraws.
- The paper has a defined front, back, top edge, and hand ownership. The flip direction is specified relative to camera.
- Eyelines matter as much as performance. Correct screen direction is what makes separately generated coverage edit together.
- The generated clip does not all get used. The first seconds often contain settling motion and the last second often deforms.

Sound is not optional

Native audio is a creative option, not an obligation.

The soundscape is a post production mix, never accepted automatically from each clip. Dialogue carries the information, one consistent room tone makes the cuts feel continuous, foley makes paper and clothing believable, and score enters late and sits below the breaths. Silence is a tool: the drawing reveal is given space before any music expands.

Ten things the production proved

- 1** The script remains the foundation. The emotional power came from the written situation, not visual novelty.
- 2** Character consistency starts with a locked reference system and becomes an editorial discipline.
- 3** A complicated action should be decomposed into coverage, never forced into one generation.
- 4** Hands and props require their own master frames, blocking, and acceptance rules.
- 5** Restrained emotion is generated more reliably through physical behavior than through adjectives.
- 6** The best camera movement is usually the smallest movement that improves the beat.
- 7** Frames to Video earns its keep when a reveal needs a precise final composition.
- 8** Professional sound design decides whether the scene feels real.
- 9** The editor is the final continuity engine. Cuts can unify separate generations, but cannot rescue unclear storytelling.
- 10** A naming and versioning system saves more time than improvising after hundreds of assets pile up.

Consistency is the whole craft

The word does double duty in this work.

Consistency is the technical problem. The same face across a hundred generations, the same watch on the same wrist, the same light in the same room, the same voice in every line. Everything in this document exists to protect it.

Consistency is also the working practice, and that is the part that decides whether anyone gets better. Nobody's first generation is good. Improvement does not arrive because a better prompt was discovered; it arrives because

the same system was applied again, and again, and the standard never dropped.

THE HONEST ADVICE

Lock the story, protect the anchors, review every take against the same five passes, and keep the log. Do that for a hundred shots and the hundredth is better than the first. The tool did not change. You did.

This is why the naming convention, the continuity lock sheet, and the generation log matter more than they look. They are not bureaucracy. They are what turns a lucky take into a repeatable result, and a repeatable result into a body of work.

No Man's Land was not produced by asking AI to make a movie. It was produced by directing hundreds of small, controlled decisions and assembling the strongest results into one emotional experience.

Watch what it produced

Nobody was going to make these films. That is exactly why we make them.

Don't look away

No Man's Land is finished and free to watch. **Upriver**, a woodcut series set in Suriname in 1762, is the next one in production.