



Shayla: Radio Tribe Productions © 2025

SHAYLA

PRODUCTION NOTES

ABOUT THE FILM

Shayla is a short fantasy drama about identity, belonging, resilience, and the quiet power of choosing to be seen.

Set largely within the familiar environment of a school day, the film follows Shayla Cambray, a young girl navigating bullying, self-doubt, and the pressure of being defined by others. As Shayla begins to experience visions and hear voices, the story moves between grounded coming-of-age drama and heightened fantasy, revealing an inner world shaped by fear, strength, and transformation.

GENRE

Fantasy Drama / Coming-of-Age

RUNTIME

15 min 05 sec

FORMAT

Short Film, 2.39:1

PRODUCTION COMPANY

Radio Tribe Productions

WRITER / DIRECTOR

Shawn Miller

STORY AND THEMES

At its core, Shayla is about a young person learning that the qualities others dismiss or misunderstand may be the very source of her strength. The story touches on bullying, class perception, identity, friendship, and the difficult process of standing up for yourself when the world around you has already decided who you are.

The film's fantasy imagery reflects the larger emotional and imaginative struggle inside Shayla. The visions are not separate from the drama. They are part of how the audience experiences her fear, confusion, and awakening.

VISUAL APPROACH

The visual style of Shayla was designed to balance realism with a sense of mystery. The school setting gives the film a grounded foundation. Hallways, offices, and everyday spaces become the stage for something larger and more symbolic.

The film uses a widescreen cinematic frame to create a heightened sense of scale around Shayla's internal journey. Compositions often place her within structured environments, emphasizing social expectation and the feeling of being watched, judged, or boxed in.

Color, shadow, and contrast were used to support the emotional movement of the film. The visual language remains grounded in the school environment while allowing moments of heightened perception to emerge through Shayla's point of view.



A widescreen frame from Shayla, balancing grounded school-day realism with heightened fantasy imagery.

VISUAL EFFECTS

The effects were designed as emotional cues rather than spectacle. Water, light, reflection, and vision imagery give the audience a way to feel Shayla's internal conflict before she is able to fully name it.

The look-development process explored how fluid motion, glow, distortion, and particle behavior could suggest emotion, power, and transformation without pulling the audience out of Shayla's story. RealFlow and X-Particles were used to develop fluid and particle-based elements, while Cinema 4D and Arnold Render helped shape their lighting, texture, and final rendered appearance. DaVinci Resolve and Fusion were then used to composite, color, and integrate those elements into the finished film. Every effect needed to remain connected to performance, character, and story.

EDITING AND RHYTHM

The editing was built around escalation and restraint. The film moves between everyday realism, moments of confrontation, and flashes of Shayla's inner world. The pacing allows tension to build gradually before the fantasy elements fully emerge.

Cuts, pauses, and transitions help connect the external events of the story with Shayla's internal experience. The rhythm of the film is designed to let the audience feel what Shayla is processing before she can fully explain it herself.

PERFORMANCE AND CRAFT

Keira Davies' performance as Shayla is the emotional center of the film. The role requires restraint, vulnerability, confusion, and resistance. Much of the performance depends on internal shifts and small moments of recognition as Shayla begins to understand what is happening to her.

The supporting cast helps shape the world around Shayla. Marvin Grays brings warmth, history, and emotional grounding to the role of Papa, offering Shayla a connection to family and identity. Willa Scout's Madison Gold and Jennifer DuHamel's Carolyn Meyers-Gold function as roadblocks, catalysts, and relational mirrors for Shayla. Through their performances, the film gives external shape to the judgment, pressure, and social expectations Shayla must move through. The contrast between these forces is central to the film's emotional structure.



A dramatic moment from Shayla, emphasizing character tension and emotional contrast.

PRODUCTION PROCESS

LOCATIONS AND ART DIRECTION

The school locations were treated as emotional spaces as much as physical ones. Hallways, office interiors, and classroom-adjacent areas helped frame Shayla within a world of rules, expectations, and social pressure.

Those spaces were made possible through relationships with Seattle Public Schools, the M5 Building, and the YMCA. Each location brought a different texture to the production. The school settings gave the film its everyday realism, the M5 Building offered practical production flexibility, and the YMCA supported the community-centered spirit behind the project.

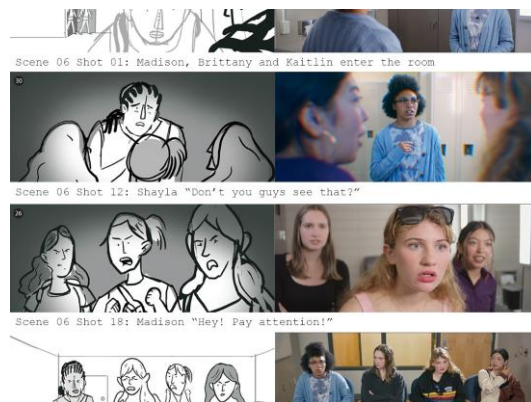
Art directors Burtukaan Taaddasaa Adaree and Tiffany Tse helped shape those locations into Shayla's world. Their work supported the grounded realism of the school environment while leaving room for the heightened visual language that emerges as Shayla's inner life begins to surface.

Tiffany and Burtukaan also defined Shayla's home environment, giving it warmth, personality, and a sense of family history. In contrast to the public spaces where Shayla is judged or challenged, the home setting gives the film a more intimate emotional center. Its details suggest who Shayla is away from the pressure of school and support her relationship with Papa as a source of grounding, memory, and identity.

Behind the camera, the production language remained simple and direct. The images needed to support the performances first while still allowing the fantasy elements to feel connected to character, place, and emotion.

Shayla was produced as a short fantasy drama with a focus on cinematic storytelling, character, and visual atmosphere. The production brought together a cast and crew committed to telling a story that could feel intimate, symbolic, and emotionally accessible.

The short format allowed the film to focus on a concentrated turning point in Shayla's life. Every department worked toward the same goal: to make the ordinary world feel real enough that the extraordinary moments would carry emotional weight.



Storyboards by Ahmed Sikander

SOUND AND MUSIC

Post-production brought together editing, sound design, music, color, and visual effects to establish the final tone of the film. The edit shaped the rhythm of Shayla's journey, but the emotional atmosphere depended just as much on the sound and music.

Sean Dwyer, through Hazy Bay, shaped the film's sound design and final mix, giving Shayla its sense of space, tension, and mystery. His work supports the contrast between the grounded school environment and the heightened moments connected to Shayla's inner experience.

Sean's score also guides the film's emotional movement, giving shape to moments of vulnerability, pressure, and recognition. Eugene Yaw Amponsah's traditional African drumming adds another layer of texture and cultural resonance, connecting the music to the film's larger ideas of identity and inner power.

Together, the sound design, final mix, score, and musical performances help make the extraordinary elements feel connected to Shayla's emotional reality rather than separate from it.

FESTIVAL RECOGNITION

Shayla has received recognition from multiple festivals and awards organizations, including wins for coming-of-age storytelling, drama, editing, visual effects, and performance.

- Best Coming-of-Age Film, Couch Film Festival
- Best Drama Film, Oregon Short Film Festival
- Best Editing, Windsor International Black Film Festival
- Best Visual Effects, New York Film & Actress Awards
- Best Young Actress, Keira Davies, New York Film & Actress Awards

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I wanted Shayla to feel like a story about a young person discovering that she is more than the labels placed on her.

The fantasy elements grew out of that emotional idea. Shayla's power is not simply something magical that happens to her. It is connected to identity, ancestry, courage, and the process of seeing herself clearly. The story is about what happens when a young person begins to understand that the fight within is real, and that surviving it can reveal something powerful.

For me, the film is about the moment when fear begins to give way to recognition. Shayla does not have all the answers by the end of the story, but she has taken a step toward herself. That step is the heart of the film.

PRESS / SCREENING INQUIRIES

For festival programming, press coverage, interviews, screenings, or collaboration inquiries, contact Radio Tribe Productions.

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