

“Emberfell”

Logline

When a group of aspiring documentarians stumble upon a war-torn fantasy world, they must choose between bringing peace to the inhabitants or returning home to worldly fame.

Introduction of Key Characters

- Miles Fletcher, Videographer & Editor

Miles, videographer of the group, is a 5'9" 25 year old Caucasian man with slightly messy dirty blond hair, downturned eyes, and a slight babyface that he hides under long stubble. Miles has a soft spot for clothing with a story, so he buys most of his clothes secondhand. He's usually seen wearing his favorite beat-up 1960s leather bomber jacket, which has several sentimental patches stitched on the front. He has a history of being a pushover, and has always admired Ryota for his confidence and authority since they met in film school. Ryota's confidence rubbed off on him over the course of their friendship, and he began to truly believe that he could achieve his dreams and make it out there as a videographer. However, it was always with Ryota leading him; without Ryota, he couldn't picture himself having the strength to hold a camera. When faced with a crisis situation, he often freezes up against his will and is unable to speak up or act, which leaves his friends to take charge with decision making. He hates this about himself and has always wanted to change it, but he has been unsuccessful thus far. He has a strong sense of empathy, and although he's not perfect, he tries his best to help people as much as he can.

- Ryota “Ryo” Yamamoto, Director & Group Leader

Ryota, the director of the group, is a 5'11" East Asian man with light skin, perpetually tired eyes, a set jaw, and slightly wavy black hair that ends about an inch above his shoulders. He dresses utilitarian, usually in muted tones of greys, blacks, greens, and browns. In his schooling, he always excelled in leadership roles, and he built up a reputation as a cool-headed dependable student who you could trust to get the job done. Since then, he's felt a constant fear of not living up to that perception and losing the respect of his peers. His hidden self-doubt causes him to constantly chase the feeling of being stable and in control, but even when he has a solid handle on things, he's afraid it's all about to slip through his fingers. It also manifests in cutthroat perfectionism over his own work and behavior, as well as a tendency to put all the responsibility of his loved ones' well-being directly on himself. He has a strong ambition, which fuels the group and keeps the hope alive of them achieving their dreams. However, his ambition often leads him

down the path of “the ends justify the means,” as he is willing to sacrifice an immense amount for an ambitious goal that he cares deeply about.

- **Kayla Mitchell, Actor & Researcher**

Kayla, the researcher for the group and the project’s on-camera narrator, is a 5’7” 26 year old Afro-Asian woman with warm brown skin, softer facial features, black hair in chin-length kinks, and sharp jet-black eyes. She’s female, but doesn’t usually present very feminine, instead preferring to dress in crisp men’s business casual. Kayla’s strength is her unfaltering drive: once she picks a task, she will follow it through to the end with thorough and methodical efficiency. She’s great at managing stress and can usually maintain a clear head even in intense crisis situations. She also has a strong curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Kayla is someone who you can always rely on, and has a strong “no man left behind” mentality. If her friends are going through a tough time, she will give as much help, encouragement, and favors as she is capable of to make sure the people around her keep pushing forward alongside her. However, she often forgets that not everyone is capable of tirelessly jumping from project to project like she is. She’s bad at reading people, and she’s so focused on making sure her friends “never give up” that she sometimes fails to notice when they desperately need a break.

- **Alana Prescott, Sound Engineer**

Alana, the sound engineer of the group, is a 5’6” 25 year old Caucasian woman with straight dark brown hair, bangs that never seem to lie flat, a playful smile, and a beanie she rarely takes off. Alana prefers to dress warm with lots of layers, usually in navy and darker tones with a few bright pops of color. She also has a collection of charms, trinkets, and small plushies, which she picks from daily to hang from her belt loops and the zipper of her side bag. Alana thinks quick and acts quick, which allows her to come up with fast, clever solutions to time-sensitive problems. She’s very sharp, both in terms of street smarts and emotional intelligence, and her intuition is often dead on. However, since she prefers to jump right in to deal with problems, she doesn’t give herself the time to consider long-term consequences, which often leads her to get stuck in precarious situations. Alana has been struggling with on-and-off depression since her sister died when she was 16. She hates to bring the mood down and loves to see her friends happy, so she hides it by putting on a happy, confident, and playful face. Alana has always loved music, and gravitated towards the technical side of music for her career. She majored in sound design in college, and made friends with the others there. They often went to her to do sound work in their student films.

- **Orin/Bruce Herman**

A nice old man in Emberfell who introduces himself as Orin the inventor. He’s 6’1 and has a gray beard and longer hair. He wears overalls and modest workshop clothing. Orin turns out to be Bruce Herman, the man who murdered Ivan Vanderbilt. Orin is trying to profit off of the conflict in Emberfell, and he tries to keep it going to collect even more wealth and power.

- Ivan Vanderbilt

Ivan Vanderbilt is the last of the Vanderbilt family, the only family from our world that has ever gone to Emberfell. After much of his family died off gradually, Ivan became devoted to preserving Emberfell and took an active interest in politics and humanitarianism. However, Bruce Herman killed Ivan and took advantage of Emberfell by starting a war. He was murdered in the 1970's and the police found enough evidence to convict Bruce Herman, also being able to place him at the scene of the crime in Central Park. However, he disappeared and the case went cold.

Overview

Setting:

In 2000's New York city, our group lives in a single cramped apartment in Brooklyn. They quickly find themselves in a fantastical world, something out of a story book. Giant mushrooms as tall as trees, fantastical beasts, and magic potions all populate the valleys in between the massive mountains of Emberfell. In Emberfell, the inhabitants are essentially humans. The 2 largest cities, Zenethen and Galadrith, which are a few miles apart, have been warring for decades. These cities are medieval in architectural style with tudor and stone buildings. Although peace talks have been proposed many times in the past, for some reason they have always fallen through, inflaming the conflict for the next few years.

Act 1

A group of young documentarians, barely funded by a stingy film production company, are assigned to investigate a man named Ivan Vanderbilt's island that was abandoned after his mysterious murder in the 70's. Together, the team visits Vanderbilt's house and stumble across a portal that leads to a fantasy world where they quickly meet an old man named Orin. Orin is a well to do village gadget inventor. Orin pleads with them not to document Emberfell and argues that a documentary would draw harmful mass human attention. Due to the existing destabilization from a long-raging war, Emberfell is completely unprepared to deal with an issue of that magnitude.

Act 2

Disappointed, the group starts to walk back to the portal. Ryo, the director, insists upon publishing a documentary about Emberfell anyways, since it would bring their group much needed success and wealth. Miles, the timid videographer, is unable to fully - take a stand against Ryo. During the conflict, a horseback messenger races past them and drops a mysterious weapon blueprint with Orin's logo on it. After following the messenger's path, they discover Orin's castle and further investigate inside, discovering that Orin is not a peaceful old man, but rather a weapons manufacturer. They also discover a plot to blow up peace talks happening that day. With the help of Orin's employee Eleanor, the group exposes Orin at the

peace talks. As a last resort means to escape after being exposed, Orin uses his planted bombs to cause pandemonium, using it as cover for his escape. Ryo and Miles chase him onto a boat. The boat crashes down a waterfall and Ryo and Miles are able to restrain Orin. In an angry rant trying to justify his actions, Orin lets slip that he murdered Ivan. Hearing him, Miles and Ryo see the similarities in Ryo and Orin's attempts to pursue success, and Miles is emboldened to finally take a stand. Horrified by this realization, Ryo apologizes, and the two make up.

Act 3

The leaders and citizens of the two warring cities generously reward the documentarians for their help with exposing Orin, capturing him, and ensuring the peace talks conclude successfully. Together, they return to the real world and destroy the portal, making sure the people of Emberfell are kept safe from human interference. They then use the riches they received in Emberfell to break free from Mizerly Media and make films they are truly passionate about, including a full scale fantasy film inspired by Emberfell.

Narrative Treatment

Act 1

A group of four New York filmmakers in their 20s have had little success after film school. Because their funding comes from the restrictive film production company Mizerly Media, the group has never been free to make creative films, and instead begrudgingly makes whatever the company thinks will be popular. Due to their lack of passion for these soulless ideas, their films funded by Mizerly turn out to be flops. Mizerly threatens to cut their funding for good if they don't produce something profitable and "noteworthy". Their new assignment is to make a documentary about the cold case of a man named Ivan Vanderbilt, who was murdered in Central Park in the 70's. Vanderbilt was a reclusive man who lived alone on his family's small island and not much was known about him. A police investigation had enough evidence to convict Vanderbilt's friend, Bruce Herman, but Herman seemingly disappeared and the case went unsolved. Bored and frustrated at the boring and seemingly dead end nature of the

documentary, the group reluctantly journeys to the island. Upon getting dropped off by a sailboat, the group searches in the abandoned house before discovering something odd on the outside, a basement window. This was odd because the house had no basement—that they knew of. Intrigued, the group searches inside to find an entrance. Eventually, they hone in on an odd full length mirror which ends up serving as a door to the entrance of the basement. Going down the stairs, they discover a wondrous reading room filled with books and a writing desk. On the wall is a taxidermied dragon head and paintings of exotic flora and fauna. The books piled on the desk are full of stories about a magical place named “Emberfell ”, except they’re not just stories, they’re journal entries. Intrigued, the group pokes around the room, opening a wooden door in the basement to reveal weathered wooden steps to a claustrophobic cave. At the end of the cave is a mossy cobblestone well that looks like it is in disrepair. Alana, for fun and to relieve some frustration from being forced to do this project, flips a coin into the well. Weirdly, we hear it hit the bottom almost instantly after it went into the well. Peering down, the group realizes the well is only one foot deep. Reaching down to pick up the coin, Alana realizes that all her hand under the water is gone, and it does not feel wet. Kayla, who’s watching from the side, thinks this might be Ivans portal to Emberfell. She excitedly pleads with the crew to adventure inside, thinking that this might be their big break. With nothing to lose, they all go into the portal and emerge at the mouth of a cave overlooking a mystical valley with a town in the distance. After reaching the town, the group enters “Orin’s”, a gadget shop where a woman named Eleanor welcomes them and teaches them all about Emberfell, including the large mushroom trees, magic, danger of great beasts like dragons and exotic fruits. A man with a beard enters the

shop and warmly introduces himself as Orin, the owner of the shop. He explains that the Vanderbilt family and the two big cities of Zenethen and Galadrith had a long and pleasant relationship. Ivan Vanderbilt took an active role in the politics of Emberfell and devoted himself to humanitarianism. He became a well liked figure and brought social peace and promoted economic security. Eventually, Ivan became the last Vanderbilt (and last human for that matter) to have contact with Emberfell. When Ivan died, each city blamed the other for his death. As a consequence, the two cities have been fighting ever since. Long ago, the Vanderbilts warned the people of Emberfell about the dangers of real world human governments and how humans can selfishly exploit foreign lands. It follows that Orin urges the documentarians not to publish a documentary to keep Emberfell private to avoid potential havoc.

Act 2

While the group begins walking back to the portal, an argument starts. Ryo, the director, believes that they got what they came for and should return home safe to enjoy fame and wealth from their discovery. Miles, the videographer of the group, believes that they have a duty to respect Orin and Emberfell by not publishing the documentary, but he freezes up and is unable to clearly voice his convictions. Ryo, unused to Miles speaking out against him, misunderstands and takes Miles' argument as a personal insult. While Miles is still trying to stammer out his thoughts, a messenger on horseback suddenly races past them, dropping a document out of his pouch as the horse jerks to avoid a collision. While he continues inside without noticing, the group inspects the document. A blueprint for a weapon... with Orin's shop logo on it! The blueprint is labeled "Walker v2"

and shows a mechanical creature-like machine that soldiers can pilot and shoot from. Confused as to how such a nice man could be related to a violent weapon like this, they follow the path of the messenger to investigate. The crew approaches a castle. Hanging from the walls are Orin's logo.

Bravely or stupidly, they go inside and are questioned by knights. While they are trying to explain to the guards that they know Orin, he enters the room, shocked. "How can I help you?" Orin asks. Alana and Kayla ask Orin more questions about Vanderbilt's life while Miles and Ryota sneak through the castle rooms to find out more about Orin. Entering one of many workshops, they inspect more weapon blueprints. An argument quickly breaks out between the two as to whether to expose Orin to the citizens of Emberfell as the instigator of the war and murderer of Ivan Vanderbilt, or leave safely and publish the Emberfell documentary. Their commotion alerts Orin, who barges in. Miles and Ryo bolt out another door and meet Alana and Kayla outside the castle where they barely escape together with all their equipment intact.

Ryo is able to convince Kayla and Alana that the best course of action is to still make the documentary, since if they help the people of Emberfell defeat Orin and end the war, Emberfell will be better equipped to deal with human interference. Ryo calls it a win-win situation, and urges them to think about how much they have to lose if they can't make a profitable documentary in time. Miles still doesn't want to make the documentary, but is overruled.

Deciding to do what they do best, they start creating a film that exposes Orin to the world. They gather more evidence explaining that Orin makes weapons secretly and has been sabotaging any efforts to stop the war. They bravely venture close to the front

lines of a conflict to capture footage of the original Walker to prove that the “Walker V2” is made by Orin. In their investigations of Orin, they find a plot to blow up and sabotage peace talks happening in Zenethen. It's now a race against time to tell everyone the message so everyone is safe before the talks happen.

Now that they have their film, they try to figure out how to share the film with Emberfell. Remembering back to Eleanor, the lady who first met them, they ventured off to find her in her shop. After explaining the situation to her, she says that if they act fast, they can present the film to the center of the auditorium where peace talks are about to begin. They travel there as fast as they can because they find out that while Orin is sponsoring the peace treaty event, he actually plans to sabotage the treaty by blowing it up right after he steps off stage. While Orin is onstage accepting a generous thank you for his hosting, the crew reveals his dark plans before he can put them into motion by projecting their attack film on the screen. Panicked, Orin initiates the explosions at the stadium as cover to escape. Kayla and Alana stay behind to help with the commotion while Miles and Ryo crew chase after Orin as he hijacks a boat from a nearby river. Orin locks himself in a cabin on the boat, but before the two can find a way to break in, the entire boat falls off a waterfall. With the boat broken and Orin crawling away, Ryo and Miles cough up water while trying to get their bearings. They catch up with Orin and tackle him, then restrain his arms with rope from the boat wreckage. Orin, furious and straining at the ropes, admits to being Bruce Herman, the man who murdered Ivan Vanderbilt. Orin rants that everything he did was justified because he was just climbing the ladder, and sacrificing the well-being of Emberfell for his success was entirely within his rights. Both Miles and Ryo hear some of Ryo's motivations in Orin. Horrified at the

thought of his friend ever ending up like Orin, Miles finally finds the courage to properly speak up against Ryota, and everything he'd been bottling in during their entire stay in Emberfell pours out. Shaking from the near-death experience, drenched, and rattled by the realization that he was acting exactly like Orin, Ryota sincerely apologizes to Miles. As they drag Orin back to the city, Ryota and Miles have a much-needed heart to heart, and by the end, understand each other much better.

Act 3

They arrive at the city, meet Kayla and Alana, and explain what happened. The four make a public proclamation to the people of Zenethen and expose Orin as the murderer of Ivan Vanderbilt. While people are celebrating the capture of Ivan's murderer and a major step forward in stopping the conflict within Emberfell, the crew remembers their livelihood in the 'real world' depends on their deadline in creating their documentary. Miles says that they can't sacrifice the well-being of a whole world for their own financial security like Bruce did, and takes a stand against publishing any sort of documentary or news story. Alana and Kayla both agree, leaving Ryo outvoted. Since it is now night, the crew needs a place to sleep and a generous innkeeper gives them a room. Slowly, Emberfell begins to heal now that the fighting over Ivan's death has stopped and the largest weapons manufacturing business was shut down. Zenethen and Galadrith begin repairing their cities, working together for the first time in decades. As a reward for putting a stop to the war, the crew is rewarded with a plentiful amount of gold from the citizens of the two cities. All four make their way back through the portal and agree they will all keep quiet about Emberfell and to destroy the portal so no outside influence can

ever harm Emberfell again. They smash the well with pickaxes found in a shed on the island.

After they sail back to the mainland, they turn in Bruce Herman to the police. To avoid giving away knowledge of Emberfell to the outside world, they decide to tell the police Bruce is desperate and crazy and keeps talking about this made up fantasy world called "Emberfell". Bruce is bound to be sentenced to life in prison. There's a huge press frenzy about the documentarians who found the murderer of a cold case. The four are interviewed about finding the murderer, a spokesperson from Mizerly interjects and claims that Mizerly should get all the credit, but none of the media people pay him any attention. Afterwards, the four go out to lunch, ignoring all calls from Mizerly. The group fully cuts ties with Mizerly and now that they have plenty of money from the gold they received for their new creative project, are able to fund a full scale fantasy film (inspired by the people and places they saw in Emberfell). With this gold, they are also able to improve their current living situation by moving into a much larger apartment.

Note about use of generative AI

ChatGPT was used to brainstorm ideas for place and character/place names. It was also asked to list spelling mistakes and inconsistencies, which were then confirmed by us.