Still Water: Series Pitch Package

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Logline

When a drought exposes a town drowned in 1926, a state survey crew goes down to explore it and finds the shoreline gone. Trapped on a shrinking island by rising water, they must learn the town's deadly rules and uncover who flooded it on purpose, before its century-old residents take their place.

Short version: The lake gave the town back. Now it wants something in return.

Format: Streaming series, 8 episodes of about 50 minutes per season · Supernatural mystery thriller · Planned for 4 to 5 seasons

Pitch

The hook. Droughts really do bring drowned towns back up. Streets, foundations and church steeples rise out of shrinking reservoirs all over the American West. *Still Water* asks what happens if one of those towns was flooded on purpose, and if the water was keeping something in.

The world. Lake Calloway is a reservoir in the Southern California high desert. For 100 years it covered the town of Harlow. When the water drops, Harlow is perfect: dry houses, set tables, clocks stopped at 3:12. A state survey crew goes down to map it. By the time they turn around, the shore is gone. Harlow is an island, and the water is climbing.

The rules. The survivors learn these the hard way, and every season breaks one:

- The water rises one foot every time someone in town tells a lie out loud.
- Never drink the lake water. People who do start remembering lives that aren't theirs.
- The original residents can't cross a threshold unless they're invited, and they are very good at getting invited.
- Every seventh night, the church bell rings underwater and someone goes missing.

The engine. Three questions drive the series, and each answer opens a bigger one. Who flooded Harlow in 1926, and why? What is the lake? Why were these people allowed in? Season 1 is about surviving the town. Later seasons uncover Harlow's earlier cycles of trapped strangers and then what lives beneath the water.

The tone. Slow dread with emotional stakes. The horror is personal: the lie rule turns every secret into a threat, so the characters' guilt is literally rising around them. It's beautiful by day and terrifying by night, with long silences broken by the sound of water.

Comparable titles. *FROM* meets *Dark*, with the grief-soaked mystery of *The Leftovers*.

Why it lasts. The setting is fixed, the cast is small and the rules are clear, so it's affordable to shoot and easy to follow. Every twist comes from the three core questions, so the mystery deepens without falling apart. The lie rule creates new drama in every episode, because someone is always hiding something.

From 9th Room Originals. An original concept, fully owned and ready for option or development partnership.

Synopsis

Series overview

The whole series is about one lake and the people it keeps. Season 1 traps a survey crew in Harlow and teaches them its rules. Season 2 reveals that strangers have been caught here before, in earlier cycles the lake erased. Season 3 goes beneath the town to what the water was built to hold. In the final season the water reaches the real world, and the survivors have to choose between escaping and sealing the lake for good.

Season 1

Episode 1: Low Water. Record drought has pulled Lake Calloway down 90 feet, uncovering the town of Harlow. Hydrologist Iris Calder leads a state survey crew in with her mapping tech Theo, Deputy Ana Soto and boatman Dell Hawkins. Iris's 17-year-old son Wes comes too, sulking on a forced ride-along. Harlow is eerily intact: dry houses, set tables, every clock stopped at 3:12. At dusk they head back to the truck. The shoreline is gone. Water surrounds the town on every side.

Episode 2: Threshold. Lights come on in Harlow's windows. The town's original residents are back, dressed for 1926 and politely confused by the newcomers. Their leader, Reverend Amos Thorne, offers food and shelter. A sharp, watchful girl named Clem Avery warns Wes: never invite anyone in. That night Theo jokes his way through a lie about being fine, and the water climbs a foot up Main Street.

Episode 3: One Foot. The crew works out the first rule: every spoken lie raises the water. The island shrinks, and suddenly every secret is dangerous. Iris hides something about her husband's death. Ana hides why she volunteered for this job. Theo keeps having déjà vu he can't explain.

Episode 4: The Bell. On the seventh night, the church bell rings from underwater. In the morning, Dell is gone. His boots are found at the edge of the water, filled with lake silt. Clem admits it has happened before and the missing never come back the same.

Episode 5: Remembered Lives. Ana finds her younger brother Marco, who vanished near the lake 10 years ago. He's living in Harlow as one of the residents, drank the water long ago and now remembers being someone born in 1903. He doesn't know her. Desperate and dehydrated, Wes takes a sip of the lake.

Episode 6: Invited. Wes begins dreaming a stranger's memories of 1926. A resident uses his voice to trick Theo into inviting them in, and the safe house is breached. Thorne reveals the residents' purpose: when the water fills the town, the lake lets one of them go for every newcomer who takes their place.

Episode 7: The Truth Tide. With the water at the church steps, Iris finally tells the truth out loud. She was steering the boat the night her husband drowned, and she lied at the inquest to protect herself. The water drops a full foot. The rule works both ways: lies feed the lake, and the truth pushes it back. The crew starts confessing, and the town grows larger.

Episode 8: Still Water. On the next bell night, Thorne's residents move to claim the newcomers. Clem leads Iris and Wes to the church and shows them what's under the floor: a shaft dropping into the lake bed, sealed with iron. Clem confesses that in 1926 she opened the dam and drowned her own town to trap the thing living beneath it. The residents aren't its victims. They're its guards, and they're tired. Iris saves Wes, but Theo is pulled under.

Final image: On the far shore, headlights cut through the dark: a 1987 station wagon, its radio playing. A woman steps out and calls across the water. She says she's been looking for Harlow for 40 years. She says Theo's name.

Main characters

Five survivors from today and two residents from 1926. The lie rule means every one of them is a danger to the others until they tell the truth.

Character	Who they are	What they want	Their secret	Their arc
Iris Calder (44)	Lead hydrologist for the state water board. Precise, controlled, the one who keeps everyone alive.	To get her son home and keep her past buried.	She was steering the boat the night her husband Daniel drowned, and she lied at the inquest.	Her confession in Episode 7 reveals that truth pushes the water back. She becomes the leader who makes everyone else tell the truth.
Wes Calder (17)	Iris's son, angry and grieving, dragged along on the trip.	To get away from his mother and find out what really happened to his father.	He suspects she lied about Daniel and has been reading the inquest file.	He drinks the lake water and starts carrying a 1926 resident's memories. He becomes the bridge between both worlds and grows close to Clem.
Theo Ruiz (29)	The crew's drone and mapping tech. Funny, skeptical, the first one to joke when it gets bad.	To prove there's a rational explanation.	Without knowing it, he has been in Harlow before, in an earlier cycle the lake erased from his memory.	His déjà vu grows all season. He is pulled under in the finale, and a woman from 1987 knows his name.

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Deputy Ana Soto (36)	Riverside County deputy assigned to escort the crew. Steady, tough, quietly desperate.	To find her younger brother Marco, who disappeared near the lake 10 years ago.	She volunteered for the job because the drought gave her a chance to search the lake bed.	She finds Marco alive in Harlow, living as a resident who doesn't remember her. Her goal shifts from finding him to bringing him back.
Dell Hawkins (67)	Boatman from the shore town. Has run the lake his whole life and knows every legend.	One last look at the town his family never talked about.	His grandmother was a Harlow girl who escaped the 1926 flood, and he knows more of the rules than he admits.	He is taken on the first bell night. His fate is a key mystery for Season 2.
Clem Avery (appears 16, from 1926)	The sharpest resident of Harlow. Wary of the newcomers but helps them anyway.	To keep the thing under the town from getting out.	In 1926 she opened the dam herself and drowned her own town to trap it.	Begins as the crew's guide and becomes the series' most important ally. Her guilt and her bond with Wes drive the later seasons.
Reverend Amos Thorne (50s, from 1926)	Harlow's minister and the leader of its residents. Warm, patient, deeply persuasive.	To set his people free after a hundred years.	He knows every newcomer who takes a resident's place frees one of them, and he has been choosing who goes first.	Starts as a kind host, becomes the season's main human threat, and raises the question of what the residents are really guarding.