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AWARDS

These key scenes in the writing nominations get to the heart of the series



Patrick Fabian as Howard Hamlin is unaware Lalo Salamanca, played by Tony Dalton, has walked up behind him. (Greg Lewis / AMC)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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A moment of revelation. A slip into magical realism. A character whose arc perfectly

stuff of "key scenes" in nominated episodes. And any of them can be the turnkey that convinces an Emmy voter to cast a ballot a certain way. The Envelope chatted with nearly every writer of the Emmy-nominated drama and comedy episodes for 2022 to find out what scene that is to them.

DRAMA

"Better Call Saul"

Episode: "Plan and Execution"

Here's the key: Howard confronts Jimmy and Kim about their elaborate scheme when Lalo walks in the door.

The big deal: "Jimmy and Kim thought they had everything going right," says writer Thomas Schnauz. "Except they didn't think [cartel heavy] Lalo Salamanca would walk in their apartment. Everything they thought they had in control is gone; their life as they knew it is over."

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Charlie Tahan as Wyatt Langmore, Julia Garner as Ruth Langmore star in “Ozark.” (Tina Rowden / Netflix)

“Ozark”

Episode: “A Hard Way to Go”

Here’s the key: Ruth gets a glimpse into a life she might have led if the Byrdes had never shown up.

The big deal: “It’s a moment of rest in the middle of all the craziness,” says writer Chris Mundy. “There’s a peace in what it would have been like if the Byrdes had never come to town. So even though there’s a sad ending, it’s cushioned a bit by the fact that this was in her mind earlier.”

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Michael Siberry plays Helly's father. (Apple)

"Severance"

Episode: "The We We Are"

Here's the key: "Innie" worker Helly meets her "Outie's" father and is confronted with the truth of who she really is.

The big deal: "The show is so much about what constitutes our identity, and in the course of this episode that question is answered for Helly," says writer Dan Erickson. "Her father thinks he's talking to his daughter, and it's a very different experience on her end."

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Lee Jung-jae as Gi-hun in “Squid Game.” (Netflix)

“Squid Game”

Episode: “One Lucky Day”

Here’s the key: Gi-hun tells Front Man on a phone call that he’s not a horse on a racetrack.

don't even realize we are acting that way," says writer-director Hwang Dong-hyuk. "Why are we just working like racehorses, racing toward an objective? Is this a fair world that we live in? These are the key questions I wanted to bring out."

Roman (Kieran Culkin) and Shiv (Sarah Snook) comfort Kendall (Jeremy Strong). (WarnerMedia)

"Succession"

Here's the key: Kendall reveals to siblings Roman and Shiv a secret he's been holding on to for a long time in a scene directed by nominee Mark Mylod.

The big deal: "The revelation maybe acts as a solvent that starts to dissolve the calcified walls of mutual hostility and suspicion that have grown up between these people," says writer-creator Jesse Armstrong. "The end of the episode, and season, only really works if a new set of relationships are formed there."

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A scene that foreshadows dark moments to come. (Showtime)

“Yellowjackets”

Episode: “Pilot”

Here’s the key: An unidentified girl runs through the woods, chased by unseen pursuers, and comes to a bad end.

The big deal: “We love the idea of teasing where these girls were going to end up, then spending the rest of the episode in a completely different tenor,” says Ashley Lyle, who co-wrote the episode with Bart Nickerson. “We wanted to punch the audience in the face a little bit.”

Samantha Hanratty as Teen Misty (Kailey Schwerman / Showtime)

“Yellowjackets”

Epsiode: “F Sharp”

Here’s the key: Scenes of a plane crash are interrupted by a flashback to a prank call to group outcast Misty.

The big deal: “In a way, Misty has been trying to escape a plane crash her whole childhood,” says Jonathan Lisco, who co-wrote the episode with Ashley Lyle and Bart Nickerson. “We were trying to put on a similar plane social and psychological scars with physical ones.” “The prank call feels as heightened as a plane crash,” adds Nickerson.

COMEDY

Sheryl Lee Ralph and Quinta Brunson in the “Pilot” episode. (Prashant Gupta / ABC)

“Abbott Elementary”

Episode: “Pilot”

Here’s the key: Young teacher Janine is confronted in a meeting in the library she admits she’s the cause of the school’s chaos.

The big deal: “It proves what we can do as a workplace comedy,” says writer-creator Quinta Brunson. “It’s about how our characters interact. One of my focuses was to keep the pacing in the episode, and the pacing in that scene sets the tone for what the show can do, to shine a light on that chaos.”

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The beignets from Mitch the baker survived a wild motorcycle chase in “Barry.” (Merrick Morton / HBO)

“Barry”

Episode: “710N”

Here’s the key: Barry, Sally and NoHo Hank respectively get advice from beignet baker Mitch.

their lives forever," says writer Daily Boudreau. "Mitch tells them exactly which path to take to avoid pain and suffering. But it's clear all three are going to go off and do the opposite, because it's not what they want to hear in the moment."

Jim, at left, stands on his lawn, knowing his house will be empty from now on in a scene from "Barry." (WarnerMedia)

"Barry"

Here's the key: As Barry is taken away by the police, Jim (whose daughter was killed by Barry) stands alone on the front lawn.

The big deal: "It summarizes the whole season, this idea of forgiveness and redemption," says co-creator and co-writer (and star) Bill Hader. "Barry's spent all season trying to convince [Gene] Cousineau he's sorry for killing Janice, but really only because he wants to feel better about himself. To Jim, who lives in this empty house with the memory of his daughter, it's all about her."

Hannah Einbinder reacts to being fired on “Hacks.” (Karen Ballard / WarnerMedia)

“Hacks”

Episode: “The One, the Only”

Here’s the key: Deborah shocks Ava by firing her so that Ava can pursue her own career opportunities.

The big deal: “This scene encapsulates just how far Deborah and Ava’s relationship has come,” writers-creators Lucia Aniello, Paul W. Downs and Jen Statsky say in a joint email. “It’s this journey that allows Deborah to see in this moment that the kindest thing she can do for Ava is to let her go, or else she may never tell her own story.”

Mabel (Selena Gomez) and Charles (Steve Martin) find a box containing a ring. (Craig Blankenhorn/HULU)

“Only Murders in the Building”

Episode: “True Crime”

Here’s the key: Mabel and Charles find an engagement ring on the roof, which signals hope to them.

The big deal: “In that hope, they find hope in their own lives,” says John Hoffman, who wrote the script with star Steve Martin. “All three of [the leads] are finding a bounce-back off of this new clue in the mystery, which gives them hope in their futures.”

Finding a way to laugh during a funeral in “Ted Lasso.” (Apple)

“Ted Lasso”

Episode: “No Weddings and a Funeral”

Here’s the key: Keeley, Sassy, Nora and Rebecca have an uproarious conversation in a waiting room at a funeral.

The big deal: “It’s such a cool way to show multigenerations of people having a fun, dynamic conversation, getting each [person’s] personality into the scene,” says writer Jane Becker. “It felt like a big moment, not just for the episode but for me in my career.”

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Kayvan Novak as Nandor, Harvey Guillen as Guillermo. (Russ Martin / FX)

“What We Do in the Shadows”

Episode: “The Casino”

Here’s the key: The vampires sit down to dinner with friends as their familiar, Guillermo, is interrogated about his private life.

the show, and here we got to push that emotional story forward," says writer Sarah Naftalis. "Do the vampires see him as a familiar? As a bodyguard? The questions gave us a lot of jokes but also a way to propel Guillermo through the episode."

The vampire Nandor (Kayvan Novak) enjoys an exercise class in "What We Do in the Shadows." (Russ Martin / FX)

"What We Do in the Shadows"

Here's the key: Amid an existential crisis, vampire Nandor joins a cult, but his familiar, Guillermo, pulls him out and back to the family.

The big deal: "Nandor asks Guillermo if he ever considered that for the first time in hundreds of years that this was the first time he'd been happy," explains writer Stefani Robinson. "This is one of the first times we've gotten into his emotional head space and examined the emotional baggage that comes with being a vampire."

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