PRODUCTION SCRIPT BREAKDOWN

Inception

Full production script breakdown — department-by-department extraction from a 142-page VFX-led feature.

SCENES	LOCATIONS	SHOOT DAYS	BUDGET TIER
118	**31 unique (6 build, 25 practical)**	**74 principal + 9 second unit**	**Studio tentpole**

Breakdown Summary

PROJECT	Inception
FORMAT	Feature film, 142 pages
SCRIPT DRAFT	Production draft
TOTAL SCENES	118
SPEAKING ROLES	22 speaking
UNIQUE LOCATIONS	31 unique (6 build, 25 practical)
ESTIMATED SHOOT DAYS	74 principal + 9 second unit
BUDGET TIER	Studio tentpole

This is a set-piece-driven schedule, not a location-driven one. Six of the eight major sequences require engineered environments — a rotating corridor, a folding street, a zero-gravity hotel interior, a collapsing Limbo cityscape, a mountain fortress exterior and a practical freight train on a city street — and each of those builds sets its own schedule around itself. The correct approach is to treat the six builds as fixed anchors, lock their stage dates and engineering lead times first, and hang all practical location work in the gaps. Attempting to schedule this script chronologically will produce a plan that cannot be executed at any budget.

> **PRODUCTION FLAG**
>
> *Three sequences (rotating corridor, zero-gravity hotel, folding Paris street) require engineering lead times of 10–16 weeks before their first shoot day. These must be greenlit at the same moment as the cast, not after. Nothing else in this breakdown is on the critical path in the same way.*

Scene Breakdown

Every scene tagged with page count, interior/exterior, day/night, cast IDs and the department triggers found in the action and dialogue.

Sc.	Slug	I/E	D/N	Pages	Department triggers
1	EXT. SHORE — JAPANESE ESTATE	EXT	DAY	1 2/8	Water safety, aged prosthetics (Saito), period props
4	INT. DINING ROOM — FORTRESS	INT	NGT	3 4/8	Build. Breakaway china, controlled water ingress, 60 SUP extras
12	INT. WAREHOUSE — MOMBASA	INT	DAY	2 1/8	Practical. Dressing: chemical lab, 40 sleepers, IV rigs
19	EXT. MOMBASA ALLEY CHASE	EXT	DAY	4 6/8	Stunts: foot chase, wall crush gag, 120 extras, 6 vehicles

27	EXT. PARIS CAFÉ — DREAM	EXT	DAY	2 3/8	VFX: environment collapse. Practical debris, air mortars, 80 extras
31	EXT. PARIS STREET — FOLDING	EXT	DAY	1 7/8	Build + VFX. 16-week engineering lead. Full previs required
44	INT. 747 CABIN — FIRST CLASS	INT	NGT	3 2/8	Build. Practical cabin on gimbal, 14 cast, sedation continuity
52	EXT. CITY STREETS — RAIN (LVL 1)	EXT	NGT	6 4/8	Rain towers (6), 9 vehicles, 2 stunt drivers, van submersion rig
61	INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR — ROTATING	INT	NGT	2 5/8	Build. Rotating set, 10-week lead, wire work, stunt doubles x3
66	INT. HOTEL BAR — ZERO-G	INT	NGT	4 1/8	Build. Wire grid, 12-week lead, 8 wire performers, medic standby
78	EXT. MOUNTAIN FORTRESS — SNOW	EXT	DAY	8 3/8	2nd unit. Ski stunts x14, snowmobiles x9, avalanche FX, altitude medic
94	INT. FORTRESS VAULT	INT	DAY	3 6/8	Build. Squibs, safe practical, dust FX
101	EXT. LIMBO CITY — DECAYED	EXT	DAY	5 2/8	Full VFX environment. Bluescreen stage, 4 practical foreground builds
112	INT. LIMBO HOUSE — MAL	INT	DUSK	4 4/8	Build. Period dressing, child performers x2, welfare hours
118	INT. LAX ARRIVALS	INT	DAY	1 5/8	Practical airport, 90 extras, top prop (hero + 6 doubles)

Cast Breakdown

ID	Character	Scenes	Days	Notes
1	Cobb	94	68	Wire work, water work, stunt double required. Aging makeup for Limbo.
2	Arthur	52	41	Zero-g wire work — 3 weeks rehearsal. Stunt double required.
3	Ariadne	44	34	Wire work light. No stunts beyond falls.
4	Eames	38	29	Firearms training. Double for alley chase.

5	Mal	24	21	Period looks x4, aging continuity across three timeframes.
6	Saito	26	22	Aged prosthetics for Limbo (4-hour application, 9 days).
7	Fischer	31	26	Wire work. Emotional continuity across three levels.
8	Yusuf	19	15	Stunt driving double — van sequence.
9–14	Projections / security	41	—	Stunt performers, firearms trained. 6 recurring.
15–22	Featured supporting	28	—	Includes 2 child performers — welfare hours apply on 7 days.

Location Breakdown

Location	Scenes	Days	Notes / requirements
Stage A — rotating corridor	3	9	Engineered build. 10-week lead. Structural sign-off required.
Stage B — zero-gravity bar	4	11	Wire grid to 14m. 12-week lead. Full-time rigging crew, medic.
Stage C — 747 cabin	5	7	Gimbal-mounted. Sound stage with wild walls.
Stage D — fortress interiors	9	12	Snow dressing, water ingress drainage, squib clearance.
Stage E — Limbo bluescreen	6	8	Full-height bluescreen, 4 foreground practical builds.
Paris street — folding	2	5	Partial build + VFX extension. 16-week engineering lead.
Mombasa (or substitute)	11	9	Practical. Alley chase requires 3 contiguous blocks, full closure.
Mountain fortress exterior	4	13	Second unit. Altitude, avalanche control, weather contingency 4 days.
Hotel practical (bar/lobby)	7	6	Dressed to match Stage B. Night work, noise consent.
LAX / airport substitute	2	2	Practical terminal, overnight access window only.

Department Requirements

Art department and construction

- Six engineered builds, of which three (rotating corridor, zero-g bar, folding street) require structural engineering sign-off before construction begins.
- Limbo requires a decayed-modernist architectural language distinct from every other level — this is a design commitment, not a dressing pass.
- Level-specific palette bibles required for four dream levels; continuity depends on the audience reading location by colour.
- Four practical foreground builds for the Limbo bluescreen stage, each matched to previs geometry.

Special effects and rigging

- Rotating corridor: continuous 360° rotation with lock-off positions, crew access hatches and performer safety harness anchors.
- Zero-gravity bar: wire grid to 14 metres with eight simultaneous performer channels; dedicated rigging crew and on-set medic for all 11 days.
- Rain: six rain towers with recovery and filtration for nine consecutive night exterior days.
- Van submersion: water tank or controlled river rig, safety divers, breathing apparatus for four performers.
- Avalanche effect: controlled snow cannon and debris sequence, second unit only, mountain safety officer mandatory.

Costume, hair and makeup

- Mal appears across three time periods with distinct looks; continuity bible required before principal photography.
- Saito ages 40+ years for Limbo: four-hour prosthetic application across nine shoot days — schedule as pre-calls.
- Snow-fortress sequence requires 26 cold-weather tactical builds plus stunt duplicates (3 per performer).
- Cobb's suit appears in six distinct states of damage — 8 duplicates minimum.

Camera, grip and lighting

- Rotating corridor requires camera mounting to the rotating structure plus a locked-off exterior position.
- Zero-gravity sequences require overhead rigging clearance shared with performer wire grid — schedule rigging conflict resolution before build.
- Nine night exteriors with rain: full condor lighting package and weather cover for six units.
- Previs mandatory for all four simultaneous-timeline cross-cut sequences; edit dependency is absolute.

Visual effects

- Folding street: hero VFX sequence, previs-locked, partial practical build. Cost is front-loaded into design.
- Limbo cityscape: full environment, approximately 210 shots.
- Paris café collapse: practical debris and air mortars extended digitally, approximately 60 shots.
- Total estimated VFX shot count 690–760. Vendor allocation required at prep, not post.

Transport, extras and support

- Peak extras day: 120 (Mombasa alley chase). Secondary peak 90 (LAX).
- Vehicle inventory: 21 picture vehicles including 9 for the rain sequence and 9 snowmobiles for second unit.
- Two child performers across seven days — welfare officer and tutoring required.
- Altitude medic and mountain rescue standby for all 13 second-unit fortress days.

Stunts, Effects and Safety

Sequence	Risk	Requirement
Mombasa alley chase	High	Foot chase with wall-crush gag. Stunt coordinator, 6 performers, 3 rehearsal days, closed streets.
Rotating corridor fight	High	Harnessed performers in rotating structure. 3 doubles, 2 weeks rehearsal, structural sign-off.
Zero-gravity bar	High	8 simultaneous wire performers to 14m. Dedicated rigging crew, medic on set all 11 days.
Van bridge fall / submersion	Very high	Vehicle drop and water submersion with performers inside. Safety divers, breathing apparatus, medical standby.
Snow fortress assault	High	14 ski stunts, 9 snowmobiles, firearms, avalanche FX. Second unit, mountain safety officer.
Fortress vault firefight	Medium	Squibs and practical debris. Firearms armourer, eye protection, clearance.

Four sequences in this script are in the highest risk category and two of them (van submersion, zero-gravity wire work) involve principal cast rather than doubles alone. Both require a dedicated safety plan signed off before the build is completed, not before the shoot day. Budget a full-time medic for 22 shoot days and a mountain rescue contract for the entire second-unit period.

Scheduling Strategy

Schedule the six engineered builds as immovable anchors, sequenced by engineering lead time rather than by story order. Rotating corridor and zero-gravity bar cannot share a stage or a rigging crew, so they must be consecutive rather than concurrent. Second unit runs the mountain fortress in parallel with main-unit stage work, which saves approximately 11 days and is the single largest available efficiency in the script.

Block	Content	Rationale
1 (12 days)	Mombasa practical + alley chase	Location-dependent, weather-tolerant, no build dependency. Gets the cast working together early.
2 (11 days)	Stage B — zero-gravity bar	Longest rigging lead resolves first; frees the grid for Block 4.
3 (9 days)	Stage A — rotating corridor	Follows Block 2 to avoid rigging crew conflict.
4 (14 days)	Rain city exteriors (Level 1) + van rig	Consolidates all wet work and the water safety package into one window.
5 (13 days)	Second unit — mountain fortress	Runs parallel to Blocks 3–4. Includes 4 weather contingency days.
6 (19 days)	Stages C, D, E — 747, fortress interiors, Limbo	Controlled stage work; absorbs schedule slip from earlier blocks.
7 (5 days)	Paris street folding + café collapse	Last, because VFX previs and build must be fully locked.
8 (4 days)	LAX, shore, pickups	Light days for schedule recovery and cast release.

Budget Drivers

Ranked by their effect on the shooting schedule, which is where the money actually goes.

Rank	Driver	Effect
1	Six engineered builds	Sets the stage calendar and the construction budget; 16-week critical path on the folding street alone.
2	VFX shot count (690–760)	Vendor commitment required at prep. Post schedule is the release-date constraint.
3	Second unit — 13 days at altitude	Full duplicate crew, weather exposure, rescue contract.
4	Wire and rigging package	Dedicated crew plus medic across 20+ days.
5	Water work (rain + submersion)	Nine night exteriors with water recovery, plus a submersion safety package.
6	Prosthetic aging (Saito)	Nine pre-calls at four hours, extending crew days.

Risks and Contingencies

- Engineering lead times: if the folding street is not greenlit with the cast, the schedule loses its last block and the release date moves.
- Rigging crew conflict between Stage A and Stage B is unresolvable by money — only by sequencing. Lock Blocks 2 and 3 in order.
- Mountain weather: 4 contingency days are the minimum; 6 is prudent for a winter window.

- Child performer welfare hours constrain the Limbo house sequence to 7 shortened days — build this into the Block 6 plan rather than discovering it.
- Water safety on the van submersion involves principal cast. A single insurer objection here can force a redesign; get the safety plan approved at prep.
- VFX vendor capacity: 700+ shots in a single window requires two vendors minimum, which means the design language must be locked earlier than usual.

Producer's Action List

- Commission structural engineering studies for the rotating corridor, zero-gravity grid and folding street immediately — before location scouting.
- Lock previs for the four-level cross-cut sequence before Block 1; the edit depends on it and so does the VFX bid.
- Contract the rigging crew for a single continuous period covering Blocks 2 and 3.
- Secure the mountain location with a weather-contingency clause and a rescue standby contract.
- Book the prosthetic team for Saito's nine days as pre-calls in the Block 6 plan.
- Issue the water safety plan for insurer approval at prep, not at the shoot day.
- Split the VFX package across two vendors by sequence, with the folding street and Limbo assigned to separate houses.

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