

Communication Design Project 2

THE D PHASE

A Graphic Novel Chronicling my Personal Journey through Depression

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Project Guide
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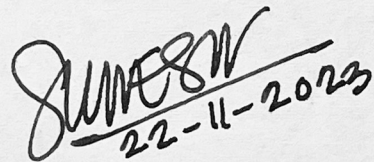


IIT Bombay

Approval Sheet

This project report entitled 'The D Phase - A Graphic Novel Chronicling my Personal Journey through Depression' by Akashnath M 22M2265, is approved for partial fulfilment of the requirements for Masters of Design Degree in Communication Design.

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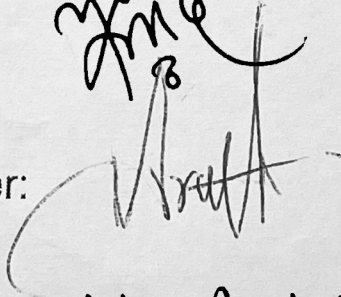

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Prof. Sudesh Balan

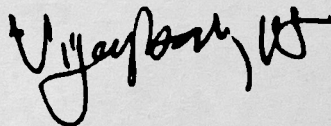
Chairperson:



Internal Examiner:



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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' opinions or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been appropriately cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Akashnath M', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Akashnath M
22M2265
14/11/2023

Acknowledgements

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Sudesh Balan for his unwavering guidance and support throughout the journey of crafting this project. His expertise and insightful feedback have been invaluable in shaping its development. I am also profoundly thankful to my fellow batchmates for their continuous encouragement and motivation, which played a pivotal role in seeing this project through to completion. Their constant support has been a constant wellspring of inspiration, and I am genuinely appreciative. I would like to give special recognition to my friend Evana Saajan Pallivathukkal for her assistance at various stages of script development and translating dialogues into English. Furthermore, I extend my thanks to my friends Dilshad Ayakkodan and Devika Anilkumar for their support in conceptualization process and transforming words into visuals.

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14/11/2023



Abstract

“The D phase” is a graphic novel based on personal experiences during the depression phase of my life.

“The D phase” isn’t a traditional tale of mental illness and interventions . We follow the tumultuous life of Adhi. Once a vibrant college student with a close-knit group of friends, Adhi’s world comes crashing down whent he experiences a change in environment.

Overwhelmed by grief and loneliness, he finds himself spiraling into the depths of depression, haunted by the memories of happier times and the friends he once held dear. This graphic novel takes readers on a vivid and emotional ride, delving into Adhi’s daily struggles, self-doubt, and the haunting specter of his past relationship. We witness his battles with insomnia, lethargy, and a sense of disconnection from the world around him.

We witness Adhi’s emotional rollercoaster as he embarks on a deeply personal journey through the 5 stages of grief, acceptance and finally towards recovery.

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THE D PHASE



Introduction



Context & Objective

I am a person who likes to share my life stories, incidents, and experiences with everyone but mostly happy ones. Sometimes I even try to push it voluntarily in between some random conversation with friends. From there came the idea of telling a story from my own life; something that everyone could relate to and most of them may have passed through.

The title can be read as the Down phase or Depression phase of life. We all have hard times in our life. Due to one or another reason, we don't usually share it or openly speak about it. Insecurities envelop us, and there's a hesitation about openly sharing them – concerns about tarnishing our image or being perceived as emotionally vulnerable by others.



I faced a challenging period during the shift from college to professional life. As those around me dispersed for personal and career growth, adjusting became daunting, especially for someone deeply connected to friends.

Survival became tough, leading me into stages of loneliness, hopelessness, lethargy, and insomnia. Eventually, I recognized I was in a state of depression. Remarkably, I managed to overcome it independently, without external assistance.

Once an incident unfolds, it transforms into a story. The nature of the experience, be it harsh, disastrous, or a loss, becomes inconsequential as time works its healing magic. In hindsight, we can look back, even laugh, at the most challenging moments.

My intention wasn't to delve into the medical aspects of mental issues or to convey a message about mental health awareness. Instead, I aimed to revisit the incidents, reasons, situations, emotions, and the surreal feelings within, expressing them through this graphic novel.



Story Development



Process

Upon resolving the initial issues with the project, my immediate step was to conduct a thorough self-assessment. This involved a meticulous examination of both my strengths and weaknesses in the realm of crafting a graphic novel. I found that my forte lies in the execution aspect, particularly in the realm of illustration. However, given my limited experience in scriptwriting, I anticipate this to be a challenging facet of the project. While I bring a strong visual proficiency to the table, delving into the intricacies of script creation marks an area where I am poised for growth and development.

I conducted a preliminary study to gain insights into the art of crafting stories and scripts. An essential lesson I learned in the process of story development is that elements I find personally intriguing may not necessarily captivate my audience. Therefore, emphasizing relatability becomes crucial when presenting personal narratives. To enhance this connection, I recognized the value of incorporating subtle fictional elements. This not only adds a creative dimension to the narrative but also ensures a broader appeal by striking a balance between personal authenticity and imaginative storytelling.



Initial storyline

Writing down the basic elements of a story.

Protagonist : A young man; 23 -24 in age

Objective : to win over depression.

Obstacles and conflict : changes in life situations, breakup, friends split apart.

Antagonist : state of mind. Fighting himself.

Creating the basic storyline:

'A young man in his early twenties faces depression and overcomes from his own.'



Breaking the storyline into parts to make the story development process easy.

HOW?

WHY?

WHEN?

WHERE?

The HOW part actually shows the stages of transition from the protagonist from his normal life to depression stage and from depression stage back to his normal life.

The WHY part should show the reasons behind the protagonist's transition. What are the reasons which pushed the protagonist to depression and what are the motivations which helped him to get back to his normal life.

WHEN depicts the time period of the incidents that happened and its duration; How long did it take the protagonist for the transitions and finally achieve the result.

WHERE depicts the places where those incidents took place, where was the protagonist in the beginning stage and and in the end.



Development

The basic storyline is then elaborated into a one page story.

The narrative unfolds during the protagonist's final year of college, witnessing the gradual drift of friends as they focus on their careers. Simultaneously, the protagonist undergoes a breakup, leaving him isolated with no emotional support. Returning home exacerbates his feelings of extreme loneliness and hopelessness, and unable to confide in anyone, he perceives these emotions as normal. Slowly descending into the depths of depression, he eventually recognizes the severity of his situation. A chance conversation with his mother unveils her understanding of his predicament and her unwavering support. This revelation becomes a turning point, motivating him to navigate and ultimately overcome the challenging phase of depression.

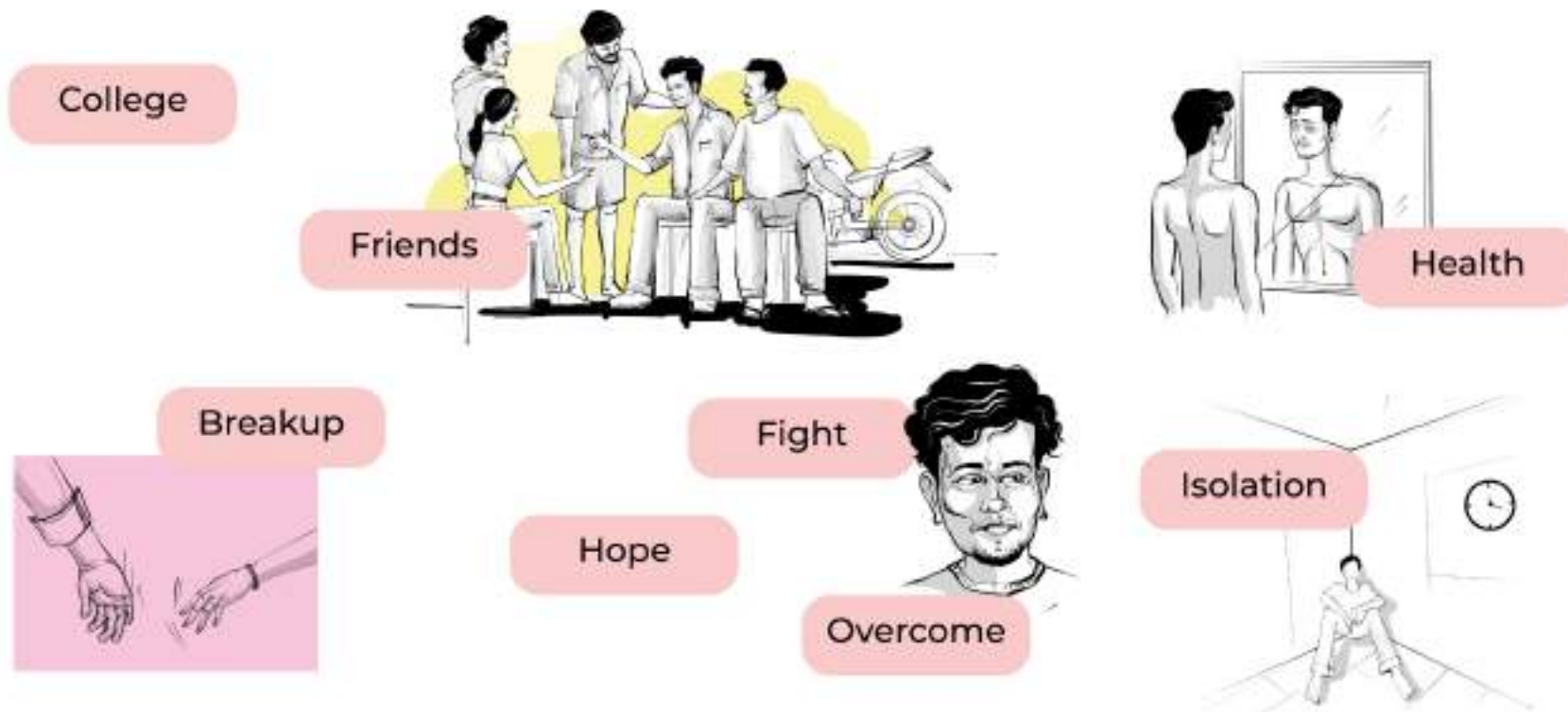
The next step was converting the story into a script. For that further details were needed. Details to establish the protagonist, his background, his character, his behavior, people he interacts with, the incidents which led him to the transitions, turning points etc. The script development actually involved 5 stages; Documentation of events, sequencing them, connecting them , adding layers and then writing the script.





Documentation of Events


- Listing down the incidents, conversations, points that explains how, why and where my journey of D phase happened.
- Adding keywords to group them.





Sequencing Events

- Sorting the events in a linear way according to the timeline and making into a sequence to develop the storyline.
 - Breaking down the events / Adding details
-
- College final year
 - Change of situations
 - Active person who was popular and chill - friendzoned
 - Change of environment
 - Confined and highly dependent on partner in the relationship
 - Relationship - situation changed - Loosening of interpersonal relationships - groups drifting apart
 - Trying to hold on to the partner, loses her even more
 - Breakup
 - Deteriorating skill levels
 - Close friends focusing on their careers
 - World is changing from the whole college to four walls of his room
 - Whatsapp groups become inactive
 - Cannot adapt to the change
 - Going through archives
 - All of these events added to the effect of loneliness
 - Feels like days and nights are getting longer
 - Surviving each day becomes a task
 - Difficulty in sleeping
 - Behavior towards parents
 - Situations at home

- 
- Is unable to understand the spiraling into depression
 - Loss of interest
 - Trying continuously to contact friends
 - Started talking to himself - looking into the mirror
 - Smoking, drinking
 - Trying to cry but unable to do so
 - Feeling of inserting a sharp pin into a soft spongy material
 - Starts overthinking
 - Starts normalizing it
 - Health conditions become worse
 - Turning point becomes before or after photos
 - Mom noticing and asking about it without addressing it
 - Realizing something worse is happening
 - Thinking of ways to get over the situation
 - Becomes conscious of his situation
 - Back to painting
 - Engaging voluntarily
 - Movies
 - Traveling
 - Job and change of environment
 - Help and support from unexpected people
 - Routine
 - Acceptance and looking back at past with humor
 - Regaining health



Connecting Events

The Sequenced events are rearranged and grouped into Pre D Phase , D Phase and Post D Phase.

The D Phase events are connected based on the theory of **5 stages of Grief**.



<https://www.verywellmind.com/five-stages-of-grief-4175361>

Denial: People may at first reject or contest the truth of the scenario. It acts as a protective mechanism to lessen the impact of the first shock.

Anger: Feelings of impatience, frustration, and wrath may surface as the reality of the loss sinks in. During this phase, anger may be directed towards the circumstance, other people, or even oneself.

Bargaining: At this point, people could try to strike agreements or offers in an attempt to undo or lessen the effects of the loss. It frequently includes a desire to reverse or alter the situation.

Depression: When the full scope of the loss becomes apparent, a deep melancholy or depression may appear. Accepting the circumstance as it is and the changes it brings about is the goal of this stage..

Acceptance: At this last phase, people start to come to terms with the fact that they have lost a loved one. Acceptance is realizing that life must move on despite the anguish of the loss.



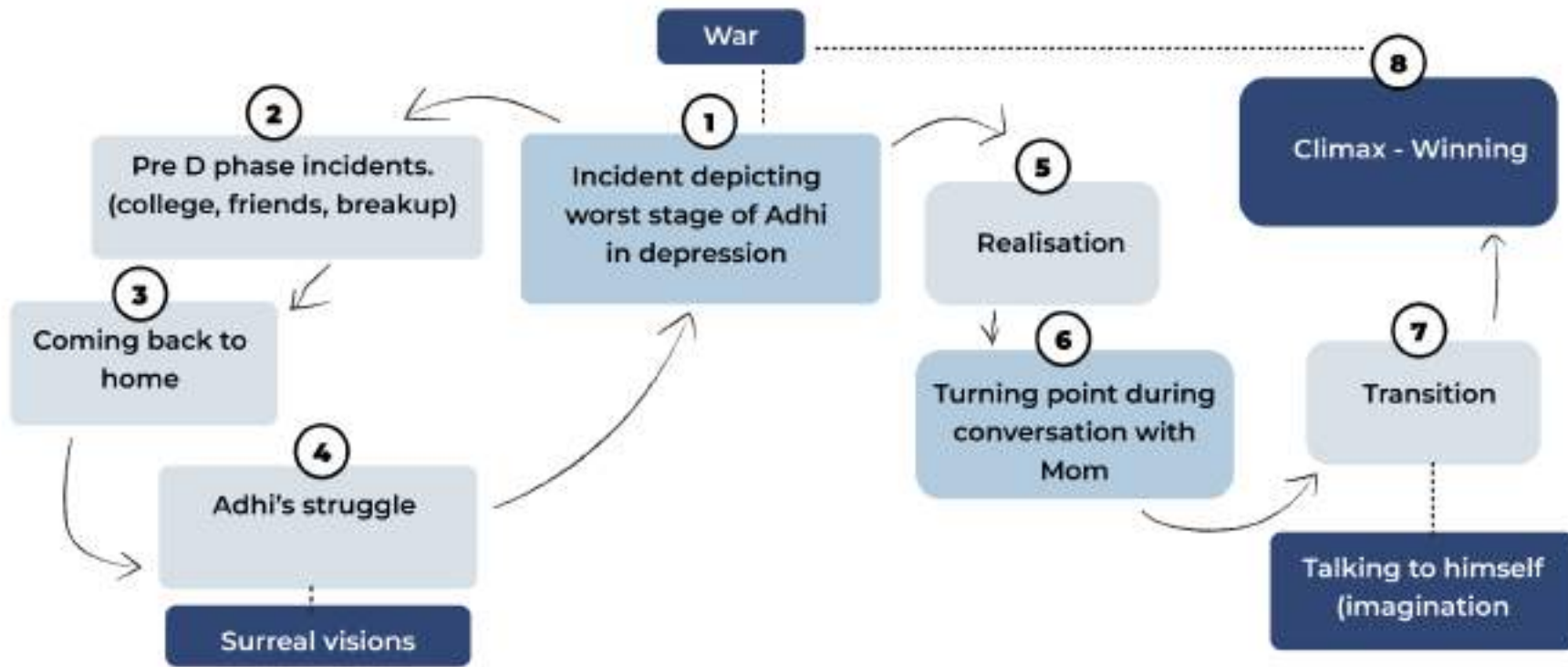


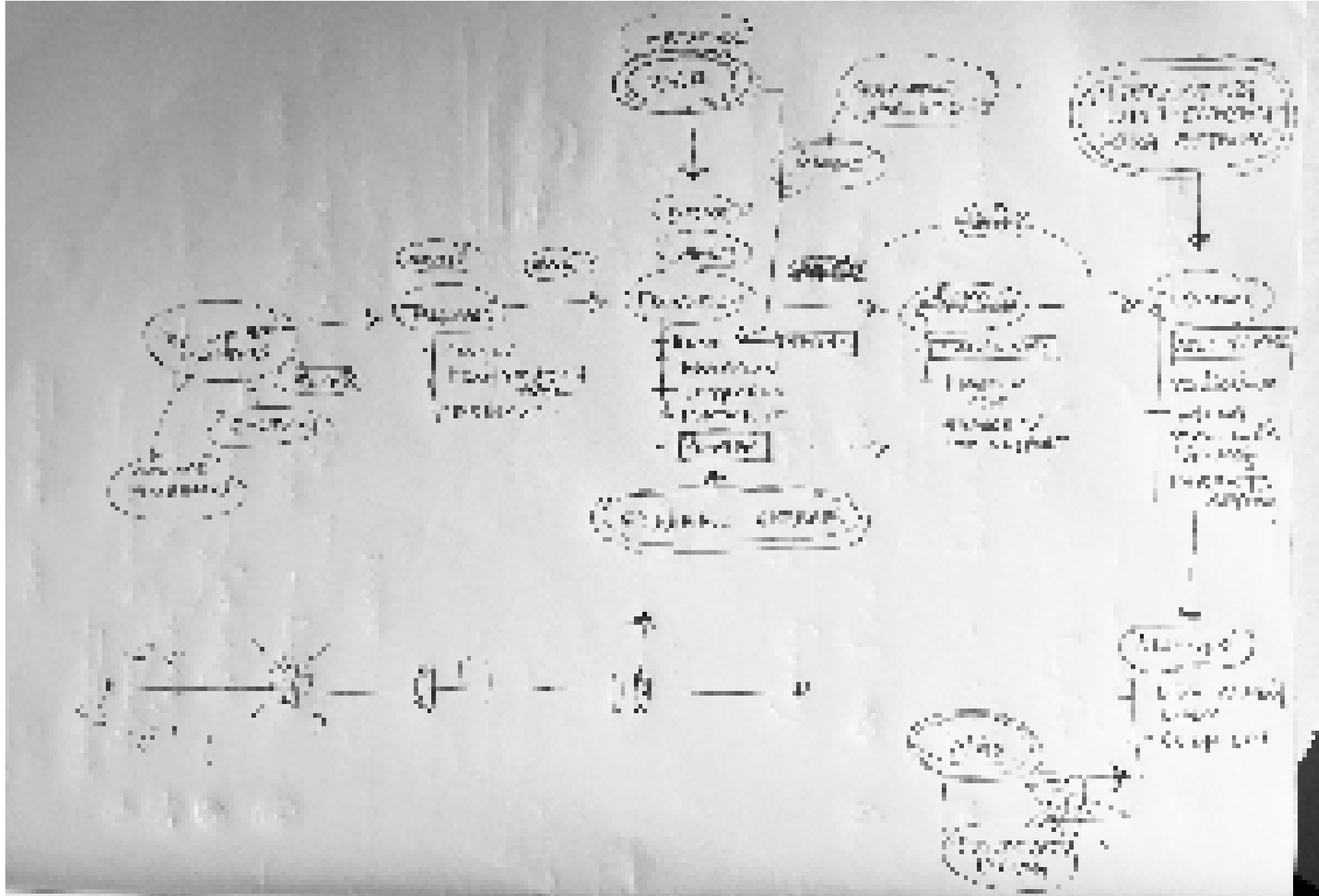
Adding layers

The sequence of events is deliberately reshuffled to narrate the story in a non-linear fashion, aiming to sustain audience engagement. Introducing flashbacks and unexpected twists serves to captivate viewers, keeping them closely tied to the narrative's momentum.

To enhance the story's depth, additional layers are intricately woven parallel to its progression. These layers serve as metaphors, vividly illustrating the character's journey or circumstances. In this narrative, a war scenario is interwoven alongside the protagonist's struggle with depression. Within this imaginary war setting, a wounded soldier grapples with the challenge of identifying the enemy, mirroring the protagonist's own confusion about his situation.

As the story unfolds, the war scenes resurface, symbolizing the protagonist's triumph over depression. The wounded soldier finally identifies the enemy, realizing it bears his own face - a poignant metaphor for the internal struggle the protagonist had to conquer within himself.







Writing the Script

Conceiving the story as a mental movie, I proceeded to craft the script, commencing with the pivotal task of naming the protagonist. The name should be short and common so the reader can easily grasp and relate it. The protagonist was named 'Adhi'.

An initial draft of the script took shape, subsequently undergoing a process of condensation, refinement, and correction. The script adhered to a cinematic format, akin to a movie script, detailing shot types, camera angles, and transitions to facilitate visualization.

Being more comfortable with Malayalam, I initially penned the dialogues in the language, allowing for a more nuanced and authentic expression. Subsequently, the Malayalam dialogues were seamlessly translated into English, ensuring the narrative's accessibility to a broader audience.



Storyboard

Storyboarding was done parallelly with script writing so that it was easy to visualize the panels for illustration.





Illustrations



Illustration style

Conducting a comprehensive study on illustration styles, I examined the diverse approaches employed by various artists. Ultimately, I settled on a unique style that seamlessly blends my customary drawing approach with elements inspired by the DC comic illustration style. This infusion incorporates exaggerated perspectives, elevating the visual impact. To enhance the detailing, I employed extensive line hatches, adding depth and texture to the illustrations.

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Character design





Paneling



The size 6.875" x 10.438" was selected for the book. I conducted a concise exploration into the art of paneling in comic books, focusing on its crucial role in facilitating transitions between shots and scenes. In the realm of comic book storytelling, transitions can be categorized into six distinct types: moment to moment, action to action, subject to subject, scene to scene, aspect to aspect, and non sequitur. The insights gleaned from this study proved invaluable in the meticulous design of panels, enhancing the overall flow of the narrative.

Implementing these varied transition techniques not only contributed to the seamless progression of the story but also played a pivotal role in structuring and concluding scenes at the end of each page. This deliberate approach to paneling significantly aided in the strategic arrangement of scenes and ultimately assisted in determining the optimal number of pages required to effectively convey the narrative.

Learnings

As someone who loves drawing and painting, creating a graphic novel based on my own story was a completely new adventure. Starting with writing the script was a bit challenging at first, but as I kept refining it, the process became more enjoyable and rewarding.

Working on the script multiple times not only boosted my confidence but also made me appreciate the whole creative journey. It became a learning experience, and I found myself genuinely enjoying the details of scriptwriting. This process had a real impact on how I tell stories, pushing me to try out different narrative styles, add layers, and use metaphors to make the story more interesting.

Turning the script into a graphic novel format showed me both the limitations and the exciting possibilities of bringing abstract ideas to life visually. This journey didn't just broaden my creative skills but also deepened my understanding of how words and visuals work together in graphic storytelling.