

Film Presentation

Topic: Old Age: The Yesteryears of our Society

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By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the project work done in relation to my graduation film and submitted as a written report to the Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay is a record of the original work done by me under the guidance of Professor Shilpa Ranade. Unless otherwise stated, the contents of this report in the form of the text and images are entirely my own. The views expressed in the documentation as part of the written submission of the project are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of Industrial Design Centre, IIT Bombay.



Anindita Mondal 16/11/2018

November, 2018

Approval

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Anindita Mondal 16/11/2018

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Abstract

Everybody has a story to tell.

The plight of the elderly in our country and elsewhere is really a sad tale of events where most of them don't get the love and respect they deserve. The moment they become dependent on the next generation, very often than none, they are kicked out of their own home. Very few get the opportunity to stay in an old-age home. The rest simply end up spending the remaining of their lives on streets. Suffering the unshaken winters and the insatiable hunger to survive.

My film deals with the plight of one such lady who have found her way onto a corner of the streets and is now reduced to begging. The story is told from the point of view of a young girl, who has no idea how unforgiving the real world could be.

So, when she finds the old lady trying to beg onto the streets, she doesn't know what the lady actually wants. So, she ends up giving the only valuable thing she had on her, her toffee.

What begins, is an epic journey of these two unlikely friends and the bonds that get carved onto their souls. And no matter if the seasons change, or the years turn, the love that each hold for the other, doesn't waver.

Everybody has a story to tell. And an old woman who has a lifetime worth of story to tell, simply wants to be heard.

Content

Sl No.	Topic	Page No.
1.	Introduction	6
2.	Research	7
3.	Analysis	12
4.	If You Could Do It All	14
5.	Story	15
6.	Script	19
7.	Storyboard	22
8.	Visual Exploration	41
9.	Character Exploration	47
10.	Sound	56
11.	Animatic	57
12.	Animation	58
13.	Post Production	59
14.	Conclusion	60
15.	References	61

Introduction

I have grown up in a semi joint family where I was looked after by my grandmother. What this means is that, though we were a joint family with lots of uncles and aunts, we all lived sort of separately in the same locality. They come visit as much as possible, and we celebrate all festivals together at our place. But other times, it's just my father, mother, grandmother and me. My parents used to always leave for their job early in the morning. My entire day, food and play was taken care of by grandmother. My world revolved around my grandmother.

So, ever since childhood I had a special connection with her and grew up with stories she used to cook up ever so often, like most grandparents do. Most of her stories were of course, stories of her childhood and I had a realization very early that she loved to talk about her childhood. About adventures she once had, and people she once loved, but were now all gone. It was a bliss, living in this beautiful glass castle, where the sun kissed roof reflected off of her many freckles and danced across the walls.

Then our school had the first annual visit to an old age home. And the glass walls came crashing down. I met people as old, probably older, cast away, withering away and tears filling their eyes as they see children maybe for the first time in that year. And I heard their stories.

For what it's worth, I couldn't believe that people could actually get away with sending their parents, or grandparents to a random old age home and move on. To me, the entire idea was very repulsive.

How can I do away with a parent who brought me into this world, fed me, clothed me and supported me through and through?

The old people loved having us there. They loved telling us stories. I loved listening to them. And I loved spending time with them. But I also hated it. I hated going there and I hated seeing their lifeless eyes glow up for just a second thinking that maybe, finally their family have come.

I hated going to those visits.

And then I realized something. I was a coward. I simply tried to block it all away because it was unpleasant. Hoping it would go away if I just closed my eyes. But I didn't want to close them anymore. There are hundreds of old people who are cast away every day, everywhere as I am sitting writing this introduction or as you are reading it. And all they ever want is to be loved. All they ever want is to belong to somewhere and sit in the porch with their grandkids playing before them until, finally the sun sets.

All they want is to tell a story.

It was for a long time that I decided, I am going to tell their story.

Research

Phase I

Basing this film on the plights of the elderly people in India, the initial approach was to do a consensus on the general demography. This included going through actual research papers and approaches by Government agencies, NGOs and the likes to get an over all view as to the situation currently prevailing in India. And based on these, the common idea and understanding that came forth are:

- 75% of the elderly who face abuse lived with family and 69% of them were owner of the house they lived in.
- 55% of those who were abused did not report to anyone and among them 80% of these did not report it for the family's honor.
- Primary abuser are sons (56%)
- Secondary abuser are daughter-in-laws (23%)

The reasons for various abuses faced by the elderly and the in-turn abandonment by the family boils down to factors like:

- Rapid Urbanization
- Competitive lifestyle
- Growing aspiration for more lifestyle products
- Family wealth and ancestral property

According to the consensus done in 2010, more elderly people are opting for a pay and stay home of their own discord rather than staying at home. The number of women choosing this option has

exponentially risen since then. According to the survey, among these women, 68% are widowed while 25% are childless.



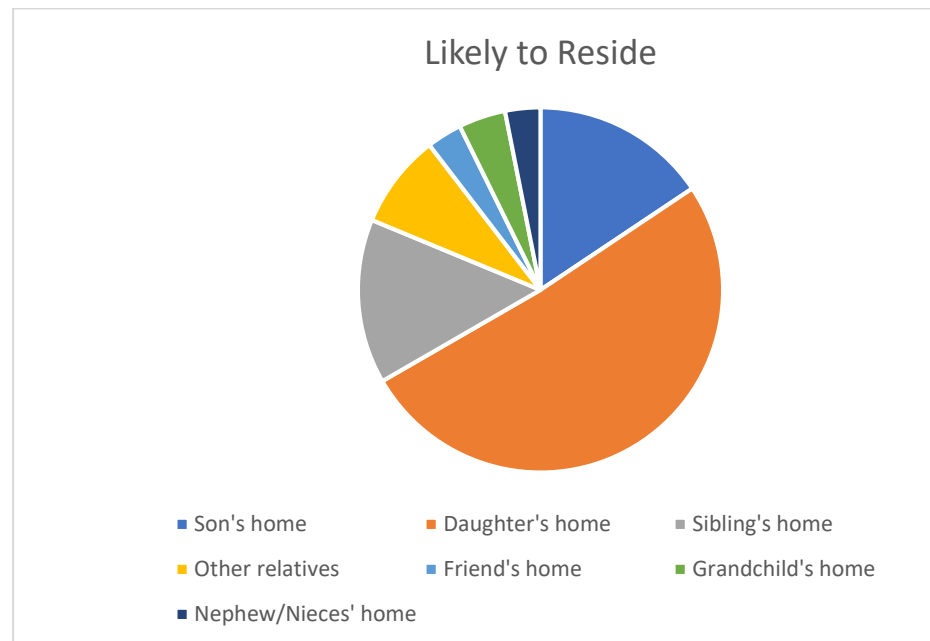
In 2007, the Government of India enacted the Maintenance and Welfare of Parent and Senior Citizen Act, whose basic guidelines are:

- Provide need-based maintenance
- Better health care facilities
- Setting up of Old Age homes
- Protecting life and property.
- Legal compulsory maintenance of the parents

After interviewing several elderly residing in old age homes, it has been found that the most common feelings that they harbor are:

- Feeling utterly powerless
- Loss of respect
- Loss of authority
- Alienation in late life
- Socially outcast in case of widowed for women.

Based on studies done to several elderly residing in the old age home, an average percentage is drawn as to given otherwise, where would they most likely want to spend their remaining time on. The pie chart below gives a visual cue to the findings.



After receiving a bird's eye view on the overall footing of the elderly people in India, the focus of the film slightly shifted towards providing more of a social commentary on their plight rather than a personal take on it. Everybody knows that their situation is critical, but just how critical?

Thus, began Phase II of the research.

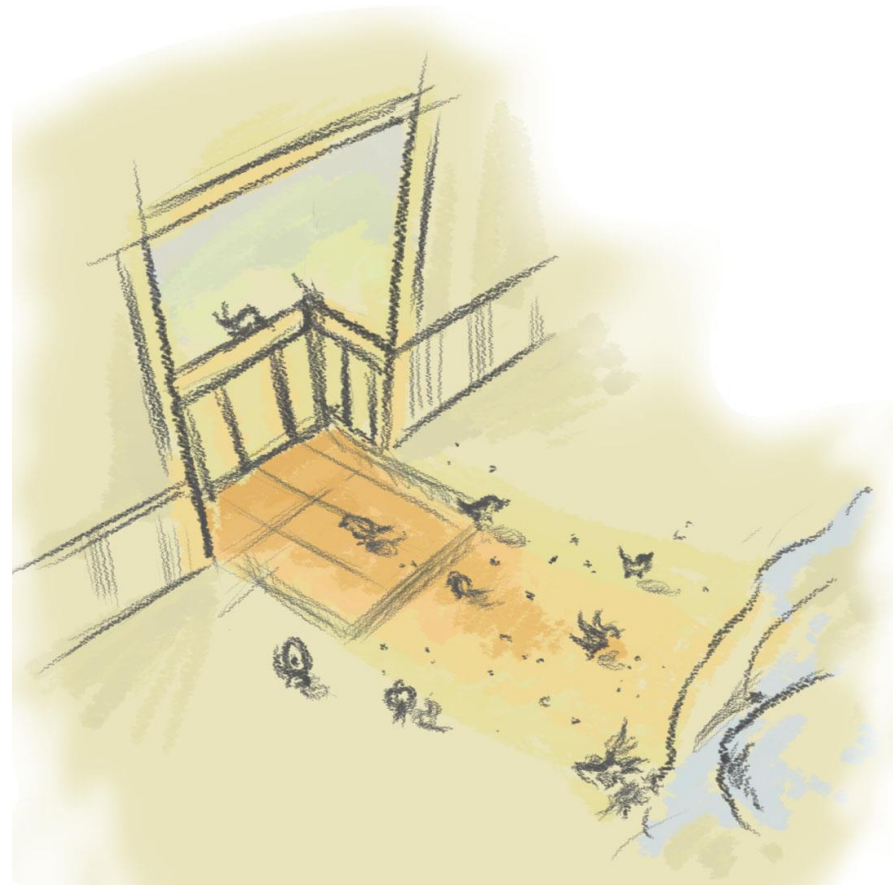
Phase II

Phase II of the research started with reading into different works of literature and art that depicted the concept in a much deeper and emotional level. Among these, two pieces spoke to me the most. The first one is a short story called **The Portrait of a Lady by Khushwant Singh.**

It portrays the journey of a young boy into adolescence and adulthood all the while guided by his closest companion, his grandmother. The account was very personal and it sort of takes you on a ride as you witness the angst of an old lady as she loses her beloved grandson to modernization while also being at par with the grandson while knowing he didn't volunteer for the distance.

It's an everyday situation. At least for people who grew up with the help of an elderly. They want you to become great men, travel the world and be a good human, but they hate it when you actually become old enough to spread your wings and fly off. And that's where the concept of alienation and the anxiety to wait for the end arises because they feel that there is nothing more left for them to do. With the constant angst of losing control over your mind and body, the elderly become ridden with the idea that they are being the burden.

Then the only two options remain in front of them: either to prove that they are still as strong as before and while pushing their limits, they deteriorate more, as in *The Portrait of a Lady*, or they simply give up and wait for it all to end.



(The Portrait of a Lady)

The film then took a turn to delve into the psyche of the elderly.

The next piece of work that actually had the most impact on the film is a poem called **The Old Woman by Arun Kolatkar.**

The Poem:

An old woman grabs
hold of your sleeve
and tags along.

She wants a fifty paise coin.
She says she will take you
to the horseshoe shrine.

You've seen it already.
She hobbles along anyway
and tightens her grip on your shirt.

She won't let you go.
You know how old women are.
They stick to you like a burr.

You turn around and face her
with an air of finality.
You want to end the farce.

When you hear her say,
'What else can an old woman do
on hills as wretched as these?'

You look right at the sky.
Clear through the bullet holes
she has for her eyes.

And as you look on

the cracks that begin around her eyes
spread beyond her skin.

And the hills crack.
And the temples crack.
And the sky falls

with a plateglass clatter
around the shatter proof crone
who stands alone.

And you are reduced
to so much small change
in her hand.

The poem is a very simple one. It's a part of a collection of Poems called the Jejuri Diaries, where Kolatkar travels to the Khandoba temples in Jejuri, and along the ride he writes about the different scenes that unfold in front of him and the subtext in all the events.

Analysing 'An Old Woman' in itself, it is understood that it deals with the dynamics between two very different cultures that collapse onto each other; the new world tourist, and the ancient Indian woman.

Throughout the poem, the tourists lack of sympathy for the old lady is pretty evident and it kind of reveals the image of a poverty-stricken country in the eyes of a person who definitely gets four square meals a day. Thus, the idea of "If you can't see it, it isn't there."

The poem reveals the hypocrisy of our society and the decadence of the social system that ruined the old woman to begging. The entire

social fabric of our world is broken, architectural features are ruined and human values are all forgotten. It reverberates our failure to take care of our elderly, to protect our heritage and to preserve our value system. In the entire poem, the absence of the location of the temple and the immense use of second person speech lets you know that it isn't a plight of only one place somewhere away from you. It's the plight of woman all across the country, all across the continent and everywhere in the world. It is a plight of the elderly caused by anyone and everyone of us.

After this, the film required a thorough understanding of the psyche of the poet to fully fathom the depths of the poem. Because it wasn't simply a story about a beggar woman, it was an active social commentary.

A brief research into the life of Arun Kolatkar revealed that most of his poetry deal with themes like religion, dogma, blind faith, superstition, religious practices and how men get easily deceived the moment they blindly follow them. He looks at society very logically and in a scientific manner.

His poems have a modernist ideology in them which was a result of the "Little Magazine Movement" in 1950-60. European trends like surrealism, expressionism and Beat Generation poetry influenced his works a lot. Thus, his works became more satirical, dark sinister, and humorous

His first step into the English language was with his *Jejuri Diaries*. They were more subtle, contextual and less whimsical.

In his last stages of life, Kolatkar wrote the *Kala Ghoda* poems when he was diagnosed with cancer. These dealt with the dynamic in relations of the modern individual with the indigenous culture. They deal with the dark underside of Mumbai's underbelly and takes a whiff at the place's myths, history, geography and ethos, through the eyes of an underdog.

The difference in the two most famous works of Kolatkar seem to lie in the fact that while *Jejuri Diaries* reside in the fixation in searching for a place to belong among the previous generation, the *Kala Ghoda* poems do not deal with any such anxiety. They simply explore the complexities of the great metropolitan which is both welcoming and unforgiving.

After going through works of Kolatkar, a great realization loomed over. An *Old Woman*, didn't actually deal with anxieties and the unfairness that an old woman has to face everyday when society has reduced her to begging. The old lady in the poem was only a plot element, introduced to address the much larger issue looming overhead. The unforgiving society.

For this, the research into the elderly took a step back for some time, as a new pathway opened in front for exploration. A book called **Poisoned Bread**, edited by **Arun Dangle**.

It's a collection of poems, prose, essays and real-life accounts of authors from the Dalit community about the atrocities that they face every day. It was the fresh take on the subject, because it revealed the naked side of the society and what the everybody on the other side of the spectrum collectively choose to ignore the turmoil.

Analysis

After the research, the film took a sharp turn from being a reverb of An Old Woman to a tale, much personal in order to catch the flavor of a story with a dash of reality to it.

The backstory:

During my last year in my graduation program, we used to travel via metro to reach to our tuitions. We had them twice a week. Because the metro station was one of the busiest stations of them all, all sorts of hawkers and sellers used to gather around near the gates. That would also include beggars; young, old, kids.

It was during the fall of the season, when one day as we came out of the station, I noticed a small figure in the back of the crowd, an old lady, almost 80. She was easily noticeable even though she was trying to be invisible. She wore a pretty good saree and had a nice stick in her hands. But then, what was queer about her was the fact that she was trying to beg. When I say trying, I mean that she clearly looked uncomfortable while doing so. Like she had never done it before. Her voice came out all wrong and she didn't really pester people to pay her like everybody else. It was evident, she was new.

I should say that I kind of sympathized with her for some reason because she reminded me of my grandmother and I paid her a good amount. She was surprised and didn't know what to do so she quickly put the money in her bag, afraid.

We used to go to tuitions only twice a week. So that meant we saw her only twice a week. But whenever I saw her, I made it a point to

give her money and smile at her. After a point she started recognizing me. Then one day, when I smiled at her, she smiled back. The first of many. I had to push the lump in my throat back.

During the entire semester that we went to tuition, me and my friends, we saw her change from her first avatar into what you would call a broken woman. Her white saree got soiled, tore in some places. Somewhere down the line, she lost her expensive cane. Her silhouette became more crooked and shriveled, hair unkempt. We were literally witness to a human life withering away.

We used to create different scenarios for her backstory. Maybe her son left her on the streets for many. Maybe she is a refugee from Bangladesh who got separated in the station. I wanted to ask her sometime, but I could never. I was always afraid to know what actually happened. Part of me was worried, that after she actually tells me, then what? What do I do with the information?

I asked around and thought of taking her to an old age home. But they told me, she literally has no proof or identification on her. They can't take her in because there is no one responsible for her. No one to pay for her. She is just a nobody, a nameless among the sea of people. And even if I do help her, it will be kind of unfair, because there are thousands of people who suffer the same fate as her every day, how will I help everybody?

So, I sort of gave up on finding a home idea. All I wanted to do was talk to her about something, anything, because I was sure she didn't

get to speak properly to anybody. And I knew old people like to tell their stories. But I could never gather around the courage to talk to her. All I ever did was smile and walk away.

And then came the winters. I asked my mother for a blanket for the old lady. I was pretty excited, and I wanted to see her face light up the moment I give her the blanket. But that day, she didn't come. And the day after that. And the day after that.

I spent one month going through that place normally, while still keeping a look out for it, the blanket waiting anxiously in my bag for its new owner. But I didn't see her anymore.

And then I left for Mumbai. I went back around July to visit my Professor, kind of hoping she would pop up somewhere, but she didn't. Almost made up my mind to ask around about her, but my friend stopped me. He told me that I didn't actually want to know what happened to her. So, I gave up and made up my mind that anytime I'm back, I will never look at the usual spot she stood, that forlorn spot under one dim yellow street light.

I still regret never actually talking to her. Never having the courage to ask her about her story. And because of the coward I am, never found the strength to take the blanket out of my bag.

The event led to me penning down a poem of my own for the film. With all the regrets and all the "What ifs" I named it "If You Could Do It All."

If You Could Do It All

What would you have done if you could do it all?

When you walk out onto the streets

And see them haggling for five-six-rupee treats.

You are a dreamer, you are a believer

You see their stories imprinted on their endeavor

What would you have seen if you could see it all?

And amidst the crowd your eyes rest on a silhouette

Wrapped with white taant, a cane carved out of willow

You see, you hear and you know, she is one of them; a new fellow.

And you start to weave, a tale as old as time

Of a lady who had probably lived a life as beautiful as a hymn

What would you have heard if you could hear it all?

You saw her seldom, but you went with her on the ride

And you saw the white turn brown, and the cane open wide

And within her ashes she rose and rose and left a trail of spice

What would you have smelt, if you could smell it all?

You wish to ask her, and you wish to comfort her

But all you do is stand by the river and shoot a smile at her

And you wonder, and you falter

And you take a step back

What would you have done if you could do it all?

Story

Story Idea I

The house on P-528 B.L.Saha Road, stood the test of time. Made originally during the Naxalite movement, it had been furnished and refurnished twice while being extended to a second storey during the winter of 2006. From floods, to torrential rain, civil war to community breakdown, it has seen it all.

The family that lived in it was a small one; a father, a mother and the two kids Deep and Jui. A really small family for a rather large house. But they were a happy one. And the house has been a witness to the entire childhood of the kids. Its very balcony was turned into a swing set, where the kids used to fight for the seat. Deep was only 7, but he could pick up 2-year-old Jui in his lap and swing in the summer afternoons. The parapet was strong enough.

The main hall still remembers the echoes of Jui's tears on her first day of school. She didn't want to go if Deep didn't come with her. The heavens cried a lot with her that day. Fortunately, the terrace was strong enough to shield them of the rain.

The front porch still has faint mud marks from when Deep ran inside with the speed of light like his life depended on it, covered in mud, head to toe. Mother asked him to remove his shoes before entering, but who cared, he was carrying a trophy almost twice his size. His team had just won the regional Under 16 Football Club. They had party the entire night.

The small corner wall of Jui's room had glowing star stickers on them. The radium glowed with the faint street lights from outside the window. It was then that Deep promised Jui he was definitely going

to be a football player when he grows up. Their parents didn't know yet. The stars wondered if the promise was sincere enough.

The small space beneath the stairs were kind of uncomfortable to stay under. But it was the only cozy place Jui could have found to cuddle inside, away from inquisitive eyes. Her curled up crying body fit there like a jigsaw puzzle. At 18, she had her first heartbreak.

The open lawn was large enough to host a huge party and not be cramped. The father had retired. And people did not fail to compliment the beautiful house that the man had accomplished in his 60 years. It was a grand party with lots of lights and laughter. But also, when the crowd was gone, and the lights turned off, it was small enough to support the back of the man sitting alone and not feel lonely.

The wood on Deep's door was strong enough to withstand the many bangs that fell on it the day Deep's results came. The parents wanted in and Deep would not budge. It echoed of the first major fight that happened in the house in a long while. Deep got a good rank and his parents forced him to pursue Engineering. They said that he has a bright future ahead. That night, behind that door, a dream was lost.

The flight of stairs had 13 individual stairs in them, but they were still too less to hold Jui's excitement. For when she got the news that she

got accepted in India's top art college, she wished she could run up and down forever.

The mezzanine floor squeaked beneath Deep's leather shoes as he walked with a quick stride, a body adorned with a suit, an air of confidence around him. This time, he didn't need to open his shoes indoor. He could walk inside anywhere he wanted. For, Deep was flying away. He had an overseas job in a huge corporation. The creases of cold textures on the floor wondered if he'd ever be back.

The head mirror across the door reflected the excitement of Jui as she hurriedly bid her parents goodbye. She was late for her flight, but she still ran back in and shouted to the empty halls that she is going to be back very soon. Rain was in the forecast that day, so the mirror had become steamy with all the precipitation.

The old grandfather clock sitting in the hallway had rung twelve, when the old couple left the house keys on the table and closed the main gate behind them, for the last time. Then the clock forgot it's chime.

And since then, the house remained untouched. Summer changed to winter and it changed back to summer. Years and years of dust, molds and cobweb formed everywhere. The trees outside grew wild and found every opportunity to knock on the windows. The darkness of the hallways echoed the emptiness in the master bedroom and only the occasional hoot of the owls or the buzz of the cicadas stirred the phantoms inside.

And then what seemed like an eternity later, the main door was coaxed open again and sunlight came rushing in. The roaches ran to take shelter. The silence was broken by unclear voices, lots of them.

The dirt had settled for years and the rooms were almost uninhabitable. The house was witness to a lot of things and it would probably take months to have it all undone.

Only the front porch was subject to a change. A signage that said "Daughters of the Cross Old Age Home" sat quietly over it.

Story Idea II (Final Story)

The overhead metro passes by across the afternoon sky that glistens a sweet amber tone. From below the station, three friends venture out, blissfully laughing at their internal jokes. The busy street was filled with hawkers screaming on top of their lungs and beggars doing what they know best.

Then the girl, hardly 15, notices an old lady amidst the crowd. She was trying to beg, but was repeatedly ignored. The girl stared at her for some time, then decided to cross over to the other side.

A quick jingle in her pockets, she pulled out a ten-rupee coin and gave it to the lady. The lady, unsure, grabbed them as fast as possible and put it in her bag; then looked really uncomfortable. The girl was curious, looked at her with large inquisitive eyes.

A quick call from her friends broke her attention as she tore away from the scene.

The next day, same time the three friends hopped out of the metro station, excited about the Bulbasaur that just spawned in Pokémon Go. And then the girl noticed her. The old lady standing fixated under a single street lamp. She smiled and jogged her way across the street, smiled at the old lady and handed over a coin. The lady recognised her and quickly looked elsewhere, while muttering something under her breath.

The girl caught it. She was almost going to ask what she said, but was called back by her friends. So, she raced back.

The third day, the girl jumped out of the station and immediately raced to the lady. But this time something extraordinary happened. The lady recognised her, and smiled back. The little 15-year-old girl could not hide her excitement as her eyes lit up. She waved back as she ran away. But she was sure of one thing. From now on, the old lady will always wait for her and smile back.

Days passed as their interaction became common and her friends started to join her in her small detour.

And then winter finally came rattling in through the windows.

It did not faze the girl though. For that day, she was exceptionally happy. She held a neat, comfy sweater in her hand as she rode the metro in what looked like the longest journey of her life. She couldn't wait to gift the grandma a sweater and look at her face glow up.

The moment the metro stopped, she tucked the sweater inside a paper bag, hopped down from her seat, raced down the stairs and almost jumped out the station only to fall headfirst into the empty place that the lady once stood.

The smile washed out of her face. She looked here and there trying to locate the old lady but the oncoming crowd pushed her backwards and eventually she let the tide wash her away.

That was the first of many empty visits she had of that place, every day while carrying the paper bag, knowing that she won't be there but hoping just in case.

Previously, she tried to search with her eyes, giving a quick scan across the crowd, but lately, she hated to be disappointed. So, she shot a quick glance towards the street lamp and then left.

She had been going to and from that place for a month and her final exams were knocking on the door. It would probably be the last time she came that way. The last day she was there, she stood a long time staring at the empty place, not crossing over. She was scared. She didn't want it to end. For she knew, the moment she would leave, it would be over. What if the old lady comes back the next day and doesn't find her anymore?

She wanted to know what happened to the lady. She didn't want to know what happened to the lady.

As the last of the day's light went out, she realized she was better off forming her own notions of what happened. Maybe she found a better place. Maybe a kind man took her home. Maybe her son came back. Maybe...

She gave a long sigh, realized she was holding her breath for a while and this time, for the final time, crossed over, to the other side, stood in front of the spot, took out the small paper bag with the sweater and carefully placed it against the post. She smiled at it and then walked away.

Walked far away and didn't turn back. The dim street lamp flickered for a few minutes and then lit up.

Script

SCENE 1

Exterior | Day | Environment

The scene opens in an aerial shot of the winter sky. The title appears. The camera pans down to reveal an aerial shot of the Victoria Memorial amidst trees.

SCENE 2

Exterior | Day | Over bridge
(Present)

The metro comes from a distance in an over bridge amidst residential buildings.

SCENE 3

Interior | Day | Inside the Metro

A little girl sits in a relatively empty compartment. She leans against the window of the metro and looks out at the bright sky and buildings as they pass her by.

She looks around for people who might be looking at her. Not finding anyone, she peaks into a package she was holding in her arms.

Inside is a neatly folded red sweater. She shuts the package and gets excited.

Impatiently, she waits for her stop to appear.

SCENE 4

Exterior | Day | In front of Metro Station
(Past)

A metro passes by from the overhead bridge.

From below the station, three kids, (two boy and the girl) walk out. Regular hum and bustle of a relatively busy streets are heard.

They are laughing at an internal joke while the girl notices something. She sees an old lady with a cane in the corner across the street under a street lamp. The old lady seems to be asking for something from passersby but nobody is paying her head.

Curious, the girl crosses over and advances towards the old lady and stands in front of her while staring at her profusely. This makes the old lady visibly uncomfortable and she tries to evade under the little girl's scrutiny.

The little girl takes out a toffee from her pocket and extends it towards the lady. The old lady hesitates for few minutes and then takes it from her. This increases the girl's curiosity and she

stares at her waiting for further actions. However, the lady only feels more uncomfortable.

At this point, the two boys call for the little girl from across the streets and she races over to them.

SCENE 5

Exterior | Day | In front of Metro Station

After a series of rain showers, the three kids come out of the metro station in their raincoats.

The girl notices the old lady standing in her usual spot. This time she races over to her and quickly hands over a toffee. This time, of course the old lady willingly takes the toffee and smiles at her.

This excites the girl a lot and she returns a hearty smile. She zealously runs along to her friends.

SCENE 6

Exterior | Day | In front of Metro Station

Days go by as the little girl visits the old lady every day while going to her tuition. They slowly get close to each other while not really having any

conversations. Her friends start visiting her as well. Seasons change to winter. The colds become apparent.

SCENE 7

Interior | Day | Inside the Metro
(Present)

The girl is looking out at the buildings impatiently. The train slows to a stop. She peeks out, sees her station approaching and jumps down her seat and races towards the exit. She shifts her footing from one foot to the other impatiently as the doors open slowly, then races out.

SCENE 8

Exterior | Day | In front of Metro Station

The girl races out from the station towards the spot where the old lady stands. But to her surprise, the old lady wasn't in her usual spot.

This perplexed the little girl. She looked here and there Searched the entire area. But all in vain. As she was getting late, she got disappointed and left the spot. The gift remained with her.

This was the start of many empty visits as every day, she became a little less hopeful to ever see her again as she crossed that spot.

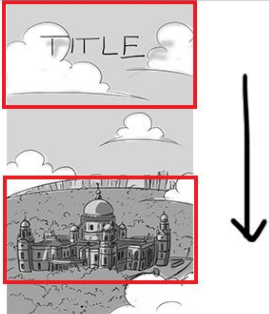
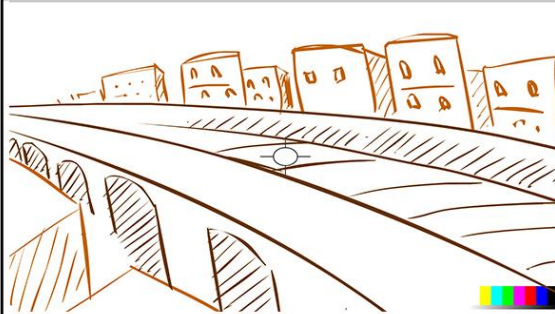
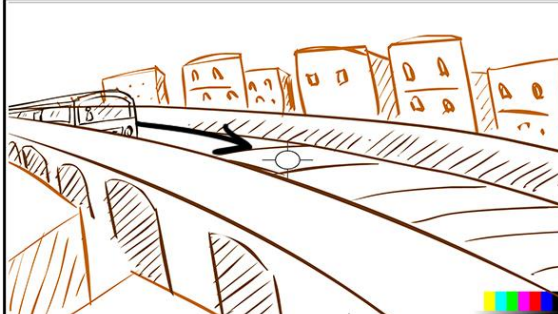
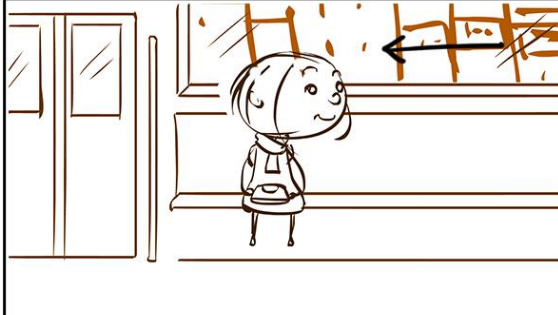
Finally, one evening, as she was coming back. She stood opposite the spot where the old lady stood. She was afraid to cross over and her legs shook. Finally, after standing still for a long time, she decided to take a step forward.

She crossed the road and stood in front of the spot. Staring for a long time, she finally decided to let it go. She took out the sweater from her bag and kept it neatly under the lamp. She gave a long sigh, smiled and walked away.

She didn't ever turn back.

The street light slowly lit into life.

Storyboard

Scene: 1 Sh 1.	Scene: 2 Sh 1.	Scene: 2 Sh 1.
		
Camera pans down to reveal the Victoria Memorial. SFX: Bird's chirping. Beginning of a metro rail horn.	Over head shot of a metro bridge. SFX: Distant rumbling of the metro horn and the rail tracks. V.O: What would you have done if you could do it all?	Metro arrives. SFX: Horns blaring. Rumbling of the tracks. V.O: What would you have done if you could do it all?
Scene: 2 Sh 1.	Scene: 3 Sh 1.	Scene: 3 Sh 1.
		
Metro exits from the track. SFX: Distant rumbling noise fading. V.O: What would you have done if you could do it all?	The girl is sitting inside the metro. She leans against the window and looks out at the passing buildings. SFX: Rumbling of the metro.	She looks here and there for people in the somewhat empty compartment. SFX: Rumbling of the metro.

Create your own at Storyboard That

Scene: 3 Sh.



The girl looks down at the packet in her hand.
SFX: Rumbling of the metro.

Scene: 3 Sh.



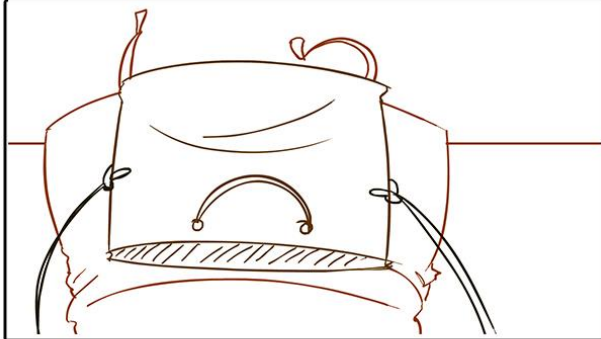
The girl becomes happy and starts to hum to herself.
SFX: Giggling noises. Rumbling of the metro.

Scene: 3 Sh.



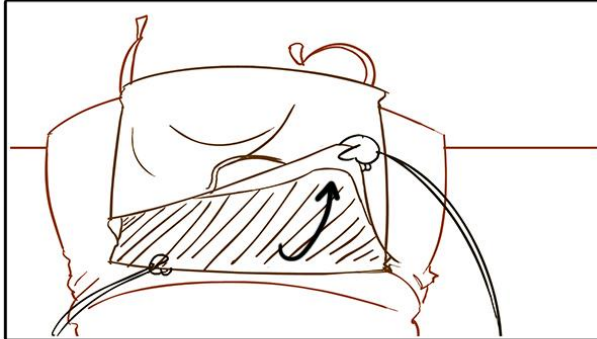
She again looks back down at the packet and this time she is smiling.
SFX: Rumbling of the metro.

Scene: 3 Sh2



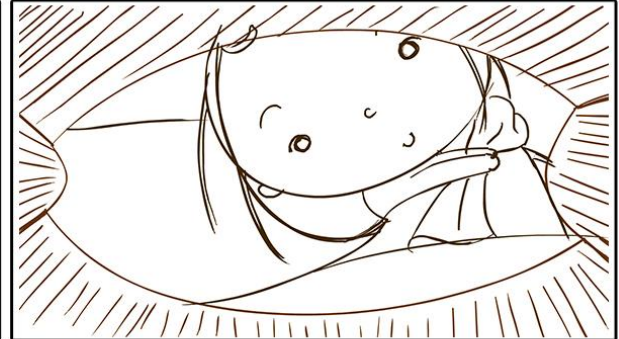
She is looking at the packet in her lap.
SFX: Rumbling of the metro.

Scene: 3 Sh2



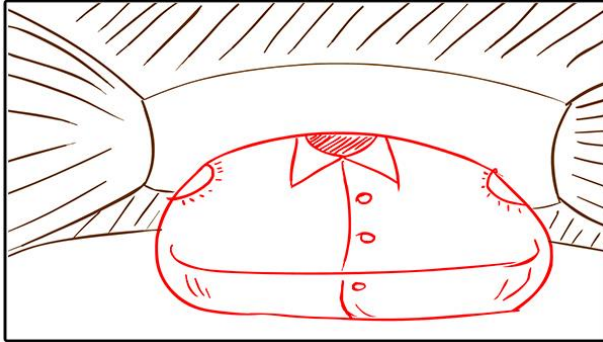
The girl picks up the top lid of the packet.
SFX: Rumbling of plastic and paper. Cloth rustle.

Scene: 3 Sh3



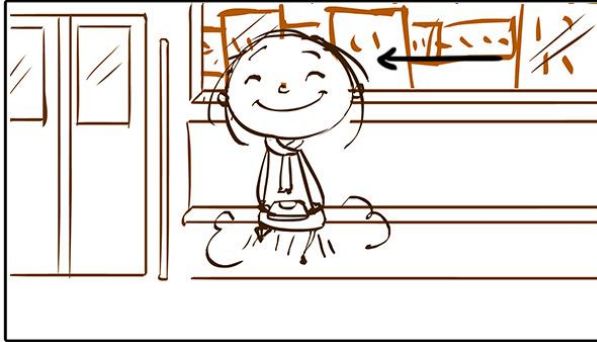
The girl peeks inside the packet.
SFX: Plastic crinkling.

Scene: 3 Sh 4



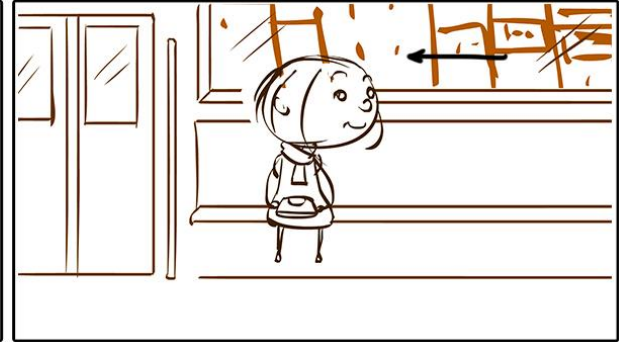
Inside is a neatling folded red sweater.
SFX: Paper crinkling. Cloth rustle.

Scene: 3 Sh 5



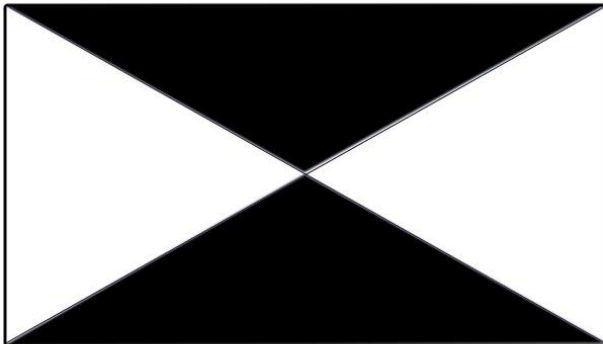
She shuts the lid and gets very excited. Her legs flail to show her excitement.
SFX: Paper rustle. Rumbling.

Scene: 3 Sh 5

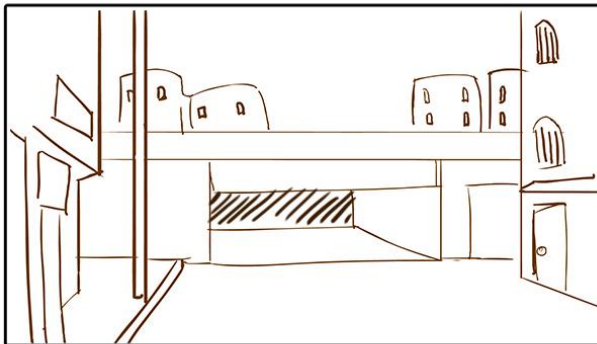


The girl looks out from the window impatiently.
SFX: Rumbling of the metro.

Scene:

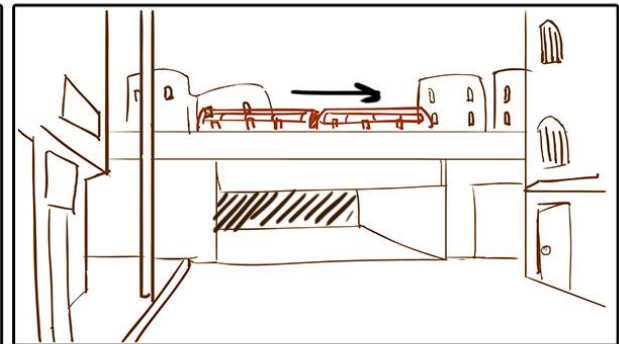


Scene: 4 Sh 1



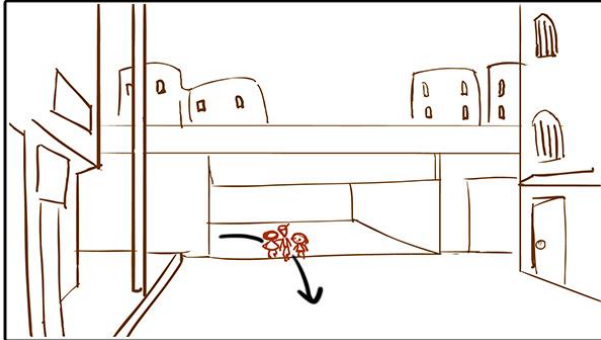
Wide shot of a metro station.
SFX: Horn blaring of the metro. General hum and bustle of the road.
V.O: When you walk out onto the streets...

Scene: 4 Sh 1



The metro passes by from the overhead bridge.
SFX: Rumbling of the metro. Hum and bustle.
V.O: When you walk out onto the streets...

Scene: 4 Sh1



3 Kids come out of the metro station and start walking down the road.
SFX: Giggling of kids. General hum and bustle.

Scene: 4 Sh2



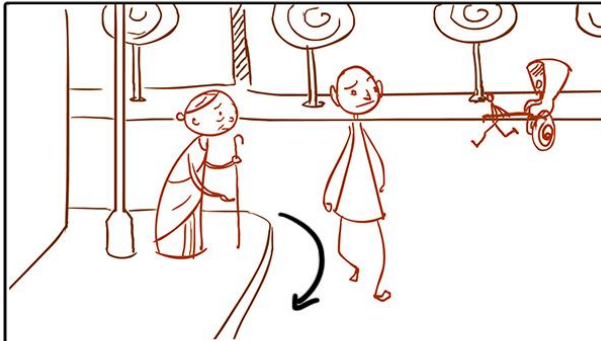
The kids walk from the station to the main road, while laughing amongst themselves.
SFX: Giggling, Hum and bustle.

Scene: 4 Sh2



The little girl notices something while the others walk ahead.
SFX: The boys indistinct chatter.
V.O: And see them haggling for five six rupee treats.

Scene: 4 Sh3



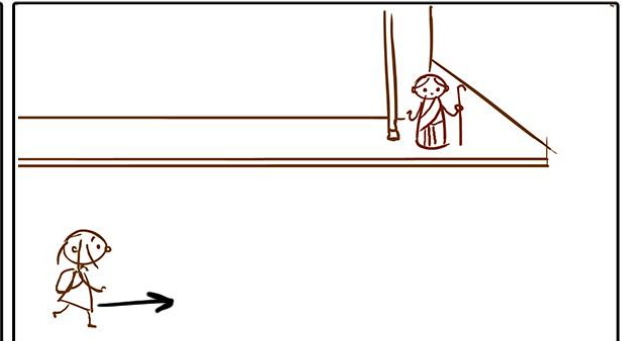
An old lady is trying to beg, but is unsure how to. People pass her by without acknowledging her.
SFX: Indistinct voices of the old lady. Hum and bustle.
V.O: And you see them haggling for five six rupee treats.

Scene: 4 Sh4



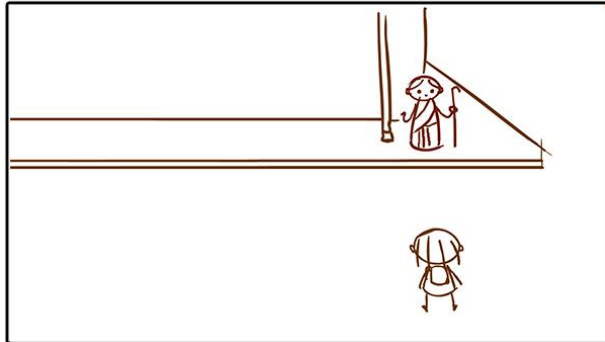
The girl gets curious and starts to walk towards the old lady.
SFX: Indistinct road noises.

Scene: 4 Sh5



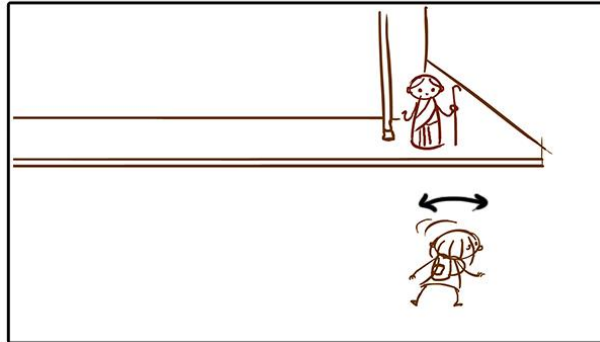
The girl walks towards the old lady from across the streets.
SFX: Indistinct road noises.

Scene: 4 Sh 5



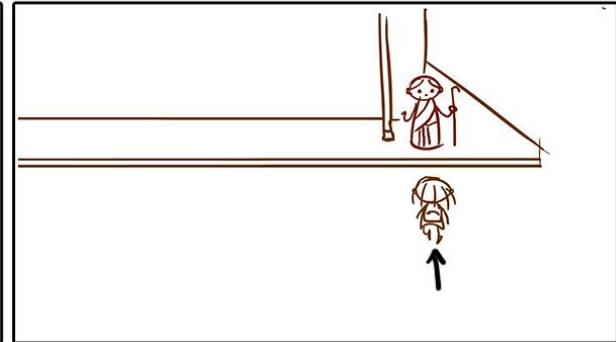
The girl stands right opposite the old lady and checks out her activities.
SFX: Normal hum and bustle.

Scene: 4 Sh 5



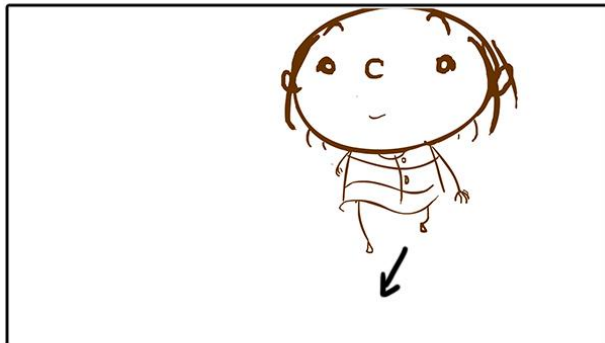
Then the girl looks around for traffic before crossing the road.
SFX: Normal hum and bustle.

Scene: 4 Sh 5



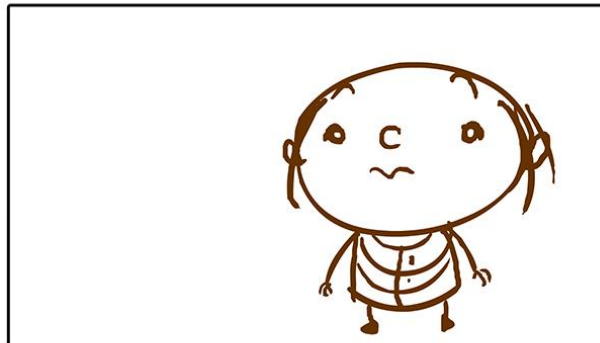
The girl crosses the road to go to the other side.
SFX: Normal hum and bustle.

Scene: 4 Sh 6



The girl approaches the old lady carefully with a timid smile.
SFX: The other sounds become a bit distant and you can hear her foot steps.

Scene: 4 Sh 6



The girl curiously stares at the old lady while trying to come up with something to say.
SFX: Breathing.

Scene: 4 Sh 7



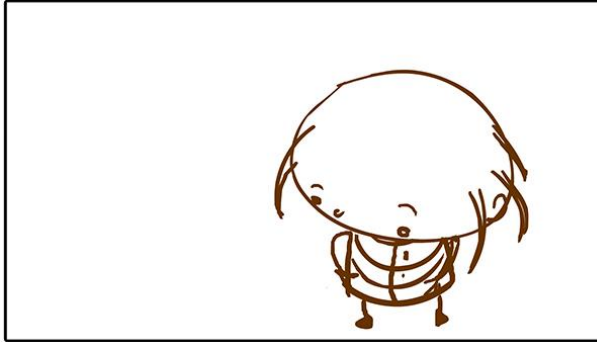
The old lady notices her staring at her and feels awkward. She starts to fidget.
SFX: Unsure grunts.

Scene: 4 Sh 7



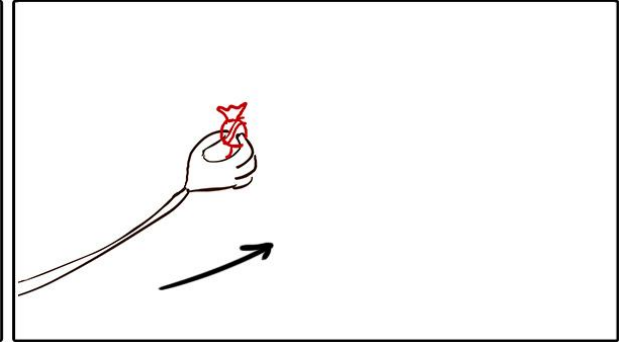
The old lady feels uncomfortable and tries to look away while at the same time curious about what the little girl wants.

Scene: 4 Sh 8



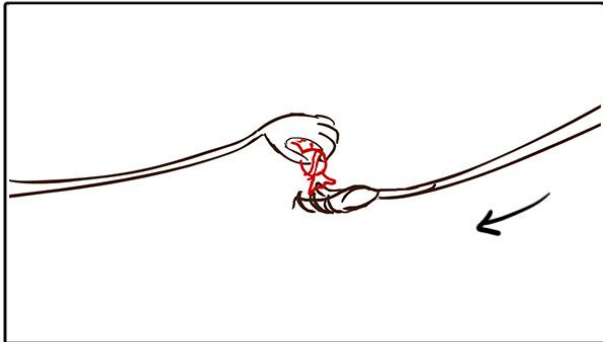
The little girl decides something in her head and nods. Then she starts to dig in her pocket for something.
SFX: Clothes rustle.
V.O: You are a dreamer, you are a believer.

Scene: 4 Sh 9



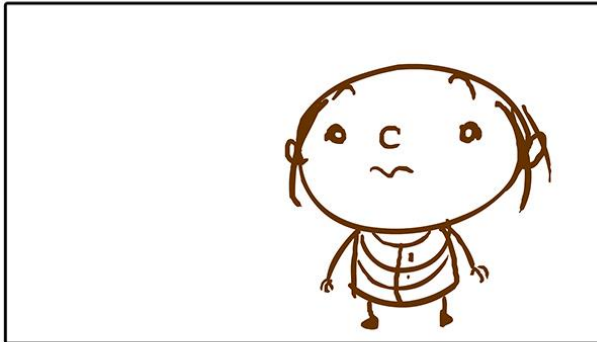
She takes out a toffee and shows it towards the old lady.
SFX: Plastic crinkle.
V.O: You are a dreamer, you are a believer.

Scene: 4 Sh 10



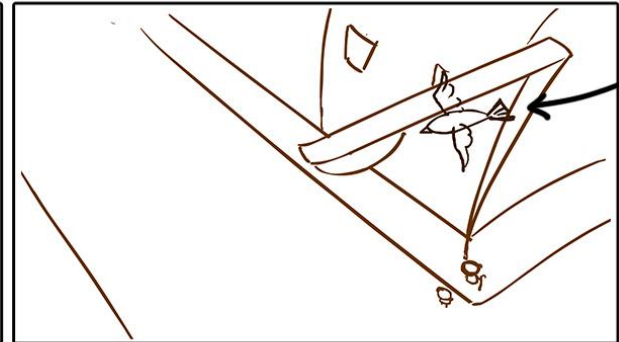
After a long pause, the old lady finally takes the toffee from her hand.
SFX: Plastic crinkle.

Scene: 4 Sh 11



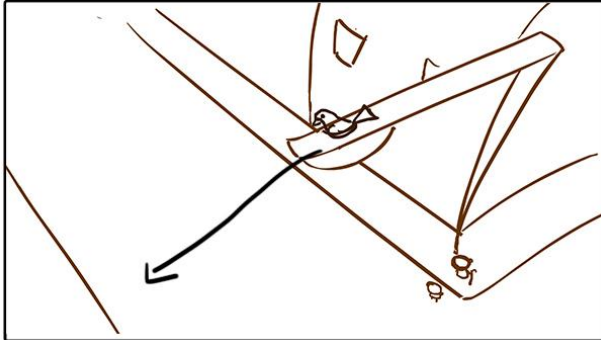
The girl stares at her waiting for further reactions.

Scene: 4 Sh 12



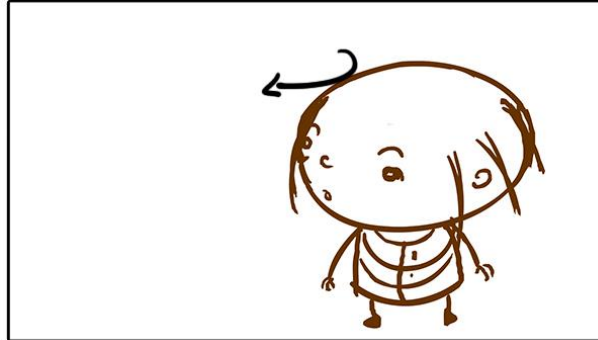
An insert shot of a bird who comes and sits on the lamp post to show the excruciating long pause of them staring at each other.
SFX: Bird wing movement.

Scene: 4 Sh 12



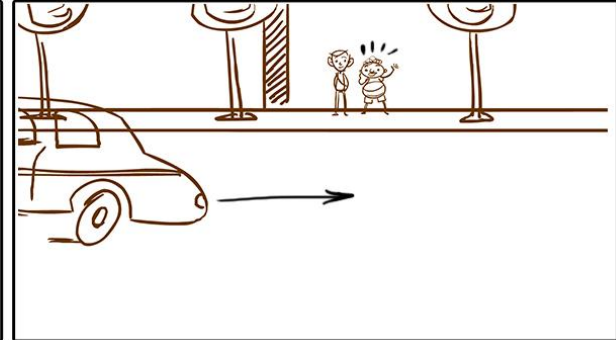
The bird sits on the lamppost and looks here and there in curiosity before flying off. This represents the young girl's own curious mind.
SFX: Chirping.

Scene: 4 Sh 13



The girl looks as she gets called.
Dialogue: Hey, hurry up!
V.O: You see their stories imprinted on their endeavors.

Scene: 4 Sh 14



The friends have reached the opposite footpath to the main road and are waving at her.
SFX: Car and rickshaw honks.
V.O: You see their stories imprinted on their endeavors.

Scene: 4 Sh 15



The girl starts to leave after being called.
SFX: The external noise comes back as their moment is over.

Scene: 4 Sh 16



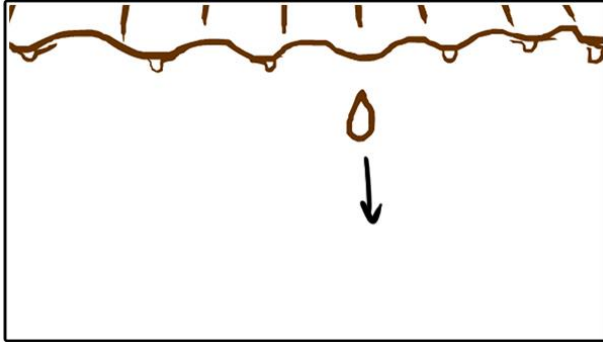
She looks at the old lady for one last time as she is leaving.
SFX: Car honks.
V.O: What would you have seen if you could see it all?

Scene: 4 Sh 16



Then she turns around and crosses the road.
SFX: Car honks.
V.O: What would you have seen if you could see it all?

Scene: 5 Sh1



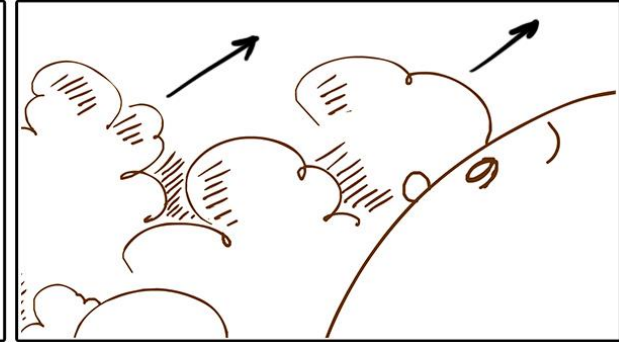
A water drop from the overhead asbestos of the metro station falls.
SFX: Water dripping.

Scene: 5 Sh2



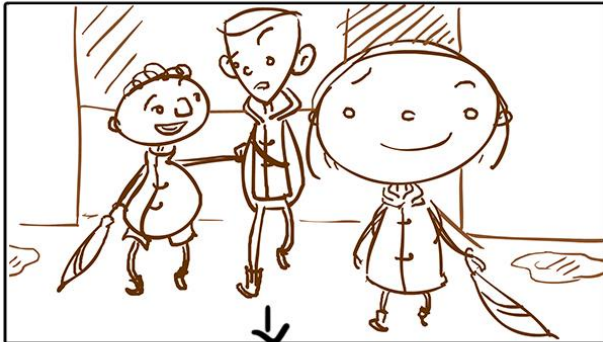
The water drop lands on the head of the little girl as she looks up.
SFX: Water drop.

Scene: 5 Sh3



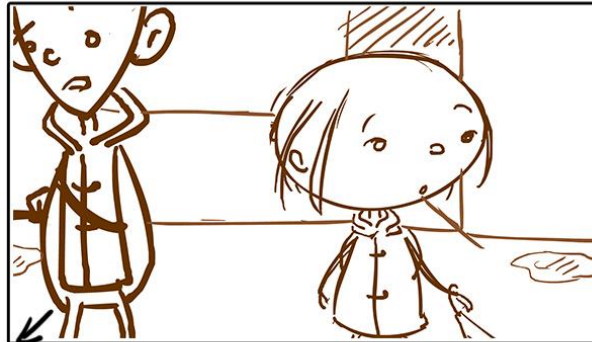
She looks at the overcast sky that just shed some of its rain.

Scene: 5 Sh4



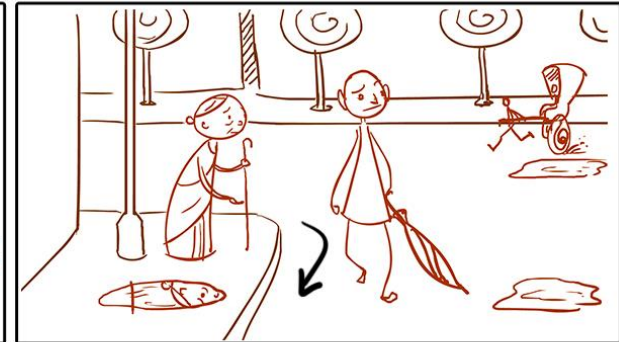
The three friends walk out of the station as the boys discuss something.
SFX: Indistinct chatter. Girl humming.
V.O: And amidst the crowd your eyes rest on a silhouette.

Scene: 5 Sh4



The guys walk ahead as she slows down and looks at the old lady.
SFX: Indistinct chatter.
V.O: And amidst the crowd your eyes rest on a silhouette.

Scene: 5 Sh5



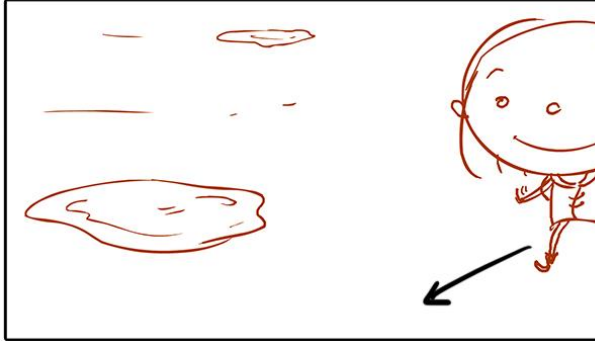
The old lady is in her usual spot trying to beg while being ignored.
SFX: Indistinct begging.
V.O: Wrapped with white taant, a cane carved out of willow.

Scene: 5 Sh 6



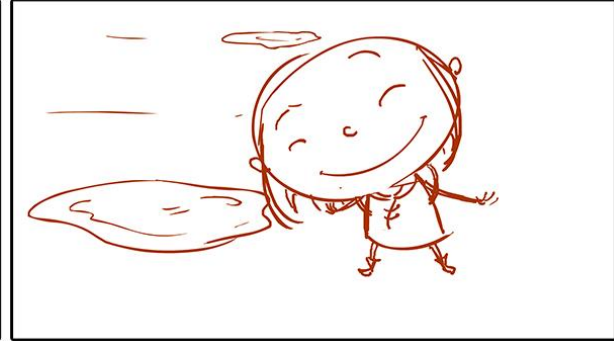
The girl smiles in recognition and makes her way across the street.
SFX: Giggle. Footsteps squelching.

Scene: 5 Sh 7



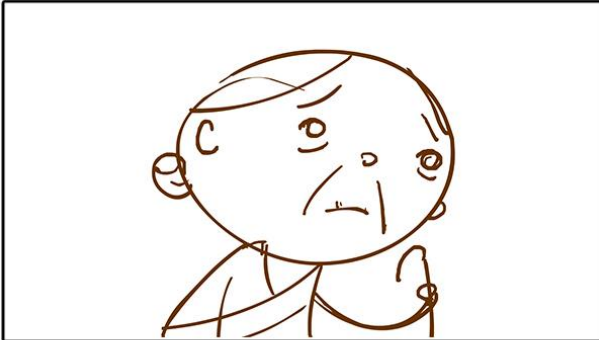
She makes her way carefully between puddles towards the lady..
SFX: Footsteps squelching.

Scene: 5 Sh 7



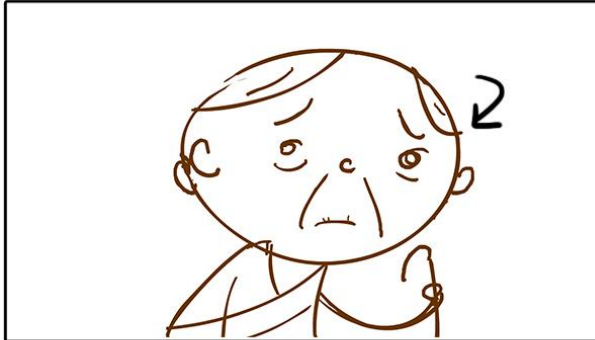
She stops in front of the old lady and gives her a big smile.
SFX: Giggle.

Scene: 5 Sh 8



The old lady turns towards her in.

Scene: 5 Sh 8



The old lady's expression changes to that of recognition and she becomes a bit worried.

Scene: 5 Sh 9



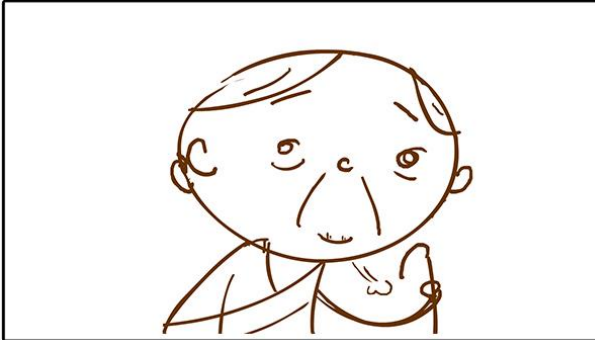
The girl starts to fish out something from her pocket with a mischievous grin.
SFX: Synthetic cloth rustle. Paper crinkle.

Scene: S Sha



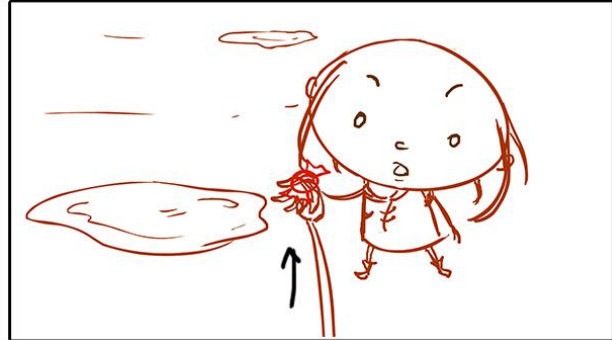
She hands out another toffee with a coy smile.
V.O: You see, you hear and you know, she is one of them; a new fellow.

Scene: S Shio



The old lady tries to hide her amusement but then gives in, sighs and finally smiles a bit.
SFX: Sigh

Scene: S Shii



This takes a girl by quite a surprise while the old lady takes the toffee from her hand.
SFX: Amusement.

Scene: S Shii



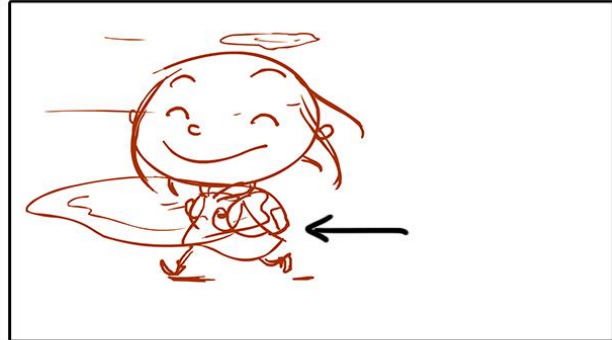
The girl gets very excited by her sudden smile.

Scene: S Shii



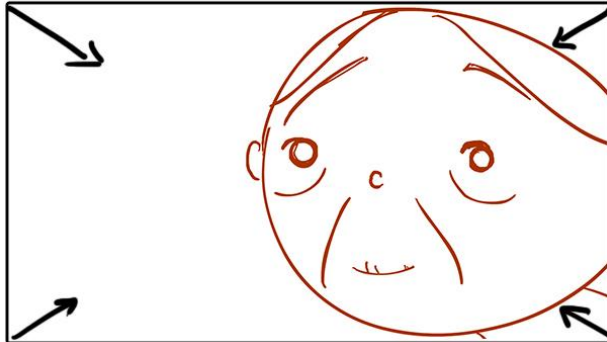
Just then, her friends call again and she turns to them with a big grin.
SFX: Indistinct call.

Scene: S Shii



Then she gives the old lady a huge smile and runs towards her friends.
SFX: Footsteps squelching.

Scene: 5 Sh 2



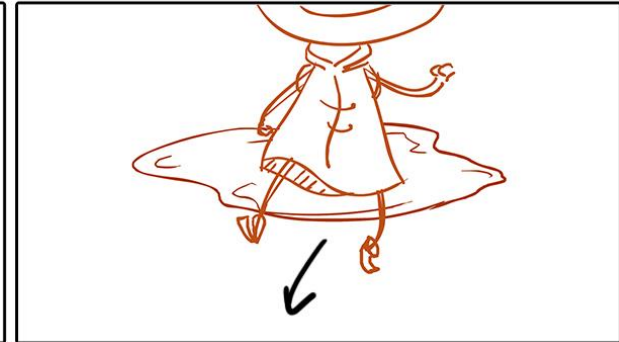
The old lady looks at her leave with hr friends and gives a warm smile.

Scene: 6 Sh 1



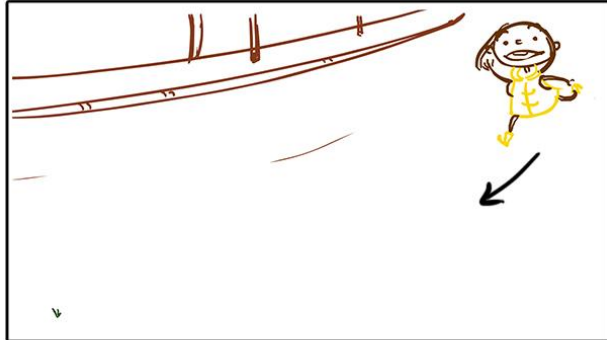
The next day. The little girl jumps into a puddle as she walks out of the station.
SFX: Humming happily.

Scene: 6 Sh 1



Then she trots away from the puddle towards the main road.
SFX: Humming.

Scene: 6 Sh 2



Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh 2



Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh 2



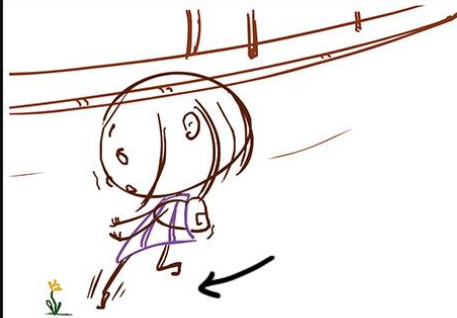
Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
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Scene: 6 Sh2



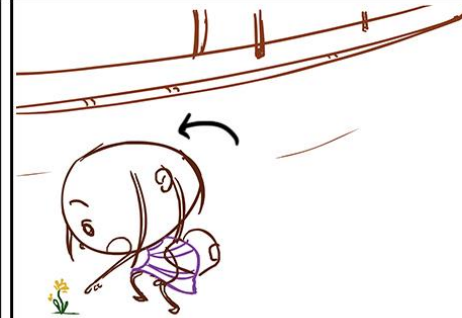
Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh2



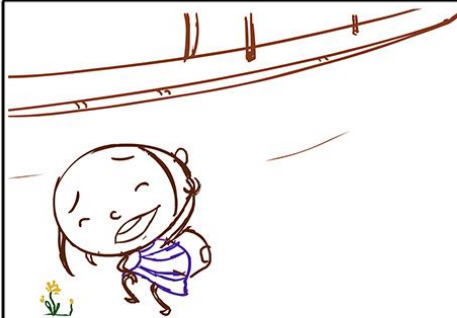
Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh2



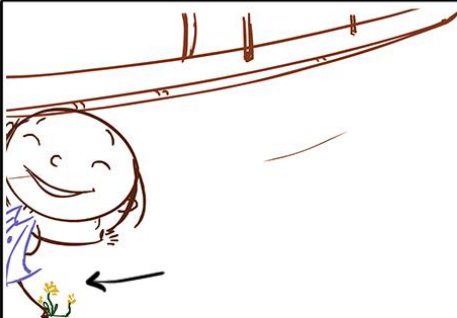
Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh2



Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh2



Timelapse scene. She comes running towards the old lady as her clothes change and her familiarity increases.
V.O: And you start to weave, a tale as old as time.

Scene: 6 Sh3



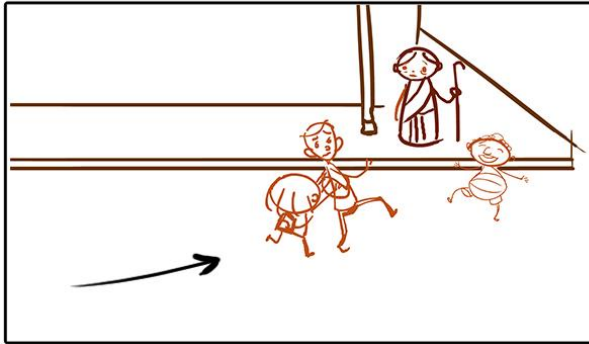
Time;apse scene. The field in front of Victoria Memorial as it goes through a seasonal change.
V.O: Of a lady who had probably lived a life as beautiful as a humn.

Scene: 6 Sh4



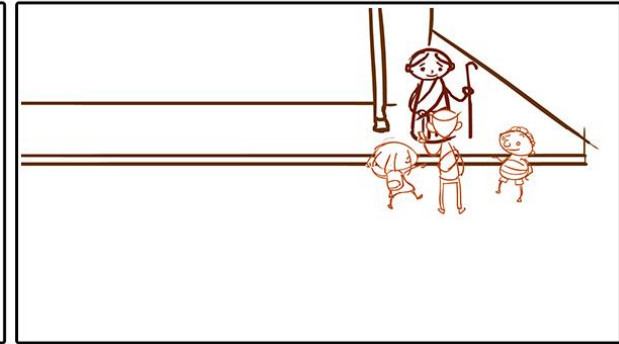
The old lady becomes more haggard as days go by, but a bit more satisfied with her life.

Scene: 6 Sh5



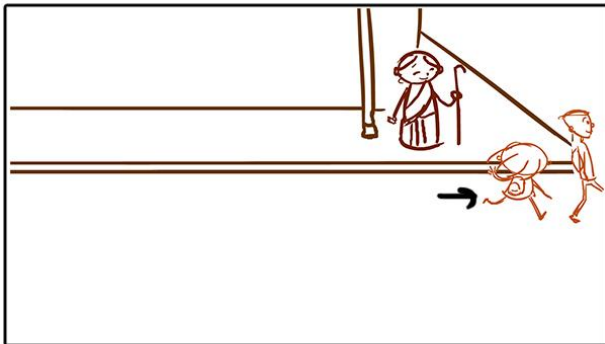
The girl pushes her friends towards the old lady. Friend A is a bit sceptical. Whereas Friend B is enjoying the situation. The old lady looks at them with curiosity.
SFX: Children chatting.

Scene: 6 Sh5



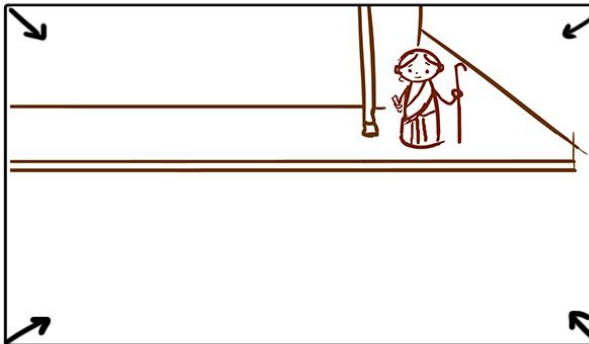
Then Friend A hands over a chocolate to the old lady while friend B and the little girl keep giggling amongst themselves.
SFX: Giggling
V.O: What would you have heard if you could hear it all?

Scene: 6 Sh5



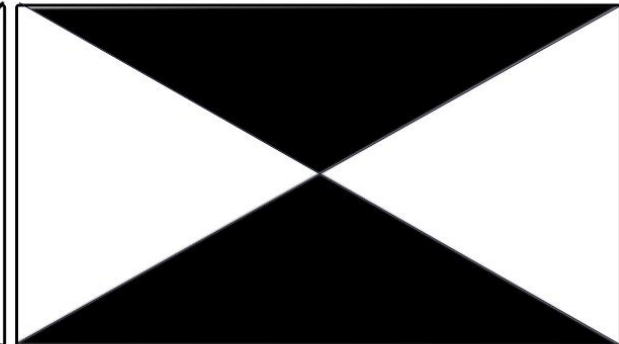
Then they all leave. The girl waves at the old lady as she exists and the old lady smiles back.
SFX: Indistinct chatter.
V.O: What would you have heard if you could hear it all?

Scene: 6 Sh5



The old lady looks back at the chocolate and smiles to herself.
V.O: What would you have heard if you could hear it all?

Scene:



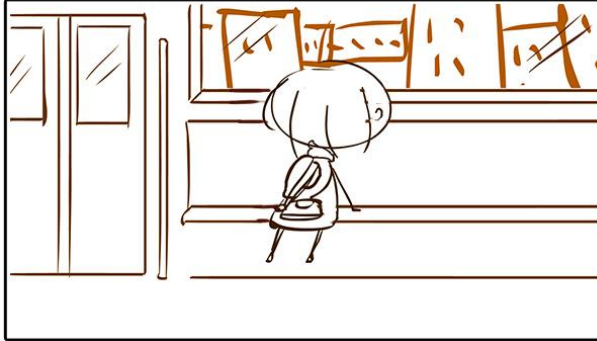
Create your own at Storyboard That

Scene: 7 Sh.



Back to Present. The girl is leaning out of the window watching the buildings pass.
SFX: train rumbling.

Scene: 7 Sh.



The train starts to slow down. She looks out to see the approaching station.
SFX: Screeching of the train wheels.

Scene: 7 Sh.



The girl jumps down from her seat.
SFX: Screeching of the wheels

Scene: 7 Sh.



She runs towards the metro gate. The metro finally stops.
SFX: Train stopping.

Scene: 7 Sh.



She waits in front of the gate impatiently, tapping her foot.

Scene: 7 Sh.



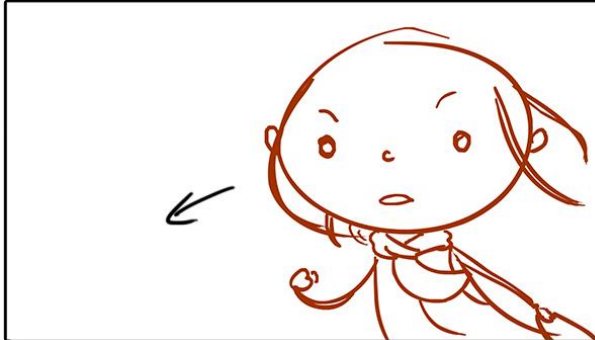
The doors finally open and she rushes out.
SFX: Door opening.

Scene: 7 Sh2



The girl rushes out of the station in a hurry with a big smile.
SFX: General hum and bustle.
V.O: You saw her seldom, but you went with her on a ride.

Scene: 7 Sh3



She made her way towards the spot where the old woman stands.
SFX: General hum and bustle.
V.O: You saw her seldom, but you went with her on a ride.

Scene: 7 Sh3



She halts and starts to pant. Her expressions change from ecstatic to worried.
SFX: General hum and bustle.
V.O: You saw her seldom, but you went with her on a ride.

Scene: 7 Sh4



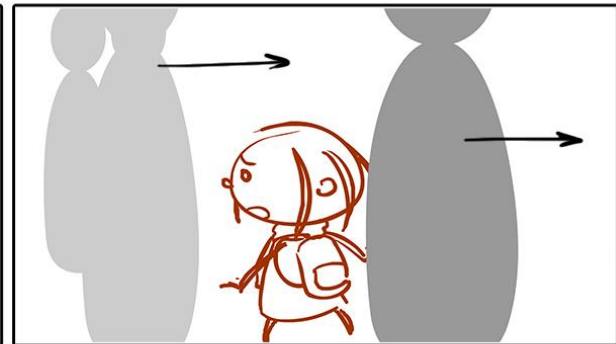
The spot where the old lady stand is now empty.
SFX: General hum and bustle.
V.O: You saw her seldom, but you went with her on a ride.

Scene: 7 Sh5

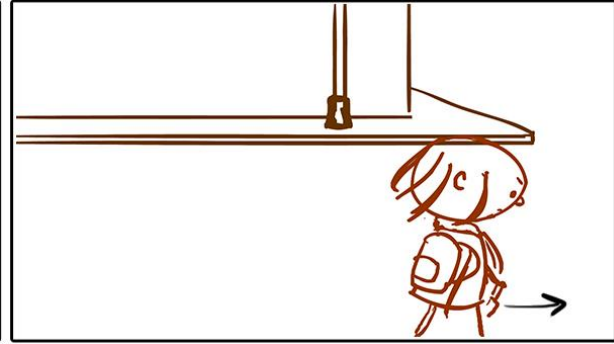
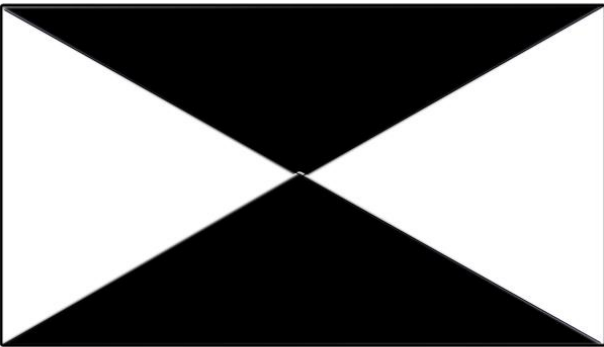
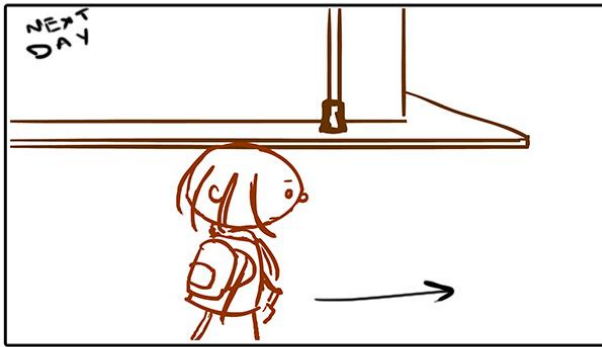
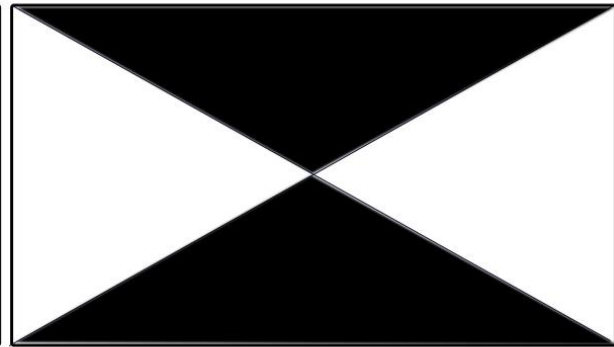


She becomes confused and then an air of despair spreads across her face.
SFX: General hum and bustle.

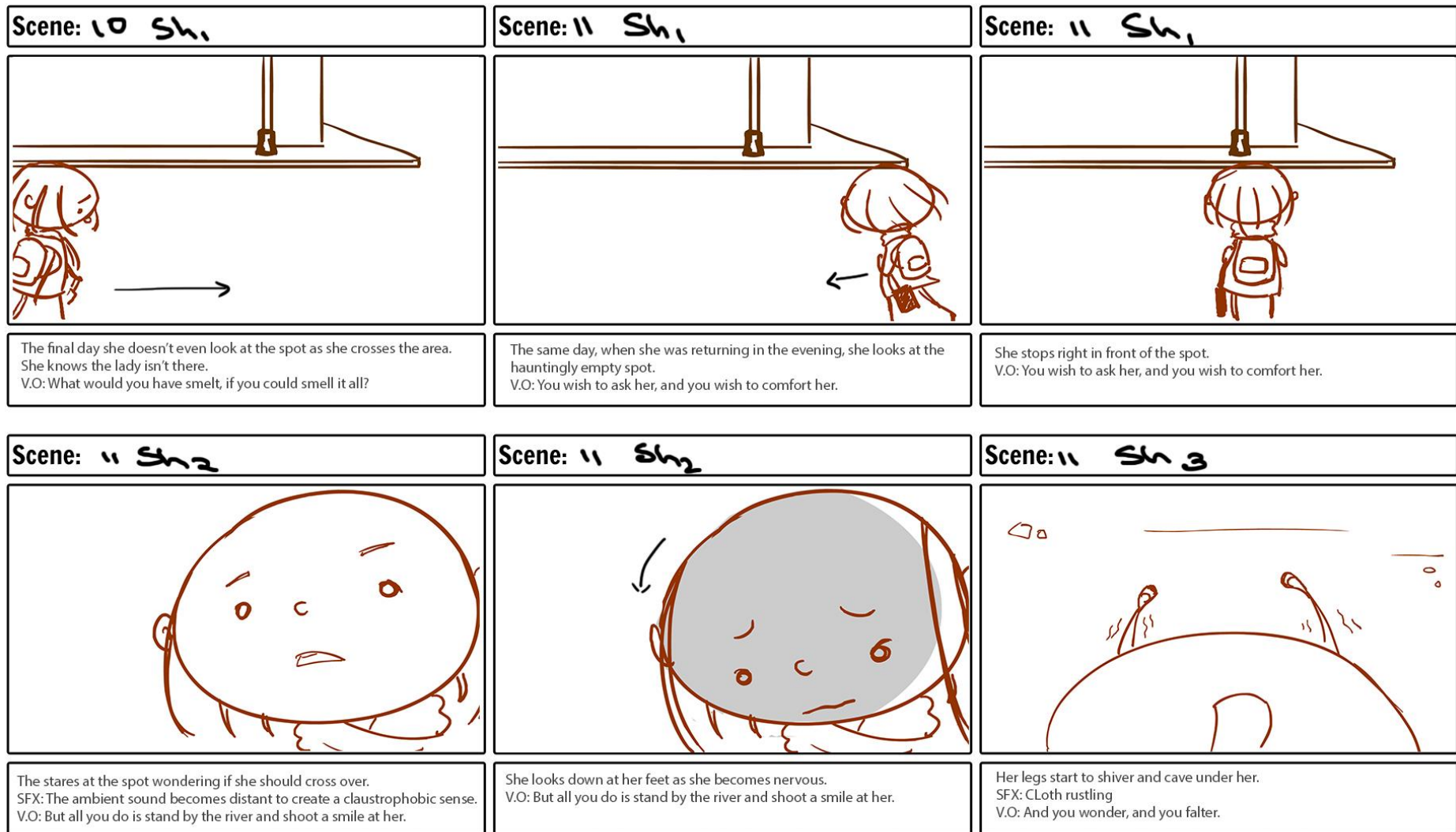
Scene: 7 Sh6



She starts to search frantically as the oncoming crowd push her back.
SFX: General hum and bustle.

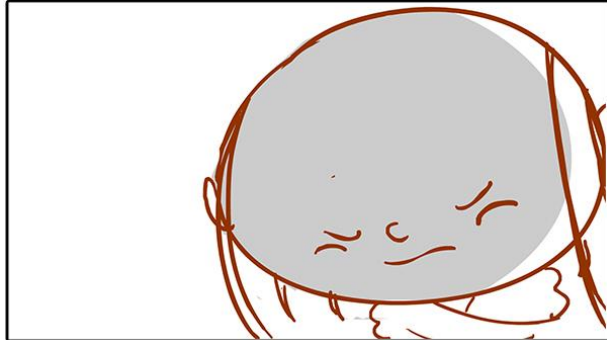
Scene: 7 Sh 7	Scene: 8 Sh 1	Scene: 8 Sh 1
		
There was no sign of the old lady. So she decided to leave for that day as she was getting late. V.O: And you saw the white turn brown, and the cane open wide.	The next day the little girl came again and found her missing. She stared at the empty spot for sometime. V.O: And you saw the white turn brown, and the cane open wide.	But this time she didn't search for her, she just left, confused. V.O: And you saw the white turn brown, and the cane open wide.
Scene:	Scene: 9 Sh 1	Scene:
		
	The next day she simply walked past the spot. Knowing the lady wasn't there, she simply looks at the spot and leaves. V.O: And within her ashes, she rose and rose, and left a trail of spice.	

Create your own at Storyboard That



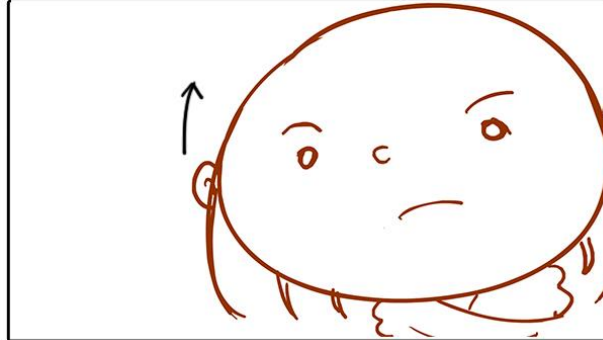
Create your own at Storyboard That

Scene: 11 Sh3



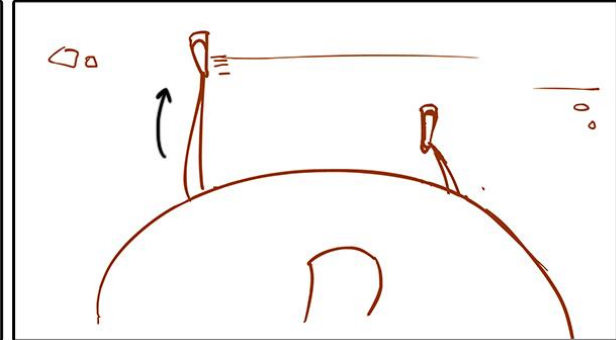
The girl closes her eyes, trying to push back the fear in her mind.

Scene: 11 Sh3



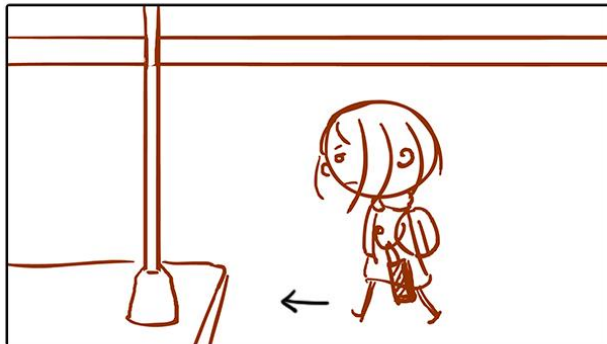
Then she makes up her mind and looks up towards the spot.

Scene: 11 Sh4



Her legs stop shivering and she finally takes a step towards the spot.
SFX: Footfall.
V.O: And you take a step back.

Scene: 11 Sh5



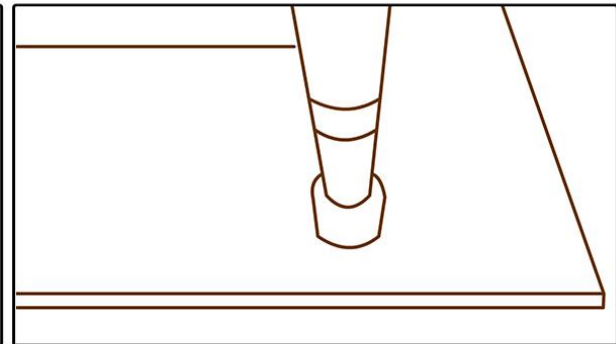
She walks across the street, determination in her face.
SFX: Footsteps.
V.O: And you take a step back.

Scene: 11 Sh6



She looks at the place the old lady used to stand.

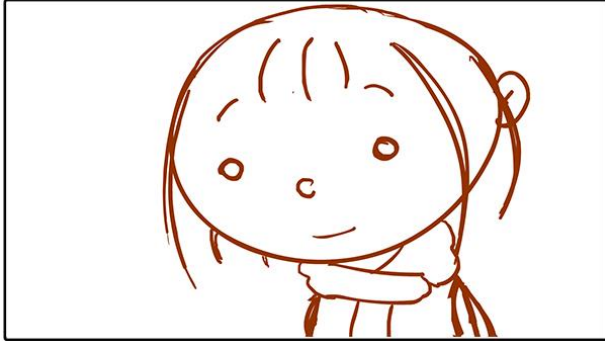
Scene: 11 Sh7



She looks at the place the old lady used to stand.

Create your own at Storyboard That

Scene: 11 Sh 7



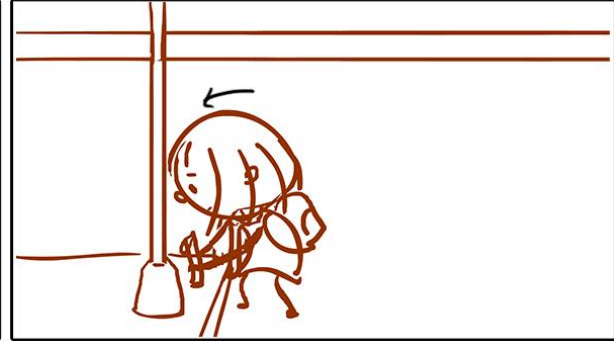
She finally sighs after holding her breath for a long time and lets it go.
SFX: Sigh.

Scene: 11 Sh 8



She looks at the packet that held the sweater she wanted to gift the old lady.

Scene: 11 Sh 8



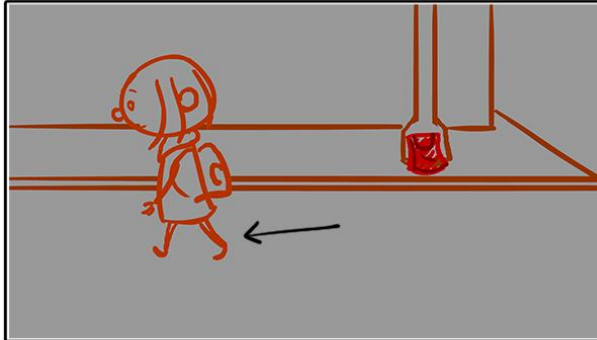
Then she slowly places it where the old lady used to stand.
SFX: Paper rustle.

Scene: 11 Sh 9



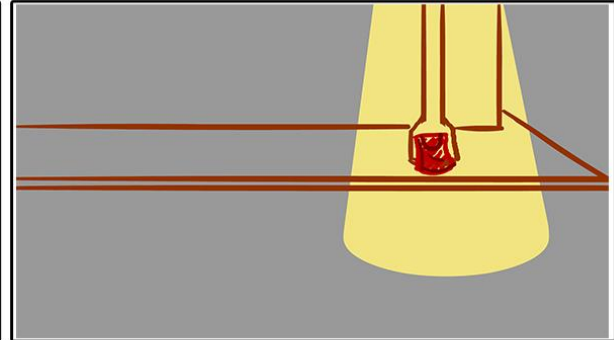
She gave a hearty smile at the memory of the old lady.
SFX: Giggle.
V.O: What would you have done if you could do it all?

Scene: 11 Sh 10



Then she walked away from the place and never turned back.
SFX: Footsteps fading.
V.O: What would you have done if you could do it all?

Scene: 11 Sh 10



The street light tinkers on in the now deserted street.
SFX: Electricity buzzing..

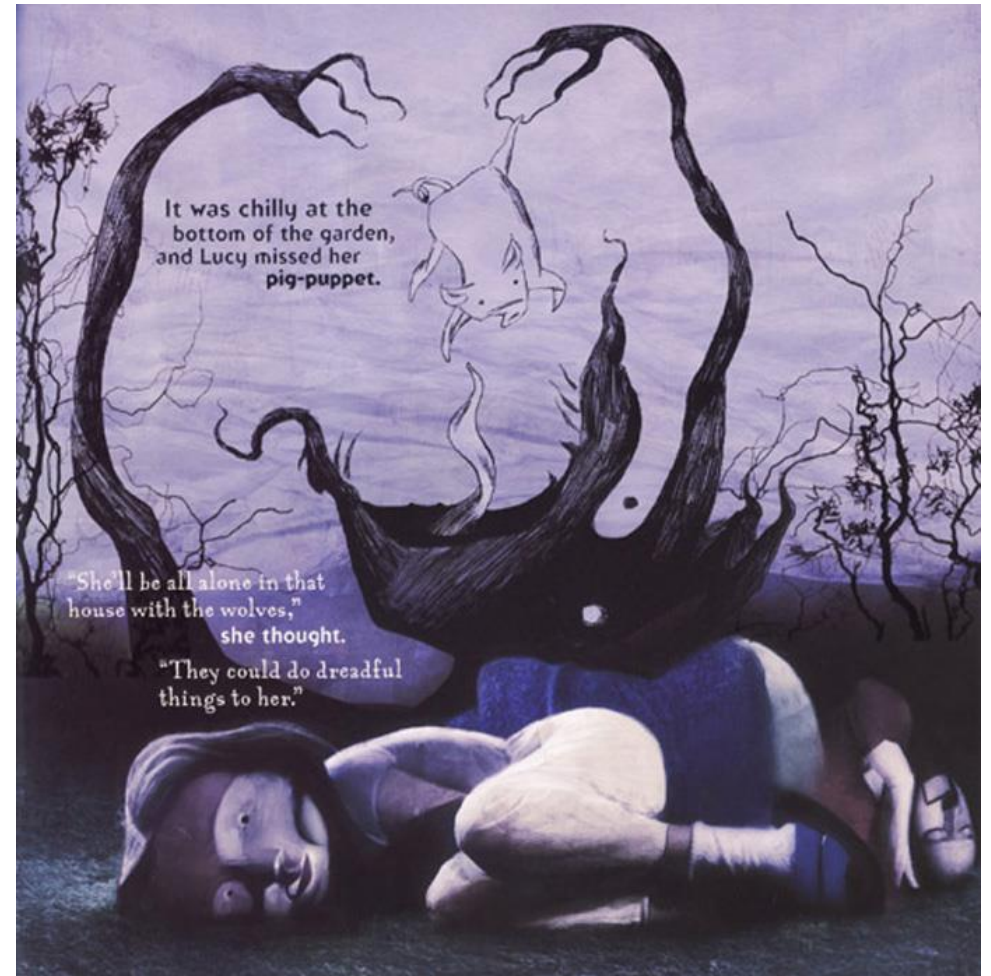
Create your own at Storyboard That

Visual Exploration

Style Inspirations



Abigail Halpin (Anton Van Hertbruggen's Children's Book)



Neil Gaiman (The Wolves in the Walls)

I was greatly inspired by the works of illustrators like Neil Gaiman, Suzy Lee and Shaun Tan and the way they brought all Children's Book to life. Their way of narration and the way that the physics of the world often didn't make sense and yet they worked just fine, baffled me.



Maurice Sendak (Where the Wild Things Are)

I wanted my film to have this children's book type feel to it and I looked more into the works of other illustrators and films like Song of The Sea, The Song for Rain and Rain Town because they had so much depth in what they wanted to say through their art style. A combination of fantasy, mixed with childlike wonder and ecstasy.



Suzy Lee (Wave)



Song of the Sea (Tomm Moore)



Rain Town (Hiroyasu Ishida)

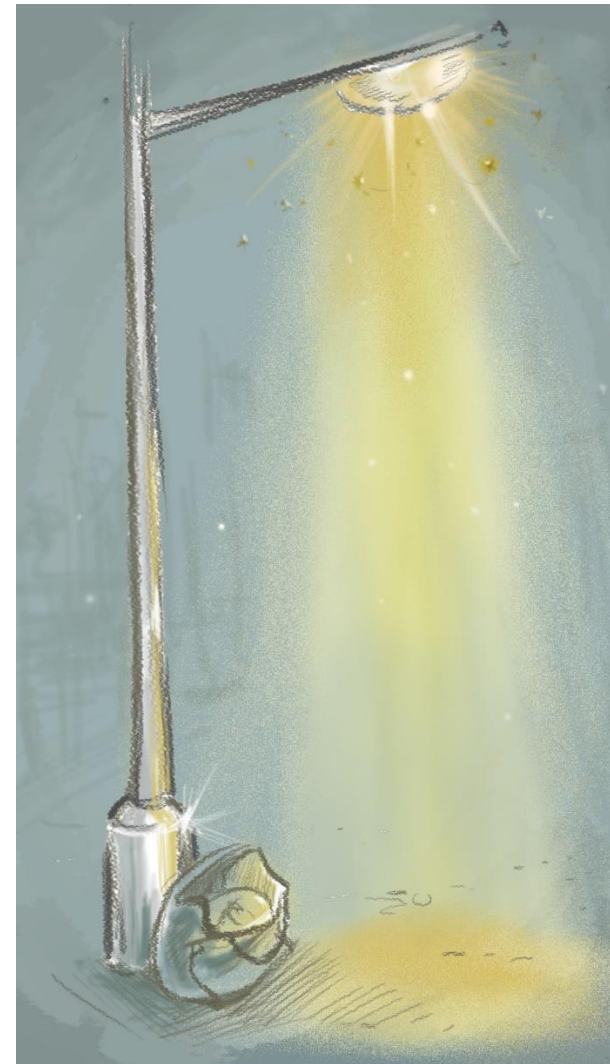


Song for the Rain (Yawen Zheng)

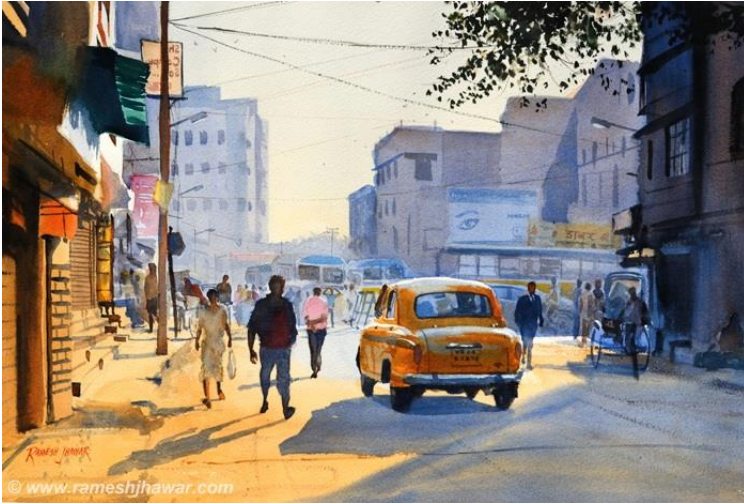


Shaun Tan (Lost and Found)

Sketch Explorations



Location Inspiration



Ramesh Jhawar (Barabazar, Kolkata)



Anonymous (Esplanade, Kolkata)



Ashraful Arefino (North Kolkata)

Stylization



Style 1



Style 2



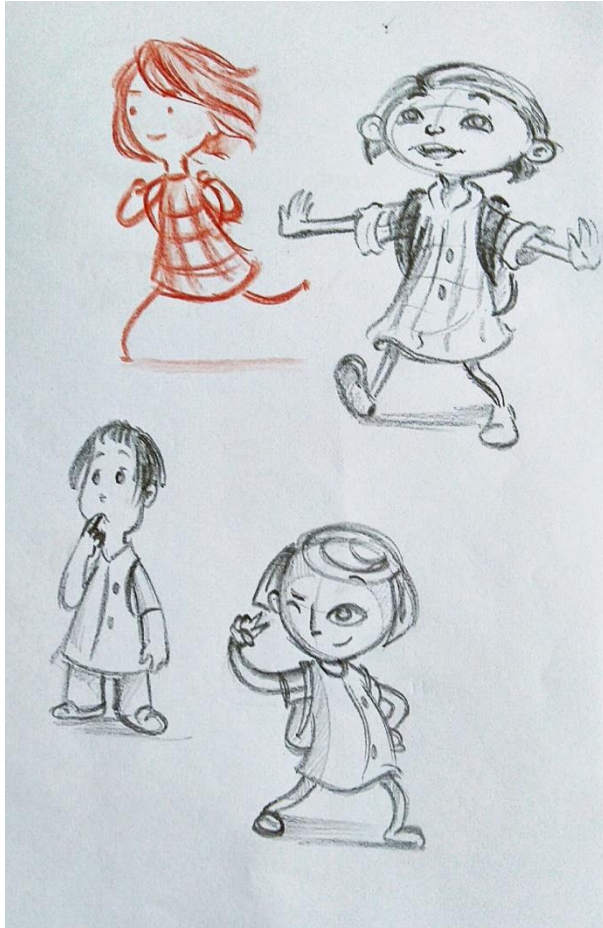
Style 3 (Final)

I figured that the entire story is like a memory that the girl recalls of in her poetry once she is old enough. So, the style should reverberate that of a memory like moment. That would involve a sort of dreamy texture to it that would give a feeling of half-forgotten imagery. This would be accompanied by crayon like drawings of that of a child imprinted on her real-life images of a location.

The entire background has a lot of pastel shades to it, to make it appear like a happy memory. Then I took it one step further by adding unrealistic elements to it, like circular windows to the metros and multiple colors to the sky to make it look like the girl has vivid imagination and probably is a dreamer. Since all this happens in the minds of the girl, all the setting is simply to reflect the personality of the girl.

Character Explorations

Little Girl





Final Character Design



WINTER COLLECTION

Default Clothing



MONSOON COLLECTION

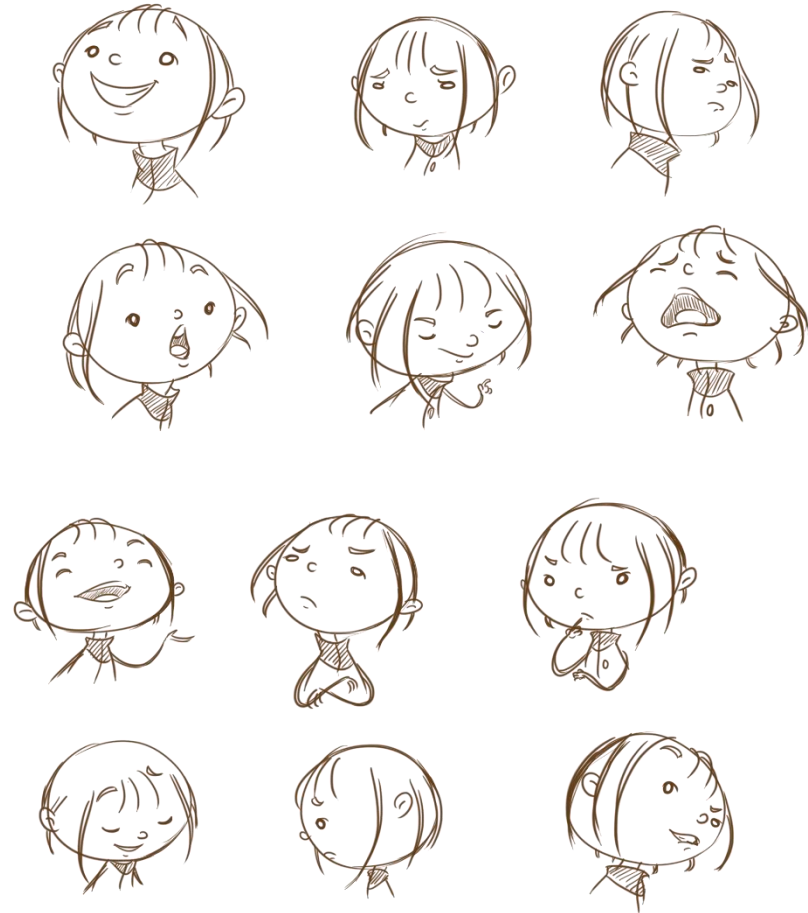
Monsoon Clothing

Winter Clothing

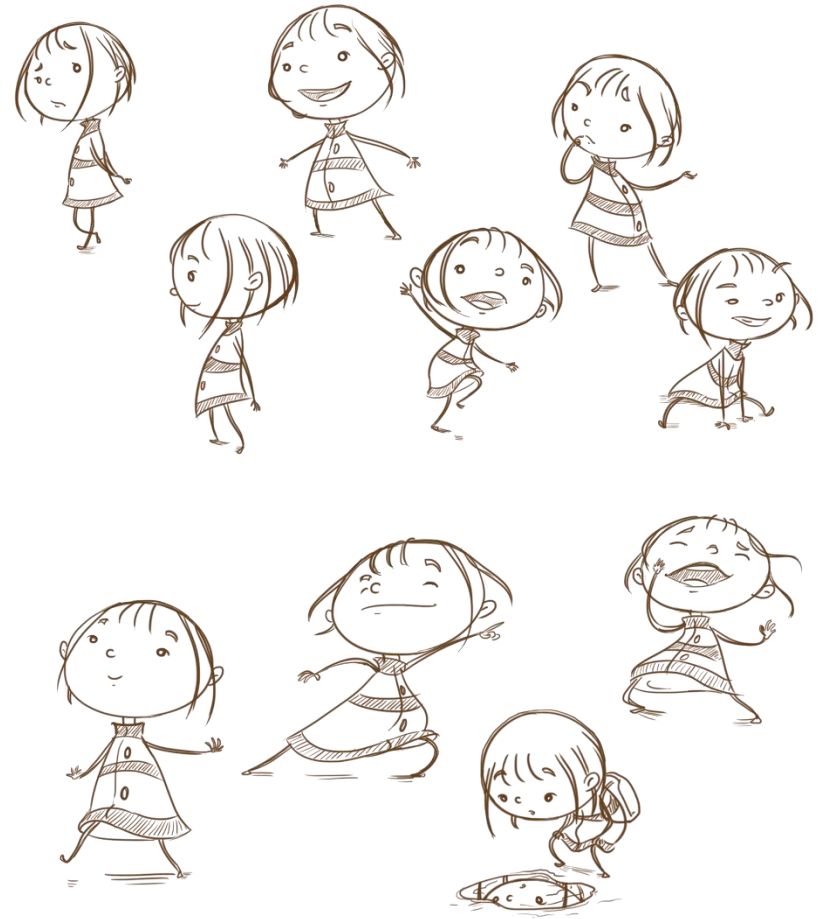
I wanted the girl to appear cute and cuddly while at the same time street smart. Hence after a lot of exploration, I figured that having her eyes far apart in her head while set close to the nose would give her a goofy charm. At the same time, her eyebrows will do most of the talking so I left it versatile and totally up to the animation.

Her range of clothing will essentially dictate the passage of time and hence she has a lot of different colored clothing that reflects the mood of the weather while predominantly belonging to the same family, so there is no difficulty in familiarizing with the character in such a short duration of time.

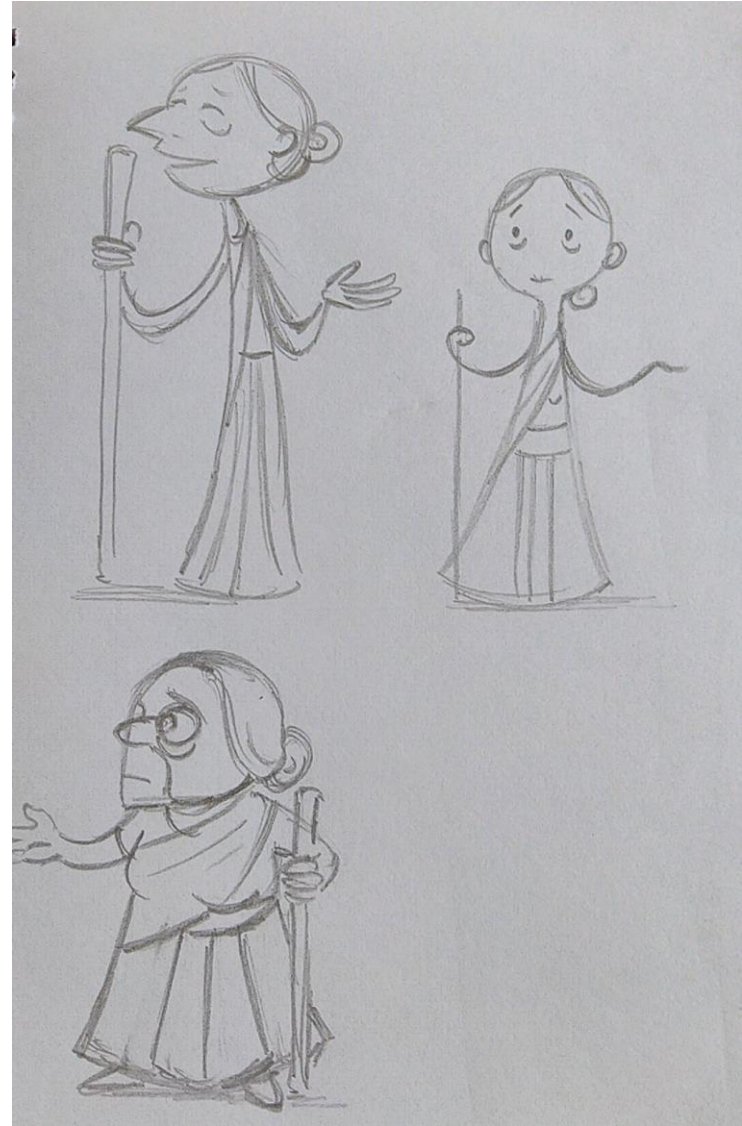
Expression Chart



Gesture Chart



Old Lady



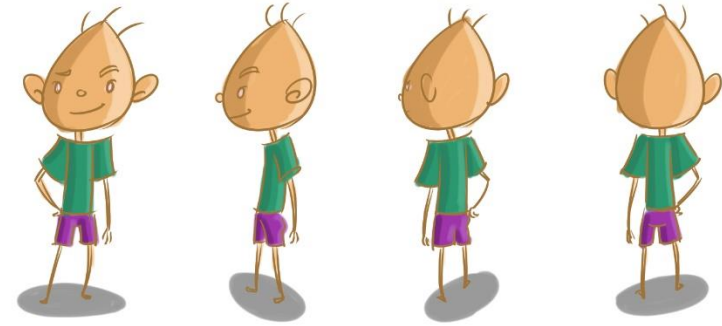
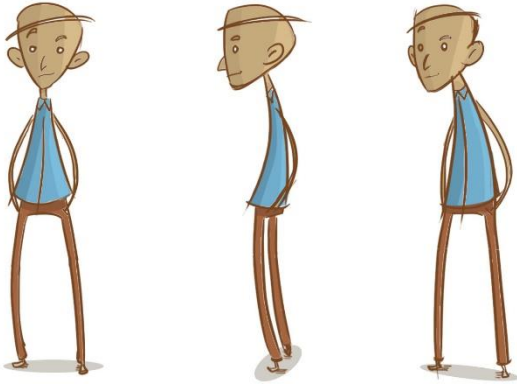
Final Character Design



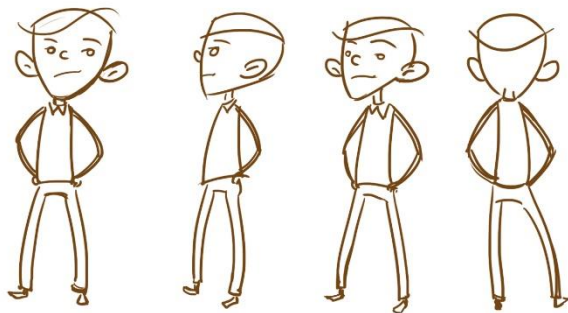
In my head, the old lady looked like a disheveled woman who has been beat down by society, so I tended to make her lean and bent. Her face needed to look like she had seen some things she doesn't want to remember.

At the same time, I wanted to make her look like she was a misfit in the environment she was begging in. Like a person who wasn't used to begging. A person who might belong from a good family and was now reduced to begging. Hence, I gave her a clean white sari, that gave off a pious image, where maybe once, she took good care of her appearance.

Friend 1

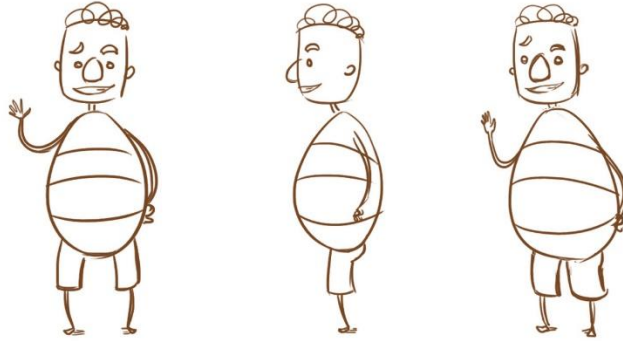


(Final Design)



I wanted friend one to appear the more intelligent looking and matured one. I began with a inverted triangle shape for the face to make him appear smart, but it was adding on to his age. So finally, I went ahead with a tear drop structure for it.

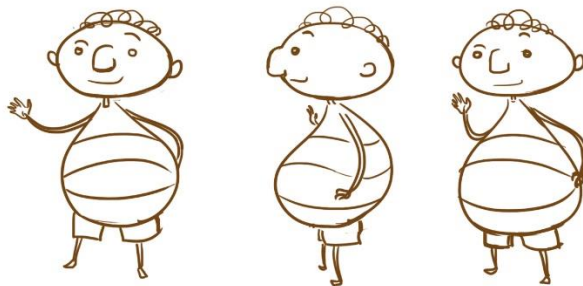
Friend 2



(Final Design)

I imagined friend 2 to be the goofier type, who is always enthusiastic about everything that happens around him. He is the type of person who would probably initiate events.

He needed to appear very approachable and cuddly, so I went with a snow man-ish body structure. The hair was my favorite part, because he needed to have curls while at the same time adhere to squiggly lines that children normally use to draw hair when they are kids.



Size Comparison



Sound

Sound played a very important character in my film. I divided it into three primary sections.

The Voice Over

This was the most important section of my soundtrack and most of the non-visual narrative depended on it. The way the poem would be read in accordance to the mood of the film was crucial. I was back and forth with the idea of having a child give the voice over as opposed to an adult. Finally, I settled with an adult doing the voice over, because then I thought it would add another layer of having the little girl grow up and remember those incidents like it was the back of her palm. The voice though needed to be soothing and yet childlike to take you on her journey like you were her, and she was you.

The Background Track

The entire setting was that of a typical Kolkata back avenue setting in a mundane afternoon sequence. So, I felt that the background track needed a very lazy summer afternoon like feel to it that transcends into a despair and finally rises with hope and remembrance.

I chose a very Indian track that had wind instruments instead of acoustic ones, firstly because they are a favorite of mine and secondly because it reminds me of a childhood of playing with siblings in open windy fields amidst rainy afternoons.

The Foleys

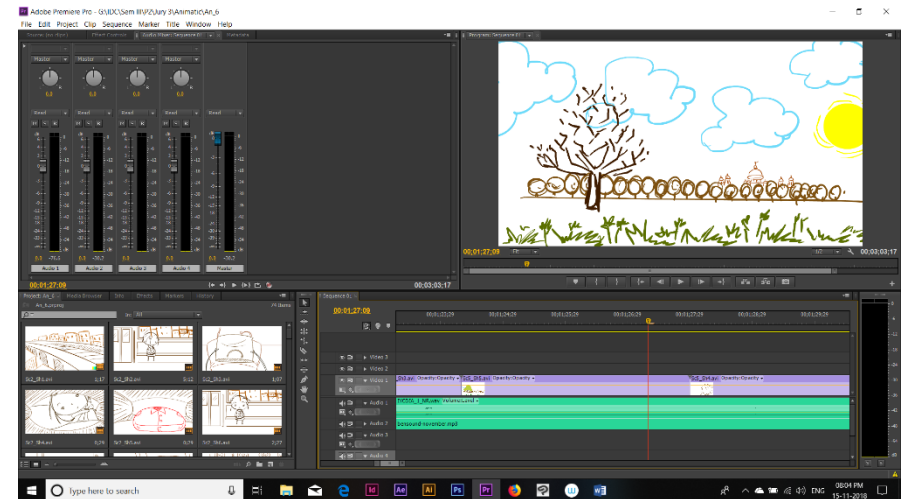
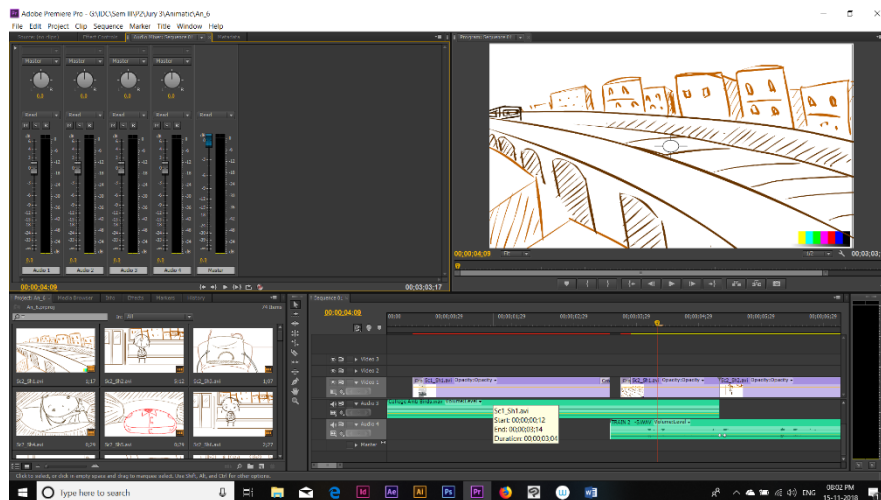
Finally came the Foley sounds that would tie my narrative into reality. Most of my scenes took place in outdoor places with lots of traffic and people. To create an authentic Kolkata location with people talking in Bengali and the typical government buses and rickshaw horns, I had a friend stand in the middle of different busy roads to record the sounds. This helped me largely to create the aroma of the city at large.

The rest of the muted Foleys were mostly created in our college Sound studio while some were downloaded royalty free.

Animatic

After settling on the sound came the animatic, where I used the frames from the storyboard, created several keyframes in between and thoroughly timed it out. The animatic came to a lot of help in setting up the mood and the pacing of the film, because I realized that in places where I kind of wanted to be a bit more emotional, I added a lot more cuts, and it looked fast paced.

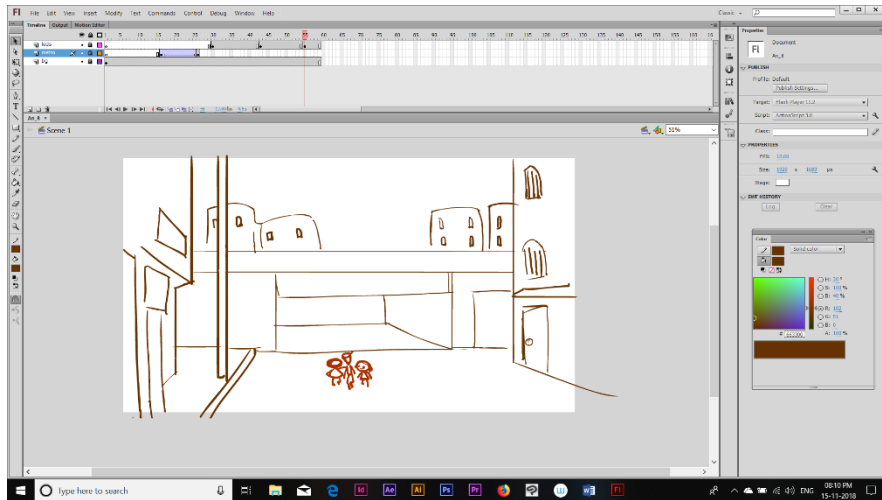
So, I had it eased out onto the part where the tension rose and I increased the beats of the sequence. After adding the soundtrack to it, I could finally visualize the story in time and how it would appear in real time as opposed to the idea of the reel I had in my mind while just making the storyboard.



Especially for the time lapse sequence, I think having it play out in the animatic was a great help because it helped me squeeze down the time of months in a few seconds and how the changes would affect the environment, visually.

Animation

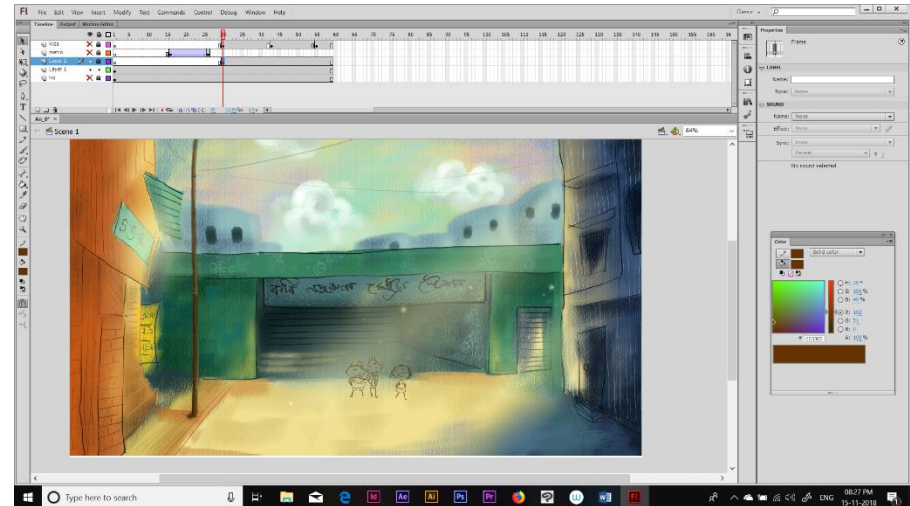
Then came the D-Day. The day I began my first animation, I had each shot separated out location wise to ease up the props and mise-en-scene.



I began with the rough animation to fix out the acting and staging of the characters with respect to the scene. It helped in bringing the characters out alive and react with the background.

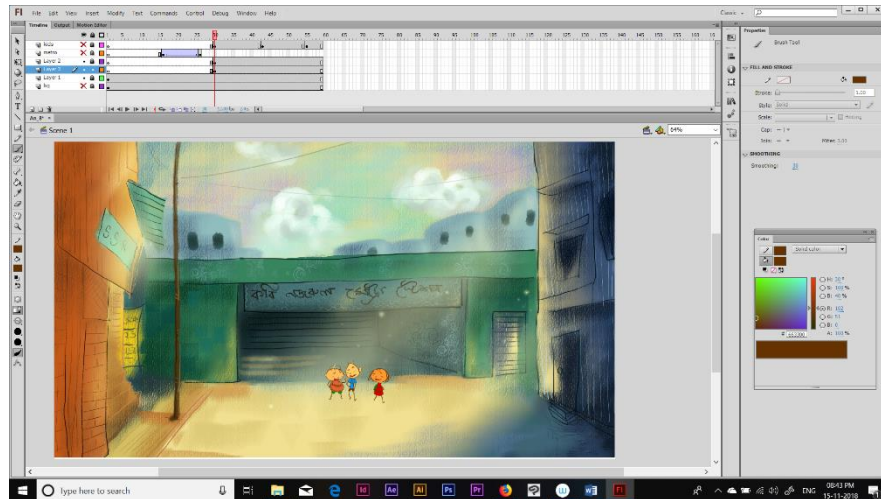
Then I went ahead with adding the finished background to it, and doing a match check to see if the characters fit the background. In this case, I wanted the background to kind of overshadow the character and their presence, in order to make them appear smaller than they already are and also in a thematic sense, their presence in the grander picture reduced.

I always prefer to work in Adobe Flash or Animate because they give me a good vector base to start with. It helps ease out several complications that arise from working in scalar.

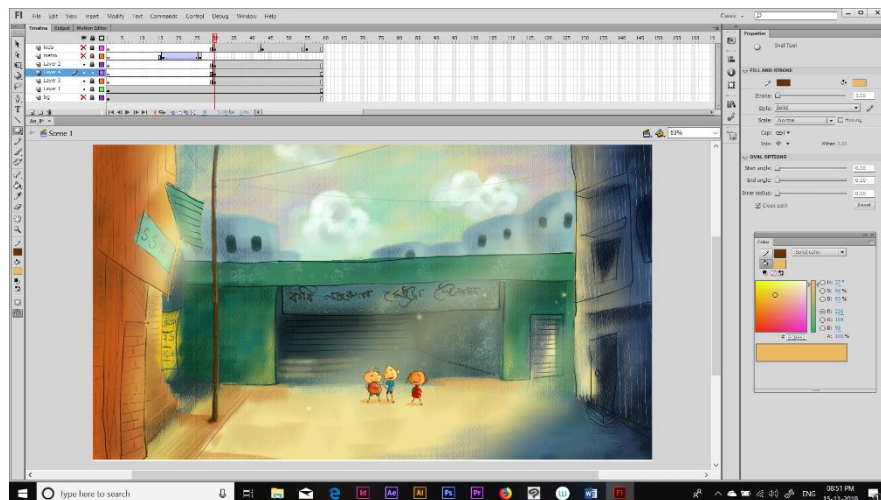


After that, I went ahead with completing the breakdowns and the in-between frames to make the animation crisp. The shots are all done in 12 frames per second.

Then came putting in the base colors of all the scene to make a seemingly workable film without depth and shadows. The contrast of a raster crayon like background with that of a vector solid character, I thought was quite welcoming because it felt more childlike and the same time dreamy.



Finally, I completed the scene by adding highlights and shadows wherever necessary.



Post Production

The post production mainly saw the entire compositing of the films, down to adding atmosphere and blurs to the scenes. The winter shots, especially the evening shot required the addition of fog and mist between the character layer and background layer and the end streetlight shot had more drama to it because of the subtle light diffusion in the twilight mist.

Some shots required a bit more pacing edits by turning the linear a bit here and there. After this, a session of color correcting the entire film and we were good to go visually.

Finally, a bit more tweaking the Foley in the sound department, adding reverb wherever needed, especially during those scenes where it needed to look a bit claustrophobic and induce anxiety, and we were ready.

Conclusion

This film was certainly very close to my heart. And ever since it was only a thought in my head, I was totally emotionally attached to it, because it was brought to life by a very personal event in my life. Hence, at every stage that I would probably finish, I reworked on it, trying out ways in which I could make it better, ways in which I could make it worth the story.

It was a great deal of learning for me, right from preproduction all the way to final editing and it has seriously been a pleasure of mine to work with the story. Until completion, it would always haunt me. When I ate, when I slept, it stuck with me like a ghost needing retribution.

I hope I did justice to the film and I really hope it resonates with my audience and they feel what I tried to portray.

The plight of woman all around our nation and beyond are really pathetic. So, I hope my film did even a bit of justice to all the elderly woman out there, waiting to be liberated. Waiting to be loved.

Thank You.

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Song of The Sea

The Song for Rain