

The Ordeal of Losing Weight

Short animation film project

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Guide
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Approval Sheet

This Animation Project entitled under the theme 'Threshold' is approved in partial fulfilment of the Masters Degree in Animation and Film Design.

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Acknowledgement

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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified 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 properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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Date: 30.5.2011

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Abstract

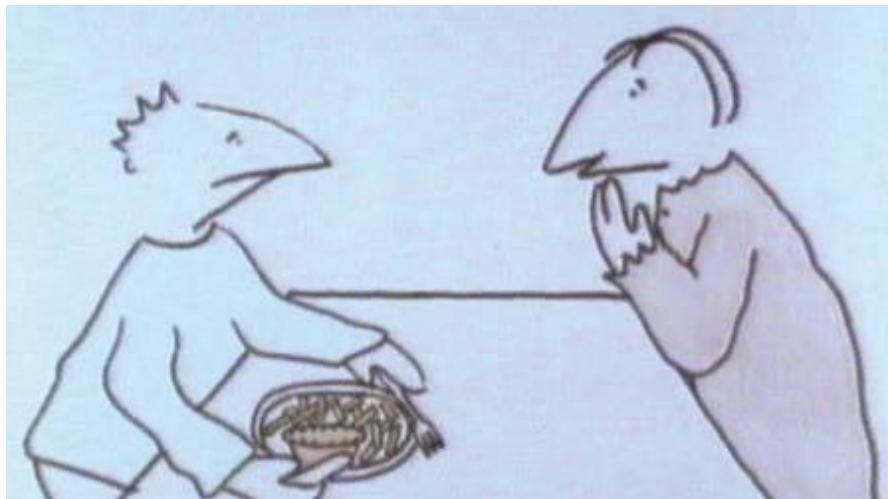
This short film project, ‘The Ordeal of Losing weight’ is an attempt to capture the trials and tribulations of an obese person who desperately wants to slim down. In the story the protagonist struggles with his problem until he realizes that moderation is the key to healthy living, and thus regains his confidence.

Introduction

With the advent of modern technology which makes our lives easier and the growth of affluence in a major section of our society, obesity has also risen to a level that WHO now recognizes it as a *global epidemic*. Not only in the rich developed countries, even in the developing countries, the percentage of overweight individuals is growing rapidly especially in the urban setting. Much of this can be attributed to change to a high calorie diet and sedentary lifestyles. Genetics also play a role and humans are in a way biologically programmed to like sweet, salty and fattening food.

But once fat, a person finds it difficult to find social acceptance. His/her situation is further aggravated by the physical discomfort and medical complications that accompany obesity. Thus there is craze for being slim everywhere, which is driven by mass media. But the ordeal of losing weight is difficult. Resorting to shortcuts like crash diets and extreme exercising actually leads to more harm. A healthy lifestyle incorporating a healthy diet and enjoyable physical activities is the way for healthy living.

In my project I wish to touch upon these various aspects of obesity and draw from my own personal experience in the pursuit of weight loss. My attempt is to portray the many futile attempts and contradictions in the journey with humour and make an entertaining yet compassionate film with a positive ending.



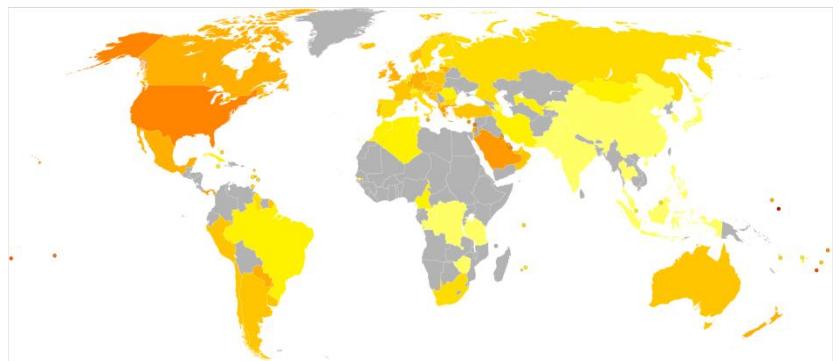
Inspiration

Candy Guard – Fatty Issues

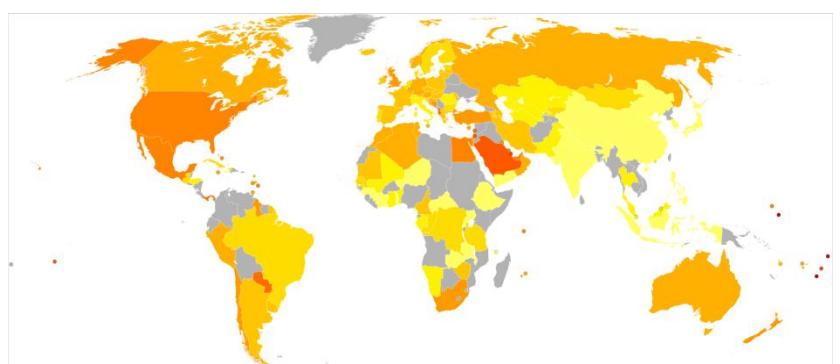
Fatty Issues is an animated short film about a woman trying to become slim and attractive, but is unable to restrict herself to a strict diet regimen. Candy Guard considered 'the most witty observer human idiosyncrasies' makes us laugh and feel the woes of her protagonist in her timeless film. The dialogues, narration and her style of economically drawn lines create a captivating appeal.

Little Miss Sunshine

This inspiring movie beautifully portrays relationships within a dysfunctional family which unites on a road trip. One the major character 'Olive' is a chubby ten year old girl who dreams of being a beauty queen. The major revelation in this film is the hypocrisy of the glamour world and the inherent beauty in every individual. The cinematography is visually stunning and the journey of the family is highly motivating.



Obesity in males



Obesity in females



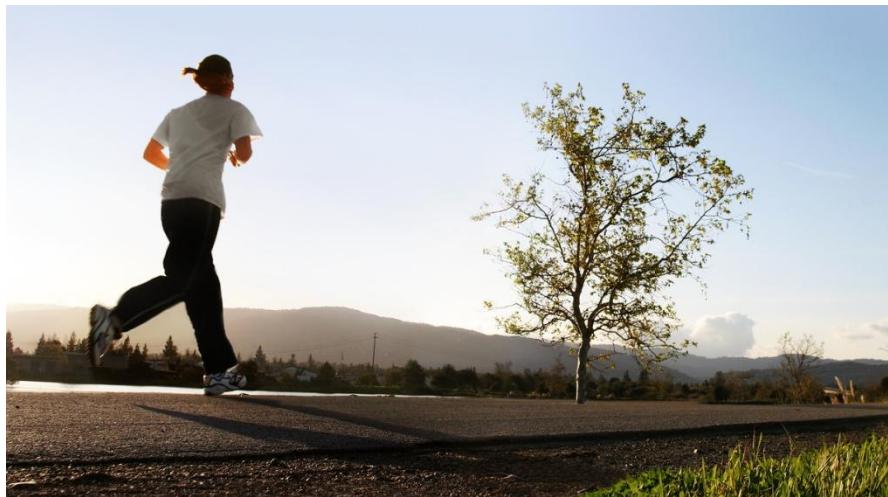
Research

Technically obesity is a medical condition of having excessive body fat which may have adverse effect on health. Obesity has been recognized as a global epidemic by WHO in 1997. It is often attributed to high calorie diet, sedentary lifestyles and genetics. It can lead to low self-esteem and medical complications.

Exercise and balanced diet is the most effective the long term treatment for it. In severe cases surgery is performed like liposuction and gastric bypass surgery, or stomach intra-gastric balloons are used. But each has adverse side effects.

There is a correlation with excessive body weight and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus type 2, obstructive sleep apnoea, certain types of cancer, and osteoarthritis. Strangely, subgroups of moderately fat people fat have better health; observed in heart and renal diseases. This is known as the Obesity Survival Paradox.

Social determinants: Women of high social class in developed countries are less likely to be obese. But men there don't show any such difference with social classes. In developing countries, men, women and children of higher social classes have greater rates of obesity. Diet programs can reduce weight in short term. Popular diets can be divided into low fat (e.g. Ornish), low carbohydrate (Atkin's), low calorie and very low calorie diets. But in order to maintain the physique, regular exercise to burn calories is essential.

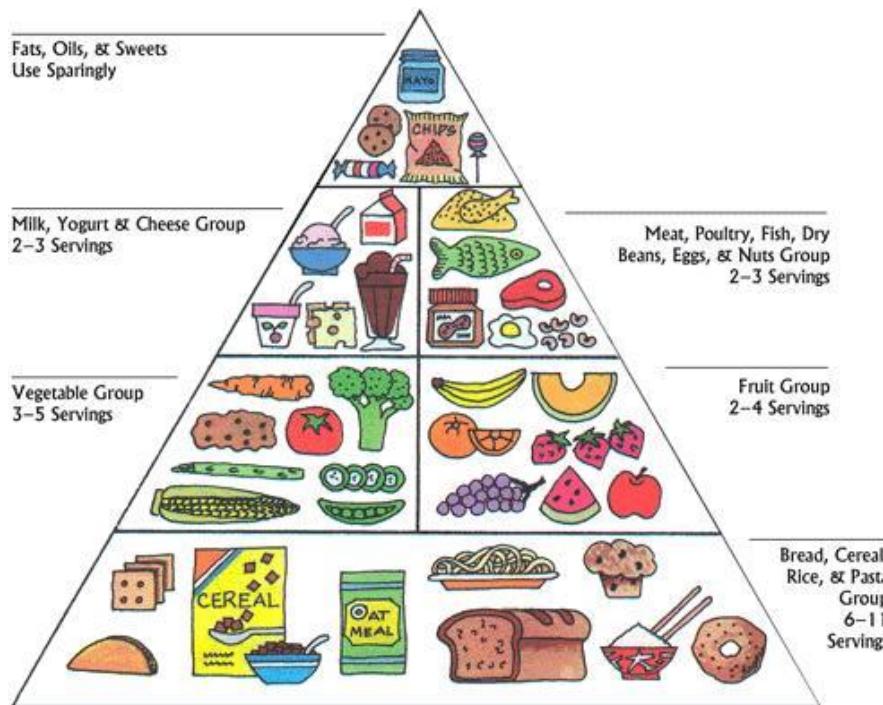


When the body spends more energy than it consumes, first the glycogen in liver gets depleted. Then lipolysis occurs where the catabolism of fat takes place. Body Mass Index is a heuristic proxy for human body fat based on an individual's weight and height.

A study conducted at Scripps Research Institute suggests that junk food alters brain activity in a manner similar to addictive drugs like cocaine or heroin. To make matters worse unhealthy fast food and highly processed food is usually targeted at children. Some of the first problems overweight children face is emotional or psychological. They suffer from low self-esteem and are teased by their peers.

Humans are biologically inclined to crave for sweet, salty and fat tasting foods. It's an evolutionary strategy which helped our early ancestors to survive in adverse environments.

Scientific study shows that successful weight loss maintainers show greater brain activation in frontal regions and primary and secondary visual cortices. This pattern consistent with greater inhibitory control in response to food cues. Neuro-imaging research on human obesity points to abnormalities in regions associated with reward and inhibitory control of behaviour.⁽⁹⁾



In order to sustain a long term weight loss program, low energy intake is essential. Research suggests this can be achieved by reducing total fat intake, reducing portion size, reducing energy density, and increasing fruit and vegetable intake. Longer duration exercise and constant limited energy intake leads to the maximum weight loss. The amount of time spent exercising is more important than exercise intensity.⁽¹¹⁾

Behavioral changes are also crucial and includes self-monitoring, environment modification, changing thinking patterns, self-efficacy and social support.⁽¹¹⁾

Due to metabolic and hormonal changes that accompany weight loss, there is a strong tendency to regain weight. It's observed that people who are successful in maintaining weight exercise regularly.⁽¹⁰⁾

Pre-Production

Initial Concepts

- The first idea was to dwell upon the issues of social acceptance and self worth of a fat person. Because women are in general more concerned about their appearance, I toyed with the idea of making my protagonist a young girl. A chubby girl would face rejection from her friend circle and romantic interest. This would make her reevaluate her priorities in life and in turn lead to finding happiness and success in her life. This idea was rejected because women are the usual stereotypes for these concerns.
- The impact of the prevalence of highly processed and junk food, coupled with sedentary lifestyle in urban settings has been one of the major causes of widespread obesity. I modelled my protagonist on a lazy man who suffers from loneliness and finds solace in junk food. He gets attracted to woman who works out in a gym in his neighbourhood. In order to win her attention he joins the gym. But his strict exercise regimen wrecks havoc in his life. This idea was used but with some differences. It's because I found it would be interesting to have the character of an awkward teenager struggling with massive peer pressure characteristic of that age.

- Further research in my topic pointed out that in modern society it is the children who are highly vulnerable to being obese. The fast food giants also direct their campaigning to children who are unable to make healthy food choices unlike well informed adults. So I decided to make my protagonist to be a fat boy in his early teens. Being overweight myself at that age I had firsthand experience of the same.

Story – ‘The Kick’

“Please sir!” pleaded Gablu, the chubby teen.

“No! Join others”, ordered the PE teacher. The boys were playing soccer in the school ground. Gablu tried chasing the ball but could never reach it. He panted in exhaustion. He got temporarily distracted when a pretty classmate walked past the ground. Then Gablu notices the football coming near him. He rushes to kick it, but loses balance and falls down. Everyone laughs at him. Gablu feels very embarrassed.

Gablu reaches home dejected. The lift is under repair. It takes him a great effort to climb up the stairs to his home. He finds a note saying that his parents shall be late from office. He gathers some snacks – a cheese sandwich, chips, chocolate cake and cola and snuggles in front of the TV. He keeps switching channels but every channel shows slim and fit people flaunting their great bodies. He looks down at his tummy. He tries to mime the actors and poses like them. But then he realizes that he can never match up to them. Then he feels frustrated and switches off the TV. Before taking his shower Gablu looked at himself in the mirror. He feels ashamed with his flabbiness and is sad.

Later at the dinner table plenty of food surrounds him. He only picks up a slice of cucumber and munches on it solemnly. His parents are surprised at his lack of appetite.

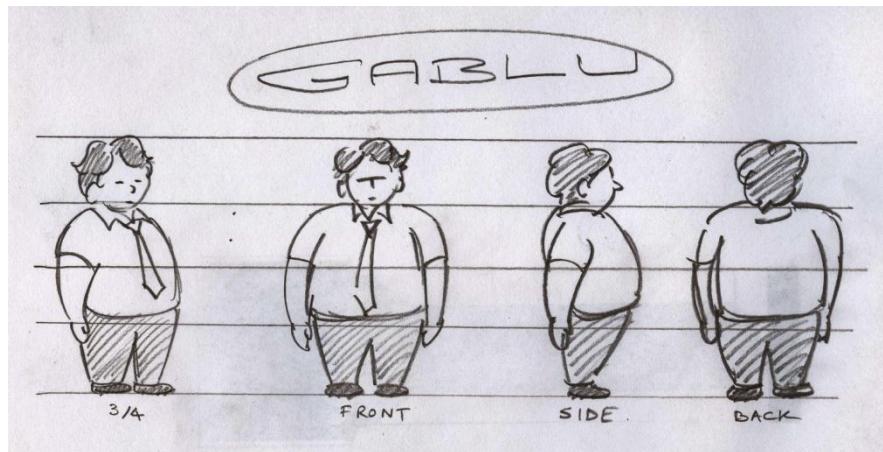
But late night Gablu's dad wakes up due to a creaking sound. Gablu is caught raiding snacks from the fridge in his hunger. Gablu is taken to the doctor next morning. He weighs 90kilos on the weighing scale. Doctor prepares a diet chart and exercise routine.

Gablu starts following the chart enthusiastically. He eats less and starts working out. But soon the routine tires him. He keeps falling asleep in class. He cheats with a burger when alone. Next when he takes his weight, he tries several tricks like balancing himself on one foot. But his weight remains same. Desperately trying to make up from his indulgence, Gablu collapses while jogging one morning.

In his dream he is light as a feather and flying amongst the clouds. He wakes up to find himself on his bed surrounded by parents. He drinks soup and takes rest.

After his recovery Gablu takes his weight. He closes his eyes in fear, but to his utter surprise he is few grams lighter. He is overjoyed with this minor success. Gablu walks with a spring in his step during lunch break at school. The pretty school girl notices Gablu for the first time and smiles to herself at his gait. As he walks past the ground a football rolls towards him. He stops it with a foot and kicks it back. He joins the game with a smile on his face.

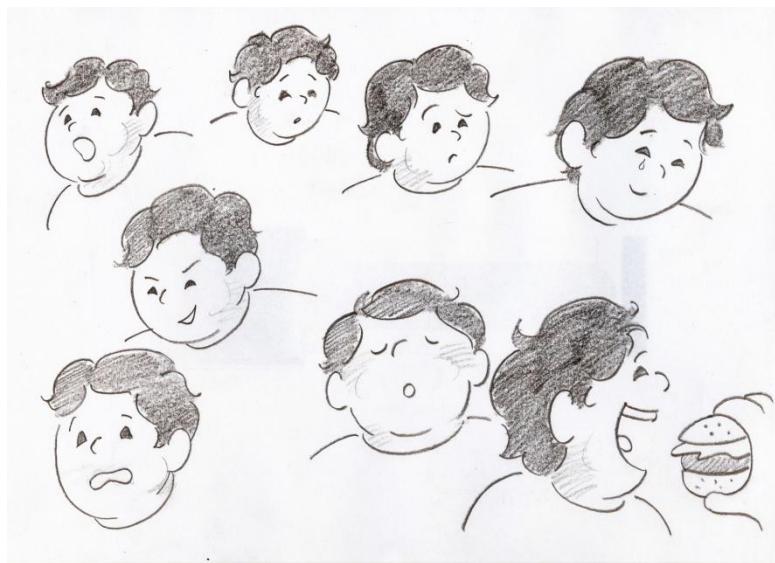
Character Design



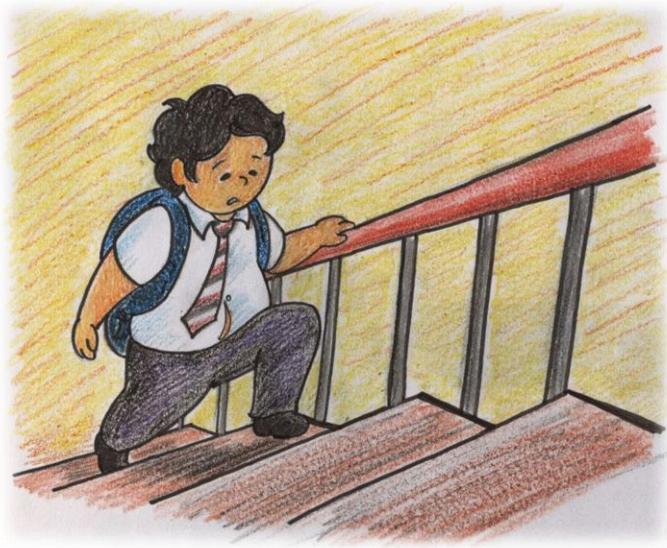
The protagonist in the story is Gablu, a chubby teen studying in high school. He is very conscious of his weight issues and prefers to stay alone, shying away from the world. He is secretly infatuated towards his classmate Tua but finds it difficult to express his feelings. Both his parents are busy working, and Gablu is mostly on his own at his home. He feels unhappy with his life and finds solace from junk food. In the story an embarrassing incident leads him to desperately lose weight. In the struggle he loses his mental balance and finally collapses. As he takes rest and recovers he realizes that moderation can help him find peace and harmony. Ultimately this leads him to regain his confidence. He learns to be happy with himself and starts to enjoy his life.



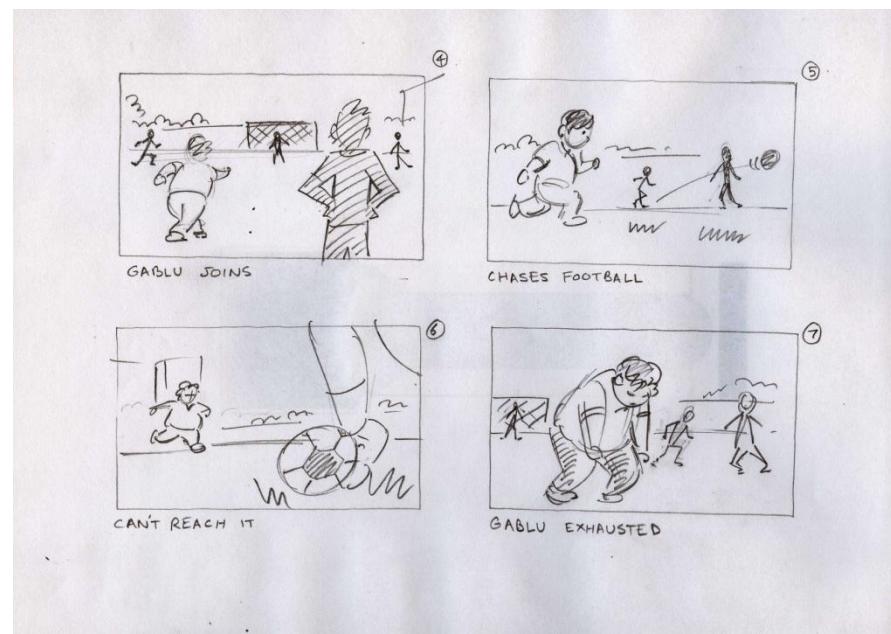
The character design tries to reflect Gablu's personality. He is a normal teenager, but has difficulty with his obesity. The features have been made rounded and details minimum keeping in mind the character and the medium of animation, which is predominantly hand-drawn.

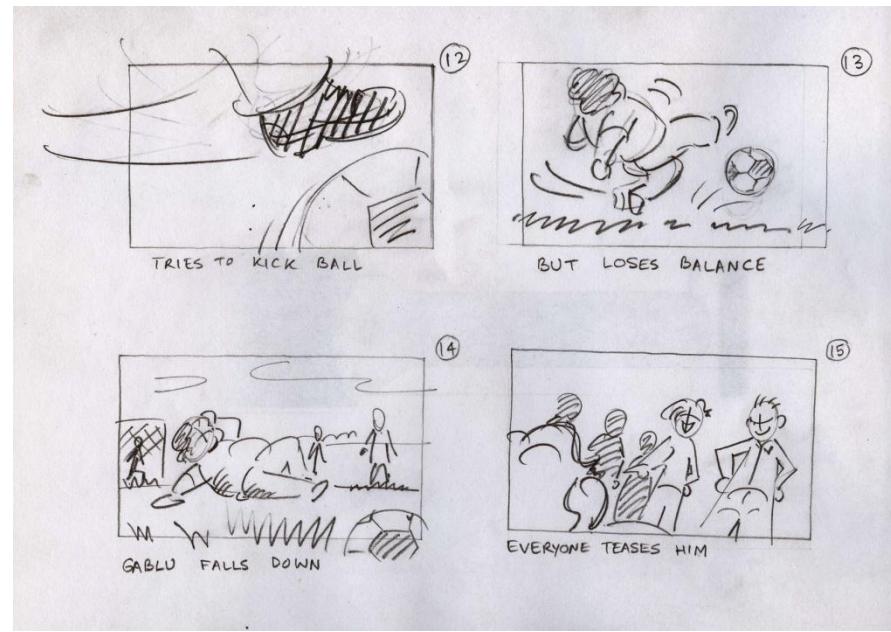
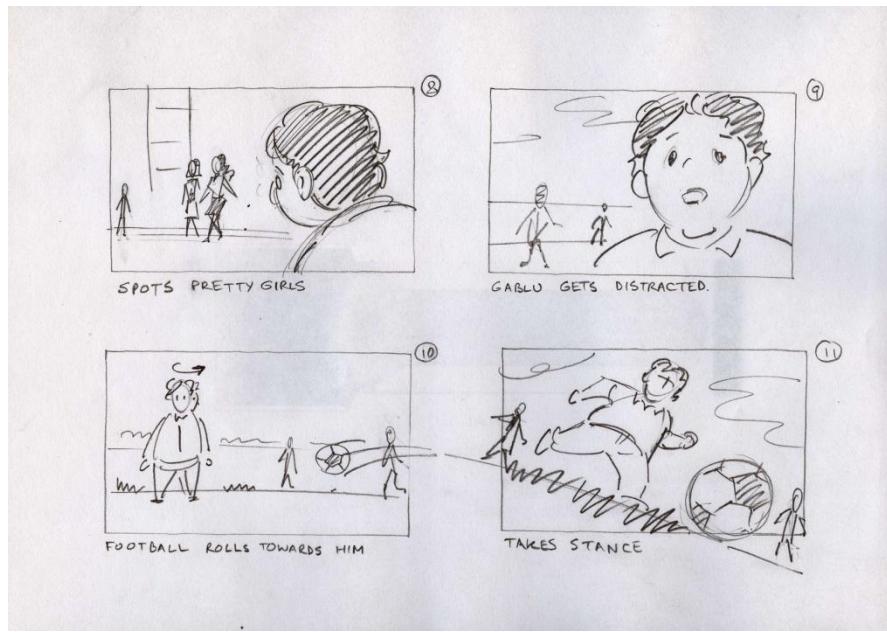


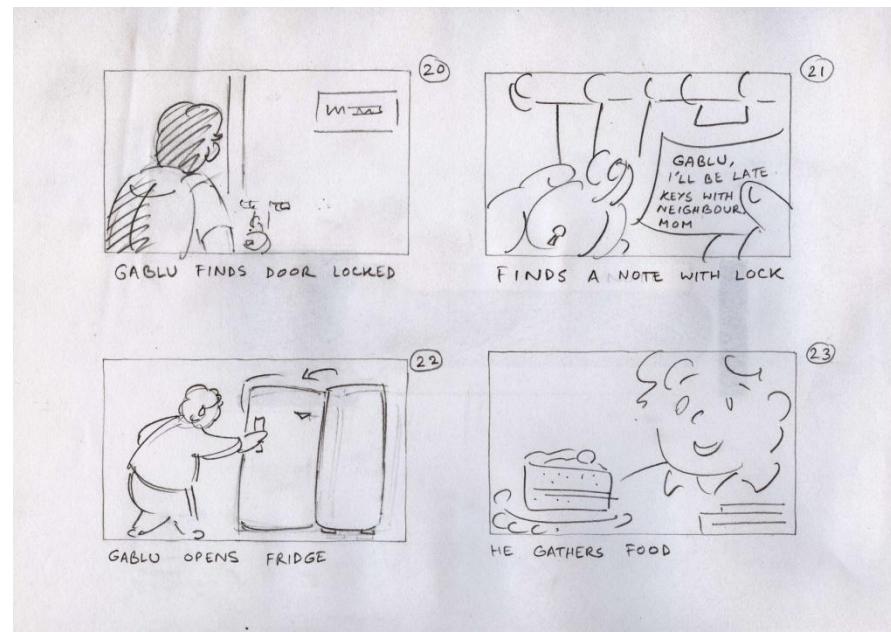
Concept Art

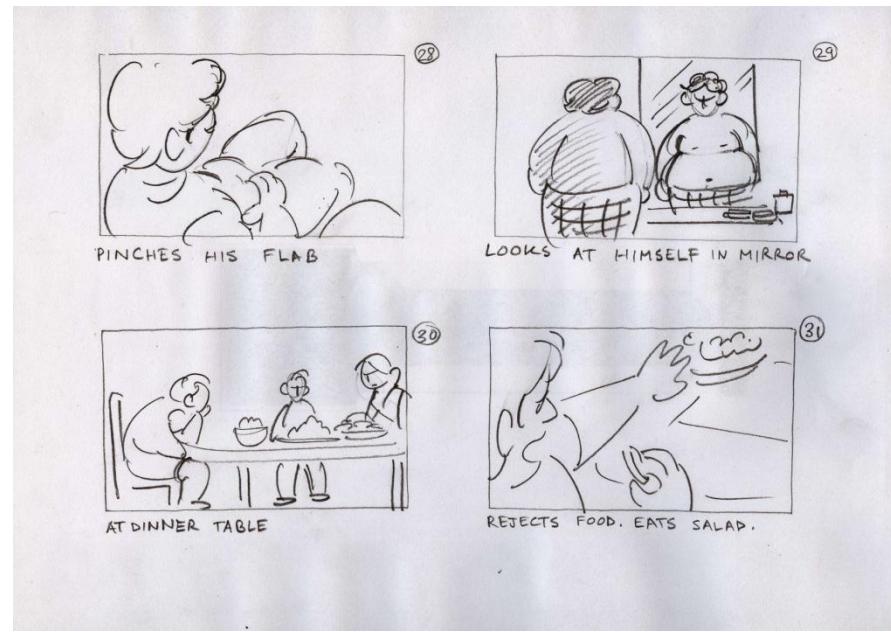
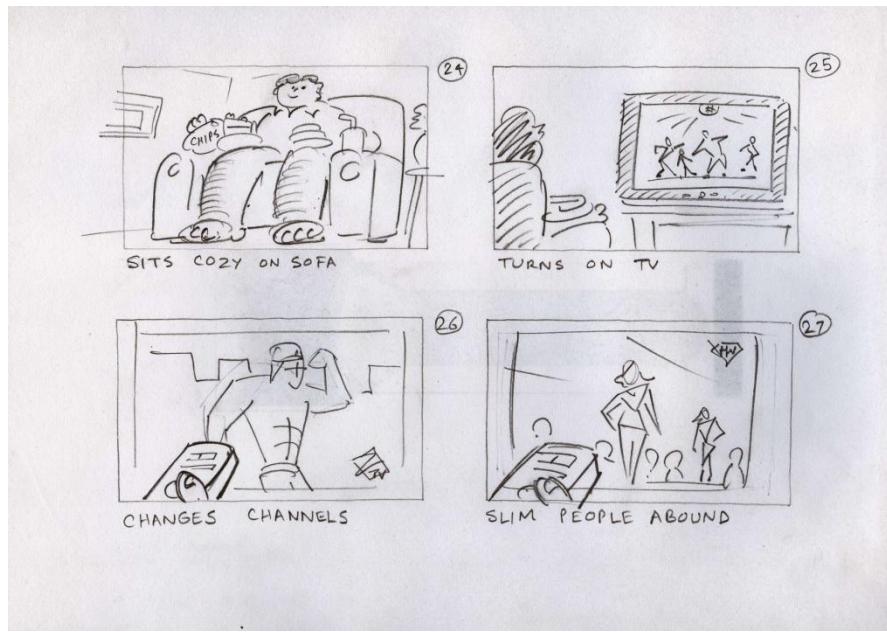


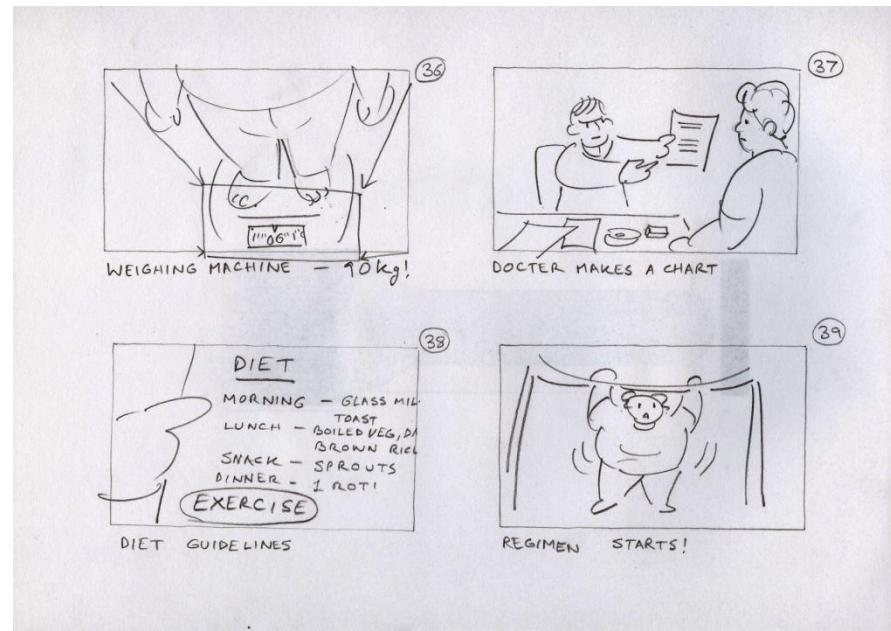
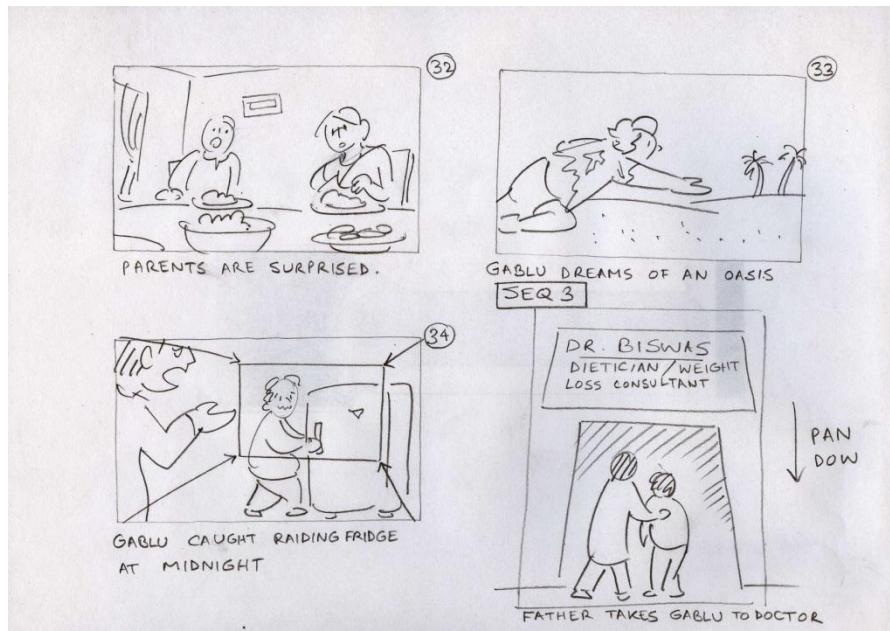
Storyboard

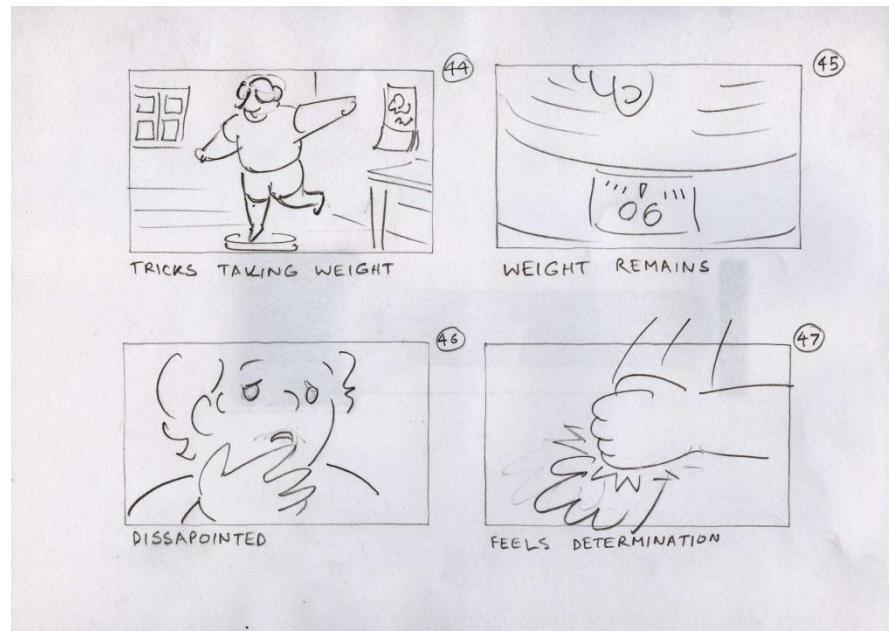
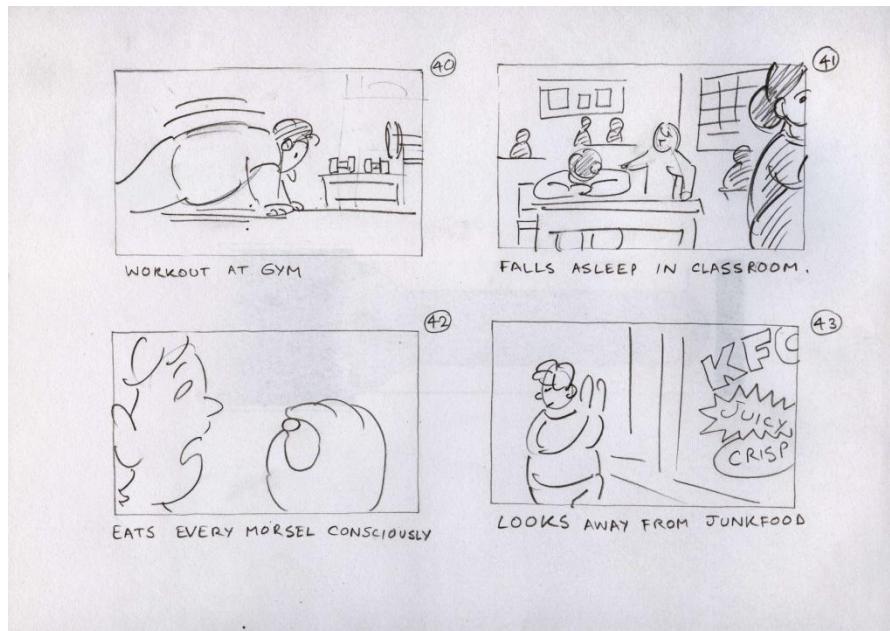


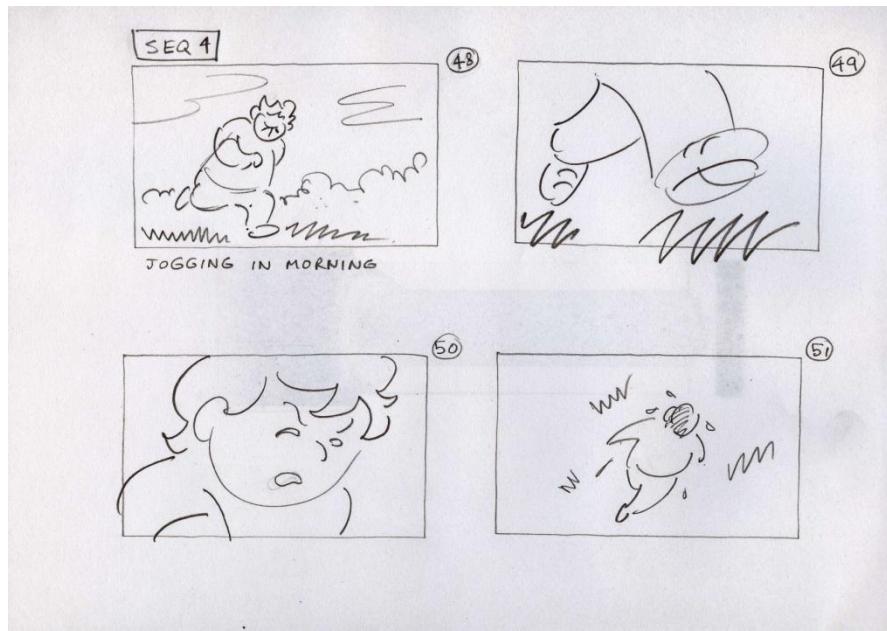


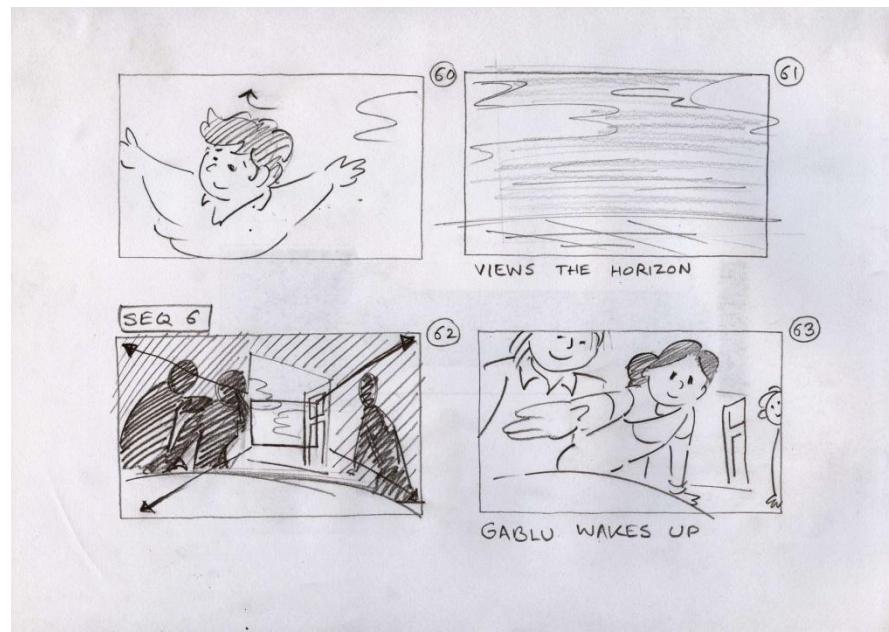
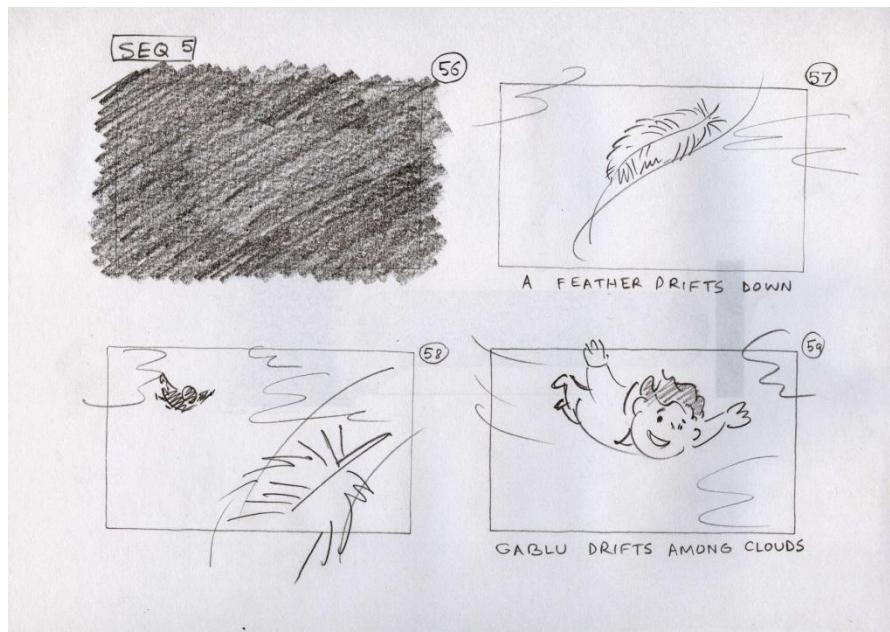


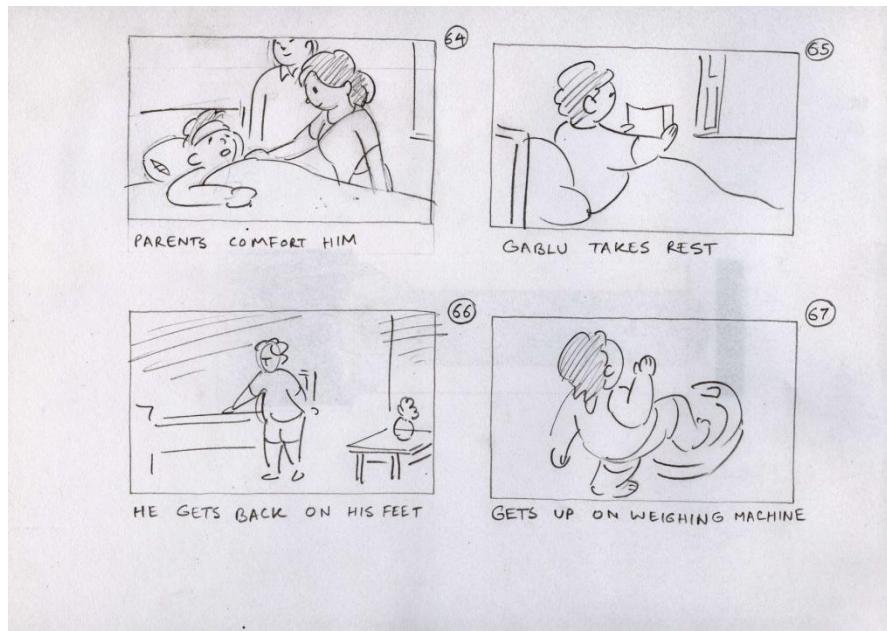


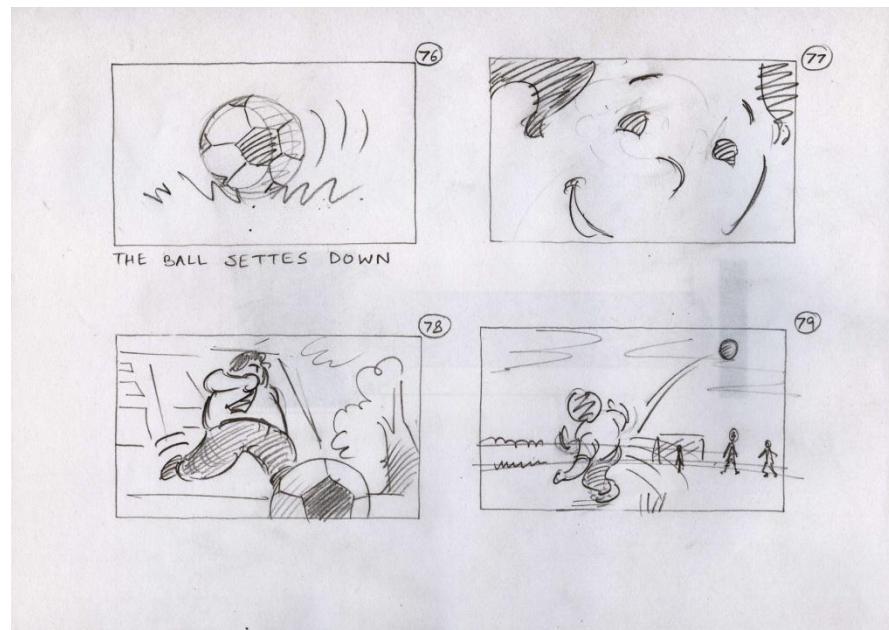
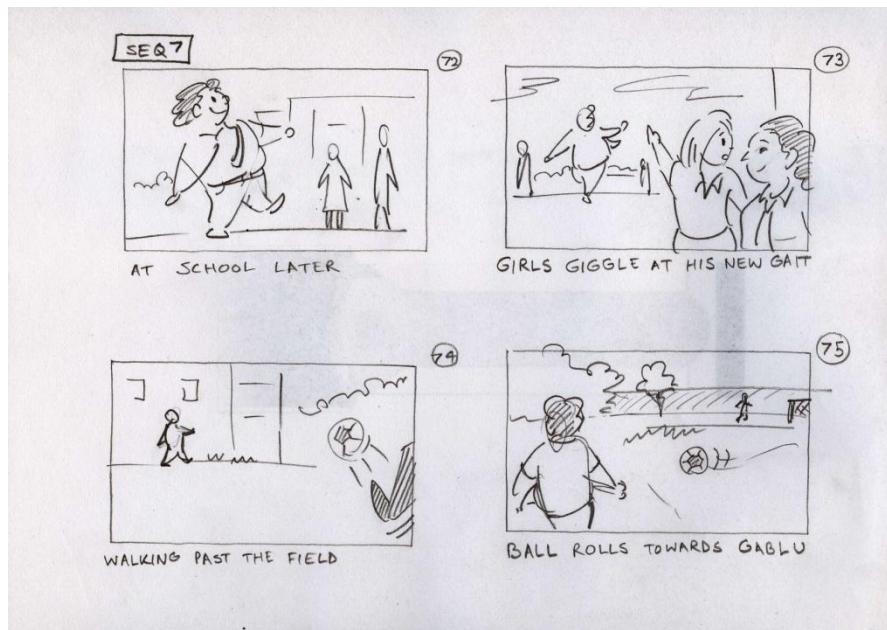
















Production

Layout, Background and Overlays

The basic layouts, characters, backgrounds and overlays have been created from rough sketches and scanned drawings using Adobe Photoshop. The colouring and texturing have been done using different brushes and smudge tool settings. The various objects and characters are organized in separate layers to enable manipulation using the compositing software. For the look I choose to use a sepia tinted colour scheme in order to match with the protagonist's frame of mind.



Animation and Compositing

The animation has been done using a combination of hand drawn 2D animation along with the use of cut-outs. The software used to achieve this illusion of movement is Adobe AfterEffects CS4.

The animated elements have been composited with their respective backgrounds and overlays using Adobe AfterEffects CS4.



Editing and Sound Design

The specific visual style of the film required very few extra effects to enhance the look. The various shots, scenes and sequences have been edited and put together using Adobe Premiere CS4.

The film required extensive use of ambient sounds. Royalty free sounds have been downloaded from internet^[13]. Some guitar sounds have been recorded with Adobe Soundbooth CS4. The audio tracks have been edited and assembled using Adobe Premiere CS4.

Final Look and Feel



Conclusion

Being my second animation short film I got to apply all my learning in the process of making it. In spite of my prior experiences, I faced several setbacks; and could only later realize the importance of proper planning for the smooth execution in the production process.

The idea started with my own problems with obesity and gradually took the shape of being more general outlook towards this subject. But the challenge was to break stereotypes and make it connect with the deeper aspects of the personal crisis one suffers from it. In this attempt I got to learn more about my own internal conflicts which I found were manifesting externally as my weight problems.

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