



**IDC**  
**IIT Bombay**



# Meghayana

◆◆ THE PILGRIMAGE OF A CLOUD ◆◆

DIRECTED & ANIMATED by K ABHILASH, MUSIC by RAJESH NAROTH, FLUTE by UTTAM BHAT, GUIDED by Prof. SHILPA RANADE

IDC, IIT BOMBAY

**Meghayana**  
♦♦ THE PILGRIMAGE OF A CLOUD ♦♦  
A Short Animation Film

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Animation & Film Design

Guide: Prof. Shilpa Ranade

## APPROVAL SHEET

This Animation Project II entitled “Meghayana - The Pilgrimage of a Cloud” by K Abhilash, 09634001 is approved in for the partial fulfillment of the Masters Design Degree in Animation and Film Design.

Project Guide:

Chair Person:

Internal Examiner:

External Examiner:

Chairman:

Date:

Place:

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I thank my teachers, friends and family for their gracious involvement in seeing the project taking shape.

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## ABSTRACT

I have expressed the movement of a small group of clouds as a pilgrimage to a large cloud. After a brief study of the nature of clouds, observations and with reference to clouds in literature, I arrived at a personal expression of the story in the form of a poem. The film is a visual rendition of this poem through the medium of animation.

## INTRODUCTION

The visual nature and characteristics of clouds have struck the imagination of many artists and poets, who have attributed the qualities of clouds to hope, freedom, destruction, relationships and divinity. Mythology, religion, literature and the fine arts stand witness to this.

The visual nature of clouds have always fascinated me. Clouds seem to add visual depth and character to a rather empty sky. The gigantic forms of clouds arouse a feeling of littleness. The amorphous gaseous nature gives a sense of lightness and joy. Clouds reflect the transient nature of life. The sight of rain clouds is a symbol of good hope though they strike terror when accompanied by lightning and thunder. The sight of rays of sunlight piercing through the clouds arouse a feeling of divinity. My recent and first flying experience on an airplane has given me a wonderful experience of being with the clouds and the opportunity to gaze at the beautiful earth down below.

These experiences inspired me to choose the subject of clouds. In my view, life is a composite of the good and the bad, happiness and sadness, success and failure, power and weakness, which resemble the nature of clouds. Through this animated short film, I reflect on the similarities between the nature of human life and the nature of clouds.

## RESEARCH

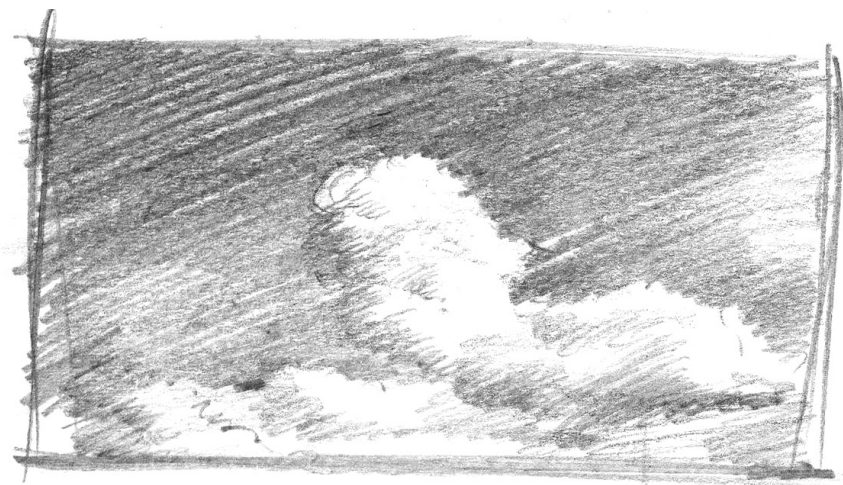
## STUDY OF CLOUDS

My study of Clouds comprised observations, quick sketching and photographing supported by a brief study of 'Nephology' - the branch of meteorology that studies clouds and cloud formation.

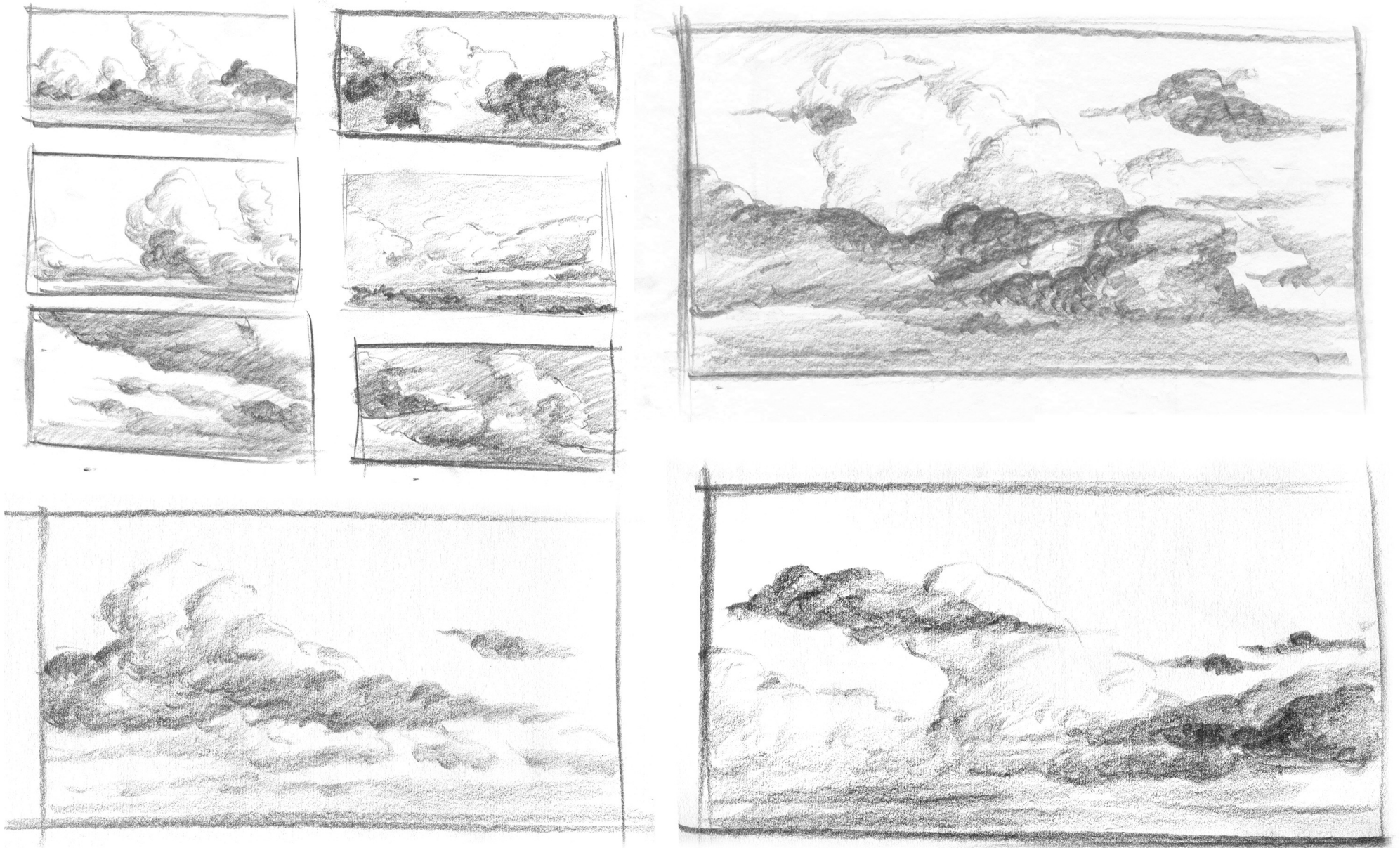
International Cloud Atlas states that:

“A cloud is defined as the visible aggregate of minute particles of water or ice, or of both, in the free air.”

The appearance of clouds is determined by the nature, sizes, number, distribution in space and the intensity and colour of light received by the cloud and by the relative position of the observer and the source of light with respect to the cloud.



QUICK SKETCHES FROM LIFE



## CLASSIFICATION OF CLOUDS

*International Cloud Atlas* states:

The characteristic forms of clouds are classified into genera, species and varieties.

The ten genera of clouds are:

1. Cirrus
2. Cirrocumulus
3. Cirrostratus
4. Altcumulus
5. Altostratus
6. Nimbostratus
7. Stratocumulus
8. Stratus
9. Cumulus
10. Cumulonimbus



The most commonly found genera are

## Cirrus

These are white, thin, fibrous hair- like clouds found at high altitudes. They are found when most of lower portions of the sky are empty.



## Alto cumulus

These are uniform layers of clouds constituting regularly arranged masses and rolls. They cover a large portion of the sky and are found at higher altitudes.



## Cumulus

They are detached clouds, generally dense with sharp outlines. They develop vertically in the form of rising mounds, domes or towers. These are the most commonly found clouds and resemble a cauliflower.



## Nimbostratus

These are the dark rain clouds. They form in low altitudes and are very thick because of the larger water content and therefore dark in colour blocking the sunlight.



## Cumulonimbus

These are large, heavy and dense clouds with a great vertical extent in the form of mountains. Their upper portions are smooth and fibrous and spread out in the shape of an anvil. The lower portions are very thick and dense. These clouds cause thunder storms with lightning.



## LITERATURE

“*Meghaduta*” - The Cloud Messenger by Kalidasa is one of the classics of Sanskrit poetry. The poem narrates the story of a lovelorn “Yaksha” - a celestial being, separated from his love and sends her a message through a cloud.

The poem is divided into two parts:

The “*Purva Megha*” or the Eastern cloud - the protagonist finds the cloud as a messenger and vividly describes the route to the abode of his love in the northern region.

The “*Uttara Megha*” or the Northern cloud - after reaching the northern regions the protagonist now describes his city called “Aloka” and that of his beloved wife living there, with his message to her.

I have derived my inferences from the first part of the poem because the personification of the cloud as a messenger is established. Its journey to the destination is vividly described not only in terms of geography but also the nature of a long distance travel in terms of places to rest and rejuvenate and tendencies to avoid to successfully reach the destination.

According to Pranab Bandyopadhyay’s retelling of *Meghaduta* from “*Tales from Kalidasa*”:

“The gentle south breeze will joyfully fan you, singing Chatakas (a bird whose cries indicate the coming of monsoon) and cranes in batches like so many wreaths of flowers, sportingly fly around you. Oh my friend, linger not there, as my dearest one sadly pines for me.”

Here the cloud is being advised not to get distracted by the birds sporting flight around it and continue its journey to his love.

According to M. R. Kale’s “*The Meghaduta of Kalidasa*”:

“with your showers poured out, suck up the water of the river, scented with the fragrant ichor of wild elephants, and having its current obstructed by the clumps of Jambu trees, the wind will not be able to shake you when thus inwardly full of substance. Everyone void of substance becomes light, fullness contributes to heaviness.”

Here the cloud rejuvenates itself after losing its content by soaking the water from the river and resumes the journey northwards.

“*The Cloud*” - P. B. Shelly

P. B. Shelley is one of the greatest English Romantic poets. In this poem the poet has given voice to a cloud as it speaks of itself in pride and glory of its qualities. The most striking verses to me are

“*I am the daughter of Earth and Water,  
And the nursling of the Sky;  
I pass through the pores, of the ocean and shores;  
I change, but I cannot die  
For after the rain, when with never a stain  
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex gleams,  
Build up the blue dome of Air  
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, live a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise, and unbuild it again.*”

The cloud seems to express its humility as it calls itself the “daughter of earth and water.” Then again it seems to glorify itself with its constantly changing yet undying nature. At the point of dissolution it seems to mock at the nature of death itself as it is sure that it can arise and build itself again.

The poet brings divinity close to the nature of clouds. The ever changing nature of life seems to lie within the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The permanent and immortal nature of divinity lies hidden within this ever changing phenomenon. The cloud is closest and a beautiful expression of this phenomenon and hence the wise choice of the poet to express it.

Apart from the literature I have come across various references of clouds in religion and mythology. They have all contributed to my understanding of the association of clouds to human nature. The unique expressions on clouds brought out in the form of personifications and symbolism has added to the development of my story, ideas and imagery.

## THE CONCEPT & STORY

The research has substantially added to the generation of various ideas on the nature of clouds and I used them as the basis of my story. With visuals and imagery being primary sources of inspiration for concept development, storyboard thumbnails on the parallel have added greatly to the development of the visuals.

The movement of clouds in groups is associated with a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage being a journey to a sacred place for higher realization and spiritual liberation, the question of a sacred place for a cloud kept me thoughtful and brought me back to references on nephology. The formation of cumulonimbus clouds is ascribed to the clustering of cumulus clouds. The cumulonimbus later dissolves itself producing thundershowers. Thus came the idea of having the cumulonimbus as the destination of the pilgrimage where the smaller clouds cluster and merge into the larger one. The story still did not have a strong focus.

Etymology refers that the word cloud comes from the word “clud” meaning masses of rock. This is due to the resemblance of the cumulus clouds to masses of rock. Thus arose the idea of a cloud transformed into a rock bringing it down to the earth and unable to get back to its original form.

With the problem set, there seemed to be more space for reasoning. What brought the cloud down? What is the solution to get it back onto the pilgrimage?

The cloud is distracted by two birds to deviate away from the flock. The cloud in its chase after the birds happens to witness the beauty of the earth for the first time and rejoices in it. Its joy suddenly gets it into trouble with the oncoming dark clouds. The dark clouds trap the little white cloud and struck by lightning the small cloud falls down to the earth transforming into a rock. Though irrational this seems to work with the story as the dark clouds represent the dark forces.

The small cloud finds itself in an arid land among a group of similar looking rocks struck by the same ill fate. Ages pass and there seems to arrive a lease of new life with the advent of a group of nomads. The leader of the nomads seems to sense a peculiarity with the rock of the protagonist cloud. A shrine builds up on the rock. With the arrival of the great flood the entire area is washed out with only the peaks of the rocks peeping to the skies.

A boat carrying a lonely boy lying unconscious drives itself by the wind to the rock with the shrine. The boat strikes the rock bringing the boy to consciousness. He looks on top to the shrine and walks up to it in remorse. He seems to have lost everything he possessed in the floods. As he sits in front of the shrine, he picks up his flute and starts playing it. The power of his music lifts the rocks and they take off to the skies along with the boy. The boy continues to play the flute for a while and stops to see himself on top of the cloud. The cloud along with the boy reach the destination of the pilgrimage and merge into the large cloud.

Music has the power to transform nature. Many Indian stories and legends relate the divine nature of musicians with their music. Lord Krishna’s flute recital is said to have put not only the human folk but also the animals and plants to experience bliss. Carnatic music legend Muthu Swami Dikshitar is said to have brought down rains through his rendition of a composition based on the Raga (scale) named Amritavarshini, meaning the one who brings rain as nectar. Kanakadasa, a south Indian mystic, through his music is said to have turned the idol of Lord Krishna towards himself revealing the Lord within the sanctum sanctorum as he was forcefully restricted to enter the temple. Jayadeva, the author of Gita Govinda is said to have brought down the Lord himself to listen to his recital of the beautiful composition. Thus the introduction of music plays a crucial role in the transformation of the rock back into a cloud.

The title “MEGHAYANA” is derived by the combination of the two Sanskrit words “Megha” meaning the cloud and “Ayana” meaning journey. The story reflects the nature of life as a journey from freedom, temptation, bondage, liberation and enlightenment through the nature of a cloud which is free but distracted away from its journey under temptation that results in bondage due to transformation into an immobile rock. With the intervention of divine nature in the form of music the cloud is liberated from bondage and merges into its greater self.

## THE POEM

## MEGHAYANA

## The Pilgrimage of a Cloud

*Out of the shores and oceans born,  
To the kingdom of the sky they are gone  
On a pilgrimage together they flock  
To behold the glory of the Great one and dock.*

*Cranes fly past quick and dive  
To the beautiful valley down alive  
The marvel below drives the young cloud low.*

*It flies down fast away from the flock  
Unaware it is caught, among the rumbles of the dark  
Lightning strikes in powerful wonder  
And roars to the peak in thunder*

*As an army of the dark they march past  
Throwing out to the hard,  
The young lad hits the ground harsh  
Cursed to become a rock  
It finds itself among another flock.*

*Seasons and ages pass  
A shrine grows to the wonder of the men bypass.  
Still and cold but with a hope  
They wait for their destined fate.*

*Then came again grumbling in pain  
Flashing rain and storms in twisting veil  
Washed ashore in a boat alone is a boy in pain  
To the rock he walks, climbs up to the shrine, he stops  
Picks his flute and sings to the Lord  
“Oh! Take me along”*

*To the tune of his song, the rocks break ground  
Lifting to the sky to the pilgrimage left long.  
With a blissful note stops the song  
Back to the kingdom of the sky, the rocks rose along  
To be the cloud among the flock  
Along with the boy to the Great cloud they dock.*

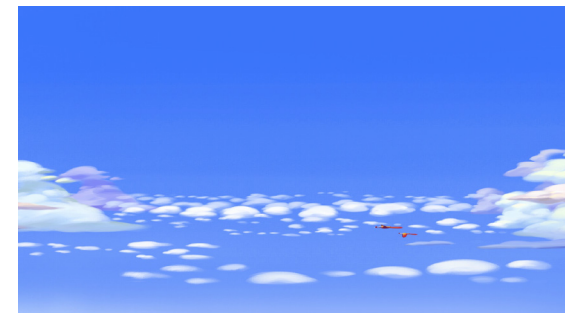
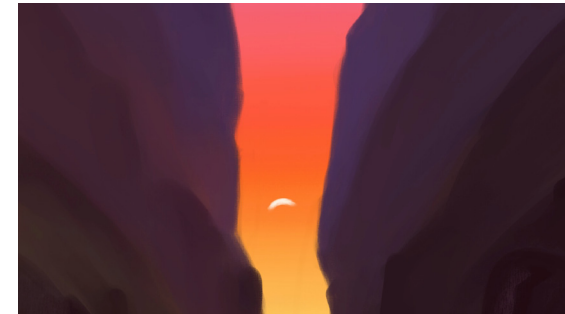
## VISUAL DEVELOPMENT

The story demands that a greater importance be given to its setting. The travel of the clouds across the sky and down to the earth needs wide landscapes and atmosphere. The story board was thus set in widescreen 16:9 aspect ratio.

The next important feature is the scale of elements of the story. The cloud should be a part of a smaller flock of clouds lead by larger ones. The birds should have the features of a high flying migratory bird which are fairly larger than common birds, yet small relative to the flock of clouds mentioned above. The cloud must seem to grow in size as it passes across the landscapes in search of the birds and find itself tiny and meek against the onslaught of the dark clouds.

The transformation to a rock was also required to be dealt within the issue of scale, relative to the human characters and the little shrine they build over it. So the rock should be fairly larger closer to size of a hill. When the rock transforms back into its original form to reach the destination they should appear tiny against the backdrop of the gigantic Cumulonimbus cloud.

These constant variations in the scale of the cloud were required to be dealt consistently for effective visual narration. The works of visual development from the movies such as “*Spirit- The Stallion of Cimarron*” and “*Surf’s Up*” came in handy reference to address the issue of scale.



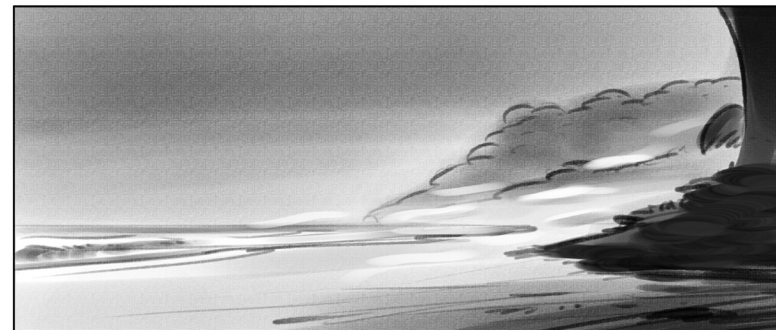
## STORYBOARD



Camera panning over the shores



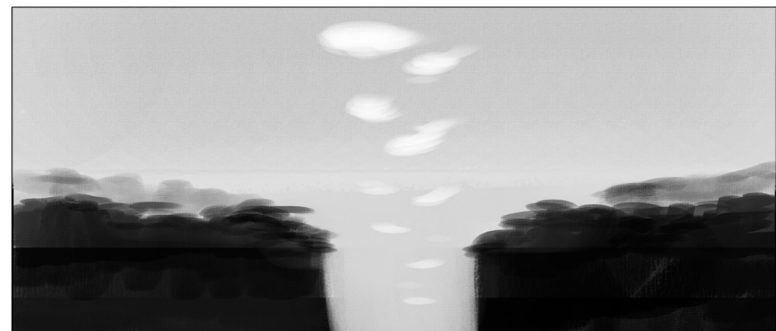
Clouds moving by the beach



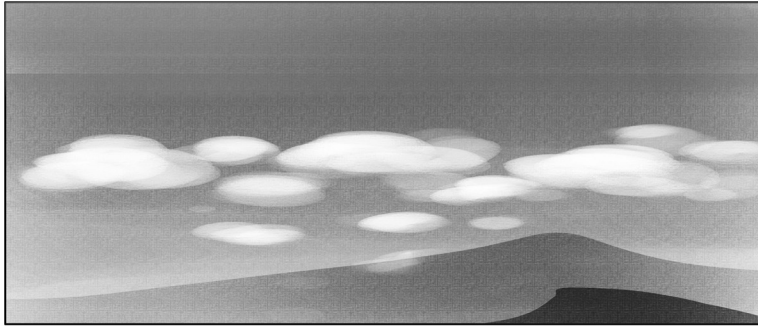
Clouds enter into the woods



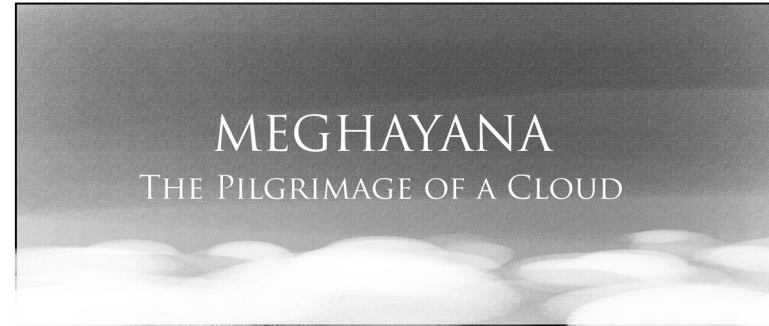
Clouds rise between the cliffs



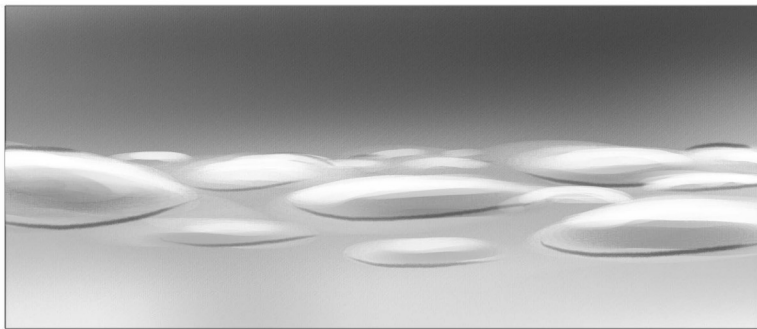
Clouds rise above the cliffs



Clouds rise above the mountains



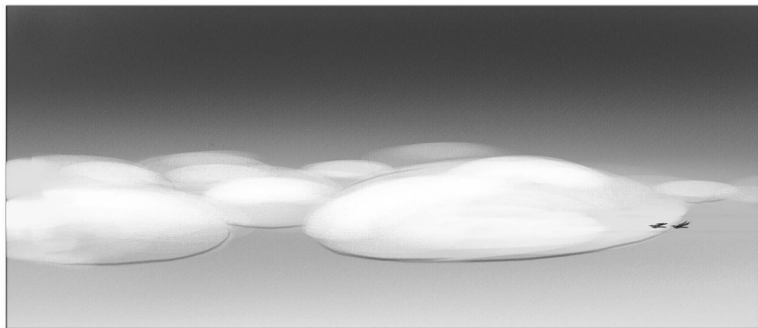
Clouds settle in the sky and the title appears



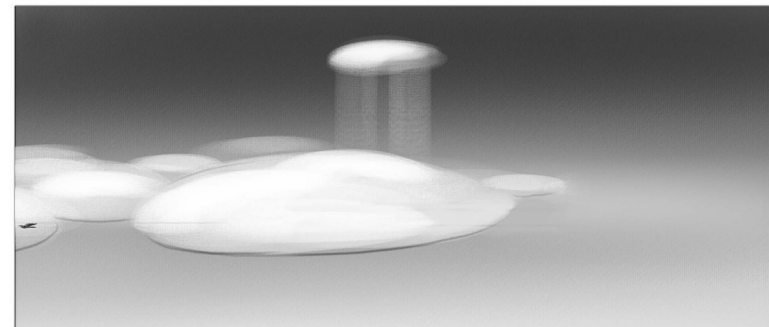
Clouds move on the pilgrimage



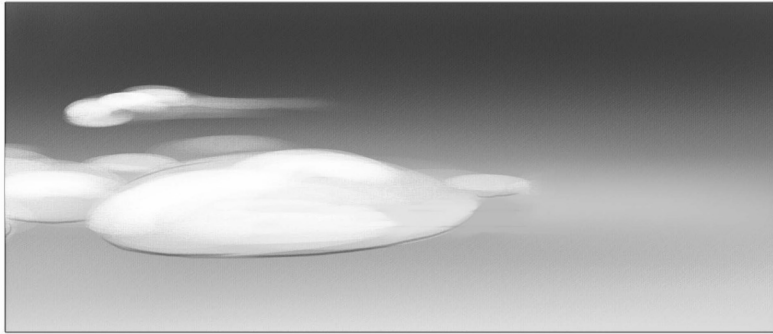
Birds enter



The birds get past the clouds



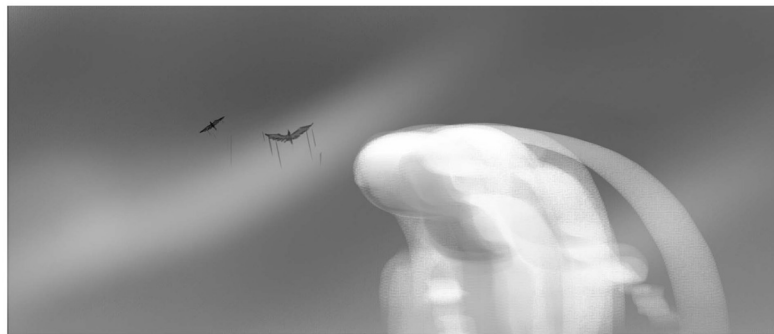
One of the clouds rises



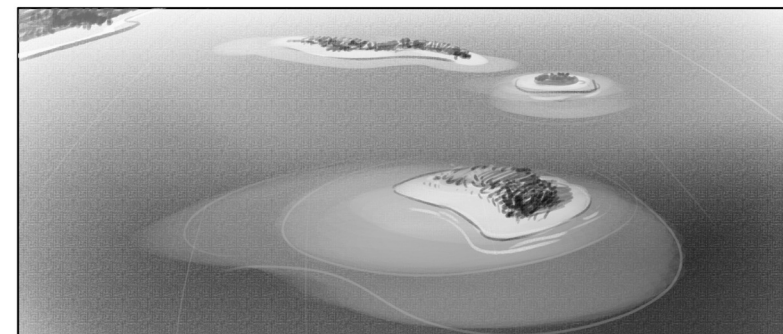
The cloud begins to chase.



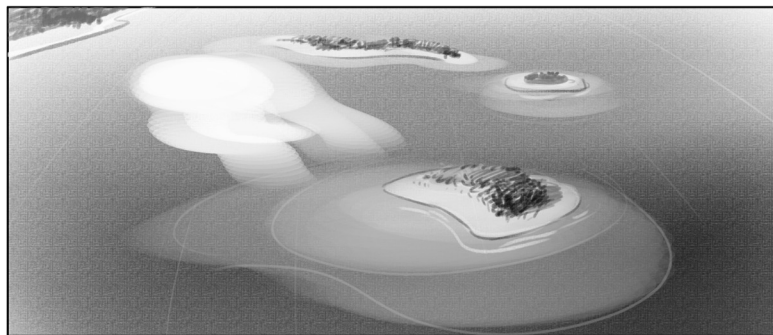
The chase begins



The birds dive down while the cloud follows



The birds vanish over the islands



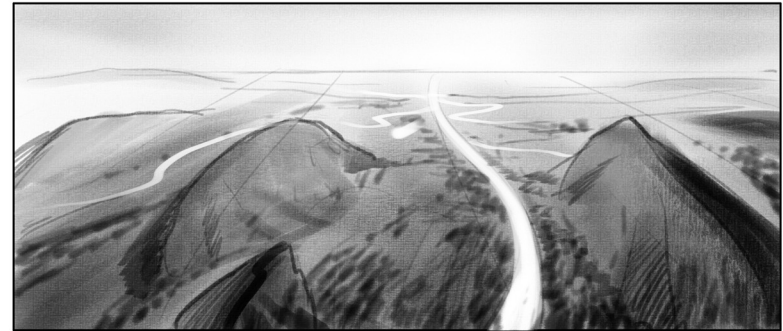
The cloud flies over the islands



The river valley among the mountains



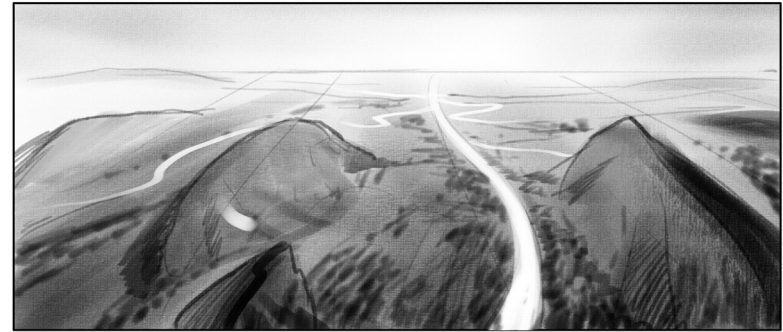
The cloud enters the valley



Rides over the hill



The cloud stops at the hill



The cloud moves to the other hill



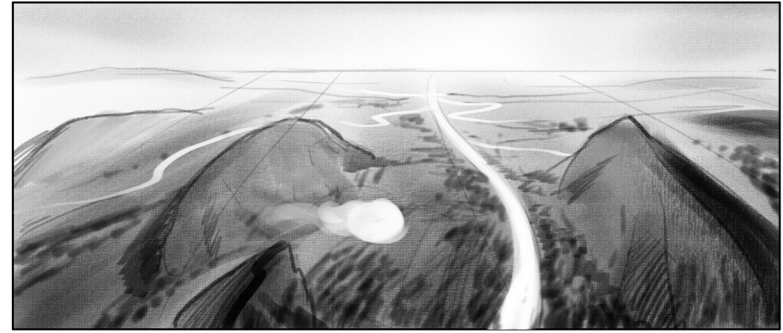
The cloud disappears



The cloud suddenly rises



The cloud rises in joy



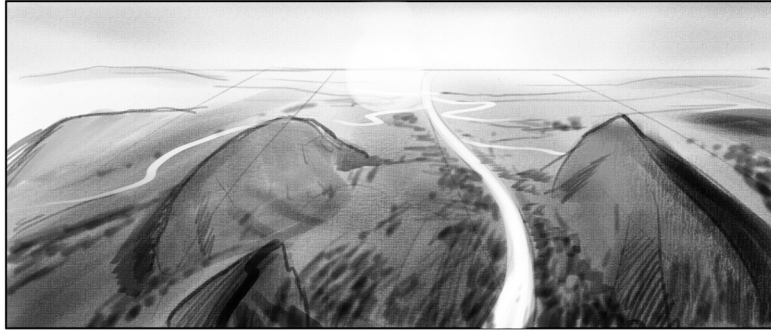
Rolls over



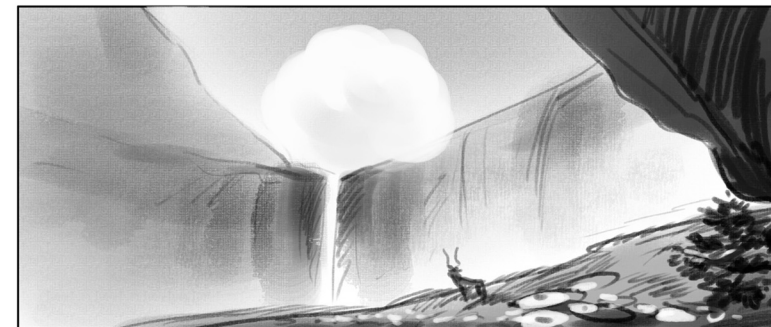
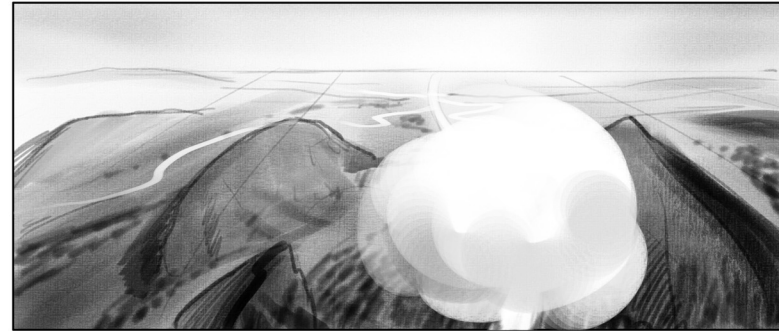
Rises over to the sky



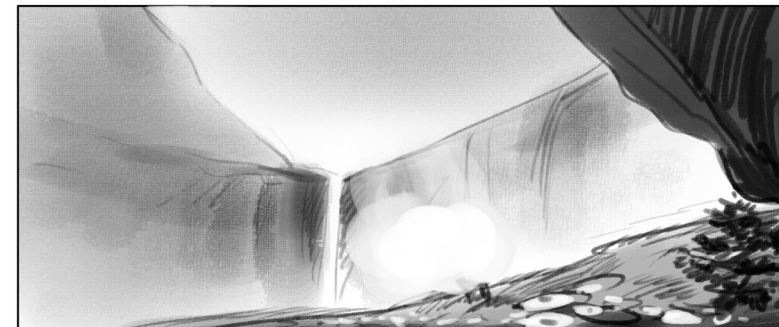
Disappears from the screen



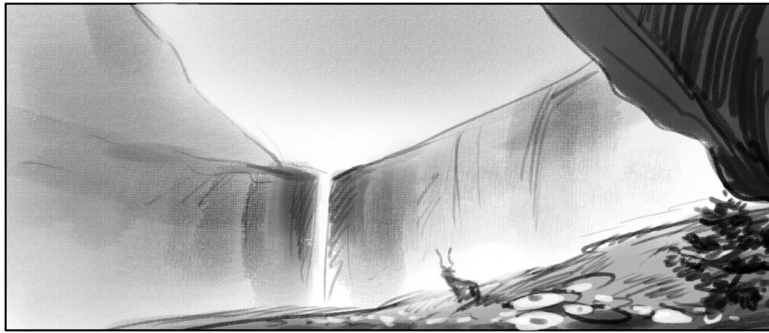
The cloud then appears moving towards the camera



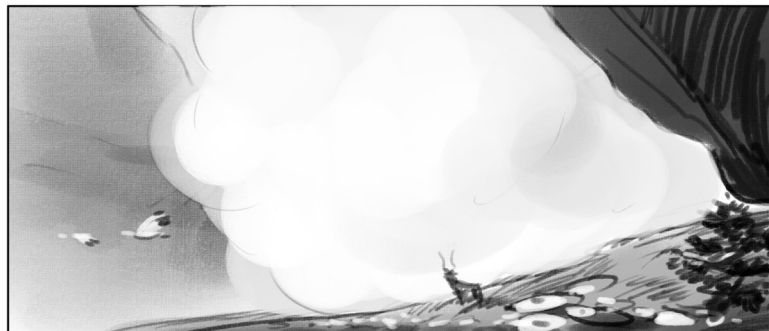
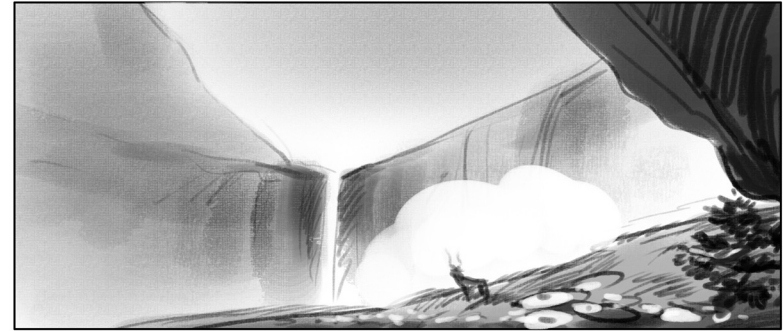
The cloud enters over the waterfalls



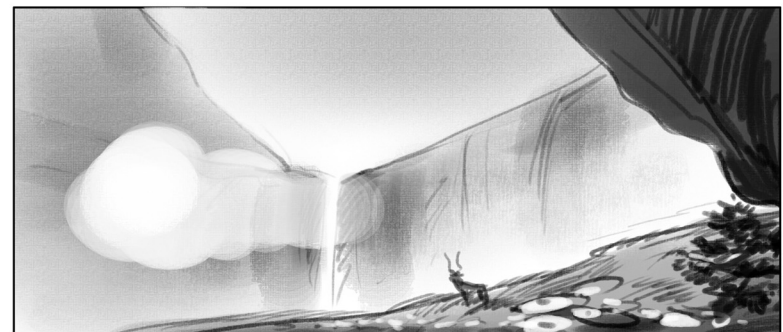
The cloud dives down



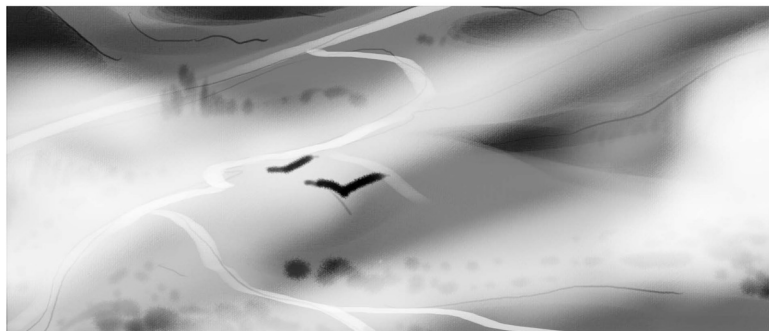
The cloud appears rises slowly



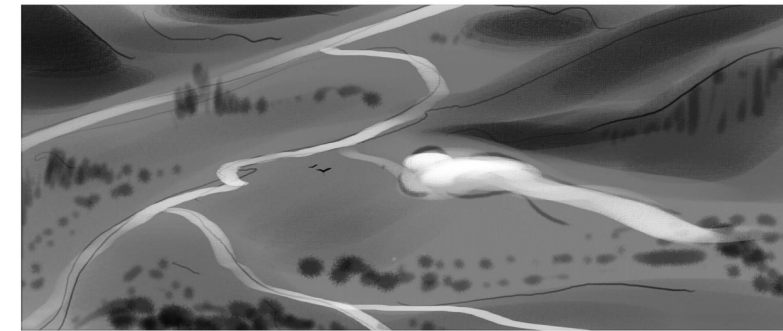
The cloud rises grown in size while the deer watches and the birds reappear



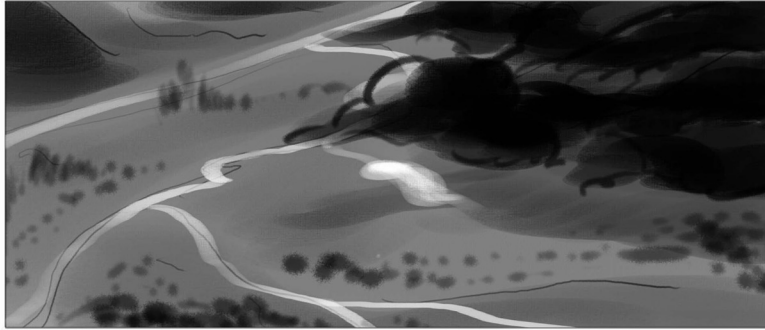
The cloud moves after the bird



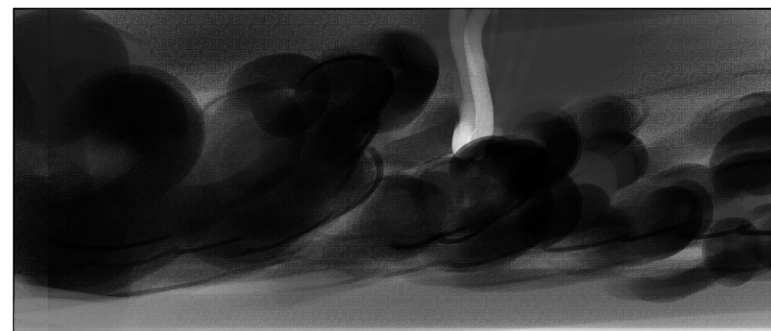
The birds gets far away into the mist



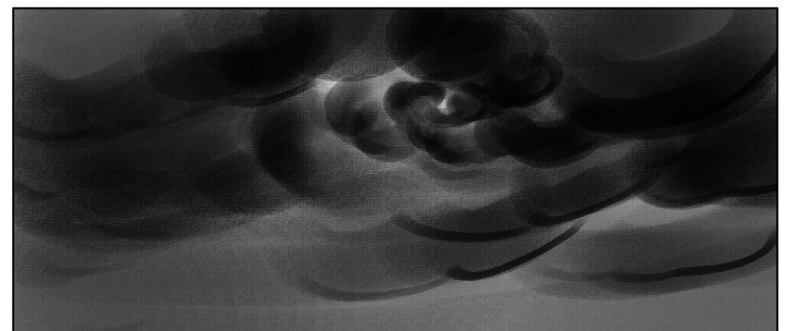
The cloud searches for the bird and dives down



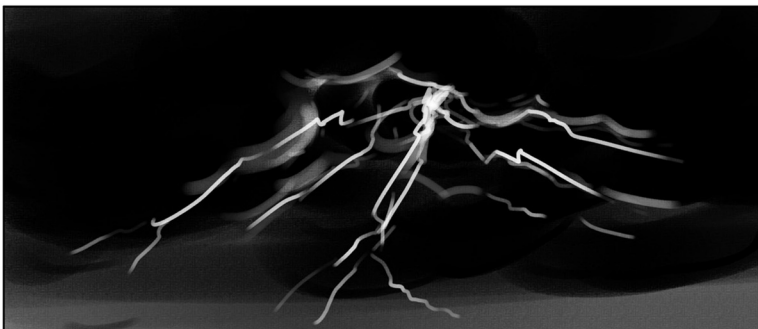
The dark clouds appear while the cloud dives down



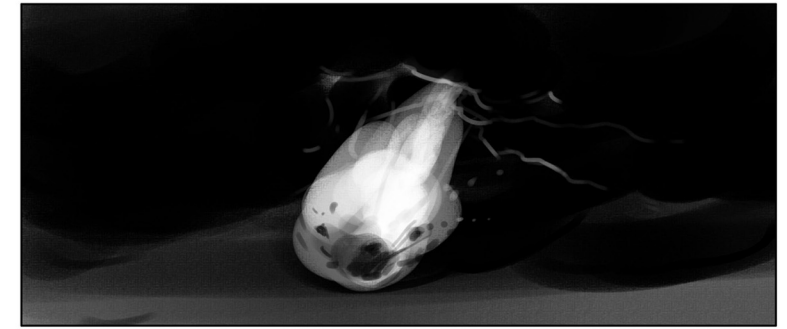
The cloud is caught among the dark clouds



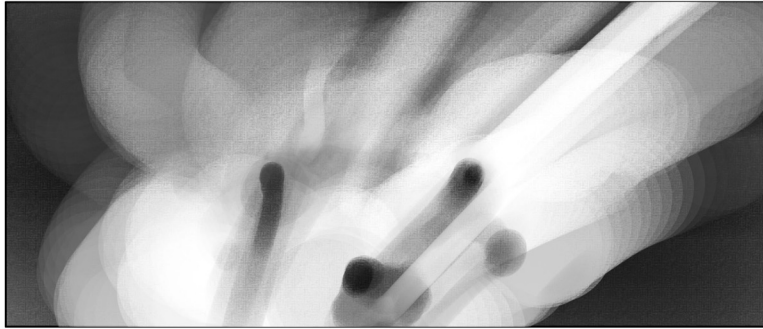
The dark clouds twist as a tornado



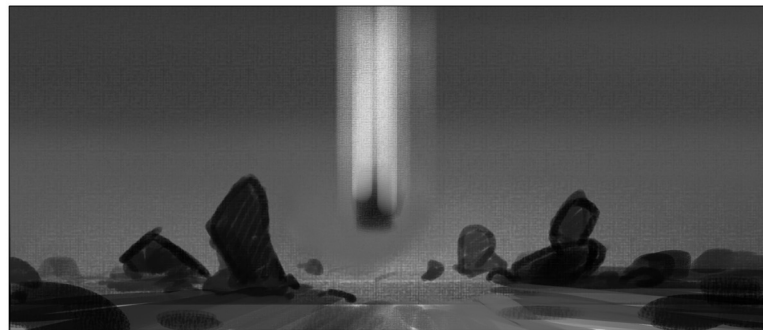
Lightning and thunder occurs



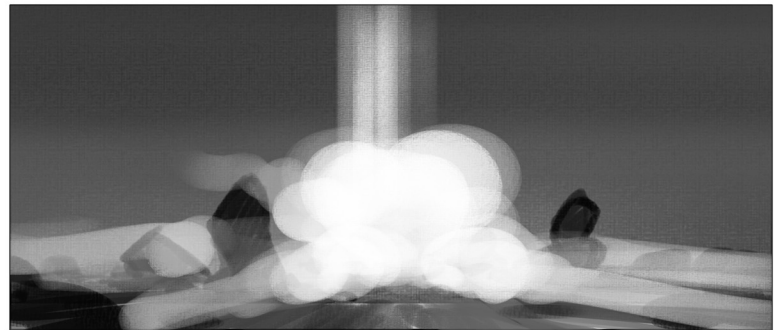
The white cloud is thrown out



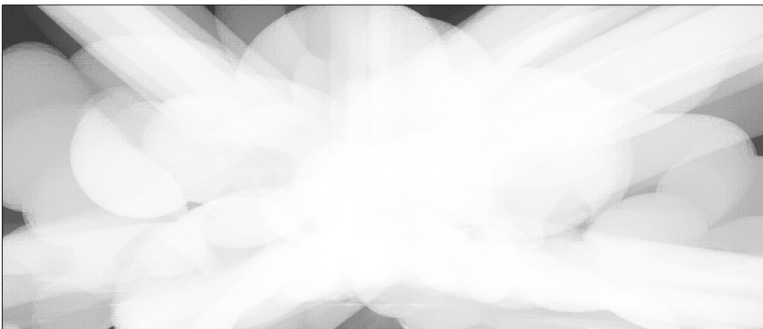
The cloud falls down



The cloud strikes the ground



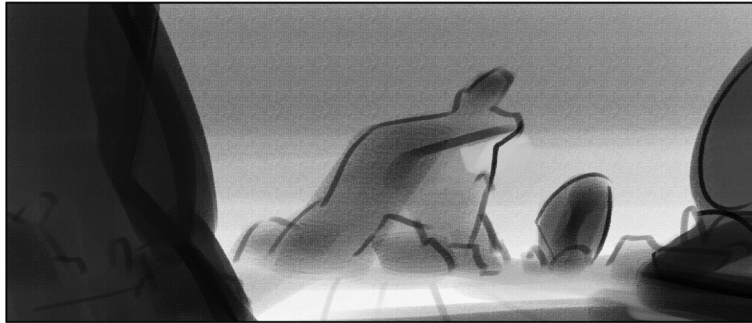
Explosion occurs



Smoke and dust blinds the screen



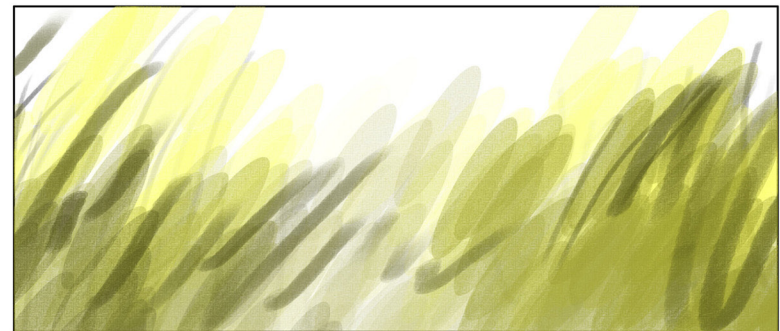
The cloud appears to have turned into a rock



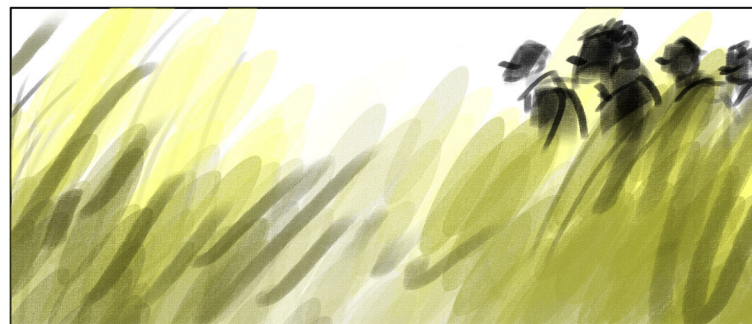
The barren land



The barren land turns green

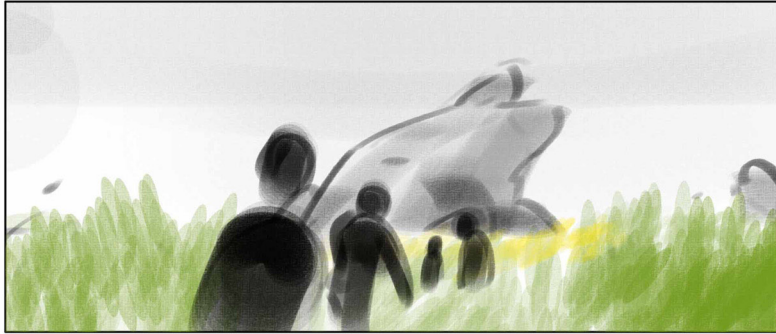


Tall grass grows

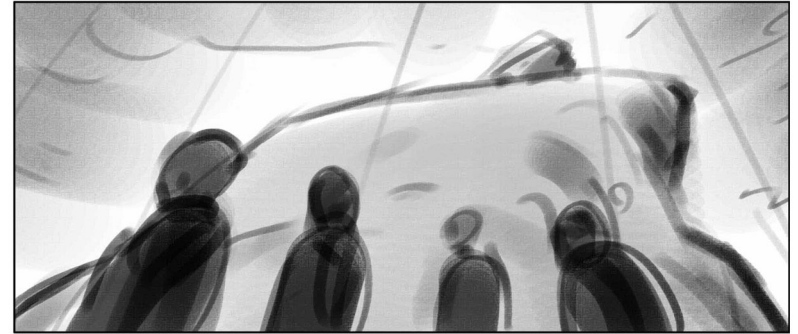


The nomads arrive

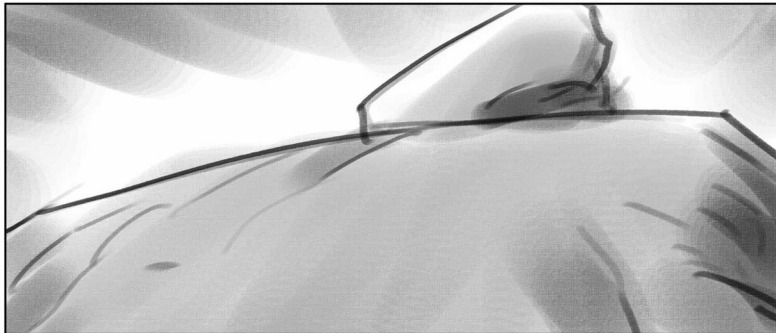




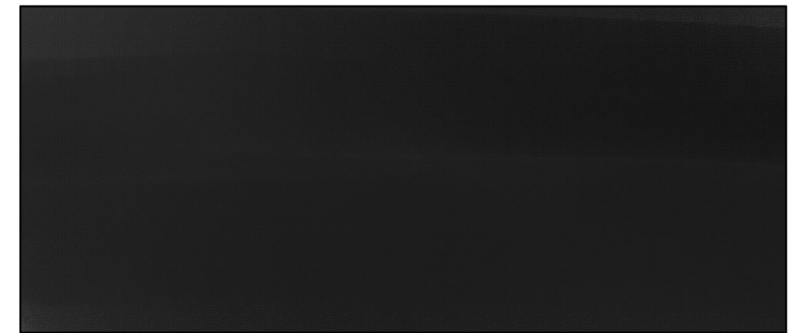
The nomads move towards the rock



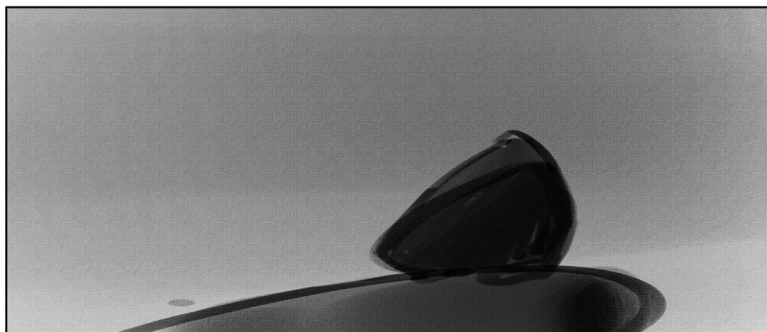
The nomads reach the rock and look above



Zoom in to the top of the rock

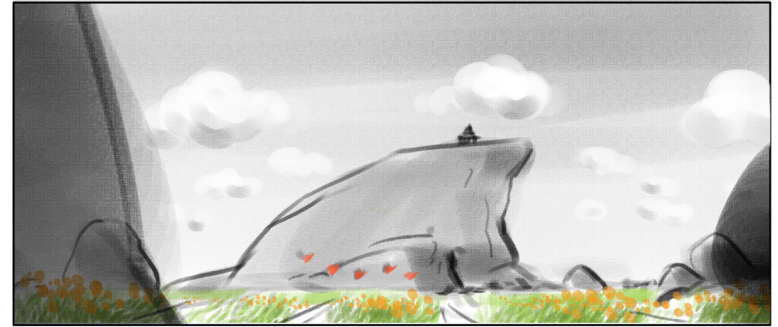


Fade out

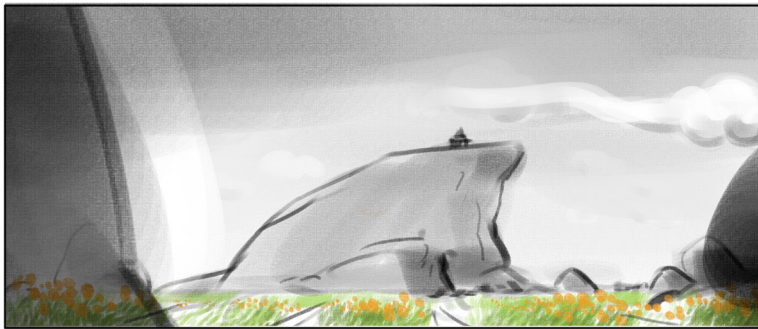




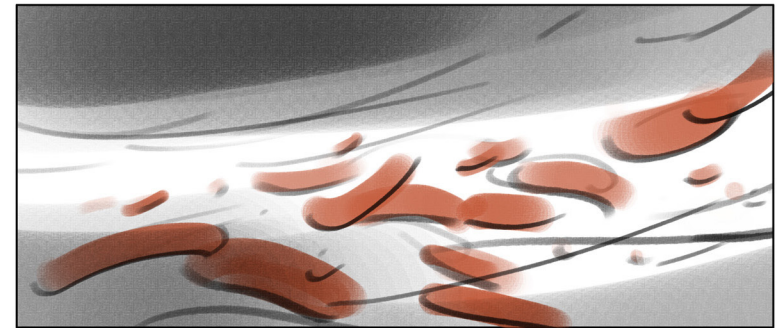
A shrine appears over the rock



The land turns fertile and flowers bloom

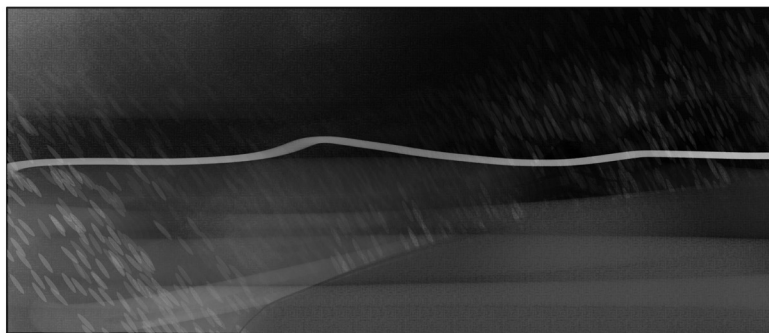


Wind blows

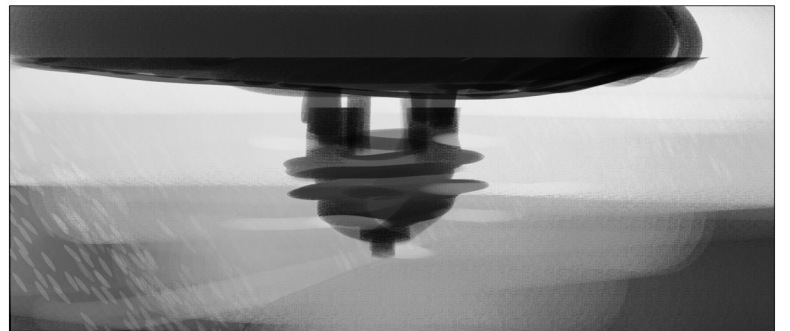
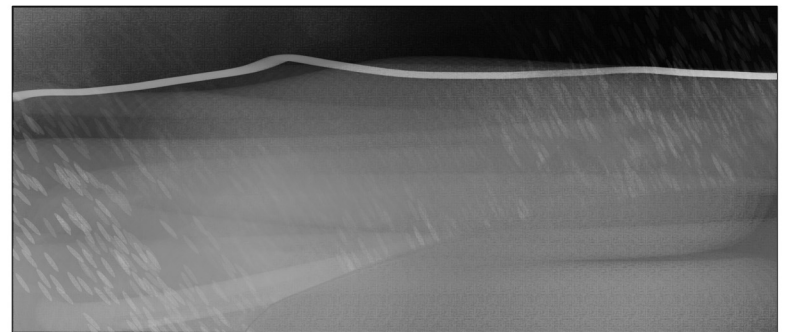


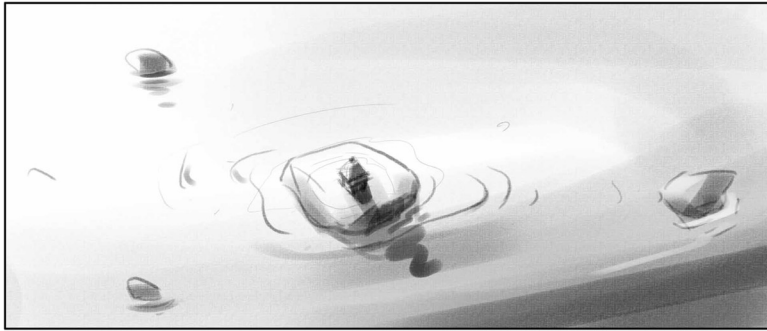


Storms arrive once again



Flooding

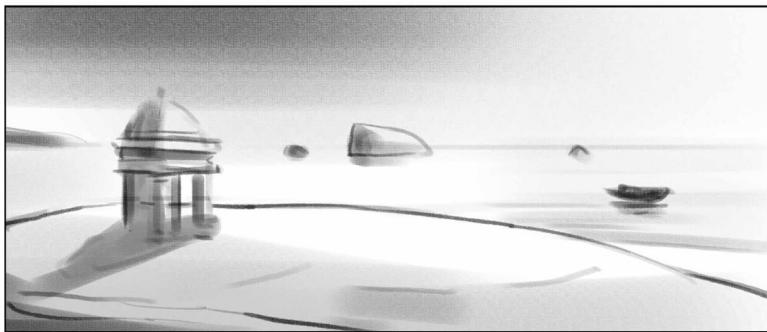




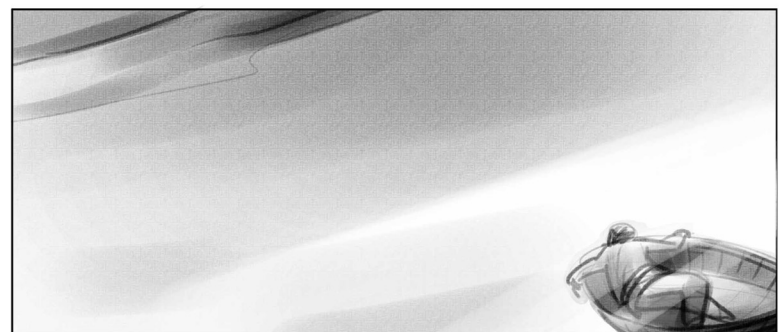
The land is flooded after the rains. The rock is submerged upto its peak



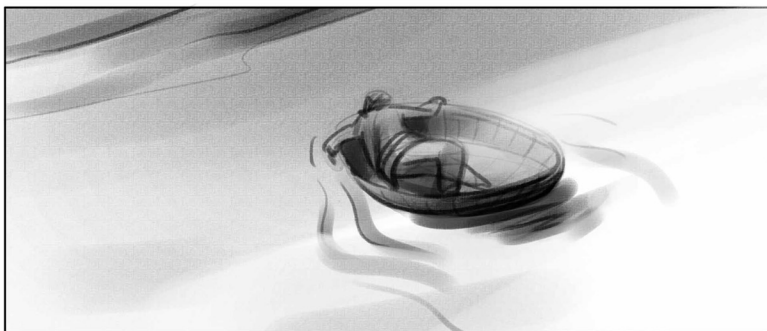
A boat appears from far



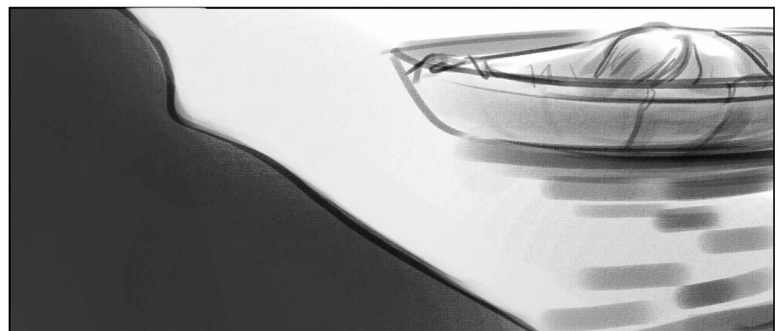
A boy is lying unconscious in the boat

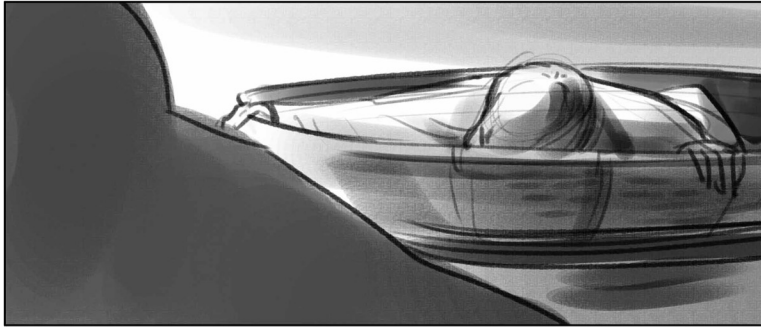


The boat is driven by the wind



It comes close to the rock





The boat hits the rock



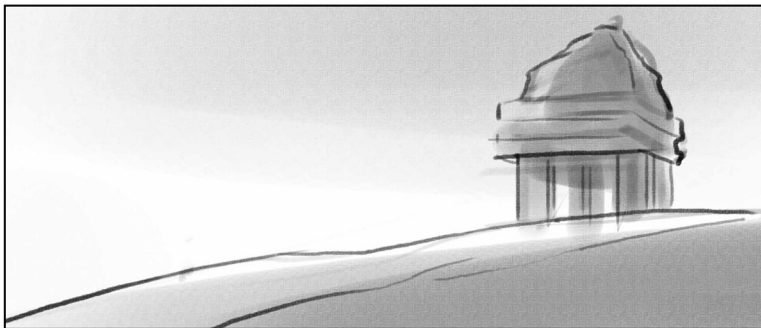
The boy comes to consciousness



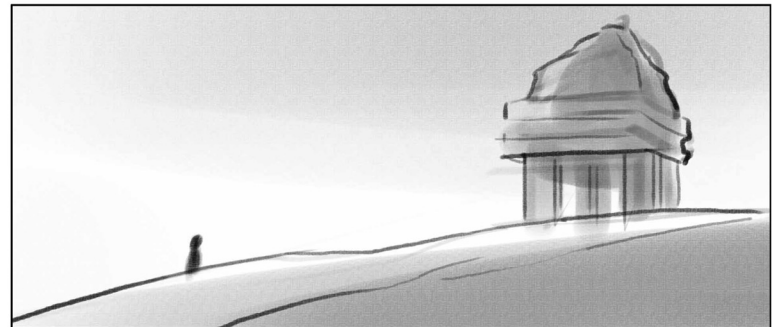
He looks up

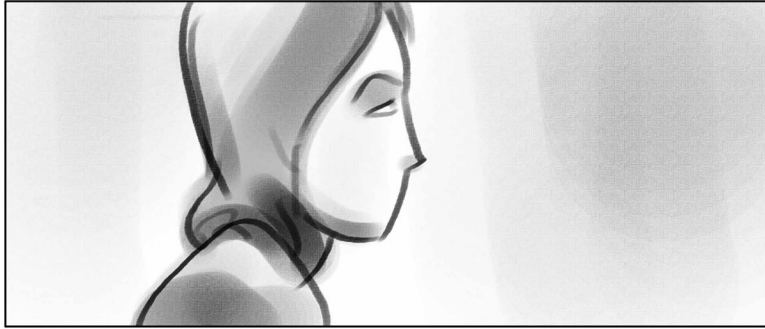


The rock and the shrine



The boy appears walking over to the rock





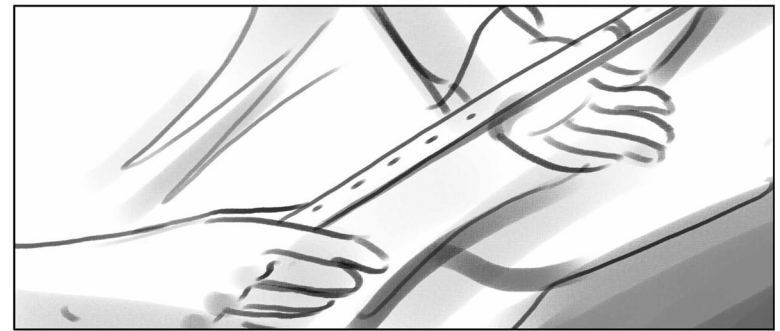
The boy sits and looks around



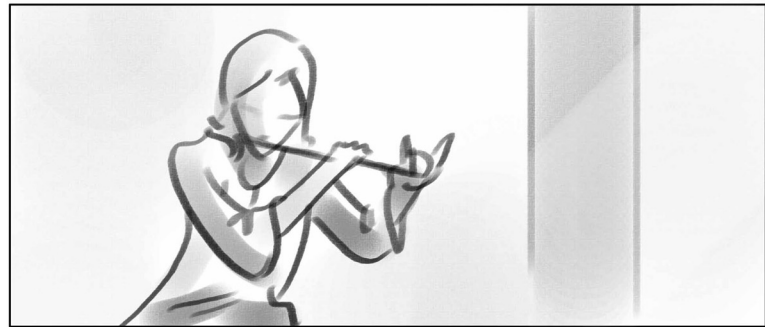
He picks out a flute



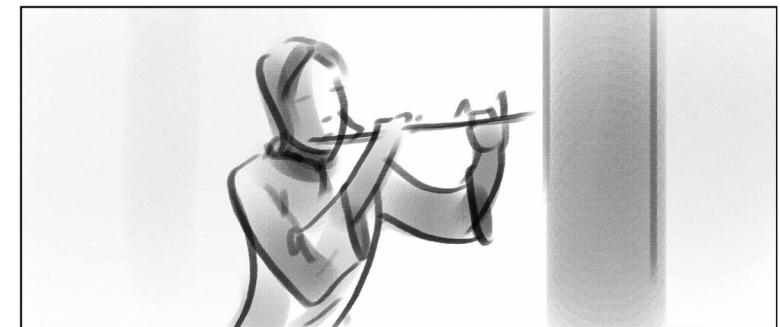
The boy searches for something



He picks out a flute

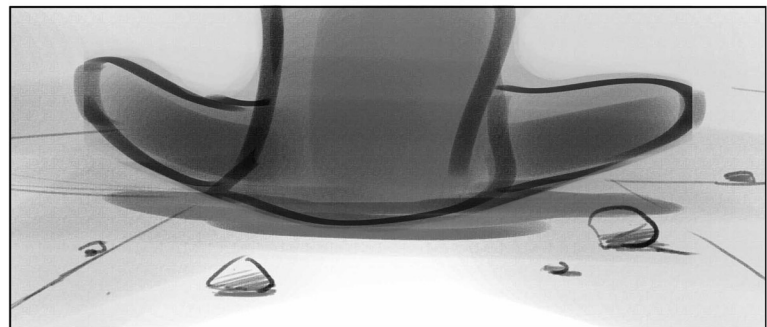
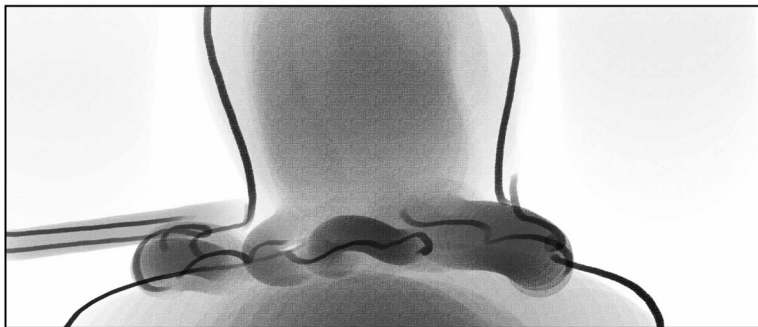


He starts playing the flute

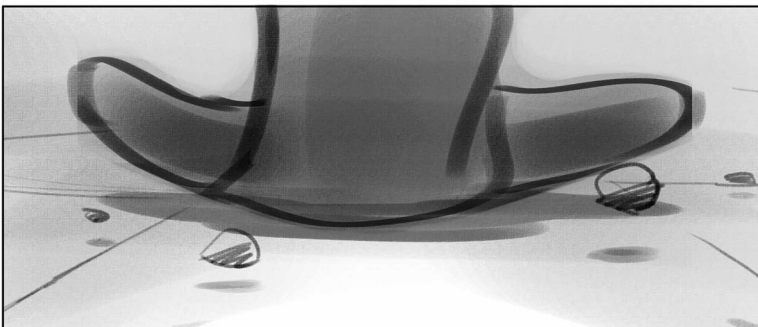




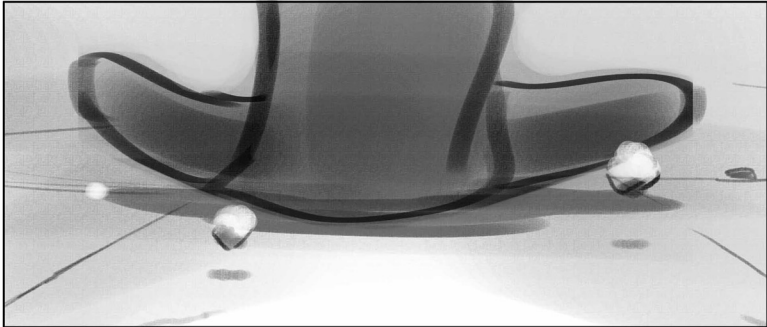
The boy continues to play his tune



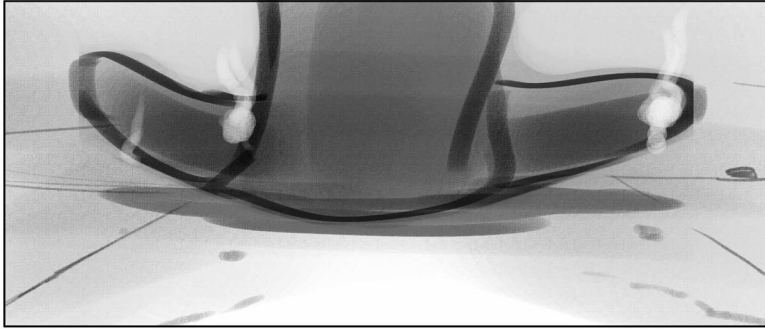
Small stones seen around



The stones rise



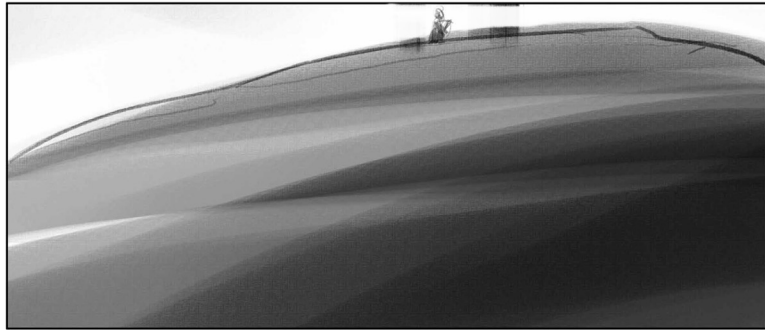
They turn into smoke



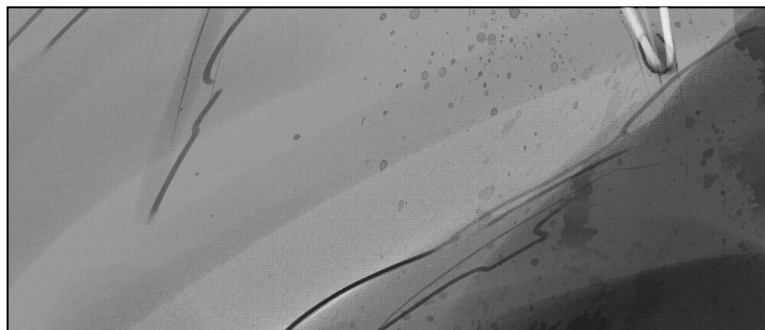
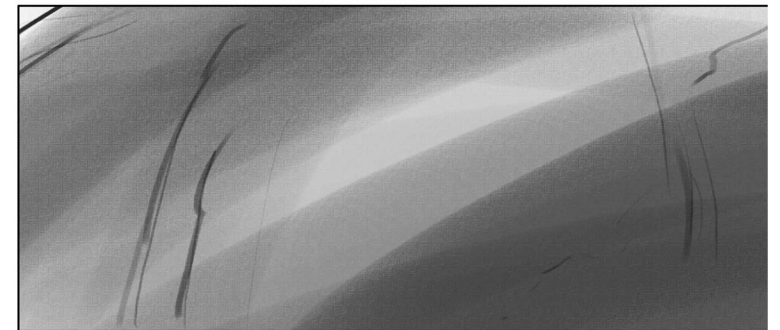
The stones vanish in smoke



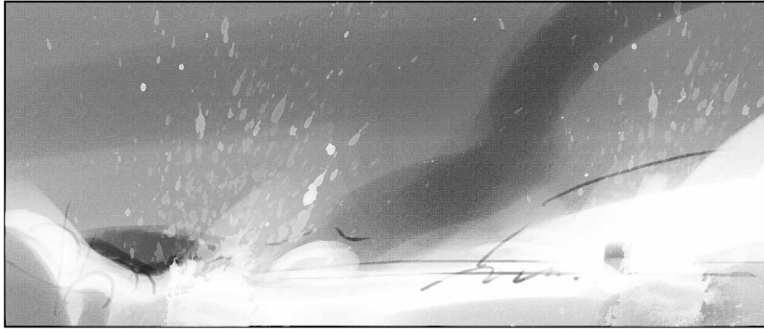
The boy continues playing



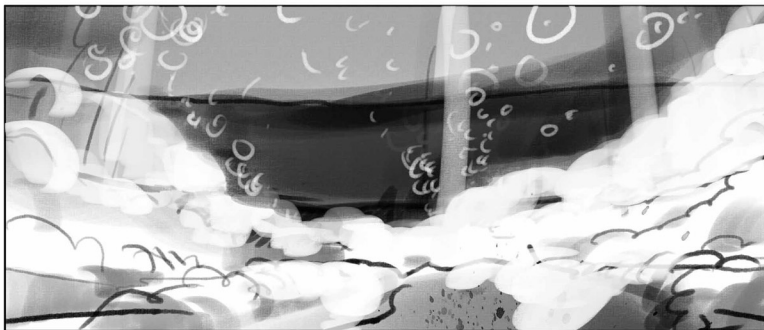
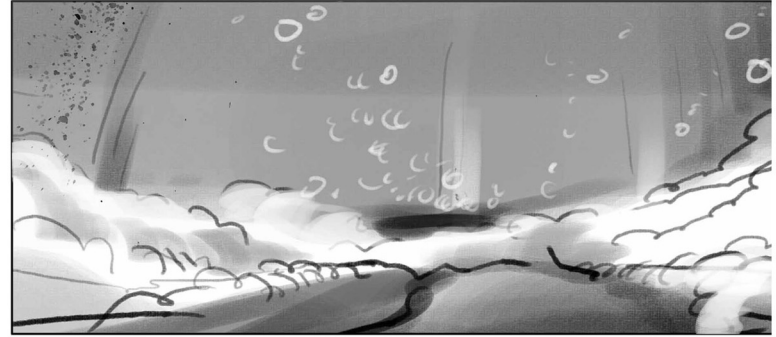
The rock rises



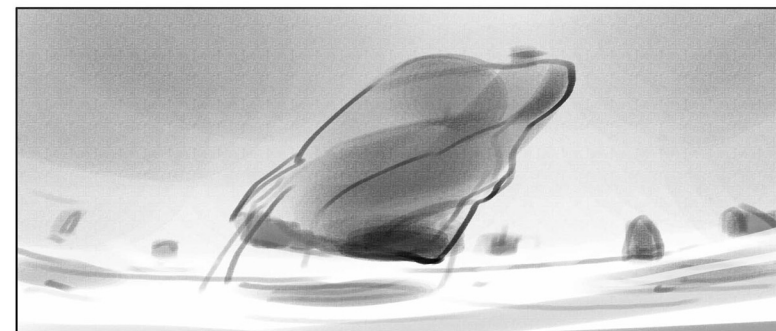
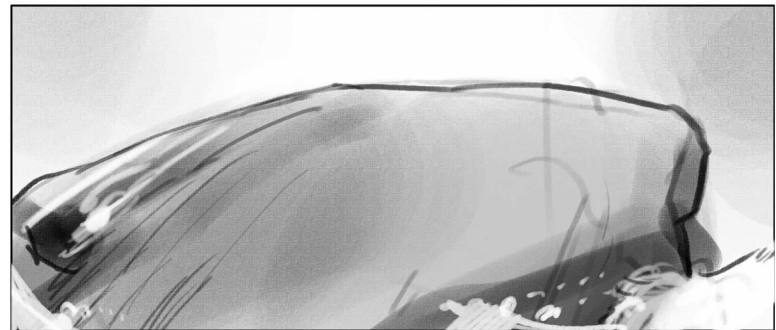
Stones tumble down



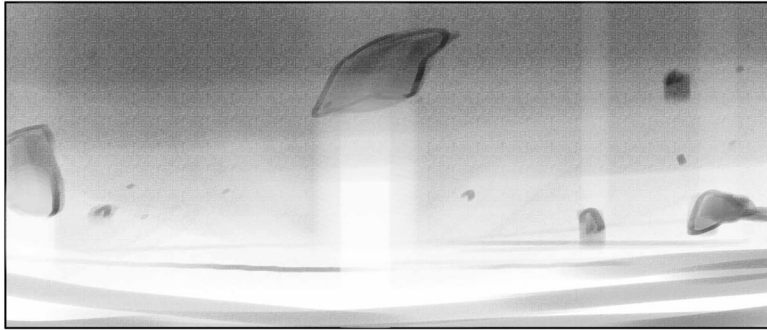
The stones strike the bottom



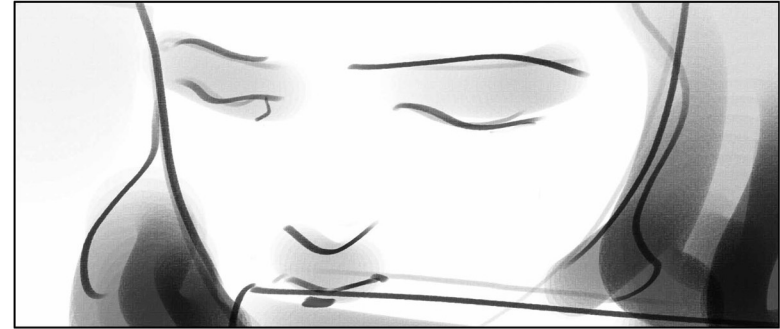
The rock rises



All the rocks around rise



The rocks continue to rise



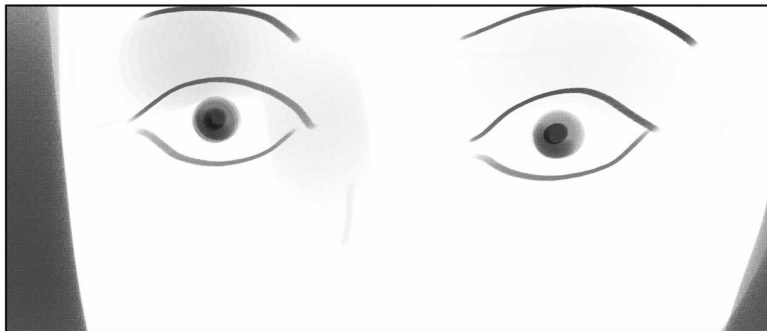
The boy continues playing



Tears roll down his eyes



He stops playing and looks



His eyes widen in astonishment



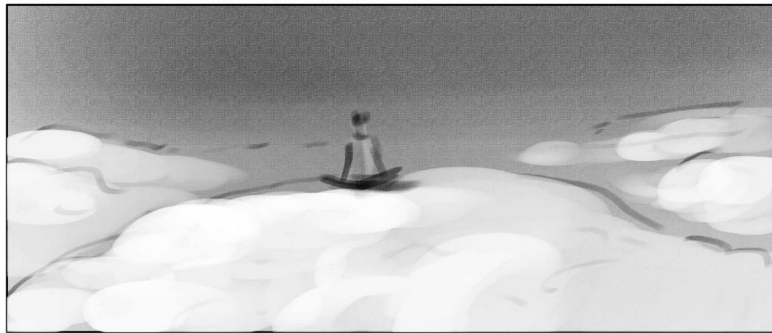
The boy is in wonder



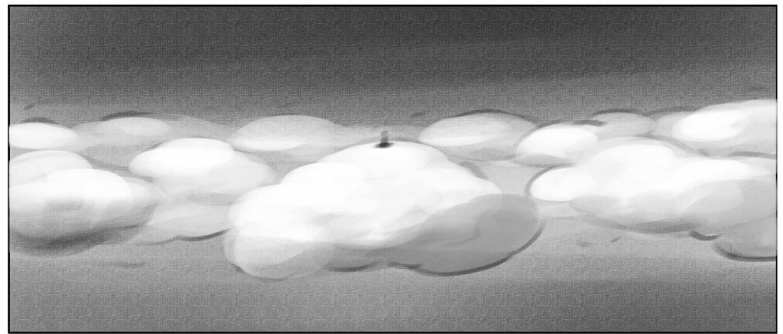
Camera zooms out



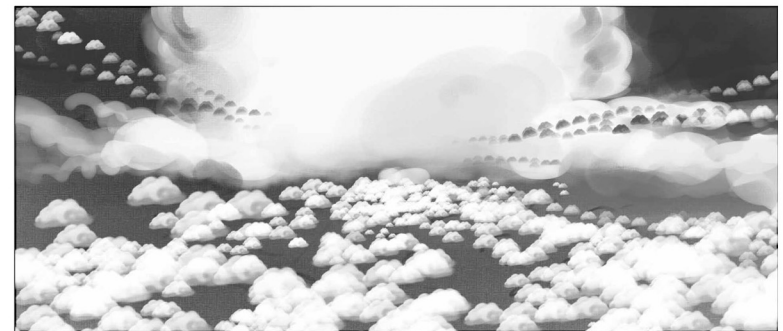
The boy is on the cloud



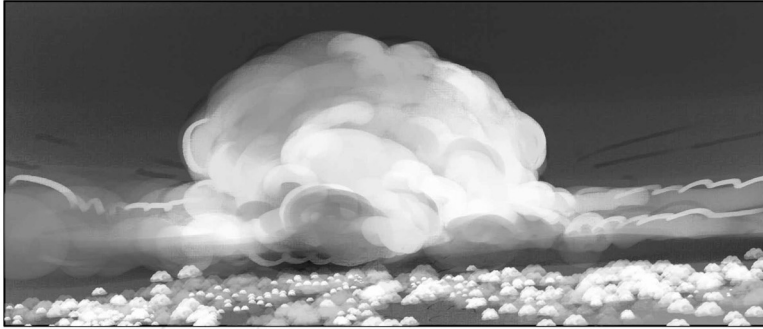
Camera zooms out



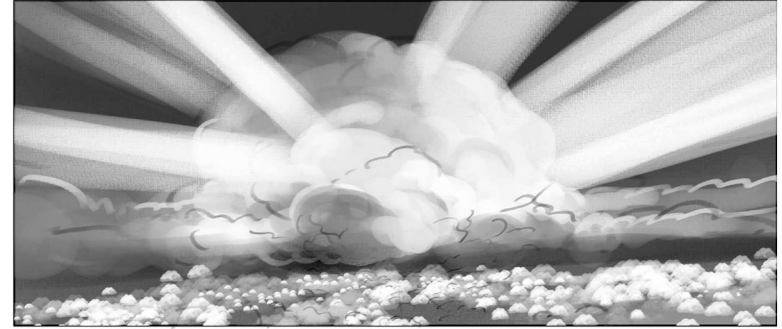
The cloud is among the herd and moving towards a large cloud



Clouds moving to the large cloud



The cloud and the boy disappear among the clouds



A bright light appears from the large cloud

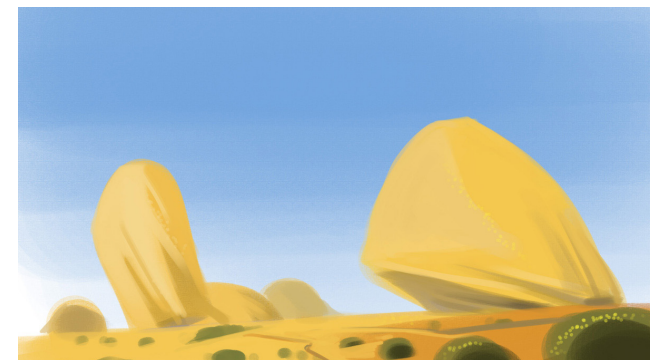
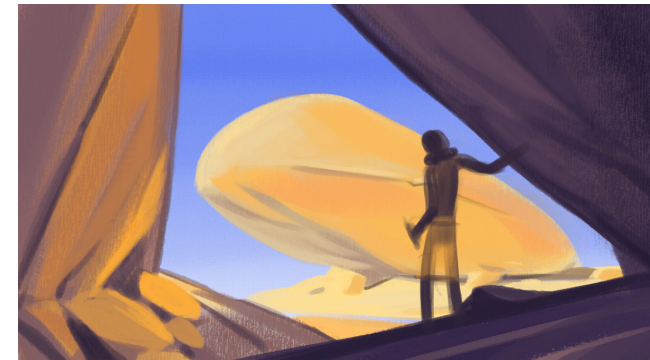
THE END

## ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

The common feature which led through the environments is to exhibit a wider scale and expanse.

The entry over the islands, the mountains with the river flowing around them, the sight of the waterfalls, the chase between the cliffs and the entry into a barren land studded with boulders reveal a wide - angle view point.

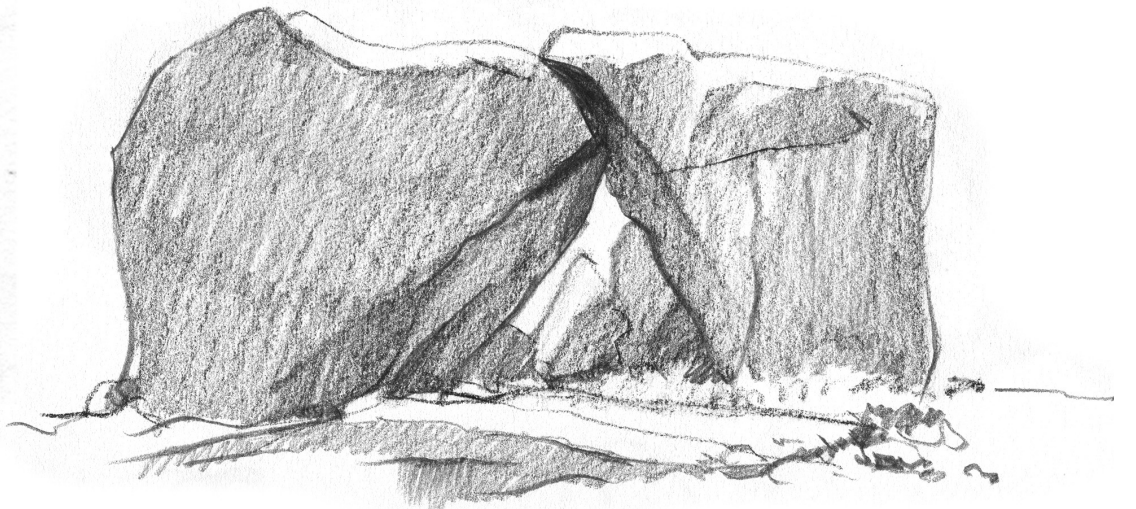
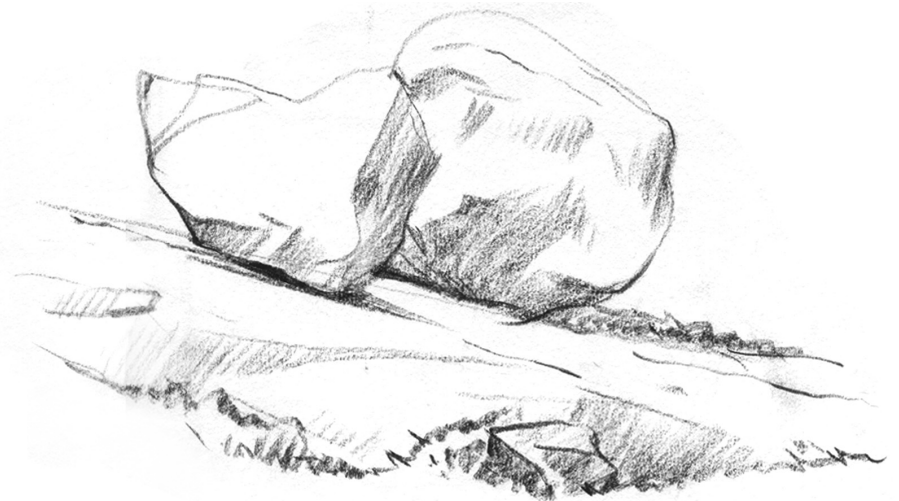
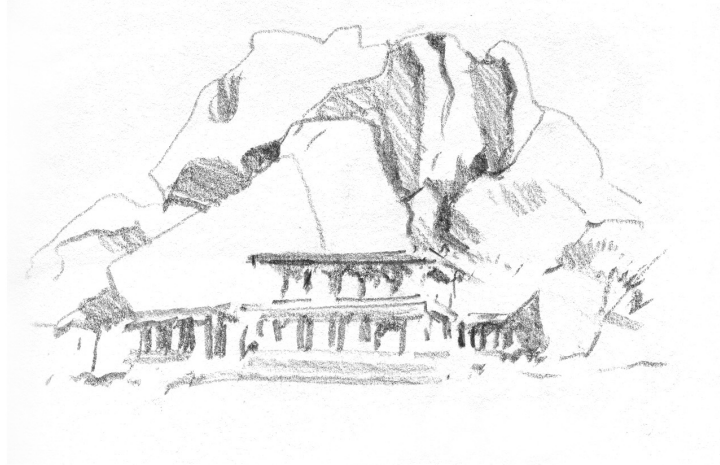
The landscape studded with boulders is a direct inspiration from that of a place called Hampi, the historical capital of the Vijayanagara Empire of South India. My visit to Hampi as part of an educational tour while as a student of fine arts, had a prominent visual impact. Even though the largest river of the Deccan plateau flows through his land, it is quite dry and different from a typical tropical climate. The landscape is studded with boulders. One can also find massive boulders standing at tip-off its balance. This gives a feeling of almost being on a different planet. The peculiar forms of the boulders reveal different forms within itself as if in a cloud. Though the clouds are constantly changing, we can recognize various forms in them. This resemblance of the clouds to the rocks had the potential to effectively communicate one of the crucial turns in the storyline - the transformation of the cloud into a rock.



Exploration of a rocky landscape

## HAMPI BOULDERS

Sketches from photographic references.

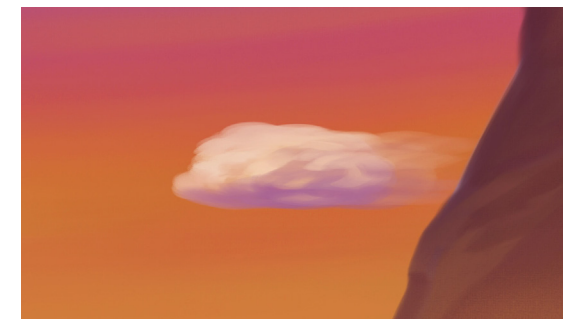


## CHARACTER DESIGN

### The Cloud

The story demands that the character of the cloud be brought within its realistic visual nature. It looks like any other cloud but its movement lends character to it. The amorphous nature of a cloud is maintained by avoiding distinct shape and form.

The plot begins with a cloud like a tuft of mist resembling a Cirrus cloud rising high to the sky. As it reaches the herd it transforms into a denser mass and joins the herd which resembles a group of altocumulus clouds led by larger cumulus clouds. As the cloud traverse away from the herd it evolves to a denser and definite form resembling a cumulus cloud. The nature of a cumulus cloud is then retained to the end of the story.

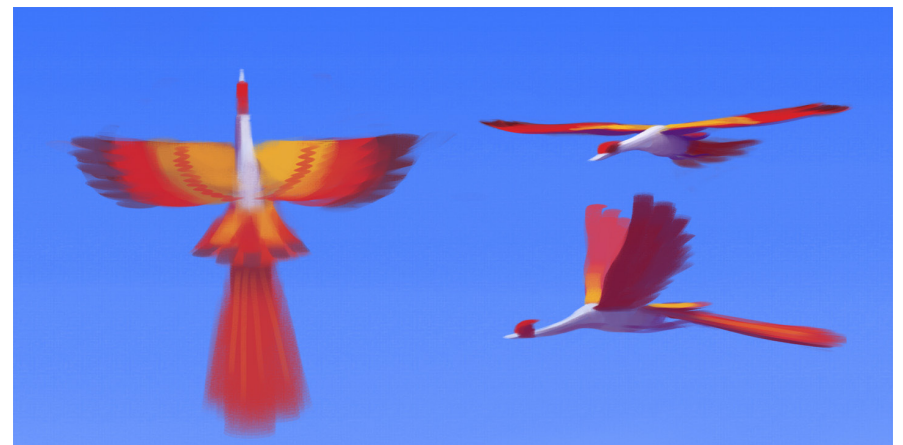


## The Birds

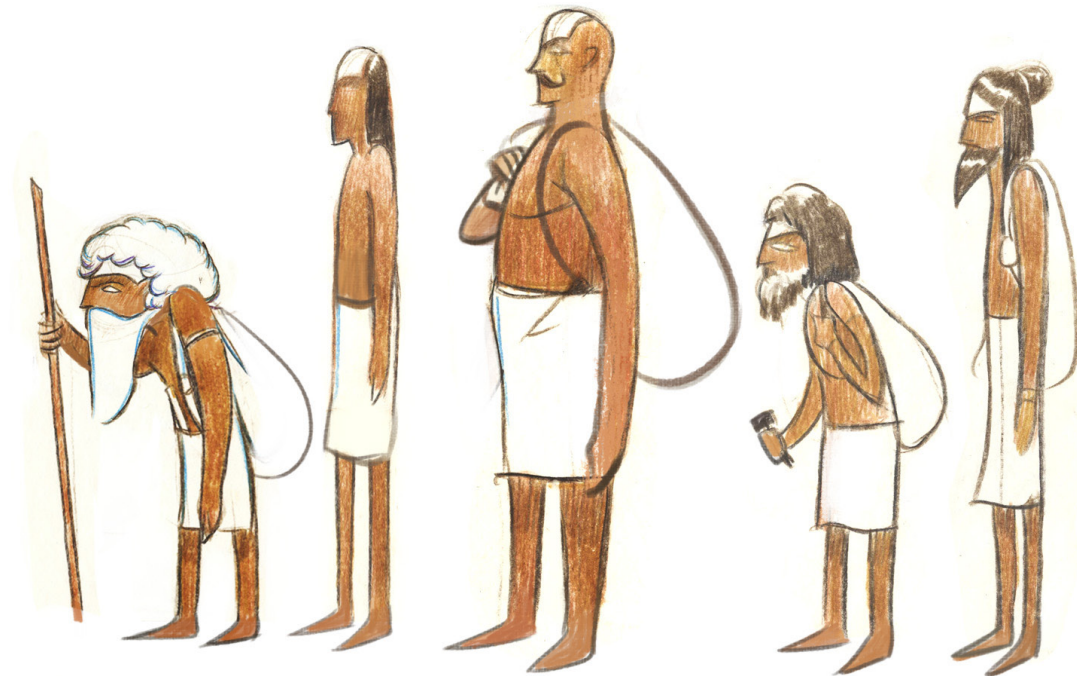
The birds play the considerable role of distracting the cloud and tempting it to follow them away from the pilgrimage. The intention was to make a fantasy bird with the features of a migratory species and the long tail feathers. With reference to flamingo, the sarus crane and the peacock a new bird was designed.



Exploratory sketches



Bird - final design



## THE NOMADS

### THE NOMADS

The nomads are a wandering tribe. They all bear the sacred ash mark on their forehead, wearing a cloth tied around their waist typical of the south Indian "Mundu". They are led by a short and bearded leader with a staff in his hand.

## The Flute player

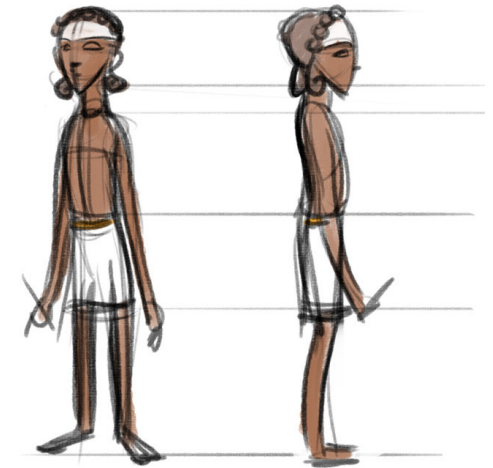
The flute player is a boy in his early teens. He belongs to the tribe of the nomads with the same costume and bears the sacred mark on the forehead. His introduction into the storyline reflects a mysterious nature. He is introduced after the floods. I wanted in him the characteristics of a lonely survivor of the disaster who is remorseful of his survival and yearns to go back to wherever his beloved people are. On the other hand his merging into the light along with cloud gives a sense of a lost soul who is destined to liberate the cloud to its original nature.

The sculptures of Buddha came in handy to imbibe the subtle and divine and mysteriousness into the nature of the boy. The curly locks of hair are derived from the Buddha sculptures.



Character explorations.

# FLUTE PLAYER - MODEL SHEET



THE FLUTIST  

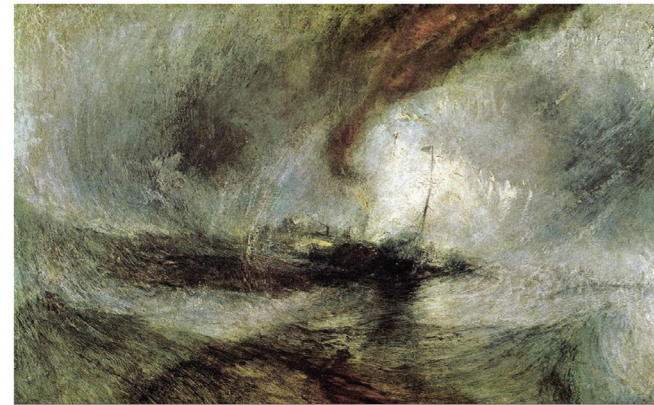

## THE TREATMENT

William Turner and John Constable were among the greatest artists of Romantic period. It was a movement in reaction to the uprise of Industrial Revolution, looking back at nature with strong and sublime emotions.

William Turner's paintings exhibit dynamic and atmospheric nature while John Constable's oil studies of clouds and carefully detailed landscapes has been my long time inspiration and a substantial one in the project.

The paintings of Nicholas Roerich, a Russian artist had a great influence on me while as a student of fine arts. Having witnessed the collection of his paintings at my institute, which includes many Himalayan studies, they became a source of direct inspiration. The paintings of Roerich reveal a unique expression of form by using bold shapes of vibrant colours defined by subtle outlines and the texture of canvas. This renders the paintings a subtle spiritual quality still within the bounds of reality.

My deep interest in the medium of digital painting has led me to explore various possibilities especially focusing on rendering the look and feel of a traditional painting using the digital medium. I have tried to imbibe the quality of the paintings of Roerich through the use of colours and subtle canvas texture in this medium. Exploring animation in this medium is a unique experience. I have tried to maintain a painterly approach in animating the cloud and the characters.

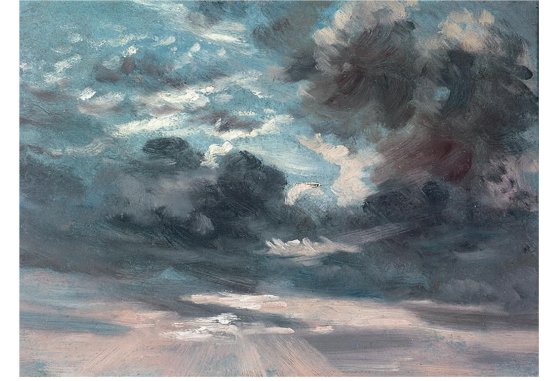


“Snow storm - Steam boat off a harbour's mouth” - J. M. W Turner



“Snow storm - Hannibal and his army crossing the alps” - J. M. W Turner

# JOHN CONSTABLE



Cloud Studies



"Harwich - The Low Lighthouse and Beacon hill"



"Hampstead heath"

# NICHOLAS ROERICH



“Himalayan Studies”



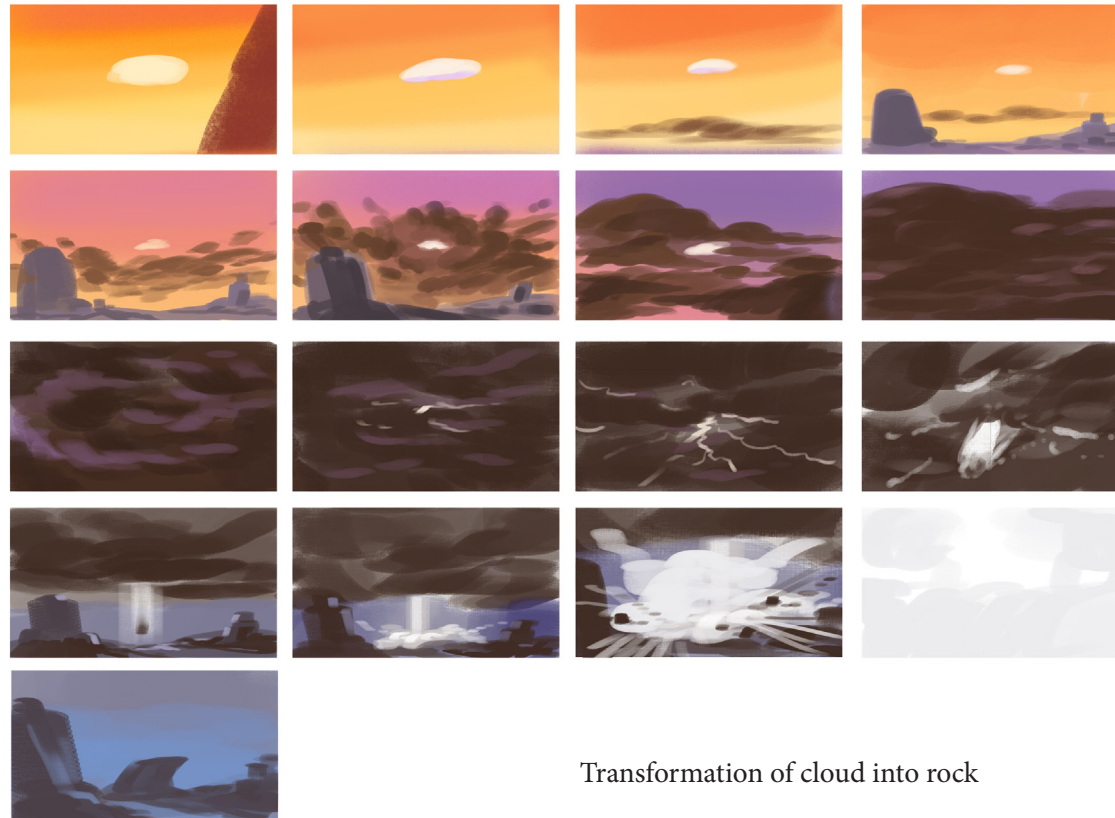
“Armageddon”



“Message to Shambhala”

## THE COLOUR SCRIPT

The colour scripts help to maintain consistency in the use of colours under the changing circumstances of the storyline. It also adds character to the animation style.



Transformation of cloud into rock

## MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN

Music plays a very crucial role in the storyline. The transformation of the rock to its original form of cloud is by the power of music. Thus it became one of the earliest objectives to lead the story and animation forward.

This project has brought a great opportunity to work on the music with composer and sound designer Mr. Rajesh Naroth and flutist Uttam Bhat under the technical support of Prof. Sudesh Balan. The music should compliment the storyline and its visual nature. I approached the composer with the basic idea of giving it a nature of Indian classical music.

In the words of the composer

“ the visuals of the story is set outdoors. The bulk of the action happens at a very high elevation. Hence the music needs to sound more open and big. The large nature of the music comes from the use of Strings (violin family). The melodies are performed in Indian flute with accents in Santur.”

A motif is a basic tunes repeated often in the storyline in variations to substantiate the emotions and slowly build up to climax.

“A melody acts a glue to the abstractness of the story. Simple melodies are powerful elements that can anchor emotions easily. It also helps to subconsciously connect different segments of a film.”

The style

“ Pilgrimage is a universal theme and applies to all religions not just Hinduism or Buddhism. However, the context here is Indian. The music style here is orchestral but with the use the raga Jog for the chase scene and the main melody is based on Kapi raga (again with a touch of Jog).

Orchestral music is timeless and combined with Indian ragas, they are very hypnotic. The raga and flute rendering will anchor the music in the Indian musical style.”

Keeping the audience in mind

“The combination of symphony and melody will appeal to a global audience and evoke very similar emotions across the board. Traditional instruments emotes differently for different demographics. This is because of the cultural effect. Thus we chose the instruments carefully on purpose.”

The words of the composer suggest that the music renders the story to its maximum effectiveness. The flute rendition was recorded and mixed with rest of the sounds before the animation process began. The music track thus became a guideline for planning the animation.

The music track produced complimented the story in the deepest sense and became a constant inspiration in the animation process.

## THE PROCESS

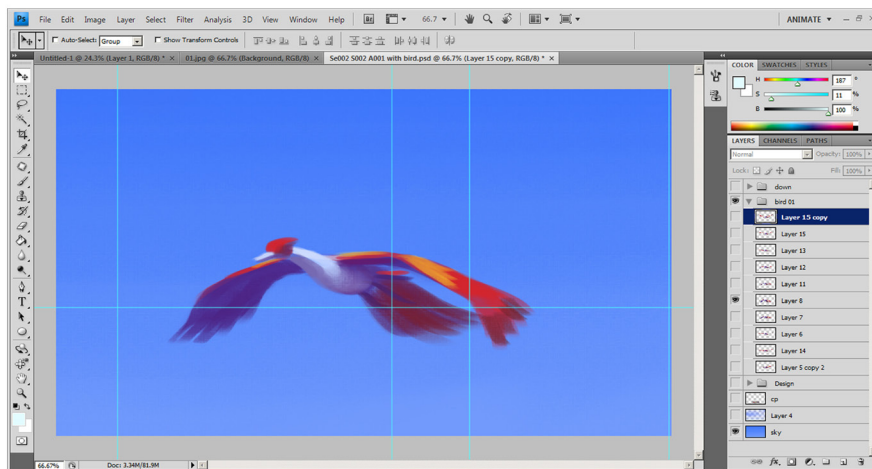
The story was established by a thought process combined with thumbnail storyboards. These thumbnails became the guidelines to set the story as an effective visual narrative. The thumbnails were then developed into detailed storyboards. These were set in a timeline and an animatic was prepared. The animatic provided an idea of time length of the film and became the basis for composing music.

The music was composed before the animation process began. This gave a comparatively stronger sense to the time length of the film and set the animation process on track.

Animating in Photoshop was the best choice to achieve the hand painted look. The layout is opened in as a image in the background layer. The subject is painted in different layers along the path of action and with appropriate spacing.



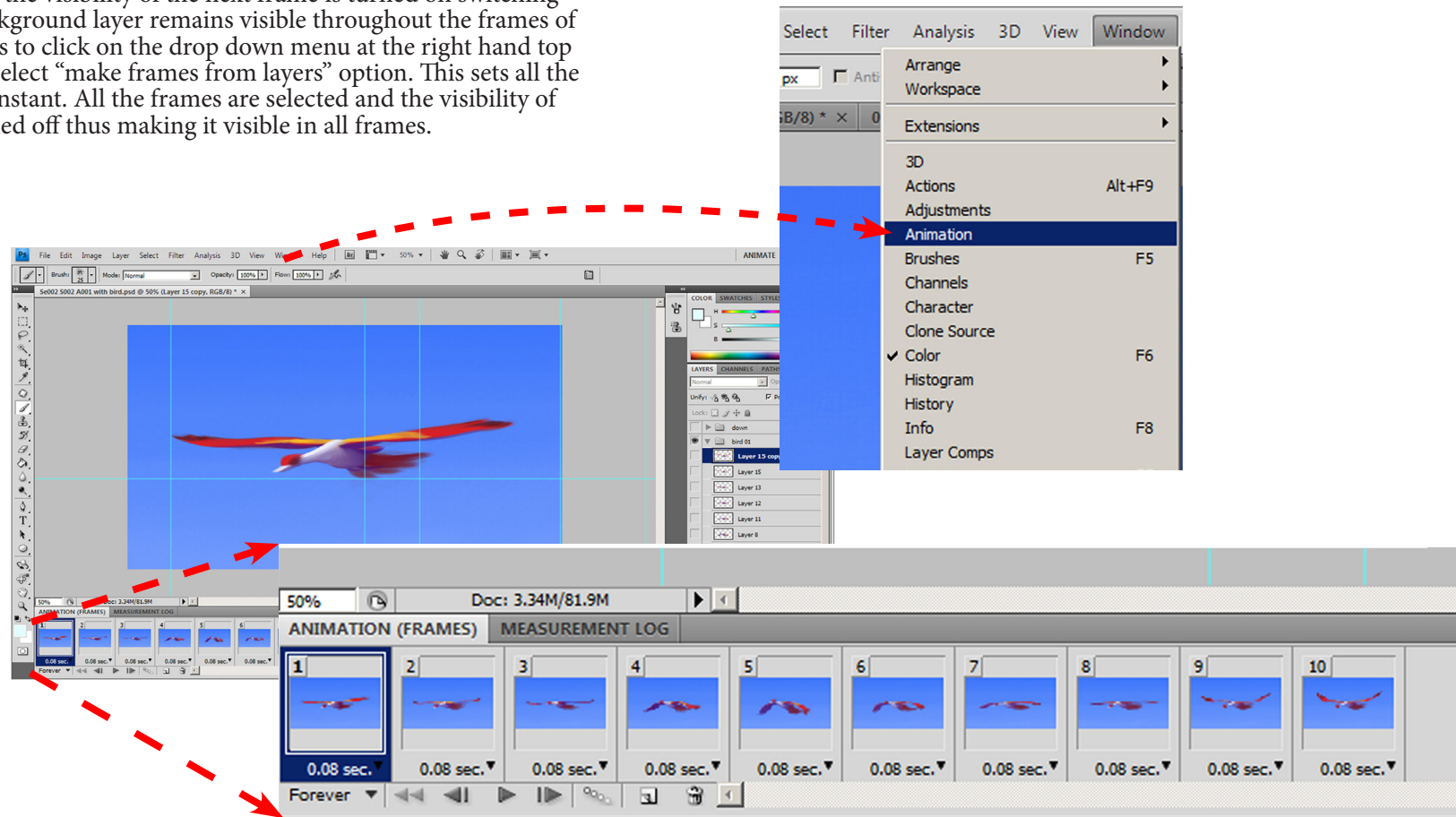
Animation frames



Photoshop interface

The animation panel is opened. It is set into 'animation in frames' mode. The visible layer is seen as the first frame. The visibility of the background layer and the first frame of the animation is turned on.

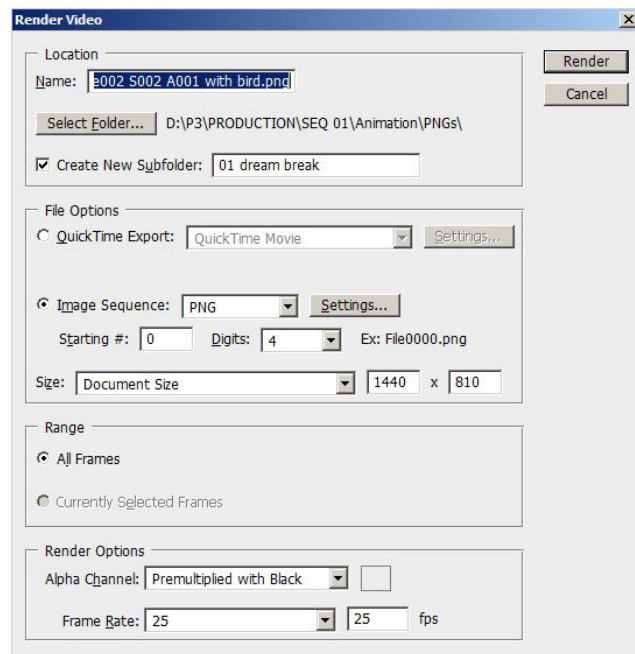
This frame is duplicated and the visibility of the next frame is turned on switching off the previous one. The background layer remains visible throughout the frames of animation. Another option is to click on the drop down menu at the right hand top of the animation panel and select "make frames from layers" option. This sets all the layer in single frames in an instant. All the frames are selected and the visibility of the Background layer is turned off thus making it visible in all frames.



Animation Panel

The time is set for the appearance of each layer. If all the frames are to appear for the same time interval then all the layers are selected and time is set. The play button is clicked to play the animation in the assigned timing. The animation is cross checked and the required changes are done.

The visibility of the the background layer is turned off in all the frames and then exported as image sequence in the appropriate format.



Render to video panel in Adobe Photoshop

The compositing is done in Adobe After effects. The background is imported as the layered file. This enables the spacing of the foreground and background elements at different depths to achieve the multiplane camera effect. The animated image sequence is imported as a different layer and placed appropriately. Various effects are added and color corrections are made. After the final compositing is done the file is rendered in appropriate format.

The rendered files are imported in the editing module such as Adobe Premiere or Final Cut Pro for editing with sound and music. After the final edit the file is rendered into the complete film in the appropriate format.

## CONCLUSION

“Meghayana” conveys through animation the story of a cloud that is distracted from its purpose and its journey back to its intended destination aided by natural and divine occurrences. The nature of the small cloud directly reveals normal human nature and its pilgrimage demonstrates the innate human tendency to move towards the larger cosmic goal. The pilgrimage of the cloud expresses the ultimate assurance of the help offered by the divine forces in reaching our intended destination.

“Meghayana” is my first ever animation film. Visual development has been my longtime interest and this project has not only given me the opportunity to design visuals for a purpose but also extended my abilities in producing animation as a whole from the developing the story and animating.

As a learning experience, the project has revealed my strengths and weaknesses not only in terms of producing the work but also as a evolving self. A team work in the production of music has come a long way in understanding the nature of getting connected with different minds and talents under a common cause to produce better results. Overall it has been an adventure and the adventure continues!

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From its flock on a pilgrimage , a cloud is distracted away and dives down to the earth cursed to be transformed into a rock. When hope dawns with the arrival of the sacred men events spiral out and the cloud revives its original form, finding its way back to the pilgrimage. It reaches the destination with a new companion who is bestowed with the power of music.

Life is transient in nature and resemble the nature of clouds. This film is visual interpretation of the poem “Meghayana” reflecting on the powers of nature, mystery and the nature of human life.



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