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School of Design
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PROJECT REPORT

M.Des // Communication Design // Project 3

Understanding the reasons why
victims of sexual harassment don't
come forward sooner.

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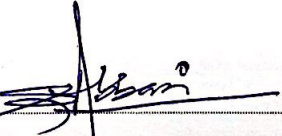
Project Guide: Prof. Mandar Rane

Approval Sheet

This communication design project titled
**'#Metoo: Understanding the reasons why victims
of sexual Harassment don't come Forward Sooner.'**
Created by 'Unmesh Nayak' is approved as a partial
fulfillment of requirements for Project 3 in Master of
Design, Communication Design, IDC IIT Bombay.

Project Guide: 

Internal Examiner:  27.6.2019

External Examiner: 

Chairperson: 

Declaration

I hereby declare that the written submission provided to IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay, is a record of my original work. The project represents my thought process towards an idea to better communicate my project goal. I have made sure to adequately cite for ideas and thoughts that don't belong to me and are used to better explain parts of the project.

I declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity by not misprinting or falsifying any idea, data, facts, and 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 that have not been properly cited, or from whom the proper permission has not been sought.

Unmesh Nayak
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Acknowledgment

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I would like to acknowledge and thank all the people who contributed their valuable time for me and shared their stories, experiences and knowledge that helped build the foundation of the project.

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ABSTRACT

After being amplified by the media the #Metoo movement generated fear between sexes, men started to be scared around women. Companies started devising policies that created a rift between men and women rather than bridging it. This was just the opposite of what the movement was set out to do. The question asked by me over this problem was “why don't they speak up right away?” Lead me to understand that the insensitive point of view I was harnessing was in itself was one of the reasons they don't come out and speak openly.

The question formed the basis of the project and helped me gain an overview of the patriarchal world we live in. Where we expect solutions to all the problems to be clear as black and white. We often have a strong point of views over situations which we see or hear from a distance but the ones who face them know and understand the complete heat of it.

The project was able to surface multiple reasons and it's layers that make decision making hard in situations like these. The victim is confronted by multiple psychological and physical challenges that include Fright/ Freeze, Shame, Denial, Fear of Consequence, Low Self Esteem, Isolation, Hopelessness, eventually breaking the willpower of the victim to speak up. By the time they realize the fact that action should have been taken it becomes too late.

The focus of the project is to communicate through a fictional story about sexual violence and explain reasons why victims of such incidents don't speak up. How perpetrators get away with the crime and how important a role society plays in situations like these. The challenge of the project is to visually justify the message through the medium of an illustrated graphic novel.

THE INSENSITIVE QUESTION

Introduction to the project.

The waves of the #metoo movement soon reached the world and became a ray of hope for the ones who stayed quiet after being victims of sexual violence. The movement brought reforms in the judicial system and helped put big names behind bars under the act of sexual misconduct which was not possible before because of their status and position in the society.

The intensity by which the movement excelled was tremendous and led to consequences. The hashtag that gave hope to many was now being misused to bash or to take out a personal vendetta against someone.

The media amplified movement drastically spreading fear between sexes, men started to be scared around women. Companies started devising policies that created a rift between

men and women rather than bridging it. This was just the opposite of what the movement was set out to do.

Eventually, bringing the question to my mind, Why don't they speak up right away? Why wait till now?. This insensitive question set me to explore reasons why victims of Sexual violence choose not to come forward. The journey helped me understand the depth of the problem.

If we take an overview, we can understand that we live in a male-dominated world that has patriarchal views towards such problems. Even if society evolves and adapts to the fast-changing trends of the technological world. The structure of the society has changed drastically

to suit women and their equal growth but is the mindset of people belonging to society changing with time to look at women as equals?

The answer everyone demanded was expected to be as clear as black and white, but we fail to understand that finding an answer to grave problems that deal with real people and their lives can never be solved this way. Especially with issues related to sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence, etc that are still not discussed and addressed openly in society. Leaving the victim in a situation where they choose to keep the incident to themselves afraid of being judged and losing reputation within the community or society.

The project attempts to map and understand cases of sexual violence, where the person refrains from coming out and speaking about

the attack. Understanding and documenting these cases surfaced multiple reasons and its layers that make decision making hard in these situations.

The victim is confronted by multiple psychological and physical challenges that include Fright/ Freeze, Shame, Denial/ Minimization, Fear of Consequence, Low Self Esteem, Isolation, Hopelessness, eventually breaking the willpower of the victim to speak up. By the time they realize the fact that action should have been taken it becomes too late.

The focus of the project is to sensitize the audience about sexual violence and the reasons why the victims hush themselves from speaking about it openly. How society plays a crucial role in aiding these victims with the support they need to overcome the problem and how we individually can try not to fall under the same patriarchal mindset and ask the insensitive question as I did.

RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative research method:

Research done by observing and studying available data and documenting incidents and interviews.

Primary study:

An initial study done using content available online on #metoo topics.

1. Web articles
2. Podcasts
3. News and Discussions
4. Video Documentaries
5. Television Series
6. Films

Secondary study:

The interviews conducted.

The project focuses on surfacing reasons why victims of sexual harassment do not speak up and how dealing with these situations can be challenging. Sensitizing about these grave problems is more important than formulating a hard and fast rule of action in such events, as these situations can be subjective in nature and can not be anticipated..

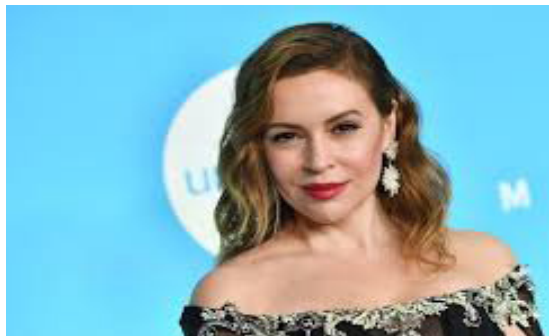
The project also tries to explain the need to develop a society that encourages everyone to talk about these topics freely and speak up their mind.

Primary Research:

Understanding the #Metoo Movement



Tarana Burke // Activist



Alyssa Milano // Actor, Activist

The #Metoo movement gave a voice to many women who suffered sexual violence and survived.

The phrase was popularized by American actress Alyssa Milano, on Twitter in 2017 when Milano encouraged the victims to tweet about it and give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.

The movement began to spread virally in October 2017 as a hashtag on social media demonstrating the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment, especially in the workplace. It followed sexual-abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein. A number of high-profile posts and responses from American celebrities soon followed turning it into a global social media movement against sexual violence

The real movement was established by Tarana Burke, an American social activist and community organizer, by using the phrase "Me Too" in 2006 on the Myspace social network platform in order to promote "empowerment through empathy" among women of color who have been sexually abused. Burke, who is creating a documentary titled as Me Too, has said that she was inspired to use the phrase after being unable to respond to a 13-year-old girl who confided to her that she had been sexually assaulted. Burke said she later wished she had simply told the girl, "Me too."

The movement absurdly molded company policies:

NBC- National Broadcasting Company
Prohibited hugging in the office environment.

Netflix
Restricted to look at a co-workers for more than 5 seconds

These rules were viewed as absurd and immature actions taken by companies.

Staying away from women is not a solution to such a problem, the problem lies in the way we approach these problems.

#Metoo Movement in India:

Me Too began gaining prominence in India with the increasing popularity of the international movement. The campaign gained pace during October 2018 in Bollywood. This led to many women in the news media, Indian films, and even within the government to speak out and bring allegations of sexual harassment against a number of men.

The movement surfaced cases of harassment against the following:

Entertainment industry:

1. Phantom Films
2. All India Bakchod (AIB)
3. Housefull 4
4. Fox Star Studios India
5. Alok Nath v. Vinta Nanda
6. KWAN Entertainment
7. Vairamuthu
8. Salman Khan
9. Arjun Sarja
10. Indian Idol

News and media industry:

1. Times of India
2. Hindustan Times
3. The Wire

Politics and law:

1. Minister of State (MOS) of External Affairs
National Students Union of India (NSUI) national president Sexual Harassment Allegations against Chief Justice of India

Education:

1. Symbiosis Centre for Media and Communication

1. Web Articles:

-Beverly Engel

Why don't victims of sexual harassment come forward sooner?

A sequence of reasons why they don't come out:

1. Fright/ Freeze:
2. Shame:
3. Denial/ Minimization:
4. Fear of Consequence:
5. Low Self Esteem:
6. Isolation:
7. Hopelessness:
8. Give up:
9. No proof

Victims primarily go through these following reasons before deciding to give up on the situation and ignore it.

Other reasons:

1. Delay in decision making.
2. High stakes/ job/ income/ reputation.
3. Were drunk/ drugged/ couldn't remember details.
4. Dealing with higher authority.

Forbes- Mona Patel

Workplace Harassment: Why Women Don't Speak Up,

In the field of design and innovation, if I've learned nothing else, it's that data is extremely valuable and provides the intellectual answers to what the problem is and perhaps why it's happening. But it isn't always enough to motivate people to design a better solution. Empathy, curiosity and even anger, however, can give us a better shot at getting real change to happen.

The New York Times- Shaila Devan.

Offenders Tactics

Offenders encourage confusion and shame and exploit people's reluctance to identify themselves as victims. Veronique Valliere, a psychologist who counsels sexual assault perpetrators and victims and consults with the military and law enforcement, said the offenders she treats list two main tactics used to obscure assaults: They camouflage the act as horseplay or humor, or they act as though nothing happened.

"If they do this enough, the victim can get really confused, like they're the bad one for thinking bad about the offender," she said.

What people think:

When it comes to the most serious assaults, the public imagines that they are committed by strangers in a dark alley, and base their view of how victims should react on that idea even though the vast majority of assaults occur between people who know one another.

BBC- Lynda Geddes

Why sexual assault survivors forget details

"A lot of people don't report because they don't want the perpetrator to go to prison: maybe they're in love with them, or it's a family member, or it's a partner and are reliant on their income," says Nicole Westmarland, director of Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse in the UK.

It is also important to recognize that people can't necessarily control their responses in such situations. Some enter a state of involuntary physical paralysis known as 'tonic inhibition'

*-Bloomberg Businessweek-
Rebecca Grenfield and Janet Paskin*

Lack of information

Even the most educated people are helpless when dealing with such a complex situation that deals with emotions. Here, two or many lives are at stake that are connected and if not treated cautiously can damage the complete life of that person.

Incidents like these can have a tremendous psychological effect on the victim:

1. Anxiety
2. Loss of self-respect and self-esteem
3. Depression
4. PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
5. Suicidal Behavior

Incidents:

1. People judge the character of a person on appearances.
2. The society tends to hush incidents like these and try to keep them low.
3. We run away from taking sides and standing for it.
4. People choose to protect close ones first even if they are wrong.
5. A victim feels alienated in the society/ branded as trouble makers.
6. The feeling that they are alone violated/ no one is violated.

Questions that often arise when addressing a sexual assault victim.

1. Why didn't she come out right away?
2. She doesn't act like she is being harassed
3. Her story is fogged up
4. Why didn't she fight back?

It is often observed that when someone is asked what would they do? in a situation like this they say fight, and suddenly they seem to know Martial arts and other self defense techniques.

But in a situation like this when our mind is least expecting anything like this to happen, when another person comes onto you and has control over you, then it is hard to process the situation. The over processing the mind done at this particular time leads to a freeze (fright).

What is fright?

Fright is a temporary and involuntary paralysis stemming from intense fear. Fright lies right in between fight and flight situations, where the victim is in a confused state of mind and fails to choose either of the basic responses.

Fight- Fright- Flight

Example:

The state of confusion where the attacker is in close relations with the victim. Here they can't flee the situation easily or can't harm the perpetrator, the body freezes, limbs turn numb,, you lose control because you are not able to choose either fight or flight resulting into a freeze i.e. Fright.

In such cases required a tremendous amount of mental strength, which the victim cannot harness by themselves.

2. Podcasts:

Mapping #metoo: Episode 8

Pain, Shame, and Fear

"Men are afraid women will reject them. Women are afraid men will kill them." This is a phrase we've seen quoted all over the Internet since #MeToo went viral last year. During this episode of Unsettled: Mapping #MeToo, Tiffany Allison, founder of the

Hidden Brain:

Why now?

Nearly a quarter century ago, a group of women accused a prominent playwright of sexual misconduct. A Boston newspaper published allegations of sexual harassment, unwanted touching and forced kissing. For the most part, the complaints went nowhere.

Mapping #metoo: Episode 10

What Now? Alyssa Milano Reflects on #MeToo One Year Later.

On October 15 2017, actress Alyssa Milano typed a tweet asking women to reply #MeToo if they'd been sexually harassed. The next morning, she woke up to 55,000 responses. During this episode of Unsettled: Mapping #MeToo , Alyssa talks about

Hear me too:

How Bad is the Problem of violence Against Women

Understand the extent to which violence against women is a problem, and all the second and third level social effects it has on society

Hear me too:

Not Safe at Home

This episode explored the violence women face at home, who it comes from and the forms it takes

Hear me too:

Not Safe at Work

We look at what kinds of violence women face in different kinds of workplaces in India, and understand the law around sexual harassment in the workplace

Hear me too:

Not Safe at Internet

What kinds of violence do women face online, and is it even seen as violence? What effect does it have on women and their participation?

Hear me too:

Not Safe at Anywhere

In the last episode, we try to find a better understanding of conflict and what it does to women.

Me too now what?:

Moving out of the toxic masculine and feminine

Talking about the overbearing power of masculine nature over women and the patriarchal society we live in.

3. News and Discussions:

Ted Talks

Me Too is a movement,
not a moment.

-Tarana Burke

Ted Talks

Why I'm done trying
to be man enough

-Justin Baldoni

Ted Talks

The Power of “Me Too”

- Najwa Zebian

Mojo Story News Update

Men on #MeToo:

Farhan Akhtar, Milind Deora
and Cyrus Broacha at We
The Women, Mumbai 2018.

Hillsdale College

“The Danger of the
#MeToo Movement”

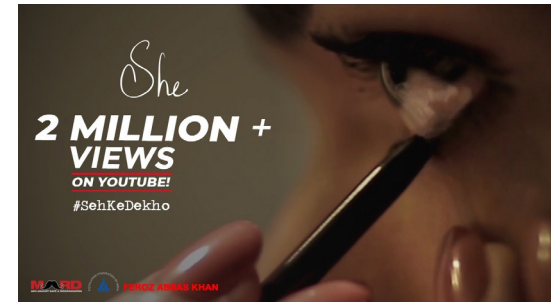
- Heather Mac Donald

4. Documentary:



The Economist

#Metoo: How it's
changing the world.



Royal Stag Barrel Select Large Short Films

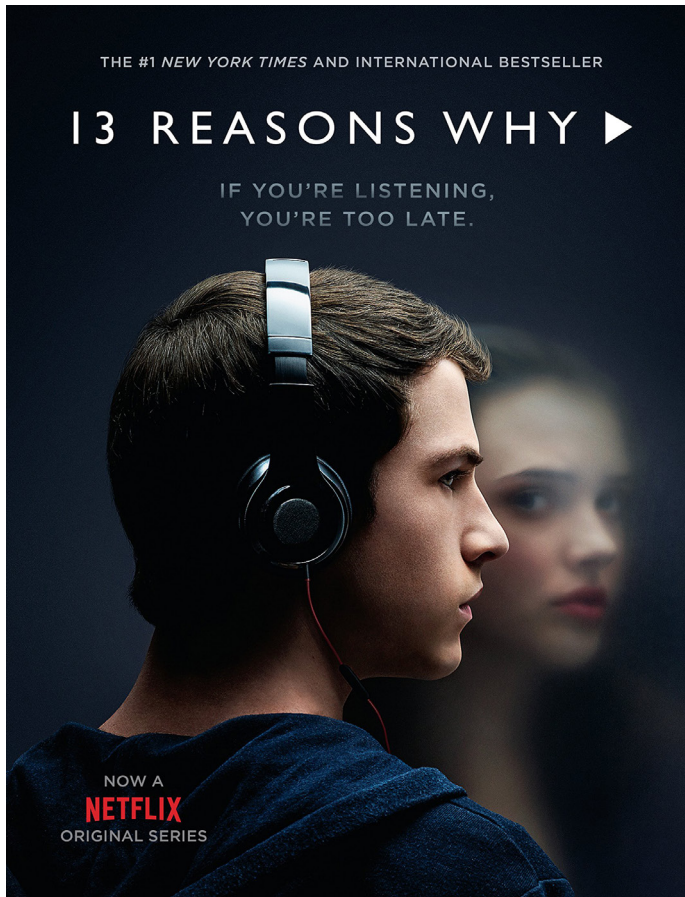
That Day After Everyday
-Anurag Kashyap



The Mard initiative

SHE- Short Film

5. Television Series:



13 REASONS WHY

The complete series is an example of brilliant story telling, using a content that is sensitive and needs to be brought forward.

The challenge here was the complexity of the content and its importance that was maintained perfectly throughout the narrative and the visual story without hampering the final outcome in each episode.

The best part of the series is that they successfully generated the unease, anger, disgust, shame, and a whole bunch of emotions that take place when dealing with such cases in real life scenarios.

Helped me see the narrative as parts of a puzzle that can be pieced together to build a complete message.

6. Film:



Pink

The movie explained the controversial nature of sexual abuse and how consent plays a major role in addressing and evaluating these cases of sexual assault/ harassment.

The structure of the arguments in the court helps build the structure of the case that eventually leads to attaining justice.

The narrative is structured in a way that it keeps nudging the audience to keep focusing the only core message "NO MEANS NO." and importance of consent.

Helped me understand how to build an argument or a conversation within a storyline.

Secondary Research:

Experiences and Conversations:

Experience 1: Female // Domestic Space

"If i tell these kind of incidents that happen while traveling to work, my parents will not let me go to work anymore, probably even get me married as soon as possible."

An instance where the victim is worried about the consequences and chooses not to tell.

Experience 3: Female victim // Domestic space

"Every-time someone asked me about it, made me feel depressed remembering it again, i should have never told in first place."

A scenario where constant inquiry from close ones can cause stress and depression.

Experience 5: Female victim // Private work space

"I was told to keep quiet and forget about it or else i would not be given my wages."

An instance where the attack was least expected leading to shock or freeze.

Experience 1: Female victim // Public Space.

"I was unable to process the situation, he touched me and even smiled back, i felt sick and disgusted and by the time i processed the complete situation he was gone."

An instance of freeze or fright, where the victim is unable to act promptly.

Experience 2: Female victim // Public Space

"He was formally dressed and did not seem to be a threat, but as he passed by, he reached out and groped me and quickly ran off into the crowd on the station."

An instance where the attack was least expected leading to shock or freeze.

Conversation

Lady Police Constable (Mumbai Police Force)

"Females mostly don't complain. If they complain, the cases are usually solved without being reported as serious crimes."

"Sometimes the cases are so worse than the female is in no condition to testify because of her mental or physical condition and the case does not progress eventually delaying the justice or even left pending."

"Females are scared to complain because they fear consequences."

"Females face consequences if they complain and even if they don't."

Worst case consequences can be:

- 1. Acid attack*
- 2. Slashing by knife*
- 3. Gang rape*
- 4. Threats to family and friends*
- 5. Bad publicity using inappropriate images*
- 7. Drugged/ poisoned*
- 9. Made to even leave the city or village*

"Many laws are in place but none of them guarantee them their physical safety and assurance of getting justice."

"Even the justice imparted sometimes is not worth the effort, most judgments end up in the payment of hefty collateral damage. This is bad on the part of females as money is equalized to their sexual reputation."

"Female officers try to help the young girls, but sometimes the girls are just in a bitter quarrel with their spouse and thus take help of the police to threaten or get back at them. The police feel violated at these times."

"Mostly the police feel under constant pressure because of the political control over the service they provide."

"Complaints are told to be kept on hold if one has a political background or knows someone with a higher authority. The victim feels helpless at these times due to the power play, as the security system in itself is not on their side."

STORY IN A GLIMPSE

To find out who assaulted the woman she just met from her husband's workplace. The protagonist of the story rushes to her husband's office where it took place. As she tries to piece together what happened, she happens to pick up conversations among the victim's colleagues and their point of view towards her character.

Unhappy with she had witnessed she moves on to find more clues that can help her get a clear idea of who was responsible for the attack. Coming across her own husband and noticing something that made her dig deeper into the mess she was already in. Only to find out that the assaulted woman wasn't the intended target, But was trying to protect someone from becoming the prey to the attackers intent.

Finally, with all the pieces together, the protagonist adds her piece to the story confirming who the attacker was. Hereby realizing that she's the only link that can complete the story between these victims and the attacker only by becoming their voice and their only hope to attain justice. But will she do it? Is the decision she has to take

STORY TIMELINE


- 
- A woman that was assaulted and is now severely injured is being taken to the hospital.*
 - The protagonist is introduced in the story and begins the journey to piece together the story of the victim.*
 - How society looks at the victim and how they make harmful assumptions depending on available information.*
 - The protagonist is confused to see the distorted image of the victim and compares it with the memory she had of the victim.*
 - How the perpetrator tries to control the situation.*
 - Discovers more pieces of the story and is trying to put them together to understand the complete picture.*
 - Comes across the blind girl and discovers that she is also a victim.*
 - Confirms who the perpetrator is.*
 - Reveals reasons she gave up and decided not to speak about her harassment.*
 - Realizes that the only way justice can be attained by the victims is only if she speaks up.*

ILLUSTRATION STYLE REFERENCES:

References and inspiration for illustration style.

illustration styles viewed and studied to generate the final outcome in the form of a graphic novel.

Manga Comic Style



The manga style of comic was explored to study how frames were oriented to achieve effective flow in visual story telling.



Graphic Novel Style



The classic graphic novel style was studied to understand the layout of a pages in context with the speech bubbles with heavy conversation chats.

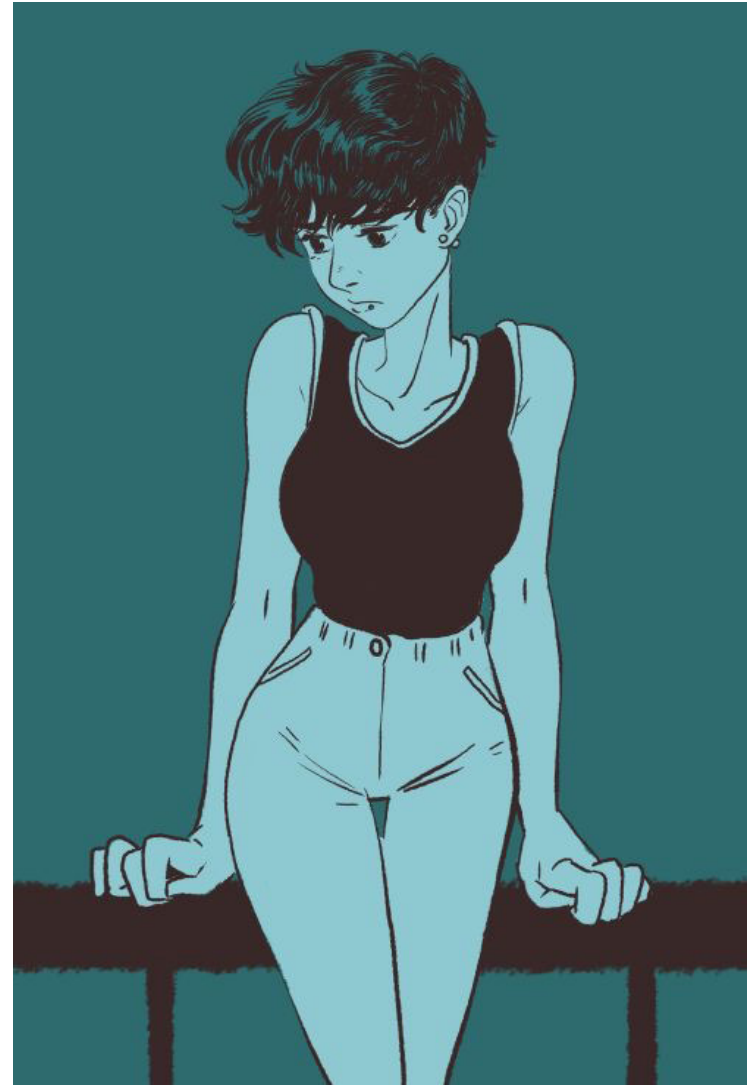
Semi- realistic graphic novel style



The style was referred to study the semi-realistic details and face structures of the characters.



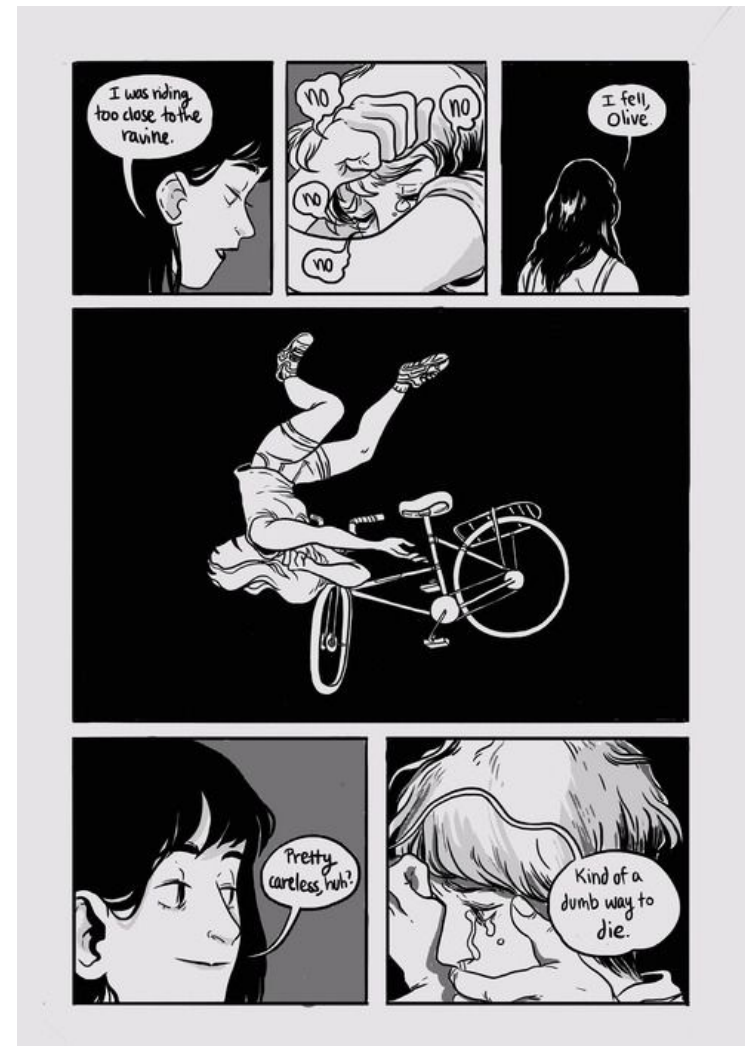




Color Treatment references:



The style was studied to understand how depth was achieved in coloring using a single color and line work.



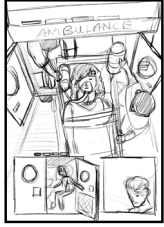


Reference to study the details that can be attained using multiple colors with solid shade and light.



PAGE LAYOUT SKETCHES

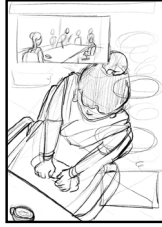
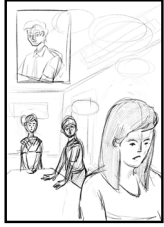
Rough sketches to understand the panel layout for the story.





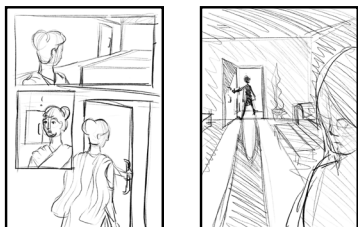










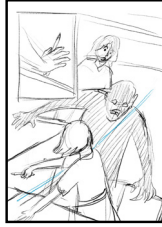


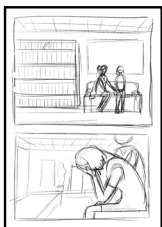
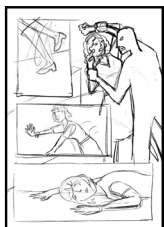






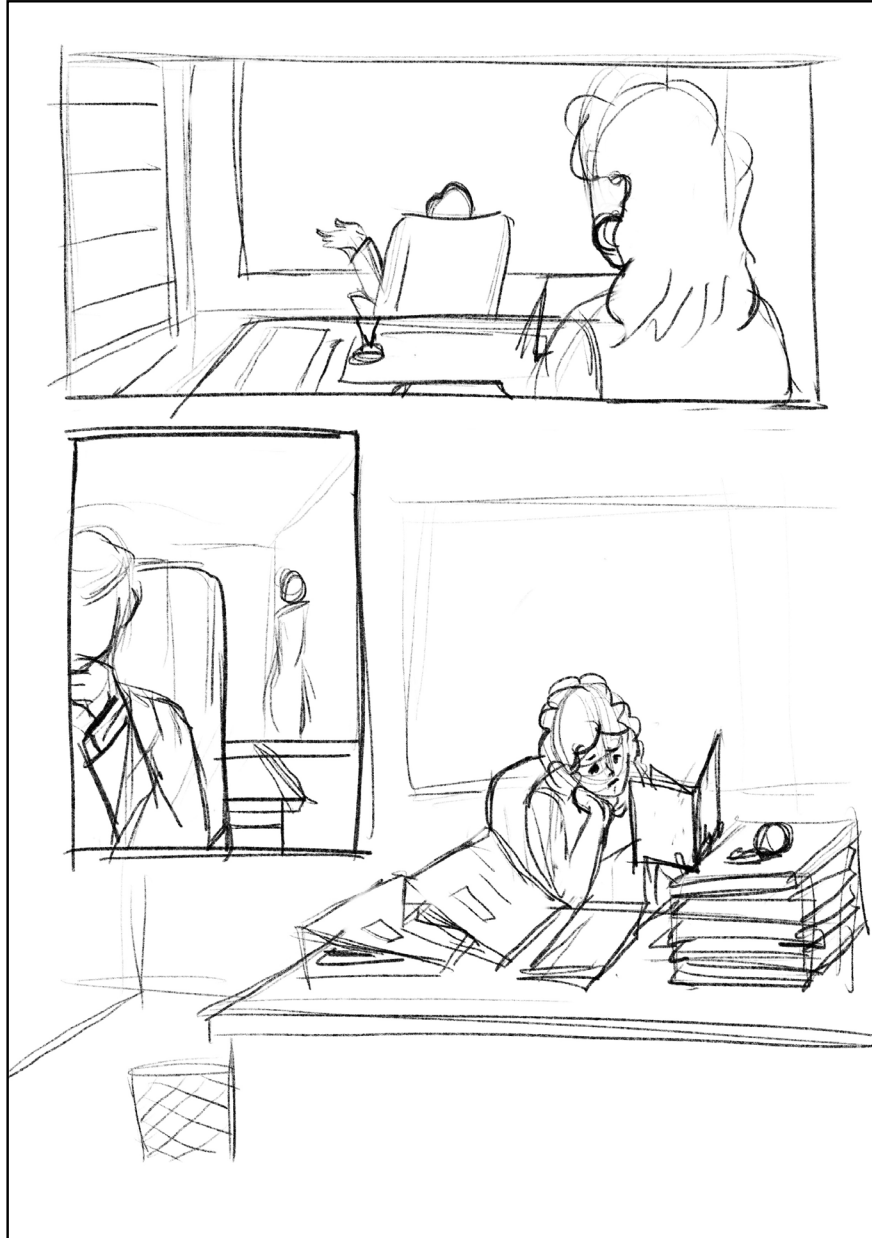
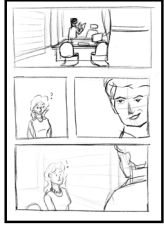














FINAL OUTPUT

HOPE

To find out who assaulted the woman she just met from her husband's workplace, the protagonist of the story rushes to the office where it took place. As she tries to piece together what happened, she happens to pick up conversations among the victim's colleagues and their point of view towards her character.

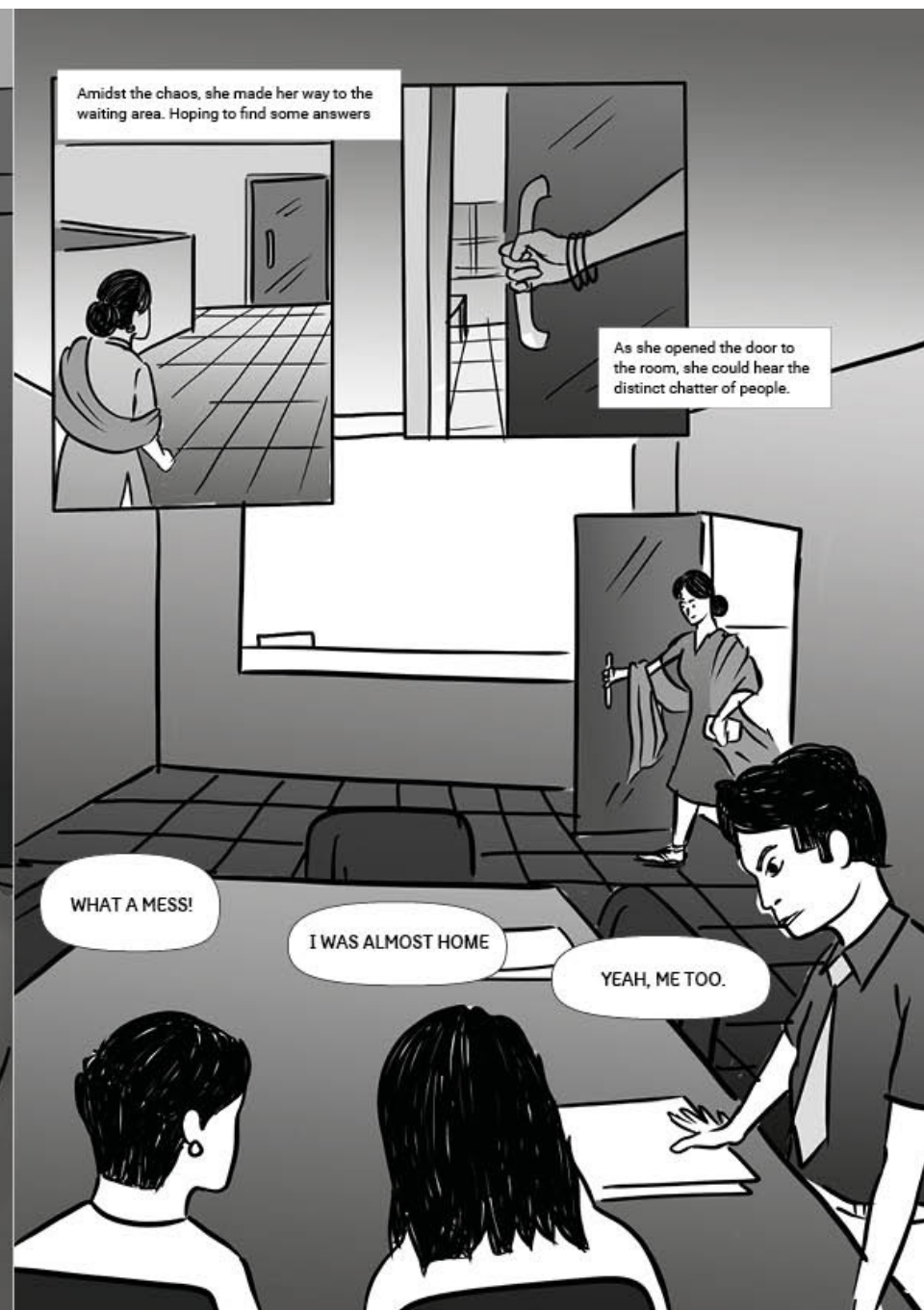
Unhappy with what she has witnessed she moves on to find more clues that can help her get a clear idea of who the attacker was. Coming across her own husband she notices something that makes her dig deeper into the mess she is already in. Only to find out that the assaulted woman wasn't the intended target, But was trying to protect someone from becoming the prey to the attackers intent.

Finally, with all the pieces together, the protagonist adds her piece to the story confirming who the attacker is. Hereby realizing that she's the sole link that can complete the connection between these victims and the attacker by becoming their voice and their only hope to attain justice. But will she do it? Is the decision she has to make.

























HELLO,

I AM NOT THE OFFICER,
BUT WHY ARE YOU
WAITING HERE?

OH



AND,
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO
GIVE A STATEMENT?

SOMEONE FROM THE
OFFICE TRIED TO
MOLEST ME.

THINGS WENT
BAD AS I TRIED TO
RESIST.

24



DO YOU KNOW
HOW JESSIE IS?

I DON'T KNOW,

BUT, SHE HAS BEEN
TAKEN TO THE HOSPITAL.

SHE TRIED TO HELP ME.
BUT SHE GOT HURT
INSTEAD.

IS SHE GOING TO BE OK?
IS SHE HURT BAD?

DID THEY TELL YOU
ANYTHING?

25

Jessie was running late that day and was about to miss the lift.



I halted the lift for her.



And we happened to become friends in the coming days.

They got along really quickly

I am used to people sympathising about my condition, but she just began a conversation with me, like she went past my disability and reached out to me as a person.

I felt accepted, i felt as if she saw the person in me rather than the disability i had. And she made sure i never felt my shortcomings, even in critical times like these.





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SHE - Short Film | MARD | PFI | #SehKeDekho // Mard Initiative // Youtube // SHE - Short Film | MARD | PFI | #SehKeDekho // [https:// www.youtube.com/watch?v=NktEiYWgFbQ&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NktEiYWgFbQ&t=2s)

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