

Take a look at progression number one, six shots of a couple talking in a restaurant. It's a basic progression that starts far away and neutral and ends up in an extreme close up featuring one character. The script may start out with some chit chat between the characters, and intensify to where in panel six the woman makes an important statement (ie: " I'm pregnant, or "I'm leaving you", or even "oh crap-- I left the oven on" etc etc). For all intents and purposes, this is correct. The shots slowly intensify to a visual climax.

PROGRESSION 1

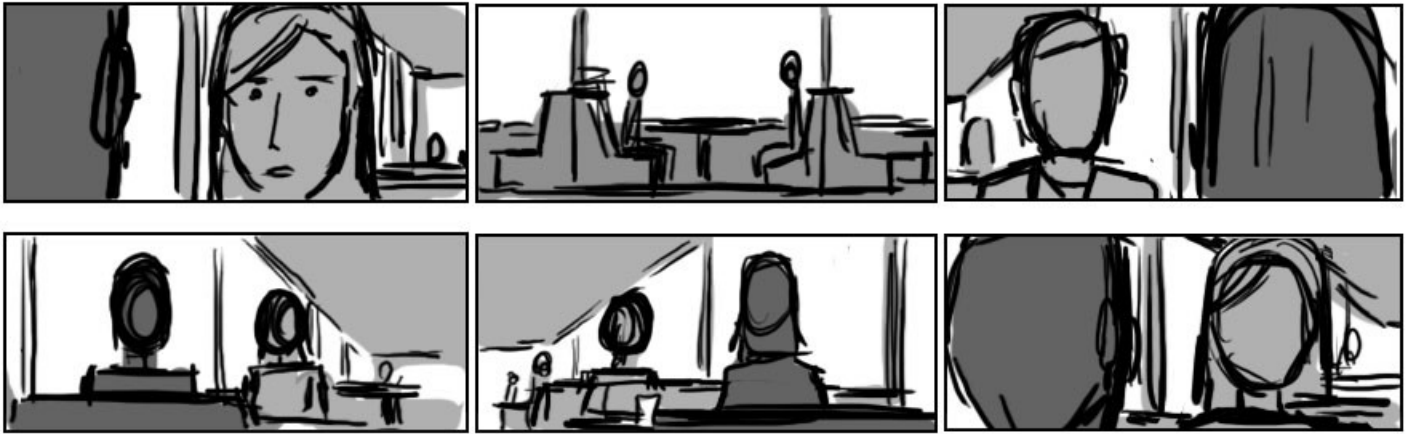


PROGRESSION 1



Now look at progression 2; same six shots, but I've jumbled them around. For the script we're using in progression one, this would be considered wrong. The shots are all over the place. Sure the woman could say "I'm leaving you " in the close up in panel six, but what impact will it have after the extreme close up in panel one? How is it building intensity if we're going to a wide neutral shot, then close up , then out to medium shots?

PROGRESSION 2



Now the tricky part. With a different script, the second progression could work. I added the panels at random, so I'll try to work backwards from this and come up with a scenario that works. Say the woman gets a phone call from the man and he says " Sally, the money's gone; meet me at the cafe".

With that intro, the script for progression two may go like this:

panel one: (woman) "what do you mean the money's gone?"

panel two: (man)(looking around nervously and whispering) " I don't know, the suitcase was empty"

panel three: (man) "we've got to find that money"

panel four: (woman) "all right but being here is making me nervous, they could be following us"

panel five: (man) " what do you think we should do?"

panel six: (woman) "we need to get out of town"

The most important bit is the woman's reaction to the money being gone and the XCU opens the scene with a punch. The second biggest bit is "we need to get out of town", so that gets a close up in panel six although not as big as panel one. The lines of them talking about being scared of being followed are in wider shots to emphasize the people around them and that they're in a public space.

Now while this isn't perfectly ideal, I just wanted to illustrate that a progression like number one, although visually solid, isn't always the right one. Your shot progression will depend on what is happening in your scene. Make sure your shots best emphasize what's happening in the story.

SHOT PROGRESSION

Leon : The Professional

33:53 mins into the film.

Matilda has such a strong sense of who she is. See how the two characters (Matilda and Leon) get along so well, despite their difference in age and backgrounds. You can really feel the bond between the two.

Just before this scene begins there is a huge action sequence where Matilda's family, including her little brother, get shot up by the cops. Matilda narrowly escapes this ordeal because she is down at the milk bar getting milk. Leon, who lives at the end of the hallway, reluctantly lets her in to his home, saving her from being killed. Now she is telling him why she is crying.

LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL

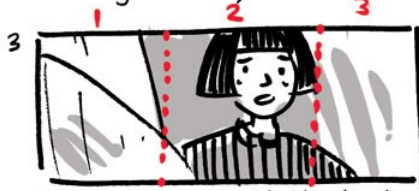
P1



"What's your name?"
"Matilda."



LONG PAUSE.
"Sorry about your father."



"If someone didn't do it one day or another, I would have probably have done it myself."



PAUSE
"...Your mother she..."

SLIGHTLY CLOSER



"She's not my mother!... My sister probably wanted to lose some weight anyway. ~~Snif~~ Snif. She never looked better."



"She's not even my real sister. Just..."



"...a half sister. Not even a good half at that. STARTS CRYING - TRACK IN



"If you couldn't stand them why are you crying?"
"Because they killed my brother! What the hell did he do? He was four years old. He never used to cry. He just used to sit next to me and cuddle. 'snif'"

The camera before this, for the most part, has been quite tense. There have been a lot of truck ins, wide angle lenses, forced perspectives, and panning with the action. So this is the first scene that has really stayed up close and is steady. The camera, for the most part, is set up in the same position at a medium-close-up/close-up. This is a bold move because it means the story relies heavily on the actors.



"I was more of a mother to him.. Dark Light



"..than the God damn pig ever was.
"Hey. Don't talk like That about pigs."



"They're usually much nicer than people."



"They smell like shit."



"Not true. As a matter of fact I have one right now in my kitchen.... That's very clear."



"It ~~see~~ smells very nice.
"You don't have a pig in your kitchen."



PAUSE.
"Yes I do."



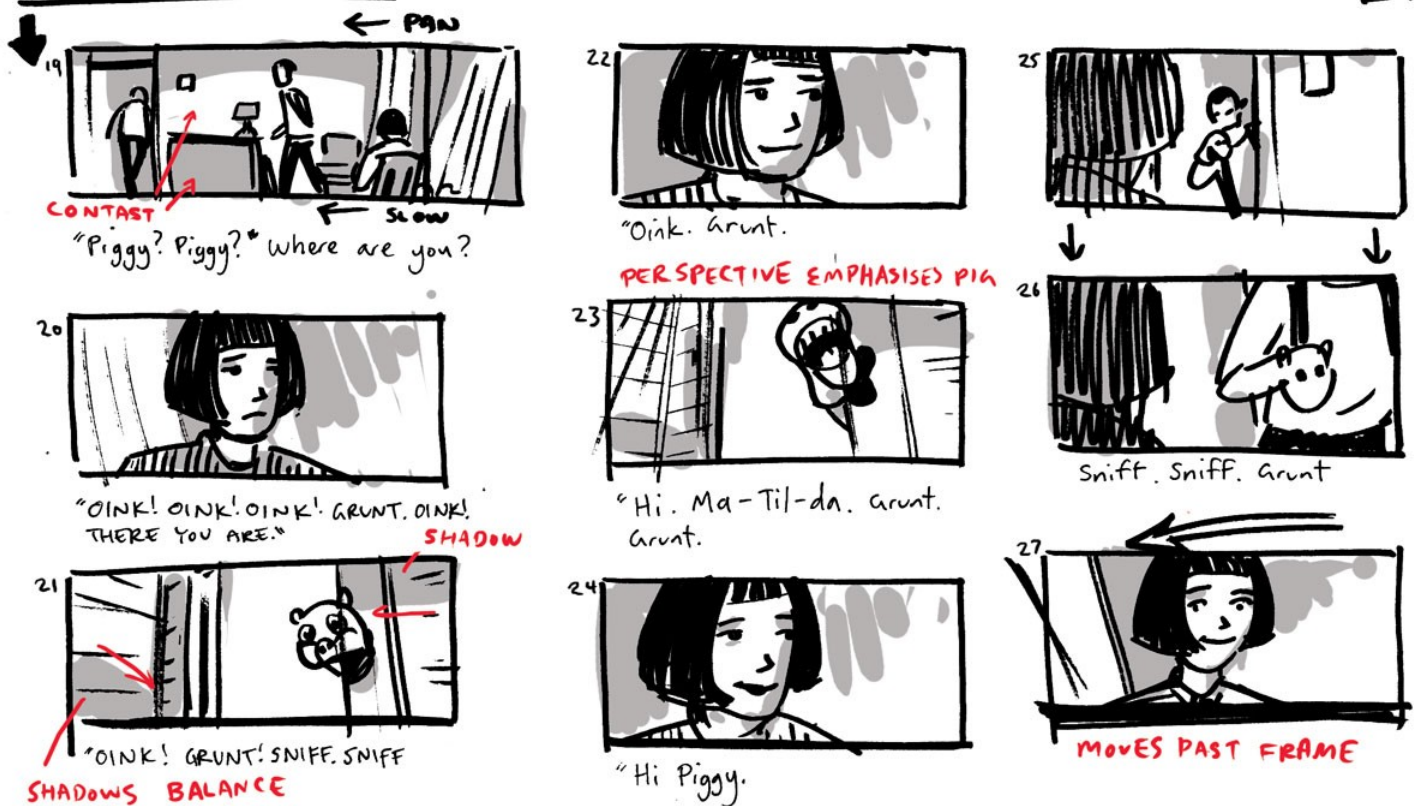
"I was just in There and I didn't see any God damn pig."

CUT ON EXIT



"Don't move. I get him."

Looking at the first and second shot, we can see that the positioning of the characters, their clothes, and the background all draw our eye towards their face. This is where we find out who the characters really are, so the attention has to be on their expressions.



Even though the shots are divided up into three, where the characters takes up the middle and the silhouettes and empty space fall to the side, Leon is positioned on the left side of the screen while Matilda is on the right. This is to be clear of who is talking, avoiding the 'pop cut'. It is only until frame 19 (page 3) where Leon actually walks away that Matilda takes up the other side. Then, only when he returns, do they go back to their original sides.

Moving back to frame 4 (page 1). The camera has cut in slightly closer. This is as Matilda reveals more about what has happened. It also cuts in equally close to Leon, who is more interested in what she has to say. As she starts crying in frame 7 the camera does a slight truck in, putting a bit more emphasis on what is happening. The camera only ever trucks in slightly, so not to bring attention to the movement. It moves like this right until the end of the scene, where everything has been revealed. Here it trucks into an extreme close up to make it obvious of what the characters are thinking.

Looking at frame 10 and 11 (page 2), I have made a note about the light and dark. This is another method the director has used to make the characters stand out. It also gives the

shots a sense of balance.

Going to frame 19 (page 3), when we cut to a wide as Leon gets up, the lighting on the back wall creates an bridge from the doorway where Leon has gone to chair where Matilda is sitting.

Two frames along, where the pig comes into screen, the shadows on the top right and bottom left balance the shot. This shot also uses a deeper perspective, shot from below, than the previous to bring attention to the puppet pig. Only until frame 25, when Leon is shown holding the puppet that the camera returns to an eye level perspective.

LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL



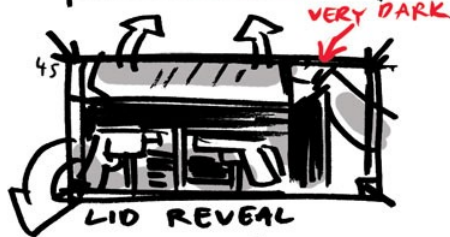
Moving to frame 35 (page 4), the camera jumps to an extreme close-up, shooting up at Matilda, as she says, "Cute name." to Leon, openly showing her attraction to him. This makes her feelings obvious to us, letting us connect with her more.

LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL

PS



Fumbles.
"I'm goin' to get some more milk."



LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL

P 60



In summary, the camera in this scene is quite subtle in its movements allowing the actors to give their performance. It's a stark contrast from the previous scenes which have been very action driven. I responded to this moment so well because the actors are so convincing. They are real people and they have a real bond between each other. Luc Besson is a very action driven director so I am glad he included a scene like this to break up the pace.

There's a scene in there that has a really nice dramatic and suspenseful build to it, so I decided to break it down into shots to figure out what made it work. This is a really great exercise for anyone who is interested in storyboarding or what makes a good scene work. There's a lot to learn from it.

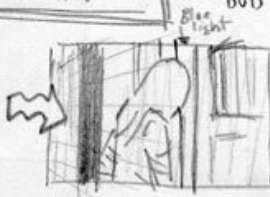
BUILDING SUSPENSE IN "THE GIFT"

9.3.01

DVD CHAPTER (17)



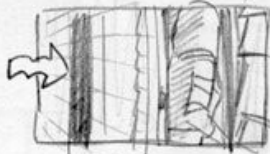
EXT. NIGHT
Annie + the kids
exit grandma's
MUSIC/SFX: crickets
CONTINUOUS



CAM follows Annie
she goes to unlock the
door - its already open
Blue light on in house
SFX: crickets, music

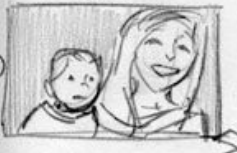


Camera DOLLYS
BACK with them
(small talk)



Annie enters house

SFX: crickets, music



CAM PULL BACK
C/U ANNIE
Smiling
holding son



CAM drift in on kids

SFX: crickets, music
windchimes



CAM STOP

Annie sees
something

SFX: crickets start
(locust noise)



VERY DARK
inside house
start on empty frame

CAM HANDHEAD - pulls back
Annie comes around
corner

SFX: crickets, music,
TV in bg.
ANNIE around corner



light is on in
the house
shadows of trees
on the house
SFX: crickets softer

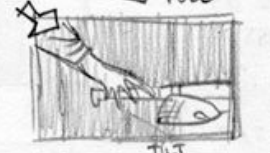


SFX: crickets, TV

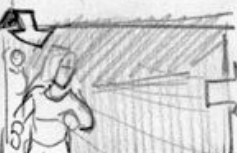


Annie hands Ben
over

SFX: ambient



CAM ADJ down to
BASEBALL BAT
(glove is next to it
to clarify)



CAM moves w/Annie
walks towards
house

SFX: crickets louder
music starts



CAM tilt back up to ANNIE

SFX: same



Annie gets keys
out goes to
door
shadowy trees



CAM Follow - VERY TIGHT
on ANNIE

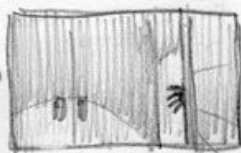
HIGH CONTRAST

SFX: same



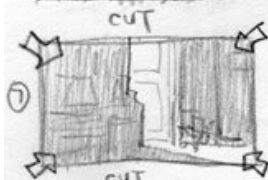
ANNIE INTO FRAME
MORE XCU
rimlight ONLY

10

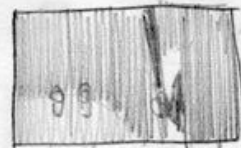


VERY LOW CONTRAST

HAND comes around
CORNER



CAM HANDHELD PUSH
POV of doorway
HIGH CONTRAST



ANNIE around corner
with BAT



CAM HANDHELD PULL



ANNIE TURNS
LIGHT SWITCH ON

(LONG BEAT)



CAM HIA PULL BACK
ANNIE closer
under/side lit
LIGHT ON FACE
GETS BRIGHTER



CAM follows ANNIE
handheld
ANNIE TOPLIT NOW

SFX: TV, circalabs, heartbeat

CUT

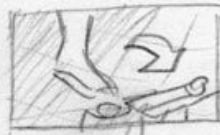


TOY TRUCK

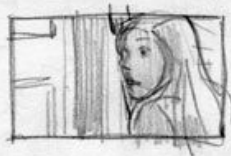


CAM CONTINUE MOVE
ANNIE Approaches DOOR
SILHOUETTE

SFX OS NOISE



ANNIE Kicks over truck
TRUCK OS
FAST!



ANNIE'S ATTENTION
IS drawn

SFX

HEARTBEAT SFX
starts up again



CAM FAST TILT
UP to ANNIE'S
FACE (XCU) underlit
SFX Heartbeat SFX
starts



CAM ADJ LEFT w/ANNIE
ANNIE SLOWLY follows
the sound



CAM starts to move
ANNIE goes on
CAM



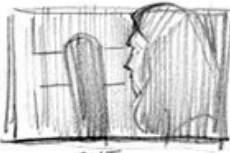
ANNIE INTO C/U
HIGH CONTRAST
silhouette

CUT



CAM STOP

LIGHT FALLS
ONTO ANNIE'S
FACE - she stops



CAM move left
w/ ANNIE towards
DOOR (2) or

CUT



LOW CONTRAST
ANNIE swings open
door

(SFX) TV louder

CUT

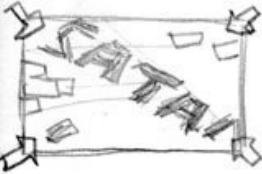


ANGLE ON -
OPEN WINDOW

(SFX) truck leaving (os)



CAM TILT DOWN
to BED



CAM PUSH IN