

OMISSION SUPPORT MATERIALS

(INCL. SYNOPSIS, CHARACTERS, OUTLINE,
CREATIVE CONCEPT, DIRECTOR'S VISION AND BIO)

Written by

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LOGLINE

Omission is a meditative short film recounting a day of interior violence and trauma for a Bengali family living in Sydney.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Monir, a Bengali father, suspects that his mischievous son has stolen a hundred dollars from him. In front of his helpless wife he savagely beats and hog-ties Rajun. Later, we observe his silent attempts to deal with what he has done his conflict with. Omission is a meditative short film recounting this day of interior violence and trauma for an immigrant family living in Sydney.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Monir

Is a wiry middle aged immigrant from Bangladesh. He is the paternalistic but loving father of Rajun, and Veena's husband. He strongly feels the obligations of being the traditional head of the family. He is under immense pressure and works as an office cleaner during the day and as a taxi driver at night. Although usually reserved, he has a very quick temper, which unpredictably devolves into frightening rage. The contradiction in his character rests on his love and desire to protect his family, and his wild anger and fear of not having control. He is also confronted by the conflict between his inner moral norms and values, and those of the western world that he has immigrated to.

Rajun

Is a mischievous, adventurous 9 year old boy who is the son of Monir and Veena. He is afraid of and antagonistic towards his autocratic father and is confused by the strict obedience that is expected of him at home and the opportunities and freedoms that are offered to him outside. He is curious and tests the boundaries of what he can get away with. He feels that he has little protection at home as his mother is equally infantilised by custom.

Veena

Is Monir's wife and Rajun's mother. She is a conservative but loving wife who is incapable of protecting her son because of her traditional role in the family and lack of power. She tends to the house, loves Rajun deeply and helps her husband in his cleaning jobs. She attempts to stop the violence but also accepts the beatings that her child suffers as a cultural norm, a right of the father.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Boy who is a school friend of Rajun. Anglo-Australian.

Older Boy who watches the Boy playing video games. Early teenage years.

Clerk who sells Rajun sporting goods. 20s. Caucasian.

Driver who drives taxi before Monir. Bangladeshi. Middle-aged.

Attractive Girl who passes Monir's taxi. Early 20s. Caucasian.

Girl 1, Girl 2, Girl 3 who have been out clubbing. 17-20. Mix of Caucasian and Asian.

Man in suit who catches Monir's taxi. 30s-40s. Caucasian.

OUTLINE

Hideously beaten, Rajun lies bleeding on the ground at the bottom of a stairwell. His mother Veena sits close to him in shock then screams.

Earlier Monir and Veena clean an office building on a weekend morning. Rajun comes along and plays cricket against a wall. It is a supportive, hard-working immigrant family.

Back at their small apartment, Rajun watches television whilst Monir searches for a hundred dollar note that he has lost.

Rajun skips school with a another boy from school. They buy frosty cones and then go to a games arcade with the small amount of money they have between them. At the arcade Rajun says that he has found a hundred dollars. We can't be sure if he really has found it or not. Rajun leaves the arcade and goes to a sport store. Warily, he buys a cricket bat and oversized T-shirt.

Rajun arrives home. He tries to hide the bat from his mother but she sees it. He makes up an excuse for how he got it.

Monir gets home and Veena tells him that Rajun has got a new cricket bat. Monir suspects that Rajun stole the hundred dollars from him. He bursts into Rajun's room and beats him to near unconsciousness [the camera turns away from the violence and looks elsewhere, the action is told through sound]. Monir then ties Rajun's hands, and his feet together and dumps him at the bottom of the apartment block stairwell. Veena sits close to Rajun in shock.

Monir quietly gets up at 2 A.M and eats. He sees the cricket bat and T-shirt laid out neatly in the lounge room and is confronted by his grotesque act.

Monir picks up the Taxi that he will drive that day. He has a jovial conversation with a friend, suppressing what is happening inside him. He drives around the city. He picks up a group of girls outside of a club.

Monir comes back home and Veena reprimands him about last night, he doesn't respond and leaves with his lunch.

He is about to light a cigarette whilst waiting in the taxi ranks at the Airport when a passenger asks to be taken to Coogee.

Monir is reminded of how lost and isolated he feels in this country by something the passenger says.

Suddenly smiling, he looks down at the his hands, the same hands that beat his son, the same hands that help him enough money to feed his family.

CREATIVE CONCEPT

Pacing

The film is sedate, meditative, observant. It is not primarily about the cliché subject of child abuse, but how deep love, and extreme abuse can coexist; how the abuser deals with his act; and how cultural paradoxes can confuse and haunt a person. The film is interested in the pre and post climactic moments.

The audience is driven to search for emotions, for causes, for meanings in the restrained, sometimes evasive narrative, and in the impassive faces of the characters. The film isn't primarily about action, but about reaction. What is important is not what is asserted but what is shown, documented.

There is a slow accumulation of details and actions and evasions which hint at who a character is and the scenario they find themselves in. The events themselves seem inevitable.

Structure

The structure sets up the initial mystery and then mirrors the meditative pacing. After the sharp climax the film rejects satisfying the audiences expectations by revealing its real subject, Monir.

1. Initial mystery of how this young boy was so horrifically beaten, tied up. Who is the woman? The hook for the audience.
2. A study of the boy. The audience is given the chance to observe the boy's behaviour, his character, his desires. The narrative balancing act here is to let the audience identify with Rajun, so that the climax is especially painful, but confound the audience expectation by dropping the story of the boy and concentrate on the father.
3. The climax is sudden and harrowing. During the worst of the violence the film looks away, but not completely.
4. The aftermath is a crucial character study bathed in silence. Because of the intense climax the audience are on edge, searching for remorse in Monir's face, searching for an effect. It isn't clear if there is any, the audience grasps for a clear, neat resolution, but life often doesn't let us choose our moments of epiphany. Perhaps the resolution for Monir comes years later. Perhaps it never does.

Camera Turns Away From the Violence

After Monir first strikes Rajun the camera turns away and looks at the parent's empty bedroom. The camera turns away but the film doesn't. The audience still hears the screams and cries and pleas of Rajun and Veena, and the rage of Monir. The audience feels the shock of witnessing something only partially. The disorientation intensifies the terror.

CREATIVE CONCEPT (CONT'D)

Extreme Out of Focus Surroundings

Once Monir leaves for work at night, he is in sharp focus but his surroundings are extremely out of focus. He cannot connect with the world. He's visually isolated from the events around him. The audience is in the same seclusion and quarantine that he is in. The audience have the chance that they've been craving (or avoiding) to study the man. It would be nice to introduce this gradually by decreasing DOF in the kitchen scene between cuts.

Dialogue in Bengali

The speaking parts of the parents will be spoken in Bengali and the film subtitled. Rajun will mostly speak in English, as will non-Bengali actors. This will bring an authenticity to the film and highlight the differences yet interdependence in language between Rajun and his parents. I speak Bengali and will be able to translate the dialogue.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Camera, Editing and Grading

A static camera with long, unhurried, watchful gazes at the characters and their situation is what will match the narrative flow best. When the camera does move it moves smoothly, gracefully, unnoticed (with heavy use of a steadicam). The camera work and editing needs to be restrained, allowing the moments to accumulate. The scenes need to breathe naturally.

These film makers are especially relevant: Apichatpong (esp. *Syndromes of a Century*), Ozu, Antonioni, Hsiao Hsien Hou, Jia Zhengke (esp. *24 City*), Tarkovsky, and Terrence Malick.

The film will be shot mostly in natural light with only reflectors or small lights when required. The scenes will show Australia's brightness, the colours, yellow and faded. There should be a half-felt feeling that this is in the past somewhere, in some bright forgotten Sydney Autumn. However, there should be a natural look to the film with only a slight yellow summer tint in the grade, nothing extreme.

Please see the Visual References that have been attached to this application.

Casting

Bengali actors will play the three lead parts. There are a number of Bengalis in Sydney who have had theatrical backgrounds and who are part of the strong Bengali associations that exist. Non-actors would be ideal for the parts of Rajun and Veena (and others) as the parts are relatively passive and a more authentic performance will be achieved. I respect the methods of the early Neo-realists and Bresson in 'modelling' non-professionals and using restrained acting.

Sound and Score

The film will only be minimally scored as the atmospheric sound that exists in the scenes will highlight the still, authentic, repressed mood we want to build. We need to get rights to a Classical Bengali ghazal for the car scene. I want the sounds to be otherworldly during the violence and the aftermath. Alan Splatt's work on *Blue Velvet*, and Leslie Shatz's work on *Paranoid park* are good examples of the direction the film will go.

Locations

Apartment (D/N). Need good natural light. Second hand furniture, things. Need to use a real apartment.

Factory with attached Office (D). Like warehouse offices out in Alexandria. Office parks etc.

School grounds (D)

Outside of Neighbourhood store (D)

Games arcade (D). Dense with game players.

Shopping centre (D)

Sport store (D).

Street outside of Taxi Centre (N).

Taxi (N)

Car (N). Used car from the 80s. A Datsun would be the ideal choice.

DIRECTOR'S BIO

Adnan Chowdhury is a Bengali speaking photographer who has recently spent 3 months on a morally questionable street photography project in Dhaka, Bangladesh (www.adnanchowdhury.com). In a past life, he was the sole Product Manager, looking after strategy, planning, and design of a software product with revenues of \$16 million dollars a year. He has a degree from the University of NSW in completely the wrong field (BCommerce Information Systems/Industrial Relations). He has recently been making short films and shooting and editing interviews for various organisations.