

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

THE THIRD CUP

2 Male + 1 Female (M + M + F) | Genre: Sci-Fi/High-Concept | Runtime: 6 - 9 Mins

OFFICIAL STORY LOGLINE: A late-night university cafeteria experiment to prove a time anomaly through tea steam spirals into a looping revelation, when the quiet cafeteria manager reveals she has already lived the night three times. As dawn approaches, the real discovery becomes not the anomaly itself, but the choice of who controls it.
DIRECTOR'S DRAMATIC VISION & TONAL CONCEPT: • Visual tone: intimate, cerebral sci-fi grounded in a single practical location, with tension created through steam, reflections, and flickering fluorescent imperfection. • Thematic depth: ambition versus wisdom, proof versus understanding, and the idea that scientific discovery is shaped by ethics and restraint, not just intellect. • Pacing: slow-burn setup, precise escalation through observational details, then a sharp emotional pivot when Asha reveals the loop. • Performance style: restrained, realistic dialogue with one character carrying calm authority that gradually overtakes the room. • Camera language: observational at first, then increasingly locked-in and reactive as the anomaly becomes undeniable. • Atmosphere: claustrophobic but elegant, with the cafeteria corner feeling like a laboratory, a confession booth, and a temporal trap all at once.
CAST AT A GLANCE & CHARACTER ARCS: • character: Professor Iqbal age: 46 look: Thoughtful, slightly rumpled, chalk dust on his sleeves, carrying the physical wear of long academic nights. dramatic_arc: Begins as the confident theorist who believes he can control the experiment, then is forced into humility when Asha proves the anomaly and reframes the discovery as an ethical choice. • character: Rohan age: 24 look: Eager, nervous, laptop open, energy drink in hand, visually restless and hungry for validation. dramatic_arc: Starts as desperate for proof and career breakthrough, becomes increasingly shaken by the loop reveal, and ends humbled as he realizes the discovery is bigger than his ambition. • character: Asha age: 39 look: Cafeteria manager in a plain apron, watchful stare, calm posture, practical and unshowy presence. dramatic_arc: Initially appears like a skeptical observer, then reveals she has lived the night three times and becomes the true guide, steering the experiment toward understanding rather than ego.
FESTIVAL & AUDIENCE TARGET: Ideal for Short Film Festivals, Indie Showcases, and YouTube Creator Channels. Focus on tight performances, sound design, and authentic Hinglish dialogue delivery.

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ART, WARDROBE & PROP MASTER

1. SET DESIGN & SPATIAL DEPTH PLAN:

The entire set is a university cafeteria corner after closing, designed to feel both mundane and uncanny. The shutter should be half-down, creating a partial barrier between the outside world and the isolated experiment space. One hanging tube light should be the dominant practical source, buzzing slightly and creating a hard, clinical pool of light. Metal tables must have reflective surfaces that break the light into strips and catch steam, cup rims, and moving hands. The counter area should remain visible in the background with Asha stationed near it, reinforcing her authority over the space. The chalkboard should be small, portable, and visibly used, with chalk dust on its edges. The kettle should sit as a practical centerpiece, with steam becoming a visual effect that can be photographed cleanly. Spatial layering should place Iqbal at the table writing, Rohan seated with laptop and energy drink, and Asha standing slightly apart near the counter, so the triangle of power is always visible. The room should feel sparse, quiet, and slightly cold, with enough texture in the metal, tile, and shutter to support reflections and flicker.

2. COSTUME & WARDROBE CONTINUITY:

- **Professor Iqbal:** Slightly rumpled academic clothing with chalk dust on the sleeves. Shirt should read as worn through a long night, with muted colors that do not compete with the steam and light. Continuity note: chalk dust must remain visible throughout, and sleeves should stay consistent with active chalkboard use.
- **Rohan:** Casual student/researcher look suitable for a late-night lab session, with a laptop nearby and an energy drink in hand. Clothing should feel practical and slightly anxious, not polished. Continuity note: his energy drink and laptop must remain in consistent positions relative to his body and the table setup.
- **Asha:** Plain apron over simple work clothes, functional and unadorned. The apron should signal cafeteria management without making her look subordinate. Continuity note: apron must remain on throughout, and her watch must be clearly visible for the moment when the second hand seems to stick.

3. HERO PROPS MASTER CHECKLIST (PRACTICAL ON-SET ASSETS):

- **prop:** Hanging tube light | **details:** Single practical overhead tube light with a slight buzz and occasional flicker, creating hard reflections on metal surfaces.
- **prop:** Kettle | **details:** Visible steam source used to create the anomaly pattern; must be practical and capable of a soft final hiss.
- **prop:** Three tea cups | **details:** Three distinct cups placed on the table: baseline, control, and anomaly cup. The third cup must be the one Asha later turns upside down.
- **prop:** Small chalkboard | **details:** Portable board with equations written by Iqbal and later a new line appearing in fresh chalk handwriting.
- **prop:** Chalk | **details:** Used by Iqbal to mark the rim of the third cup and to write equations; chalk dust should be visible on his sleeves.
- **prop:** Laptop | **details:** Open in front of Rohan, used for recording and readings; screen reflection must be visible as a distortion factor.
- **prop:** Energy drink can | **details:** Handheld can that signals Rohan's anxious, sleepless energy and remains part of the table environment.
- **prop:** Watch | **details:** Asha's watch must be visible for the moment when the second hand seems to stick.

4. PRACTICAL SFX & MAKEUP (MUA):

Keep makeup naturalistic and grounded. Iqbal should have subtle under-eye fatigue, chalk dust on sleeves and possibly faint dust transfer near hands. Rohan should look slightly stressed and sleep-deprived, with a bit of shine from late-night tension. Asha should remain composed, but her face should carry a quiet, lived-in fatigue that becomes more visible when she reveals the loop. For SFX, use practical steam behavior as the main effect, with a clean spiral and a reverse condensation movement inside the third cup. Add a brief tube light flicker and a split-second frozen-feeling moment when the cup is overturned. The chalkboard line appearing should be treated as a practical or composited effect that feels immediate and believable.

ACTOR MASTERCLASS & HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES

STORYDILSE PRODUCTION BIBLE

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ACTORS & CASTING DIRECTOR

STANISLAVSKI SUBTEXT & CHARACTER DRIVERS:

- **Professor Iqbal:** {'super_objective': 'To prove his theory and validate his scientific authority before the night ends.', 'subtext': 'He wants control, recognition, and the comfort of being right, but he is also genuinely seeking truth.'}
- **Rohan:** {'super_objective': 'To secure proof that can change his career and make the experiment matter.', 'subtext': 'He is desperate to be seen as capable, and his urgency masks fear of failure and irrelevance.'}
- **Asha:** {'super_objective': 'To force the men to understand that discovery without wisdom is incomplete.', 'subtext': 'She is not trying to win the argument; she is trying to steer the outcome toward responsibility and trust.'}

CANONICAL HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES (CLIMACTIC SCENE):

IQBAL

If a time anomaly passes through this space, steam pattern will deviate.

ASHA

Same cups hain?

ASHA

Obviously ka matlab science mein kab se proof ho gaya?

ROHAN

Ma'am, please... thoda serious ho jaiye.

ASHA

Main serious hi hoon. Isliye puch rahi hoon.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: CINEMATOGRAPHY & SOUND DEPT

1. CINEMATOGRAPHY CONCEPT & LENS PALETTE:

Use intimate, controlled framing with a preference for medium close-ups, over-the-shoulders, and selective inserts of the cups, steam, watch, and chalkboard. Start with observational static or very subtle movement to establish the cafeteria as a contained lab space, then gradually tighten coverage as the anomaly becomes undeniable. Favor longer lenses for compression of reflections and steam layers, and occasional wider frames to preserve the three-person triangle around the table. Camera movement should feel patient and deliberate, never flashy, with the final reveal benefiting from a slight push-in or locked-off stillness that lets the audience register the new chalk line and Asha's authority.

2. 3-TIER LIGHTING SCHEMATIC:

Tier 1: Establishment — one hanging tube light as the primary practical, with minimal ambient fill to preserve the after-hours isolation and metallic reflections.

Tier 2: Experiment escalation — add controlled soft bounce or hidden fill only where needed to keep faces readable while preserving steam visibility and the hard overhead feel.

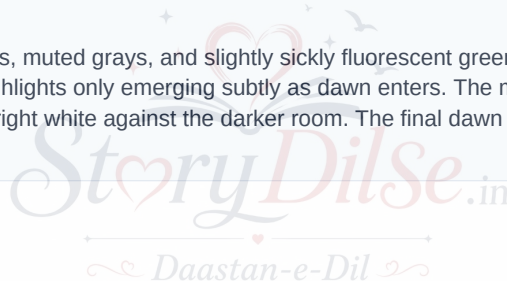
Tier 3: Reveal and dawn — allow the tube light flicker and the first dawn spill from the side window to create a tonal shift from cold artificial light to faint natural warmth, signaling the emotional resolution.

3. SOUND DESIGN & FOLEY ATMOSPHERE:

Build the scene around the tube light buzz, kettle hiss, soft cup contact on metal, laptop key taps, and the subtle scrape of chalk on board. The cafeteria should have a low, empty room tone with faint HVAC or distant building hum, but no distracting exterior activity until dawn begins to seep in. Steam itself should feel almost audible through the hiss and the quiet tension of the room. The final soft kettle hiss should land like a release after the reveal.

4. COLOR GRADING LUT & PALETTE:

Use a cool, desaturated LUT with steel blues, muted grays, and slightly sickly fluorescent greens in the practical light. Skin tones should remain natural but restrained, with warm highlights only emerging subtly as dawn enters. The metal tables should carry crisp specular reflections, and the steam should read as bright white against the darker room. The final dawn moment should introduce a gentle warm lift without abandoning the nocturnal palette.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: PRODUCER & LINE MANAGEMENT

TIME	ACTIVITY / SCENE BLOCK	KEY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED
08:00 - 09:30	Tech scout, blocking, and table layout confirmation	Director, Camera, Art, AD
09:30 - 11:00	Set dressing, chalkboard prep, cup and kettle continuity setup	Art, Props, Continuity
11:00 - 12:30	Lighting rig with tube light practical, bounce control, and reflection tests	Camera, Gaffer, Grip
12:30 - 13:30	Rehearsal of dialogue beats and cup rotation timing	Director, Cast, Script Supervisor
13:30 - 15:30	Principal photography of setup and experiment beats	Camera, Sound, Cast, AD
15:30 - 17:00	Principal photography of reveal, cup overturn, chalkboard line, and dawn ending	Camera, Art, VFX, Sound

LOCATION HACK & BUDGET SAVING TIPS:
Shoot in a real cafeteria after hours to avoid building a full set. Use one strong practical tube light and minimal hidden bounce instead of a complex lighting package. Steam can be achieved with a real kettle and careful lens placement rather than heavy effects. Keep the chalkboard small and portable so it can be reset quickly. Use one table corner as the entire playing area to reduce coverage needs. The loop reveal can be sold with performance, sound, and a simple chalkboard insert rather than expensive VFX. Prioritize continuity on the three cups, watch, and laptop screen reflection, since those details carry the story.

• **Mandatory Licensing:** Completely free for student/commercial production with on-screen credit: 'Story & Screenplay by Story Dil Se (storydilse.in)'.

