

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

THE THREE KEYS

3 Female (F + F + F) | Genre: Mystery/Crime | Runtime: 6 - 9 Mins

OFFICIAL STORY LOGLINE: A detective confronts two nervous women in a dim apartment corridor over three identical keys, only to uncover that the real mystery is not a locked storage room but a hidden web of illegal occupancy, forged records, and a tenant who left behind evidence for all of them. As the corridor tightens into a pressure chamber, the truth reveals three lives trapped inside one apartment number.
DIRECTOR'S DRAMATIC VISION & TONAL CONCEPT: • Visual tone: claustrophobic, procedural, and quietly explosive, with the corridor treated like an interrogation chamber. • Thematic depth: identity, concealment, and the way systems hide human lives behind paperwork and locks. • Pacing: slow-burn tension with sharp verbal reveals, each beat tightening the emotional and spatial pressure. • Camera language: restrained, observant, and forensic, favoring close scrutiny of hands, keys, registers, and faces. • Performance style: minimal outward movement, maximum internal conflict; silence is as important as dialogue. • Atmosphere: one flickering bulb, weak daylight, and sound details that make every tiny action feel incriminating.
CAST AT A GLANCE & CHARACTER ARCS: • character: Detective Anjali age: 37 look: Plain shirt, practical presence, sharp eyes, controlled posture, flashlight and evidence pouch in hand. dramatic_arc: Begins as a calm investigator reading the corridor like evidence, then methodically dismantles the lies until she becomes the voice of judgment and clarity. • character: Farah age: 33 look: Casual clothes, avoiding eye contact, trembling fingers, visibly anxious and emotionally exposed. dramatic_arc: Starts defensive and evasive, then cracks under pressure as her hidden name in the register and her connection to the photograph are exposed. • character: Mrs. Verma age: 63 look: Sari, composed exterior, suspiciously tidy handbag, unreadable face, controlled body language. dramatic_arc: Appears calm and managerial, but her composure fractures when the keys, diary, and hidden records reveal her deeper involvement in the concealed apartment truth.
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:

Build a narrow apartment corridor with a strong sense of compression: walls close enough to reduce movement and create visual pressure. Place a locked storage room door at center frame as the apparent mystery anchor. Add a stairwell window at one end to leak weak daylight, and a single overhead bulb with visible flicker to create instability. Dress the walls with old nameplates and worn paint textures, slightly stained plaster, and aged metal fixtures. Include a small ledge for the tenant register and keys so the evidence can be staged naturally. The corridor should feel lived-in but neglected, with layered realism: scuffed floor, dull door hardware, and a lock that reads as recently replaced. The space must support close blocking and make every shift in posture feel significant.

2. COSTUME & WARDROBE CONTINUITY:

- **character:** Detective Anjali | **costume:** Plain shirt with practical, no-nonsense tailoring; neutral tones that do not distract from her investigative focus. | **continuity_notes:** Flashlight and evidence pouch remain with her throughout; clothing should stay clean but slightly compressed by the corridor environment.
- **character:** Farah | **costume:** Casual clothes that suggest she arrived in a hurry and is trying not to be noticed. | **continuity_notes:** Hands must remain visibly trembling; wardrobe should support a vulnerable, everyday look without glamour.
- **character:** Mrs. Verma | **costume:** Sari with a neat, controlled presentation; handbag held tightly and tidily. | **continuity_notes:** Her appearance should stay composed until the handbag reveal; the bag must read as suspiciously organized from the start.

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

- **prop:** Flashlight | **details:** Handheld investigative flashlight used to inspect the keys and lock cylinder; beam should be strong enough to isolate evidence in the dim corridor.
- **prop:** Evidence pouch | **details:** Detective's pouch used at the end to collect the three keys; should feel official and tactile.
- **prop:** Tenant register | **details:** Physical register placed on a small ledge; must contain one apartment number with three different initials beneath it.
- **prop:** Three identical keys | **details:** Three same-looking keys placed visibly beside the register; later revealed to be unrelated to the storage room lock.
- **prop:** Locked storage room door | **details:** Center-frame door with a lock cylinder that appears recently replaced; the lock is a visual red herring.
- **prop:** Mrs. Verma's handbag | **details:** Suspiciously tidy handbag containing the diary, three small envelopes, and a photograph.
- **prop:** Diary | **details:** Recovered from the handbag; contains the hidden truth and evidence trail.
- **prop:** Three small envelopes | **details:** Placed with the diary and photograph; should be small, physical, and clearly distinct.
- **prop:** Photograph | **details:** Aged photo that Farah recognizes herself in; must be readable enough for the reveal.

4. PRACTICAL SFX & MAKEUP (MUA):

Keep makeup naturalistic and performance-led. Anjali should have minimal makeup with a slightly tired investigative sheen. Farah needs visible stress: damp under-eyes, slight facial pallor, and trembling hands that can be enhanced with subtle sweat. Mrs. Verma should appear controlled and polished, with only a slight tension in the jaw and eyes. Use light sweat and skin shine to react to the corridor heat and pressure. No heavy SFX is required; the emotional distress should come through micro-expressions, breath control, and lighting reactions on the face.

ACTOR MASTERCLASS & HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES

STORYDILSE PRODUCTION BIBLE

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ACTORS & CASTING DIRECTOR

STANISLAVSKI SUBTEXT & CHARACTER DRIVERS:

- **character:** Detective Anjali | **super_objective:** To expose the truth hidden behind the lock and the register. | **subtext:** She is not just solving a case; she is stripping away layers of deception and forcing the corridor to confess.
- **character:** Farah | **super_objective:** To protect herself from being exposed. | **subtext:** She wants to deny, then survive, then be understood once her name is found in the record.
- **character:** Mrs. Verma | **super_objective:** To maintain control over the narrative and prevent collapse. | **subtext:** Her calm is a shield; every measured word is an attempt to keep the hidden system intact.

CANONICAL HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES (CLIMACTIC SCENE):

ANJALI

((dryly))

Teen keys. Ek missing tenant. Aur teen alag kahaniyan. Convenient.

FARAH

Main bas... charger lene aayi thi.

ANJALI

Charger ke liye itna darr?

MRS. VERMA

Detective ji, main building secretary hoon. Register check karne aayi thi.

ANJALI

Aur handbag itna tight kyun pakad rahi hain, Mrs. Verma?



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: CINEMATOGRAPHY & SOUND DEPT

1. CINEMATOGRAPHY CONCEPT & LENS PALETTE:

Use a restrained, forensic camera style with mostly 35mm and 50mm equivalents for intimacy, and occasional tighter close-ups for keys, hands, and the register. Framing should emphasize the corridor's narrowness with symmetrical center compositions and compressed depth. Movement philosophy: minimal but deliberate—slow pushes, subtle handheld tension, and precise reframing when the truth shifts. The camera should behave like an observer in an interrogation, never flashy, always suspicious of what is hidden in plain sight.

2. 3-TIER LIGHTING SCHEMATIC:

Tier 1: Establishing tension with a single flickering overhead bulb as the primary source, creating unstable pools of light and shadow across the corridor. Tier 2: Add weak daylight from the stairwell window as a cool fill that outlines faces, the register, and the storage room lock. Tier 3: During the reveal, let the flashlight become the key accent source, carving out the lock cylinder, keys, and diary while the bulb flicker intensifies the sense of collapse.

3. SOUND DESIGN & FOLEY ATMOSPHERE:

Build the soundscape around the bulb's buzz, the faint stairwell airflow, soft fabric movement, and the tiny metallic scratch of a key in the lock cylinder. Keep room tone thin and tense, with the corridor acoustics slightly echoing every word. The register pages should sound dry and papery; the handbag opening should feel crisp and controlled. Silence after the final reveal should land hard, with the bulb flicker carrying the emotional weight.

4. COLOR GRADING LUT & PALETTE:

Use a cool, desaturated crime-thriller palette with muted greys, washed blues, and sickly practical light tones. Preserve skin tones enough for emotional readability, but keep the corridor environment slightly drained and metallic. Contrast should be moderate to high, with the flashlight beam and bulb flicker creating sharp highlights. The final reveal can lean a touch warmer on the diary/photo moment to separate truth from the cold corridor atmosphere.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: PRODUCER & LINE MANAGEMENT

TIME	ACTIVITY / SCENE BLOCK	KEY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED
08:00 - 09:30	Set corridor dressing, place register ledge, rig flickering bulb and stairwell daylight control	Art, G&E;
09:30 - 10:30	Wardrobe, makeup, and prop continuity check for all three actors	Wardrobe, Makeup, Props
10:30 - 12:00	Rehearse blocking around the storage room door, register, and handbag reveal	Director, Cast, Camera
12:00 - 13:30	Shoot dialogue confrontation and key inspection coverage	Camera, Sound, Script Supervisor
13:30 - 14:30	Shoot register reveal, handbag open, diary/photo insert shots	Camera, Props, Art
14:30 - 15:00	Capture final silence beat, bulb flicker ending, and cut to black	Camera, Sound, Director

LOCATION HACK & BUDGET SAVING TIPS:
Shoot in a real corridor with permission and enhance it with minimal dressing rather than building a set. Use one practical flickering bulb, one window source, and a single flashlight to create the entire lighting design. Keep props simple but specific: a real register, printed initials, and a believable handbag insert. Limit the scene to three actors and one location to reduce logistics. Use close-ups strategically so the audience feels more production value than the budget actually allows. Prioritize sound design and performance, because this story lives on tension, not spectacle.

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

