

THE BIRTHDAY LIE — VISUAL STORYBOARD GUIDE

DIRECTOR'S VISUAL APPROACH (Slice of Life/Family): This storyboard is designed as an easy, creative guide to help you shoot the film. Each scene beat below describes what the audience sees on screen, character movement/staging, the lighting vibe, and the dramatic purpose.

SCENE 01: THE UNDERPREPARED BIRTHDAY ROOM

Camera Vibe: Wide Room View

- **What We See on Screen:** A small living room at night with crooked fairy lights on the wall, a cake box on the table, half-inflated balloons in the corner, and a gift bag on a chair. Vivek circles the table while Anil works on a balloon and Sanjana sits quietly on the sofa with her card.
- **Actor Movement & Staging:** Vivek keeps moving with fake control, Anil juggles balloon and gift bag, and Sanjana watches without speaking, folding and unfolding the card in her hands.
- **Lighting & Mood:** Soft warm practical glow with uneven coverage, creating a slightly awkward, handmade birthday atmosphere.
- **Why This Shot Works (Director Note):** Establish the emotional imbalance of the room before anyone says the truth; the audience should immediately feel that the celebration is fragile.

SCENE 02: THE BALLOON POP BANTER

Camera Vibe: Medium Two-Shot with Insert

- **What We See on Screen:** Vivek and Anil in the same frame near the table, with a quick visual emphasis on the balloon as it pops and Anil jerks it away.
- **Actor Movement & Staging:** Anil jokes through the balloon mishap, Vivek scolds him, and both continue their fake-fun routine while trying to manage the setup.
- **Lighting & Mood:** Warm but slightly tense, with the balloon pop punctuating the scene like a comic crack in the surface.
- **Why This Shot Works (Director Note):** Show how humor is being used to cover discomfort, while also revealing the brothers' familiar irritation.

SCENE 03: THE CARD AND THE LIE

Camera Vibe: Close-Up on Sanjana and the Card

- **What We See on Screen:** Sanjana on the sofa, holding the handmade birthday card. The front drawing of three stick figures, a cake, and the words 'Happy Birthday, Papa' are visible as she folds and unfolds it.
- **Actor Movement & Staging:** She stays still, observant, and then answers with calm precision when questioned about birthdays and truth.
- **Lighting & Mood:** Soft side light with a gentle shadow on her face, making her look thoughtful and sharper than the adults expect.
- **Why This Shot Works (Director Note):** Center the child's perspective and make the audience realize she has understood the situation long before the adults do.

STORYBOARD: THE DRAMATIC BUILDUP & CLIMAX

SCENE 04: YOU'RE NOT CELEBRATING ME

Camera Vibe: Over-the-Shoulder and Reaction Close-Ups

- **What We See on Screen:** Sanjana speaking from the sofa while the adults react in fragments: Vivek's smile freezes, Anil's humor falters, and the fairy lights glow behind them like a witness.
- **Actor Movement & Staging:** Sanjana calmly calls out the fake surprise and the adults' avoidance; the men try to joke, then begin to fail at it.
- **Lighting & Mood:** The room darkens slightly in the fill, making the fairy lights feel more exposed and emotionally charged.
- **Why This Shot Works (Director Note):** Create the first real emotional turn by letting the child name the performance and expose the adults' denial.

SCENE 05: THE SILENCE ABOUT MAA

Camera Vibe: Tight Close-Ups and Still Frame

- **What We See on Screen:** Sanjana's accusation lands, and the room goes still. Vivek's hand rests on the cake box, Anil rubs his eye, and the silence becomes visible in their faces.
- **Actor Movement & Staging:** Sanjana explains that the party is a way to avoid Maa's memory; the adults stop pretending and absorb the truth.
- **Lighting & Mood:** Softer, more honest light with deeper shadows, allowing the emotional weight to sit in the faces.
- **Why This Shot Works (Director Note):** Let the silence become the dramatic peak; the audience should feel the grief without needing extra dialogue.

SCENE 06: TRUTH, CAKE, AND STRAIGHTENED LIGHTS

Camera Vibe: Medium Ending Shot

- **What We See on Screen:** Anil opens the cake box, ties the balloon properly, Vivek straightens the fairy light strand, and Sanjana places the card on the table. The room looks slightly better, but still imperfect.
- **Actor Movement & Staging:** Vivek asks if they should celebrate, Sanjana agrees with honesty, and the three of them quietly fix the room together.
- **Lighting & Mood:** Gentle warm balance returns, with the fairy lights now feeling comforting instead of fake.
- **Why This Shot Works (Director Note):** End on a small but meaningful act of repair, showing that honesty creates real warmth even when the room remains imperfect.

CREATIVE SHOOTING CHEAT-SHEET FOR THE DIRECTOR:

- **Keep Camera at Eye-Level:** In small rooms or single locations, eye-level framing makes the audience feel trapped in the room with the characters.
- **Reaction Shots are Gold:** When a secret or punchline lands, hold the camera on the character *listening* to capture their silent shock.
- **Audio Drives Emotion:** Whispers, deep sighs, and awkward silences carry 60% of the dramatic tension.