

THE BRAIN BRAKE

camera guide · everything that happens in front of a lens

FOR VENKATESH

SHOOTING DAY · TUESDAY 18 AUGUST 2026 · BENGALURU

version two · built from the film, not typed by hand

THE ONE THING TO UNDERSTAND

You are not filming a film. You are filming a boy in an empty grey room, talking to a lens, reacting to things that do not exist yet. The runner, the factory, the mission control room, Coach Brain and every drawn world in this story are made in Zagreb afterwards and built around him.

So the job is to hand over a clean, consistent, evenly lit boy who can be cut out and placed anywhere. Consistency beats beauty on this one. A gorgeous take we cannot cut out is worth nothing, and a plain take we can is worth everything.

THE DAY, IN NUMBERS

Frames in the finished film	50
Frames that need you	26
Frames with a line to camera	10
Camera setups	4
Cast	Manan only
Finished running time	1:57

TECHNICAL

- 4K, 25 fps, 16:9, no in camera sharpening
- Original camera files, untouched. No transcode, no grade.
- Separate audio with the slate intact. His voice is the film.
- Photograph the wardrobe and each lighting setup before you strike them.

Manan is fourteen and he has ADHD. The whole shooting method is built around that, and it happens to produce a better film anyway.

- One sentence per take. Never ask him to run a paragraph.
- Let the camera roll through the resets. The moment between takes is often the take.
- No counting down and no pressure language. Roll, and let him go when he is ready.
- Break every twenty minutes. A tired take is a wasted card.
- Shoot past the point where it feels finished. Take six is usually the one.
- He has rehearsed from a book that gives him one line per page. If you ask for a line by its number, he will know exactly which one you mean.

THE FOUR SETUPS

SETUP A TO CAMERA

12 frames · 1.5 1.6 2.6 3.6 4.2 4.4b 4.7 4.8 5.9 8.6 8.7 8.8

Manan against plain mid grey, medium, lens at his eye height, key from camera left. This is the setup the film lives in. He speaks straight down the lens. Nothing else is in shot and nothing moves behind him.

- Mid grey seamless, lit evenly, no gradient and no hot spot.
- Key from CAMERA RIGHT, soft, slightly above eye line, roughly forty five degrees. This is the one lighting decision the whole method depends on. Manan gets a real shadow cast onto drawn paper later, so the side must never change between frames and the light must be hard enough that the shadow has a shape. If the light on the day is flat, every frame in the film loses this and it cannot be added back honestly.
- Frame him with clear space above the hair. He gets cut out and placed inside drawings, so anything touching the edge cannot be used.
- One sentence per take. Reset fully between lines.
- Keep rolling through the resets. The unguarded moment between takes is often the one we cut.

SETUP B THE BLACKBOARD

1 frames · 2.1

A real blackboard, real chalk, and Manan actually writing. Everything that appears written is added later in Zagreb, but his hand and arm must genuinely move, so the chalk sound and the arm passing in front of the writing are real.

- THE BOARD IS SHOT COMPLETELY EMPTY except for one vertical chalk line down the middle.
- He writes with real chalk on the empty board. It does not matter what he writes.
- Give us a clean pass of the empty board first, locked off, no Manan, five seconds.
- Same lighting as setup A if the room allows it.

SETUP C SILENT PLATES

12 frames · 3.2 3.3 3.4 4.5 5.4 5.5 5.6 5.7 5.8 7.3 8.1 8.3

No lines. These are the pictures between the words, and the film breathes on them. Each one is on screen for well under half a second, so what matters is that they are clean and still, not that they are performed.

- Shoot each one much longer than we need. We take the stillest part.
- No performance at all. He is not acting in these, he is simply there.

Same grey, same key, same distance unless the note says otherwise.

SETUP D THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

1 frames · 2.3

The brass glass is the film's transition. Twice the picture goes through it into the next scene, so the glass has to be real, in his hand, and in focus.

- Insert of the glass held up, the circle of the lens filling as much of frame as it can.
- Hold it steady for a slow count of five. We push in on it later.
- One pass with his eye visible through the glass, one pass with the lens empty.

IF THE PICTURE AND THE WORDS DISAGREE

Follow the picture for anything you can see: light, direction, framing, wardrobe, where he stands.
Follow the words for anything you cannot: what happens, what he says, how long it is on screen.
Then tell us, so we can fix the words.

In film order, which is not shooting order. Group them by setup on the day and shoot whatever is lit. Each page carries the timecode it lands on in the finished film, how long it is on screen, the words he says over it if any, and what the camera has to do. The picture is a reference for framing and mood. It is not a photograph of anything real, it was drawn to show you the intention.

00:00:04:11 → 00:00:04:21

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

**CAMERA**

He enters at camera LEFT and moves to the right, as the reference shows, stops, and looks off. Half a second on screen. Shoot the walk in six or seven times and let him arrive differently each time.

00:00:04:21 → 00:00:10:05

134 frames · 5.4 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“Hold on. He had nothing left. So where did THAT come from?”

**CAMERA**

The first time he speaks to us. Straight to lens, glass at chest height. He has just seen something impossible and he is asking us about it, not telling us. Shoot past the point where it feels finished. Take six is usually the one.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

THROUGH THE GLASS. Push in on the lens until the circle fills the frame. The next scene, the lecture room of 1923, appears inside the glass, bending at the edges as if seen through it, then straightens as we come out the other side into 2.1.

00:00:10:05 → 00:00:13:00

70 frames · 2.8 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

“A. V. Hill. Nineteen twenty three.”**CAMERA**

He writes on the empty board and says the name and the year over it. His arm must pass in front of where the writing will be. Do not worry about what he writes.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

THE BOARD IS SHOT COMPLETELY EMPTY except for one vertical chalk line down the middle. Everything else is composited afterwards. Manan must actually write on it on the day, so the chalk in his hand moves and his arm passes in front of the writing. The left half carries a quick chalk sketch of A. V. Hill and his year. The right half carries 1997, T. Noakes, and the new chain.

00:00:13:10 → 00:00:13:20

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

**CAMERA**

Insert. The glass raised, lens filling frame. We travel through it into the next scene, so hold it long and hold it steady.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

THROUGH THE GLASS. Same move. The factory inside the lens grows until the circle fills the frame and we are inside the factory for 2.4.

00:00:15:17 → 00:00:18:01

59 frames · 2.4 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

“Except it doesn't explain this.”**CAMERA**

Over his shoulder, looking back at the board. Voice only, he is not to camera here, so his face can be three quarters. Shoot it also as a clean profile.

00:00:18:11 → 00:00:21:17

81 frames · 3.2 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

“At the back, a door nobody opens.”**CAMERA**

He looks at something low and to camera left that is not there. Give him a mark. Curious, not worried.

00:00:21:17 → 00:00:22:02

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

**CAMERA**

His hand reaching forward, palm open, at chest height. The door is drawn in later. Shoot the hand alone as an insert too.

00:00:22:02 → 00:00:27:22

145 frames · 5.8 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

“Tested the moment they gave up, the muscles could still do far more.”

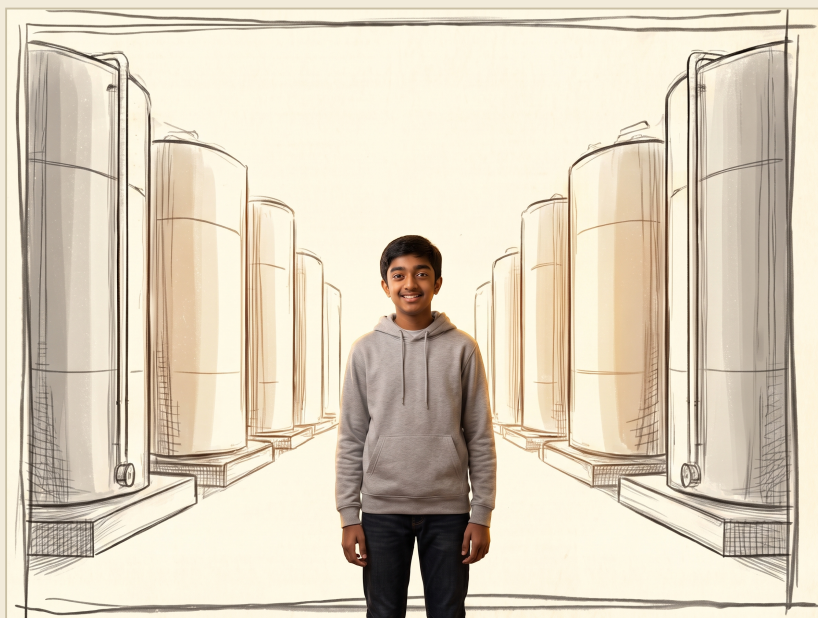
**CAMERA**

Wide, him small in frame, looking up and around at nothing. He is standing in an enormous room that does not exist yet. Give him time to actually look.

00:00:27:22 → 00:00:31:13

91 frames · 3.6 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“It was never empty. Somebody closed that door.”

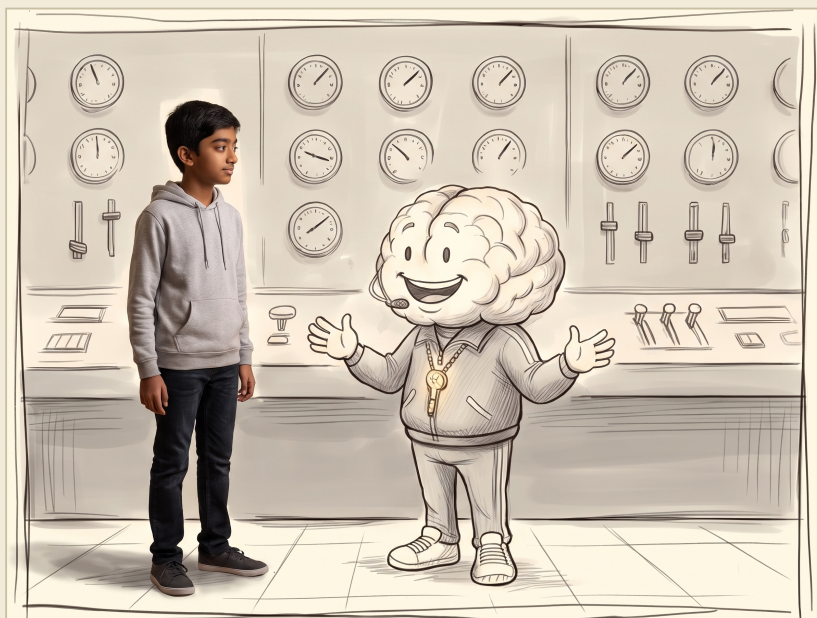
CAMERA

To camera. This is the end of the mystery and the start of the argument. Certain, quiet, no push.

00:00:34:14 → 00:00:36:12

48 frames · 1.9 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“You closed that door.”**CAMERA**

To camera, level, an accusation that is not angry. He has just worked out who is responsible and he is almost pleased about it.

00:00:46:12 → 00:00:49:04

67 frames · 2.7 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“So you're secretly pacing me?”

NO PLATE YET · THIS FRAME IS SHOT ON THE DAY

CAMERA

NEW. Same setup and same eye line as 4.2, one step closer. He is not accusing any more, he is working it out, and he is impressed without wanting to show it. A small pause before the word secretly.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

TO SHOOT 18 AUG. Manan to camera, same setup and same eyeline as 4.2, one step closer. He is not accusing now, he is working it out. The question lands and he holds it.

00:00:49:04 → 00:00:53:17

113 frames · 4.5 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

**“Like a phone at twenty percent. Not broken.
Protecting itself.”**

**CAMERA**

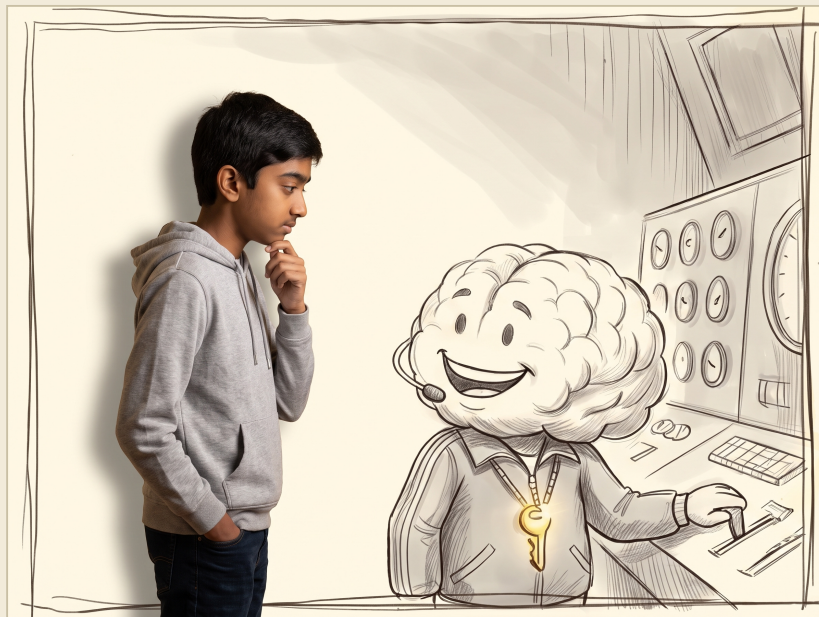
Voice only over a picture of him. Him looking down at his own hand as though holding a phone, but with nothing in it. Shoot the empty hand clean.

00:00:59:16 → 00:01:06:19

178 frames · 7.1 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“So the limit isn't my body. It's your judgement. They call it the Central Governor Theory.”



CAMERA

To camera. He names the theory. A subtitle goes under this later, so leave the lower quarter of frame uncluttered.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

ON SCREEN SUBTITLE, small, low in frame, held two seconds, nobody speaks it: "Central Governor Theory, proposed by Prof. Tim Noakes, 1997. An influential model. Scientists are still investigating how the brain and muscles produce fatigue." It costs no running time because it is not spoken, and it is what protects the film on scientific accuracy.

00:01:06:19 → 00:01:12:09

140 frames · 5.6 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“It sets your limit in advance, and keeps something in reserve.”

NO PLATE YET · THIS FRAME IS SHOT ON THE DAY

CAMERA

NEW, AND IMPORTANT. Shoot this as one continuous take with 4.7, on the same breath. We cut it into two panels afterwards. This is the only sentence in the film that states the science plainly, so it is slow, still, and straight down the lens. A clear beat before and keeps something in reserve.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

TO SHOOT 18 AUG. Direct continuation of 4.7, identical setup, identical light, cut on the same breath so the two panels read as one take. This is the only sentence in the film that states the science plainly, so he says it slowly and to camera. Noakes and 1997 stay on the lower third underneath.

00:01:20:02 → 00:01:20:12

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

**CAMERA**

Close, his face as an idea lands. No line. Shoot a long unbroken take of him simply thinking and we will find the moment.

00:01:20:12 → 00:01:22:10

48 frames · 1.9 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

“So I tried it.”



CAMERA

Voice only. Him from behind or three quarters, about to start something.

00:01:22:10 → 00:01:22:20

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

**CAMERA**

Movement. Him running on the spot or leaning into a stride against the grey. Shoot high frame rate if the camera allows it.

00:01:22:20 → 00:01:23:05

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.



CAMERA

The hardest moment. Effort, not pain. He is working, not suffering.

00:01:23:05 → 00:01:25:14

59 frames · 2.4 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · VOICE OVER, HIS FACE NEED NOT BE TO LENS

“Nothing about my legs changed.”



CAMERA

Eyes closed, completely still, breathing. Shoot a full unbroken minute and we will use the stillest twenty frames. No performance at all.

00:01:25:14 → 00:01:28:20

81 frames · 3.2 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

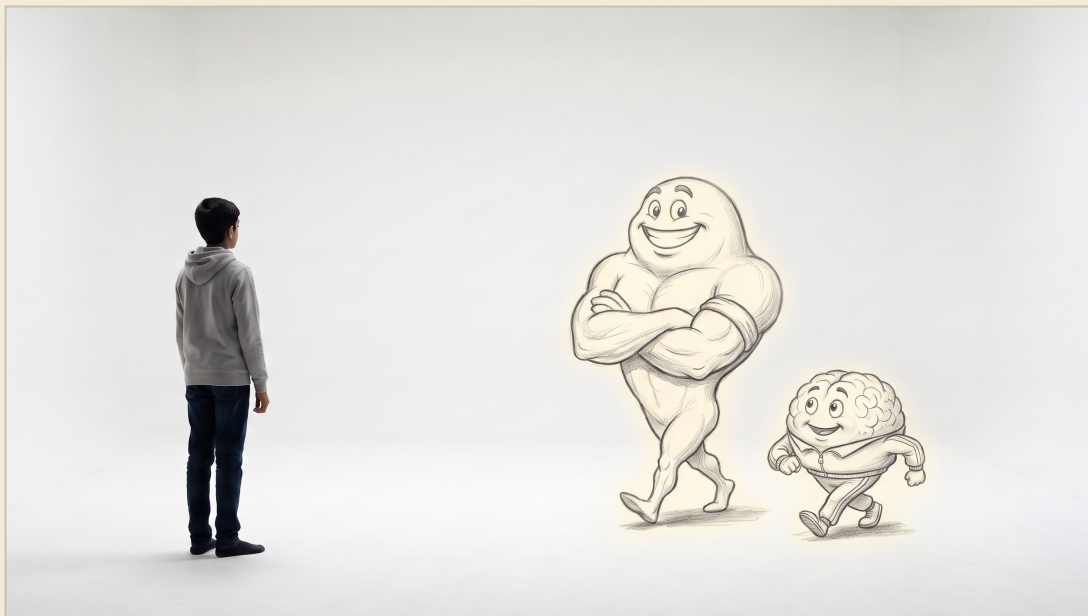
“Only what I believed they had left.”**CAMERA**

Eyes open, to camera. The quietest line in the film and the one the whole experiment is for. Do not let him push it.

00:01:39:18 → 00:01:40:03

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.



CAMERA

Him against white, small, still. A breath between two scenes.

00:01:40:13 → 00:01:40:23

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

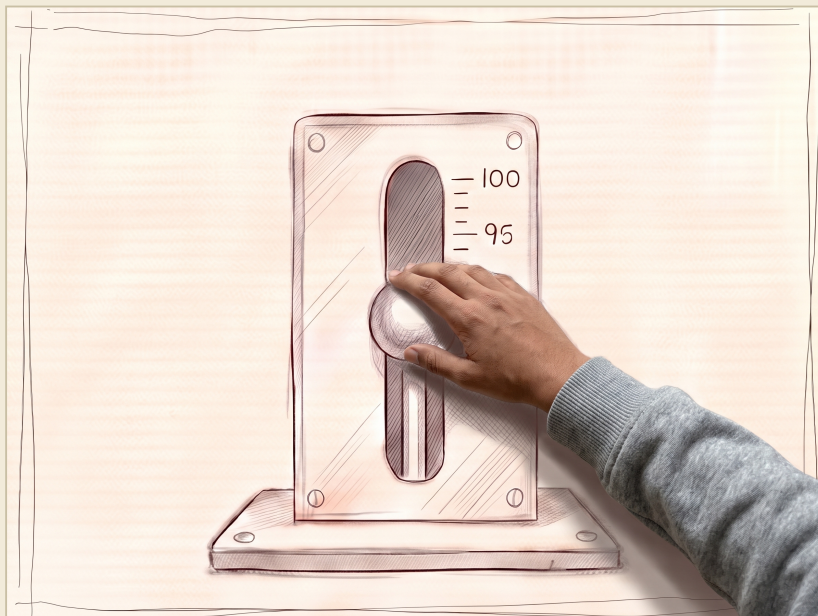
**CAMERA**

Breathing, eyes closed, calm. Same as 5.8 but at the end of the film rather than the middle. Shoot it separately so the two do not match too exactly.

00:01:40:23 → 00:01:41:08

10 frames · 0.4 seconds on screen

NO LINE. PICTURE ONLY.

**CAMERA**

His hand, raised, closing around something that is not there. The lever is drawn in later. Insert, and shoot it twice at two heights.

00:01:41:08 → 00:01:45:24

116 frames · 4.6 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“Next time somebody finds one last burst of speed,”**CAMERA**

The first line of the ending. He is already looking at us before he speaks. He is setting something up and he knows it, so the line does not finish. Leave it open.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

Image inherited from the retired 8.5. The key in his hand, held up, the setup line of the closing triplet. He is already looking at us before he speaks.

00:01:45:24 → 00:01:50:03

104 frames · 4.2 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“don't just wonder how strong their muscles are.”



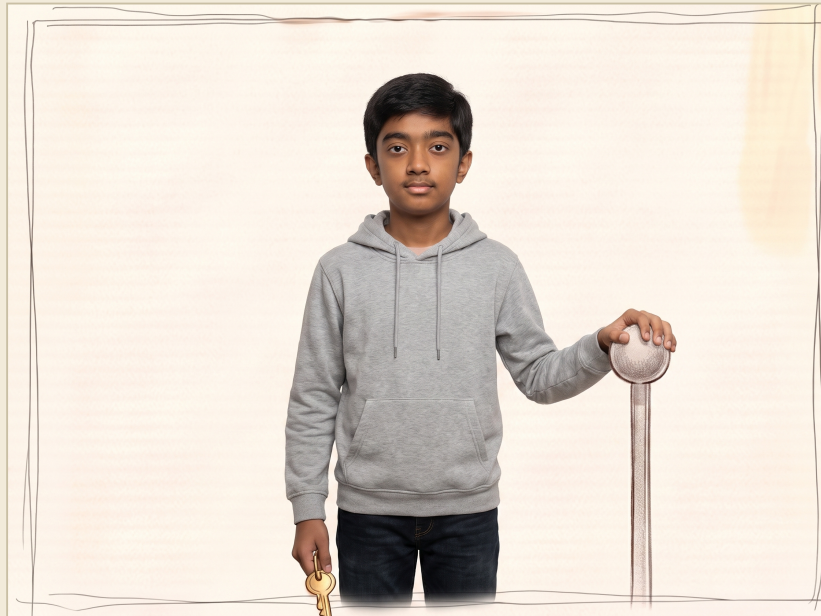
CAMERA

The turn. Gentle, not a telling off. Everyone gets this wrong including him at the start of the film.

00:01:50:03 → 00:01:53:19

91 frames · 3.6 seconds on screen

HE SAYS THIS · TO CAMERA

“Wonder what their brain believed was safe.”**CAMERA**

The last thing he says on camera in the whole film. Completely still, dead to lens, no movement at all. Let the last take be the tired one. It will be the best.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THIS FRAME AFTERWARDS

The payoff of the triplet. Eyes open, dead to camera, no movement. The last thing he says before the paper writes itself.

8.9 is the end card. It is voice only, recorded separately in a quiet room, and needs nothing from the camera. If there is a quiet corner on the day we will take it there, otherwise it happens later.

Every word Manan speaks in this film is his own voice. Nothing he says is replaced later, so the sound you record is the sound in the finished film. If a take sounds right and looks wrong, keep it anyway and tell us.

DELIVERY

- Original camera files, untouched.
- Separate audio files, slate intact.
- A photograph of the wardrobe and of each lighting setup.
- Upload within 48 hours. The whole Zagreb schedule starts the moment they land.

IF IN DOUBT

Shoot it wider and shoot it longer. We can crop and we can trim. We cannot invent what is outside the frame.