

**Pushing Daisies One Day at a Time: Director's Commentary**

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The film starts with the title card over a bunch of daisies. We get a brief scene with voiceover narration. The narrator (Ahmad) has a thick British accent because we wanted to add some charm to the world which the characters occupy by presenting their universe as whimsical and quirky. The narration is mostly used to establish the universe of *Daisies* and provide exposition. The first shot is a close up on daisies before quickly panning over to a pair of legs which run past the frame. This is similar to the opening shot of the tv show that this is based off of. The next shot introduces us to Ned's neighbor who quickly dies. When we were making this film, we first tried shooting the death scene with an actual car driving slowly so that we could speed up the shot and the speed the car travels in the post production process. We ended up using special effects to insert a fake car because it was more convenient and it immediately introduced the lighthearted and comedic elements of the film. The next two close up shots show young Ned and Emerson's reactions to the man's death. The closeup of Ned touching the man allows for the audience to clearly see the touch. The light and sound effect that occurs when Ned touches highlights it and gives it a supernatural feel. The film cuts to a reaction shot of Emerson, having witnessed Ned use his power. He exits the frame because the narration explains that he doesn't become a vital part of the story until later. The low angle shot of the camera, the appearance of legs entering the frame, and the narration divert Ned's and the audience's attention to a new subject. Ned and Chuck's lightsaber battle has the shot significantly darkened in post in order to make the sabers seem more bright. This was used to set up a parallel to their lives at the end of the movie when they are together. We also wanted to make Ned and Chuck have a more playful relationship because we couldn't have them touch each other throughout most of the film, which means no kissing or hugging. The next shot is in a wide angle, showing and setting up Chuck's

father's death. The closeup of Ned entering his house allows us to see his reaction. The narration and the camera quickly crabbing right allows us to see why Ned had reacted the way he did. After Ned's mother has been revived, the narrator begins to explain the rules of his touch, discussing the minute rule. As this rule is explained, an extreme close up of a clock is used to illustrate this concept. A quick montage is next seen, using extreme close ups of Ned's face and a clock as well as a wide shot of Chuck's father watering the garden. This montage along with the narration, sets up the father's impending doom. The face of the clock ticks down the time until death, and young Ned's realization that he is the cause for his death are cut together at a rapid pace. These shots are at most shown for 2 seconds during this montage. This rapid editing builds tension. Ned's mother's second death is slowed down to keep in time with the narration and hammer home that the second touch brings death as well. The mother slumps over dead and is shot from overhead to get her and Ned in frame.

During the funeral scene for Ned's mother and Chuck's father, we wanted the characters to kiss, but couldn't actually do that. To compensate, we used narration to explain that they kissed and shot/reverse shot to imply that they kissed each other based off of the way Chuck and Ned were looking at each other. They are also never in the same shot to subtly suggest distance between the two of them. This becomes a recurring theme as neither of them can touch each other. On Ned's face, the movie quickly cuts to present day Ned, showing the audience who Ned has grown into. Emerson is brought back and we learn that Ned is somewhat of a detective. Narration doesn't explain much about that until later because we wanted to focus on the main conflict of the film. In fact, the narration and nondiegetic music stops once the film fades to Chuck's death scene to make the scene much more serious. There's an insert shot of the briefcase at the passenger seat of Chuck's car to tell the audience early on how important that particular item is. Chuck dies and the camera cuts to a separate shot of Chuck's dead body, using the elevator doors to hide the cut. The elevator doors close again and then open for a smooth match cut to bring us back to the Ned and Chuck, as they see the TV news reveal

tell them what happened. The film cuts to a reaction shot of Ned as dramatic, non diegetic music plays to heighten the seriousness of the moment. The reaction shot uses the dolly zoom effect in order to disorientate the audience's view, similar to how Ned first reacted after seeing Chuck's death on the news. There's an insert of Ned dropping the remote, then shots of him yelling and Emerson yelling back. The yelling was inserted in post because we couldn't yell on set of Sabah's house and also because we thought it would be funnier. The film uses freeze frame to help the narration introduce Emerson. Then a quick montage begins using fades to illustrate the narration and show Ned and Emerson's success. The montage ends with a fade to a low angle shot of Ned. The film uses shot/ reverse shot as Ned and Emerson come up with a plan to confirm whether or not it's Chuck. We cut to a shot of Ned dramatically moving his head from Emerson to the direction of the TV to reserve the tension and drama of the scene. We cut to a scene of Emerson then moving his head dramatically and seeing the bounty for the murderer. The camera quickly pushes in during his reaction shot to add a bit of comedic relief in the scene. The next shot dramatically moves up from a wide low angle shot to a low angle close up of Ned in disbelief. The narration ends the scene to tell us that this where the story begins because we know that Ned will finally be able to see Chuck again.

Chuck's funeral begins with a close up of a figurine of Jesus as the camera slowly moves out. This gives off an inside out setting, as the audience begins to realize that they are watching a funeral. The figurine of Jesus serves as the clue that a funeral is taking place and as a clue to Chuck's own resurrection. The funeral is a montage of people carrying small items and a table filled with religious objects. The non diegetic sounds are meant to evoke sad feelings. The final shot begins out of focus before focusing in. We shot it like that because we thought it'd look cool that way. This cuts to a shot reverse shot of Ned and Emerson joining the funeral and Tommy Wiseau scowling at them. This then cuts to Ned and Emerson debating about whether or not Ned should go in and touch Chuck. This scene is shot over the shoulders of both actors, so it could be a shot reverse shot. Just before Ned enters the room,

Emerson reminds him that he only has a minute to talk to Chuck. This part is shot in a wide angle.

When Ned enters the room, the camera tracks his strides towards Chuck, lowering as Ned kneels to touch Chuck. An insert of Ned touching Chuck's cheek is done to once again highlight his touch. Chuck punches Ned in the stomach in a wide shot, Ned leaves the frame due to the power behind the punch. This is in a wide shot for comedic purposes. As Chuck first questions Ned, the camera shakes to give a disorienting and confused feeling for the audience, similar to how Chuck currently feels. She is immediately disarmed once Ned introduces himself again to reestablish their playful relationship they had as children. Chuck hazily remembers being strangled to death which Ned reaffirms. This is done as a voice over as the audience in which sped up footage of her death is shown. The two continue to discuss their relationship and ask what happens now. This is done in shot reverse shots and lets the audience see their reactions. In between the conversation, the funeral director entering the bathroom to pee before dying. The sound of pee and his dying screams are heard as the audience can only see a door. The sounds of pee were added in post, as a real bathroom wasn't used. This was due to the hallway leaving such little space for the cameraman. We noticed a glaring plothole when we couldn't explain how Chuck was able to get out of the room she was lying dead in. To solve this, we purposefully overexposed the shot of the window so that the audience couldn't see how high it was. We also had Elijah open the window blinds to transition to the outside. After Ned opens window blinds, it cuts to a low angle shot of the window, before moving down into a medium close up of Chuck. This serves as the transition from inside the room, to outside. Emerson questioning Ned is shot over Emerson's shoulder. Ned walks into frame, opens the bathroom door and sees the funeral director dead inside.

Narration returns, as the audience sees Chuck in wide shot with a fence in the foreground, giving it the illusion as if Chuck is being blocked by the fence. The narrator goes over what happened to Chuck after her father's death. This begins a montage of Chuck living at her uncle's house. The montage uses footage of a bird that has been saturated in red to match the

lens of the binoculars. Sped up footage of the uncle and Chuck running up the stairs make the two seem full of energy. Overhead shots of Uncle Ben ironing and mediums of him cleaning the windows are used. Quick shots of Chuck reading books and a book pile covering her face are used to show how much she has read and implies passage of time. When the book pile comes down, present day Chuck is there. Arnold walks into frame, his shady look gives an uneasy feeling and hints at who killed Chuck.

The next scene starts with a long handheld tracking shot, following Ned and Chuck. After Ned closes the door behind them, he walks past Chuck and further away from the camera so that he can't be heard. This was unintentional, but it fit the scene because it allowed us to push in towards the two of them once Chuck keeps him against a wall, showing the romantic tension between the two characters. The shot follows the two from the door to the two sit on the sofa, the camera lowering as they sit. The two begin to discuss their plan for what to do next. Shot reverse shot is used, in a medium close up. The 2nd subject is always of center and slightly out of focus so the audience can focus on who's talking. When Ned sends Chuck to bed, this is done in a wide shot, so when Chuck walks upstairs, we can see her walk in the background as Ned prepares to sleep on the bed. As Chuck reads Ned's scrapbook, faded newspapers fill the screen, leaving Chuck still visible. The newspapers are from Ned's scrapbook and they detail his achievements with Emerson as a detective. Chuck goes back down to confront Ned about his motive. Unfortunately, we lost some of the footage was lost during the conversation between Ned and Chuck, where they discuss why Ned brought Chuck back. To compensate, we consulted the editor (Elijah) of what he wanted to use. We just stuck with shooting inserts of Chuck and Ned's hands and inserted the dialogue in post through ADR. The inserts are shot using shot/reverse shot to suggest distance between the two of them. They become appropriate to the scene by the end of the inserts. As Chuck and Ned can't touch, Chuck has an idea and brings the two gloves. The two hold their gloved hands as romantic, triumphant music swells, before the two disengage awkwardly and go back to sleep. The gloved hands are in a close up together in the same shot, suggesting a drastic change in their

relationship. The two look at each other in a medium. They disengage in the middle of the medium and at the start of the next wide shot. Ned lays down in a overhead shot that slowly crabs left to give space to a split screen, showing Chuck with her hand out, as if touching Ned's own outstretched hand. This shows the distance and inability for the two to get intimate, despite their wants.

The next scene begins in the morning after. Chuck put on one of Ned's outfits and walks around the kitchen in a tracking shot. She goofs around in the kitchen to add to the quirkiness of her character and the world she lives in. Ned enters the scene in the next shot as he reacts. He seems stiff when he first sees Chuck wearing his clothes, but begins to loosen up once the narration enters the scene. His conversation with her is shot using shot/ reverse shot so that we get Jenna's body language which helps add to her character. The narration is simple, and short, not adding to the story. It's just there for comedic effect and to add to that whimsicality that was established earlier in that same scene.

The next scene has Chuck discussing with Ned and Emerson and her want for justice. This is shot as a shot reverse shot, with one angle showing all 3 of the characters, and the other with only Emerson and Ned. Ned and Emerson are reluctant to help her, but Ned opens up to the idea due to Chuck's insistence. Chuck retorts back to Ned as the camera pushes in on her. Emerson pulls Ned off to argue. Emerson realizes that he could have died due to Ned's touch, and smacks him with a roll of newspaper. The sound of the swing and the line, "Bitch, I was in proximity!" was added in post due to lackluster audio on the day of shoot. Their argument is filmed in mediums and shot reverse shot. As Ned recounts the funeral director's death, the camera is pushed in. Chuck interrupts their conversation as Ned walks to the right, giving Chuck space in the frame.

Chuck and Ned decide to pay Arnold a visit. I decided to hesitate before opening the door to give Elijah some room to edit sounds he found appropriate. This is shot with the camera behind Elijah and Bryan in a medium closeup. The scene never reveals much about Arnold, keeping him behind a door when he first enters the scene to show that he's the weaker character in

the scene. He runs to exits the frame from the left side because I couldn't run straight or else I would hit the camera. Ned and Emerson chase after him.

The chase scene begins at a low angle, only seeing Arnold's legs, as Emerson's leg comes into frame, the camera begins to rise up, allowing us to see the full bodies of the 3 in a wide. They run into the background. Next, we see the 3 hop over a small brick wall, only the hands are visible. The camera shakes slightly to add intensity in the next shot. At last, Arnold runs towards the camera, pauses, and runs out of frame as Ned and Emerson come into the foreground. Arnold is hit by a car and Emerson and Ned react all in one shot. Diegetic sound of a car hitting into Arnold was added in post. Ned goes to bring Arnold back to life in a closeup. Arnold wakes up in extreme close up and slightly out of focus, mimicking the disorientation of Arnold. When Arnold refuses to answer, Emerson holds down on Arnold, Arnold's face is not shown, but his moans of pain are heard. After Arnold reveals everything he knows, he punches Ned. He clenches his fist in a closeup and punches Ned in a medium. The sound of a punch landed is added in post and the scene hard cuts to black.

Once Arnold dies, Chuck and Ned plan their next step to solving Chuck's murder. We chose to shoot this using shot/reverse shot again, but this time Ned and Chuck are given their own shot together since their relationship has grown and matured throughout the movie. Emerson is given his own single shot alone because he essentially serves as the third wheel of the group. In post, Elijah added a push in on the pony Bryan was holding. We just thought it was funny. After Chuck questions where they would send belongings of a dead person, non diegetic music is used to enhance the shocking twist that the aunt strangled her. The camera begins with her house being out of focus, her ankle comes into frame, the tattoo clearly there. Only her ankle is in focus as it is in an extreme closeup shot. If you can notice, in the background, we accidentally left a tripod there. The scene hard cuts to black for dramatic effect.

The next scene begins with a wide establishing shot of Iana and Ben's house, as Ned, Chuck, and Emerson enter the frame. I messed up the framing of the shot when Ned, Chuck, and Emerson

all huddle up to plan how they'll go into Iana and Ben's house without Chuck being seen. Right before they huddle up, the shot cuts off Bryan Lee and Jenna. Elijah is the only one who didn't get cut off. That was my bad, but for the rest of the shot, it's okay because they huddle up into view. We had no idea how to direct actors. We just gave them the scene and told them that their role is up to their interpretation. During this scene, Bryan Lee has lots of over exaggerated head movements when he hugs Jenna's character. This is for comedic effect since it contrasts with the sweet and cute moment as the romantic music plays and Ned and Chuck smile.

Uncle Ben crying begins the next scene. It is filmed in a medium, as we see Aunt Iana in the back next to Ben. The shot is held on for a long time as Ben monologues about Chuck. Soon, his voice becomes an echo as Chuck sneaks into the house. The conversation between the 4 resumes, continuing in a shot reverse shot, with 2 actors always in frame. Non diegetic music is used to dramatize their conversation and seems to build to a revelation. Iana leaves the frame as Ben continues. He proceeds to launch himself at Emerson as Ned awkwardly leaves. The non diegetic begins to swell here.

The next scene begins with Ned walking and looking for Iana. It is darkly lit and the absence of music create tension. The camera slightly dollies back as Ned enters the foreground. Iana appears with a bag and pulls him back into the background. Non diegetic action music begins to play. Chuck pushes Iana to the left of the frame. I was really anxious that the students watching the scene where Uncle Ben stops Iana would ask how Ben didn't see Chuck. That's a really huge plot hole. Luckily they didn't. After Iana grabs a pencil defensively, the suitcase hits her head and stops her. We didn't actually throw it. We just had someone hold it out of the frame and push it towards her head into the frame as if it were thrown. The camera then does a whip pan to Uncle Ben, who we assume was responsible for throwing the suitcase because of the whip pan. After Ned explains that Iana tried to kill Chuck, the film cuts to a wide shot of Iana in the background in focus and the suitcase in the foreground out of focus. In that same shot, the camera goes in focus of the suitcase, changing the audience's main subject to the shot. The



shot then goes out of focus as Elijah's character picks up the suitcase and takes out the handkerchiefs. The next shot has Emerson run through the door, enter the scene, and stop next to Uncle Ben.

After Emerson runs into the room, the narrator comes back again after a long absence. The narration is heard over a montage; non diegetic music plays as well to help dramatize the revelation. The montage begins with a short tracking shot of Iana on the phone while Uncle Ben irons in the background. Quick closeups of Arnold, Iana, and the suitcase are used. The suitcase is open, and in post, items that Iana would sneak are added. They were added in post as the props were not on hand and wouldn't have been able to be shot in one take. The narrator explains Iana as this montage happens.

In the last conversation between Chuck and Ned, I accidentally tilted the wide shot. In post, Elijah had to tilt the shot the other way so that it was balanced. The frame is still slightly messed up, but the subjects within the frame are restored. It was shot in a wide to suggest the distance between the two characters, but as the scene progresses, the shots get closer and closer until the scene ends with an insert shot of Chuck and Ned's hands wearing gloves as they hold each other. We used reaction shots to our advantage. During the shot of Elijah reacting to Jenna's lines all we needed to record was Elijah's face smiling and occasionally laughing. We were able to mute the audio in post and replace it with Jenna's lines in addition to dramatic non diegetic music. This also helped the actors so they wouldn't have to memorize every single line. Once Elijah's character says, "I think I have," the film cuts to a shot of Bryan at a different location given the lighting and the decorations. We just cut them together to suggest that he was in the scene and make him serve as a friendly, comedic relief. The next shot starts with a muted voiceover to help convince the audience that Bryan Lee was actually in the scene. This shot actually starts with a blooper, but Jenna and Elijah kept rolling. The blooper actually helped contribute to their playful relationship they've had throughout the film no matter how romantic it got. The camera pushes in to remove all the distance they've had throughout the entire film. They take out their

gloves and the film cuts to an insert shot of them holding hands. They moved their hands towards the camera for a smooth match cut transition to the Disneyland montage.

The last scene shows a montage of Chuck and Ned on a date to Disneyland, as Chuck couldn't have gone before. It begins with a transition of their hands swinging after the previous scene ended with their gloves. This shot is at a low angle to clearly show the location. Much of the shots are handheld, medium closeups, closeups to give the scene a much more intimate feeling. This was done to make their date seem much more natural and heartwarming. In one shot, we see their shadows holding hands. This was actually because Elijah wanted more literary allusions, and I remembered a scene from *Beloved* where the shadows of the characters are holding hands to suggest the rebuilding of a community after slavery. In this context, we can't see their gloves, so it's as if they're actually holding hands as a cute couple. In another shot, they hold up shirts that have a famous quote from *The Empire Strikes Back*. The quotes, "I love you." and "I know." describe the two's current relationship. The two fighting with lightsabers parallels their time as kids. The last shot is stable, matching their now stable relationship.