

CHARACTER DOLLY

What does it look like?

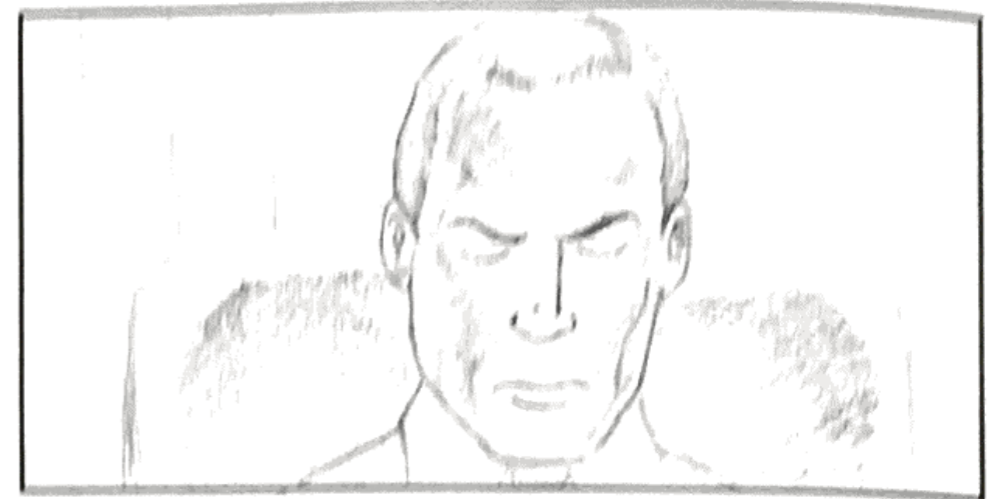
A *Character Dolly* is a forward camera movement that focuses on one or more characters in a scene. It is commonly noted in screenplays as "Push In."

The camera starts out with a wide shot of an actor and is pushed forward, reaching for the actor's close-up and beyond. This cinematic technique adds tension to the scene, acting like a magnifying glass on the character's emotional state. The actor doesn't have to be saying anything for the *Character Dolly* to be effective.

The speed of camera movement can greatly alter the emotional effect of this technique. A very slow *Character Dolly* will subtly highlight the scene's emotional qualities. More flamboyant films use a faster version for a comic or exciting effect.

Where can I see it?

Perhaps the most recognizable personification of the *Character Dolly* is in *The Godfather: Part II*. To end the film, Coppola simply moves the camera slowly towards a contemplative Michael Corleone, leaving the audience with a lasting impression of the character. Steven Spielberg uses this technique in many of his films.



Character Dolly

DISCOVERY

What does it look like?

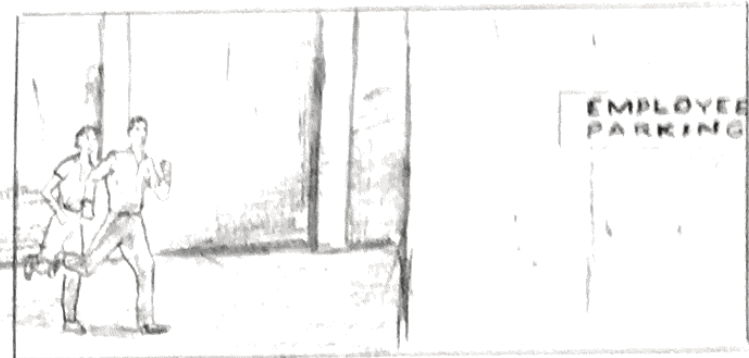
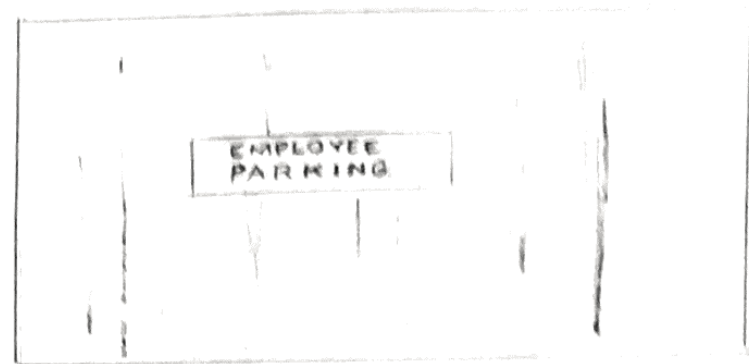
A *Discovery* includes any shot that begins away from the action and then a camera movement that reveals a scene.

A common example of this technique occurs when the camera begins behind an obstacle that obscures an audience's view. The camera then moves out from behind that obstacle to discover the true subject of interest.

Another example of *Discovery* is a camera shot that starts out looking at nothing in particular; then, gradual movement reveals the action.

Where can I see it?

In *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, the camera discovers Clint Eastwood by moving across the barrel of his rifle to his face. In *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the camera reveals a bedroom and then moves to discover the lovers in bed. In *Goodfellas*, the camera swings around from the back of Ray Liotta's head to discover his face as he testifies in court.



Discovery

PULL BACK RETRACTION

What does it look like?

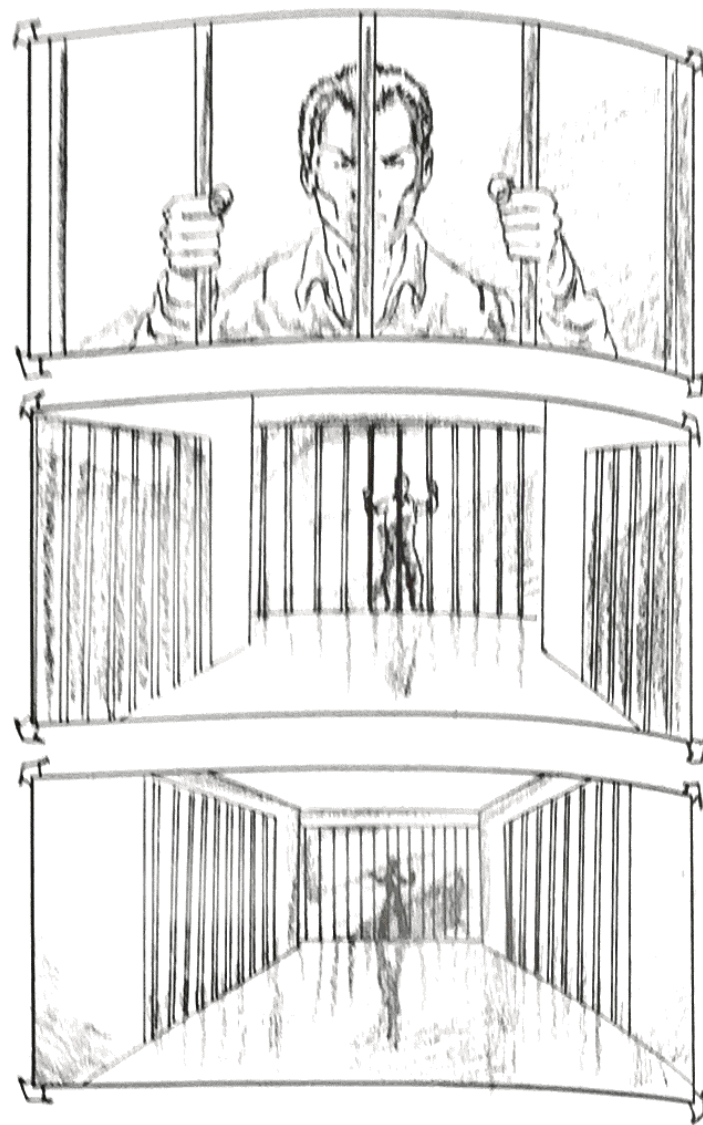
With *Pull Back Retraction*, the camera faces a scene and moves backwards.

The purpose of the camera movement is not to reveal anything new, but to distance the audience emotionally from the actions occurring onscreen.

Where can I see it?

Pull Back Retraction can be seen in *The Bride Wore Black*. The camera pulls back as one of Julie's victims suffocates in a storage compartment. As the camera pulls back, the trapped man's hopelessness is emphasized. At the end of *La Strada*, the camera pulls back from the Strong Man crying at the beach. This allows us to distance ourselves gradually from the character, allowing the film to end. This technique is similar to slowly turning down the volume to end a song.

In *The Graduate*, the camera pulls back from Ben at the bottom of the swimming pool as he contemplates his future. At the end of *Poltergeist*, the camera slowly pulls back from the television set that has been left outside.



Pull Back Retraction

PULL BACK REVEAL

What does it look like?

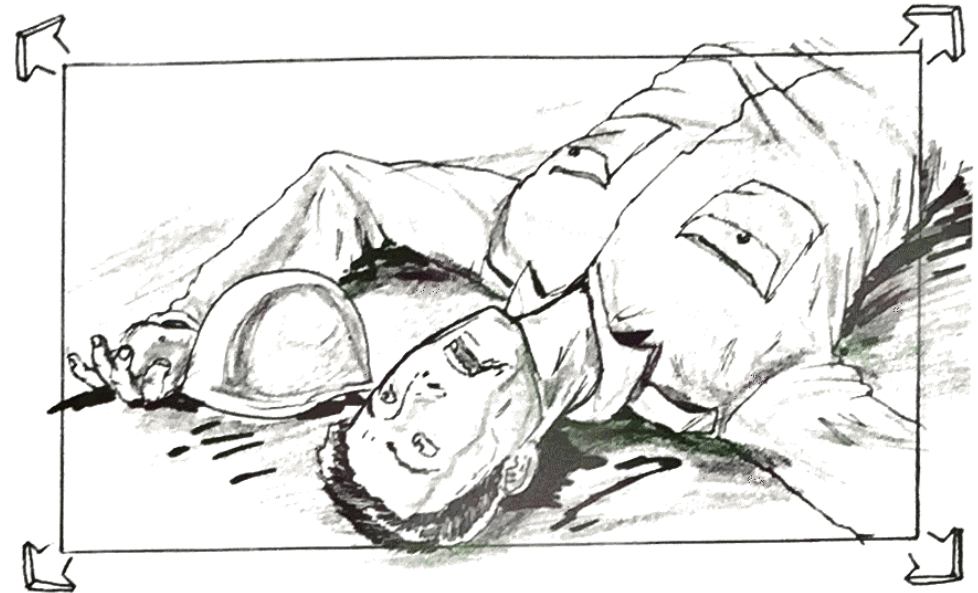
With *Pull Back Reveal*, the camera moves backwards to reveal the true extent of a scene.

This technique gradually expands our understanding of a character's surroundings by revealing more of the character's world as the camera moves farther away.

Where can I see it?

In *Goodfellas*, the camera pulls back from a cross on Ray Liotta's neck as he arrives for a date. In *Cinema Paradiso*, the camera pulls back from a burned out movie theater to reveal the crowd looking on.

In *The Exorcist*, the camera pulls back from a mother yelling on the phone to reveal her daughter listening in the hallway. At the end of *Citizen Kane*, the camera pulls back to reveal the vast amount of possessions that Kane collected over the years.



Pull Back Reveal

SPIN AROUND

What does it look like?

Spin Around involves circling the camera around the scene in progress, creating a dizzying kinetic effect. You might also hear this referred to as a “360° Dolly.”

Spin Around is simple, and it adds positive motion and energy to a scene. The camera doesn't have to move very fast for this to be effective.

Where can I see it?

In *The Untouchables*, the camera *Spins Around* the characters at dinner after their first successful raid. In *The Color of Money*, the camera *Spins Around* the pool table as the characters compete.

In *The Matrix*, the camera *Spins Around* a telephone as the characters are transported into their virtual existence. You can also see this in *The Crow*, when Sarah talks to Eric in his apartment after he's been resurrected.



Spin Around

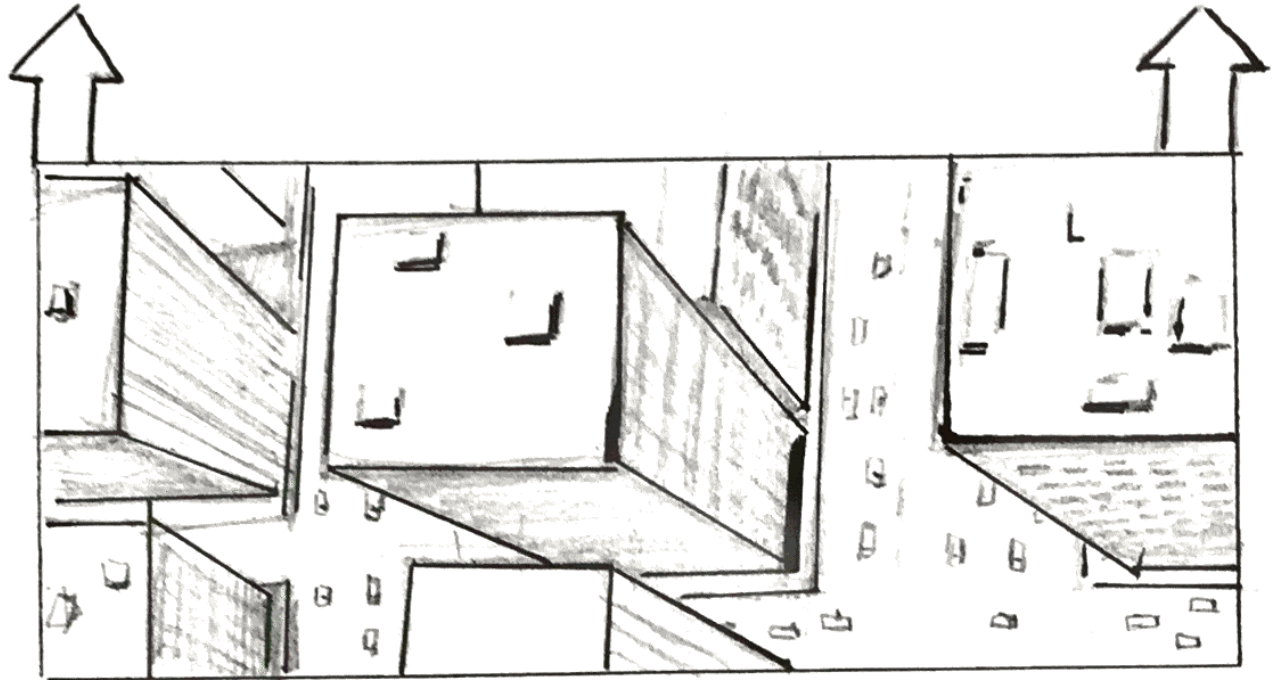
FLY OVER

What does it look like?

Fly Over is a technique in which the camera is carried in a flying aircraft—an airplane, a helicopter, a blimp, or a balloon.

Fly Over is a grand way to show entire landscapes, covering more area, with more maneuverability than that of any ground-based camera. This technique is commonly used for establishing shots, to begin and end films, and to follow moving objects from far above.

When *Fly Over* is used over large cities, the camera often points straight down. This emphasizes the height of the buildings below.



Fly Over

Where can I see it?

In *The Shining*, you can see a helicopter's shadow on the hillside as *Fly Over* is used to follow Jack's car driving along the road. In *Scream 2*, the camera flies up from ground level to the sky to end the film. In *The Replacement Killers*, the camera flies over the city. *Fly Over* is used extensively in *Braveheart*.

DEPTH DOLLY

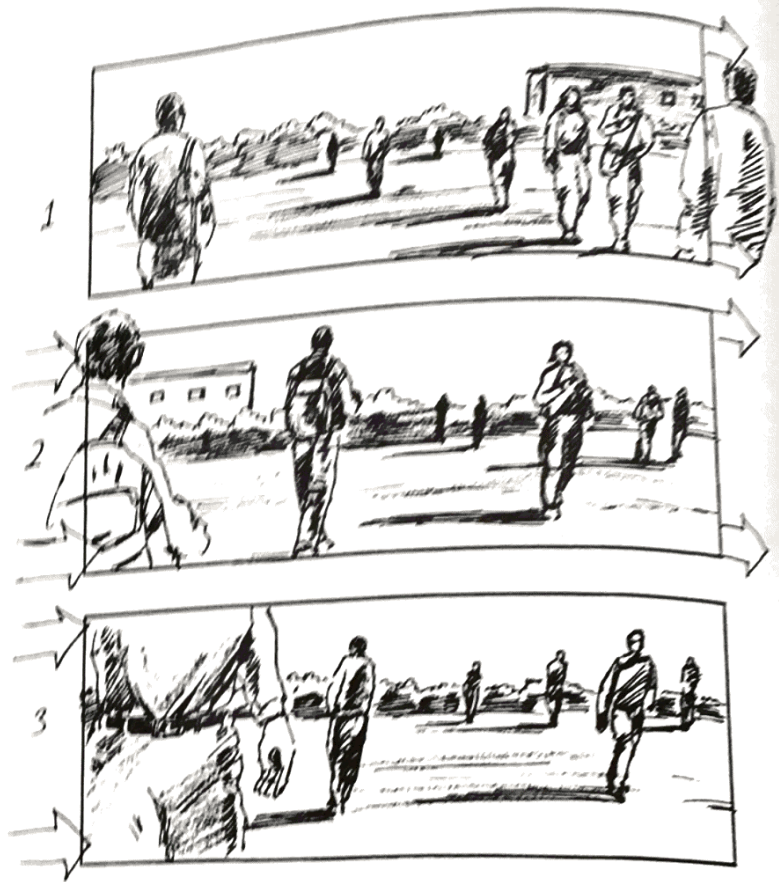
What does it look like?

A *Depth Dolly* is a camera movement that is perpendicular to a scene's line of action, increasing the sense of depth.

Characters move toward the camera and away from the camera. To further emphasize depth, the camera will occasionally move in front of objects that temporarily obscure the camera's view. These foreground objects contrast with objects far in the background.

Where can I see it?

Depth Dolly can be seen as the students run across campus in *Good Will Hunting*.



Depth Dolly

DOLLY UP DOLLY DOWN

What does it look like?

When a camera moves up or down, the camera moves vertically. This is usually used in a close-up shot. Most dolly shots show characters on a set.

Dolly Up is used to emphasize a character's height and vastness. *Dolly Down* can be used to emphasize a character's smallness or a dramatic event.

Where can I see it?

At the beginning of the film, the camera is used as the camera moves up. At the end of the film, the camera moves down. *Dolly Down* shows the camera moving down by. Near the end of the film, the camera moves up toward the forest.

DOLLY UP, DOLLY DOWN

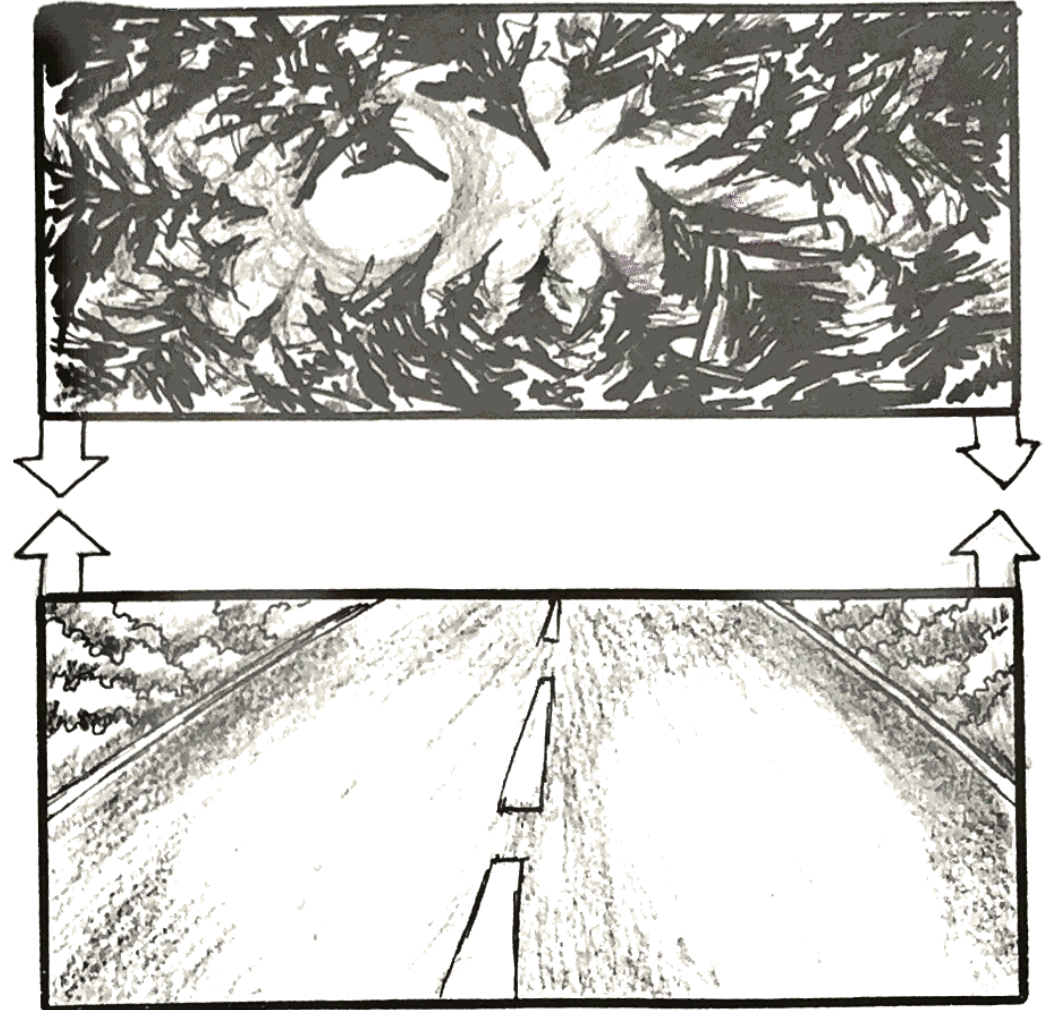
What does it look like?

When a camera is moved around, the angle of the camera makes an impact on the meaning of the shot. Most dollies are fairly level as they follow the characters onscreen.

Dolly Up and *Dolly Down* are specialized techniques. When the camera is moved, it's tilted unusually high or low. *Dolly Up* emphasizes the height and vastness of a character's surroundings. *Dolly Down* can transform the ground rolling by into a cinematic event.

Where can I see it?

At the beginning of La Femme Nikita, *Dolly Down* is used as the camera traverses the streets of France. At the end of Terminator 2: Judgment Day, *Dolly Down* shows the seemingly endless highway flowing by. Near the beginning of Rashomon, *Dolly Up* looks up toward the trees as the woodsman walks through the forest.



Dolly Up, Dolly Down

SPIN LOOK

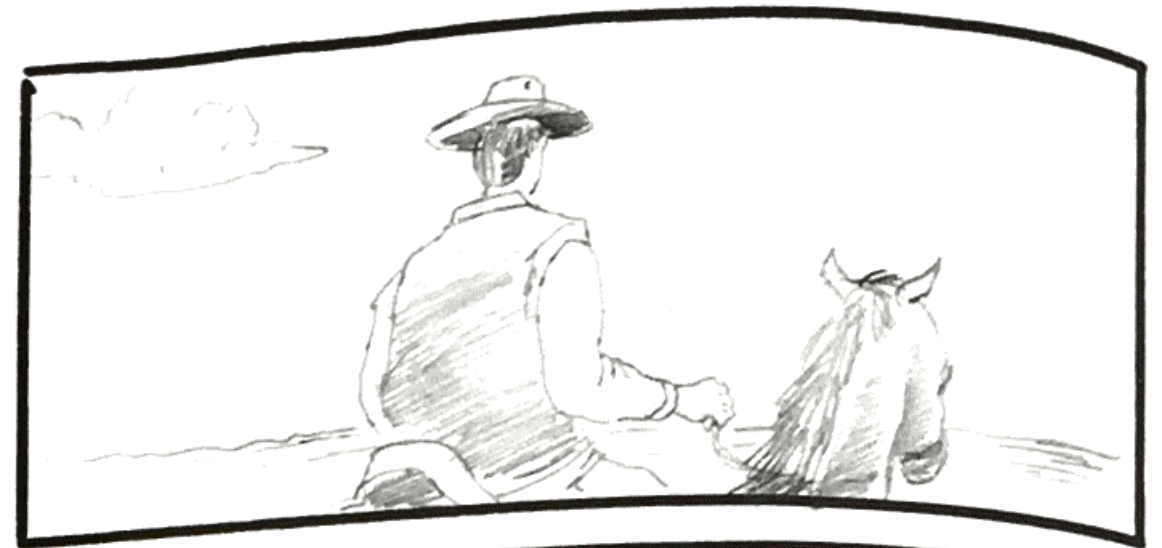
What does it look like?

With *Spin Look*, the camera spins around an actor to get a glimpse of what he is looking at. The camera may also begin by viewing the object, then spin back around to view the character.

Spin Look is an alternative to the popular technique of cutting away when a character looks offscreen.

Where can I see it?

In Tombstone, the camera spins around Wyatt Earp as he looks toward a group of horses approaching. *Spin Look* is used several times in After Hours, as Paul explores New York City at night.



Spin Look

TRACK THROUGH SOLID

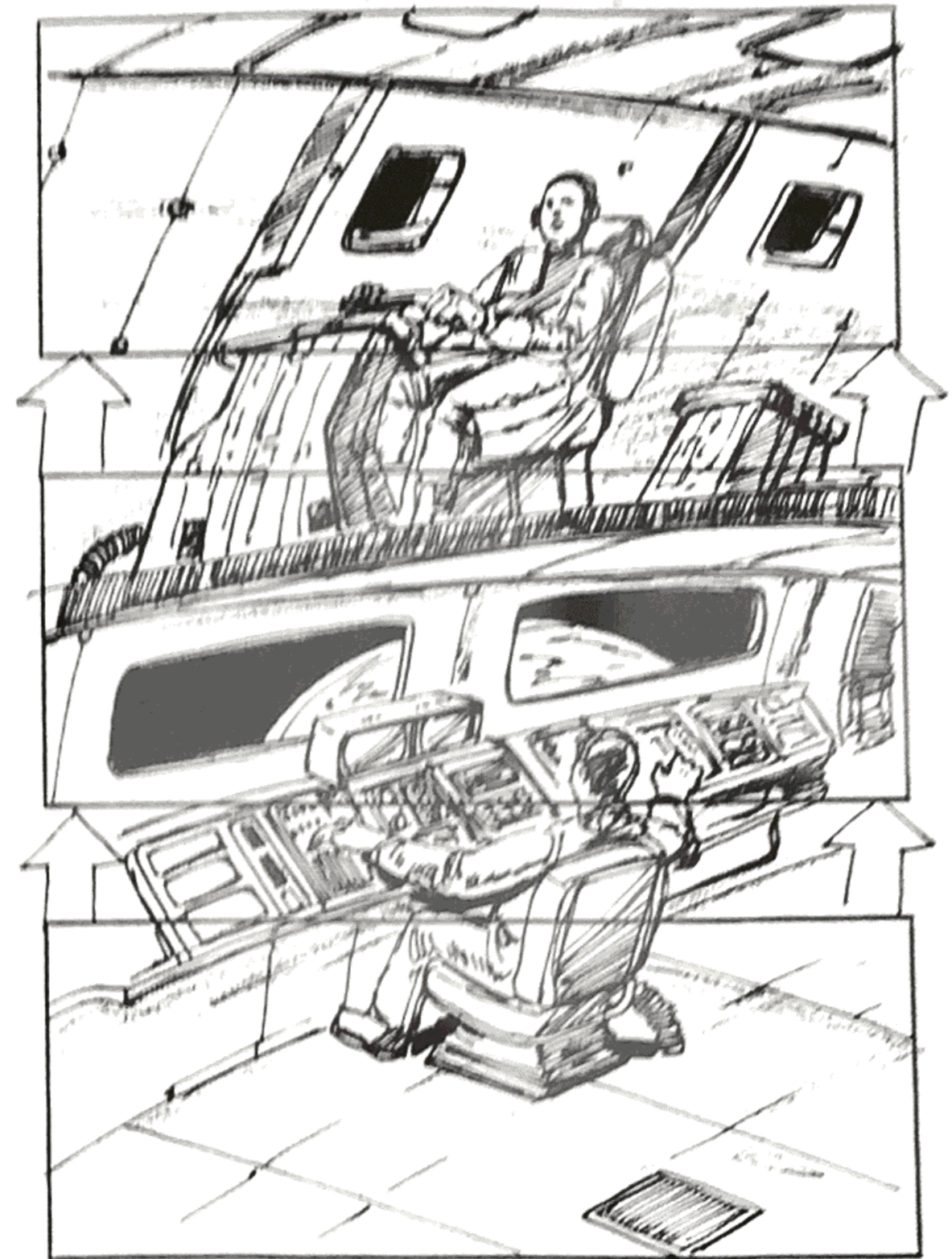
What does it look like?

A filmmaker can use *Track Through Solid* to give the appearance of tracking through a solid object.

To create this effect, an object is cut open so that the camera can pan, tilt, or move in front of the cutaway portion. When this technique is used, it seems as if the camera has accomplished something impossible, but it is actually a rather straightforward visual trick.

Where can I see it?

Watch *Blade Runner*. When Deckard enters the building, the camera cranes down “through” the roof of the police office. What actually happens is that the office is a cutaway set, and the camera cranes down in front of it. Most audiences will never notice this strange transition. You can also see this technique in *Bound*, when the camera moves over a wall that divides the two apartments.



Track Through Solid

VERTIGO

What does it look like?

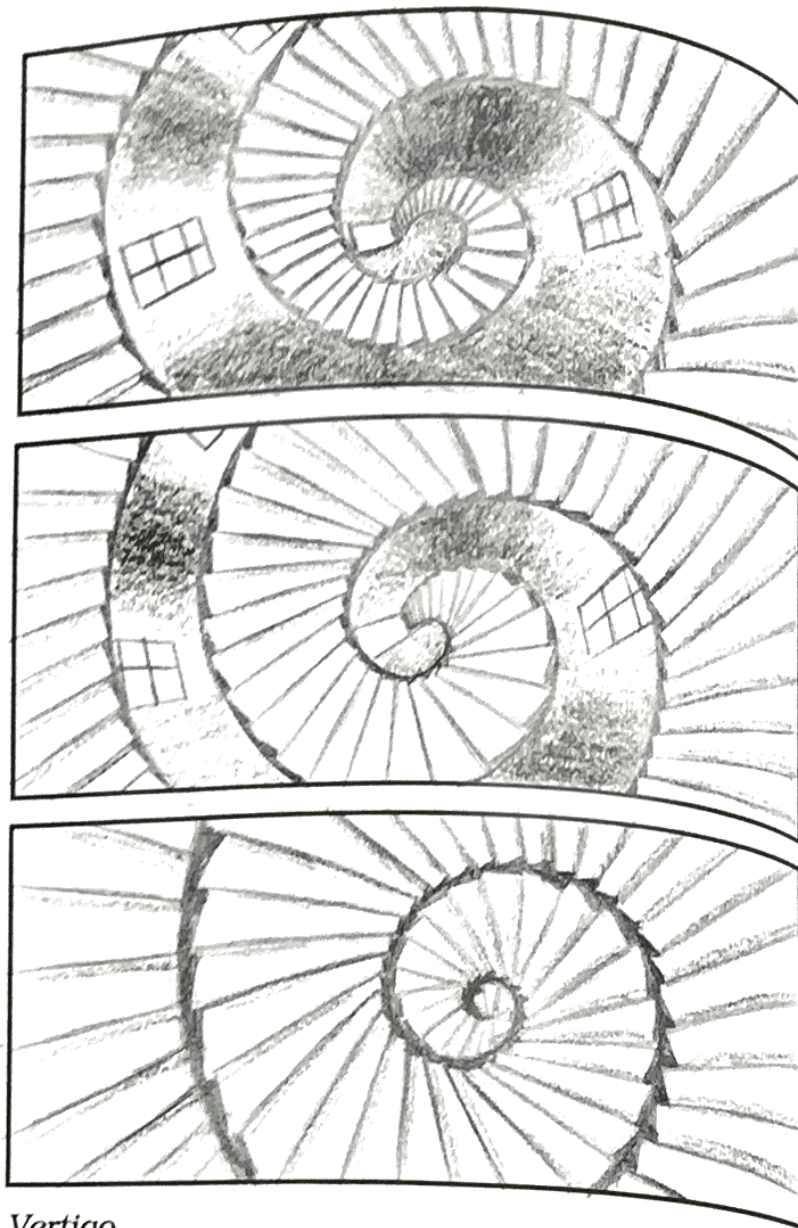
Commonly referred to as a "Dolly Zoom," *Vertigo* exaggerates perspective, but keeps objects in the center of the frame at the same apparent size. This is achieved by moving the camera forward while zooming out at the same time, or by moving the camera back and zooming in.

This technique is used to create the effects of dizziness, confusion, ecstasy, boredom, or surprise.

Where can I see it?

Watch Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, in the end where James Stewart tries desperately to conquer his fear of heights. In *Jaws*, when Martin Brody sees the shark attack at the beach. In *The Mask*, Cameron Diaz's sexy character steps into the room, and Jim Carrey and his co-star suffer the effects of *Vertigo*.

A very slow *Vertigo* is used near the end of *Goodfellas*, when Ray Liotta and Robert DeNiro sit across from each other in the diner.



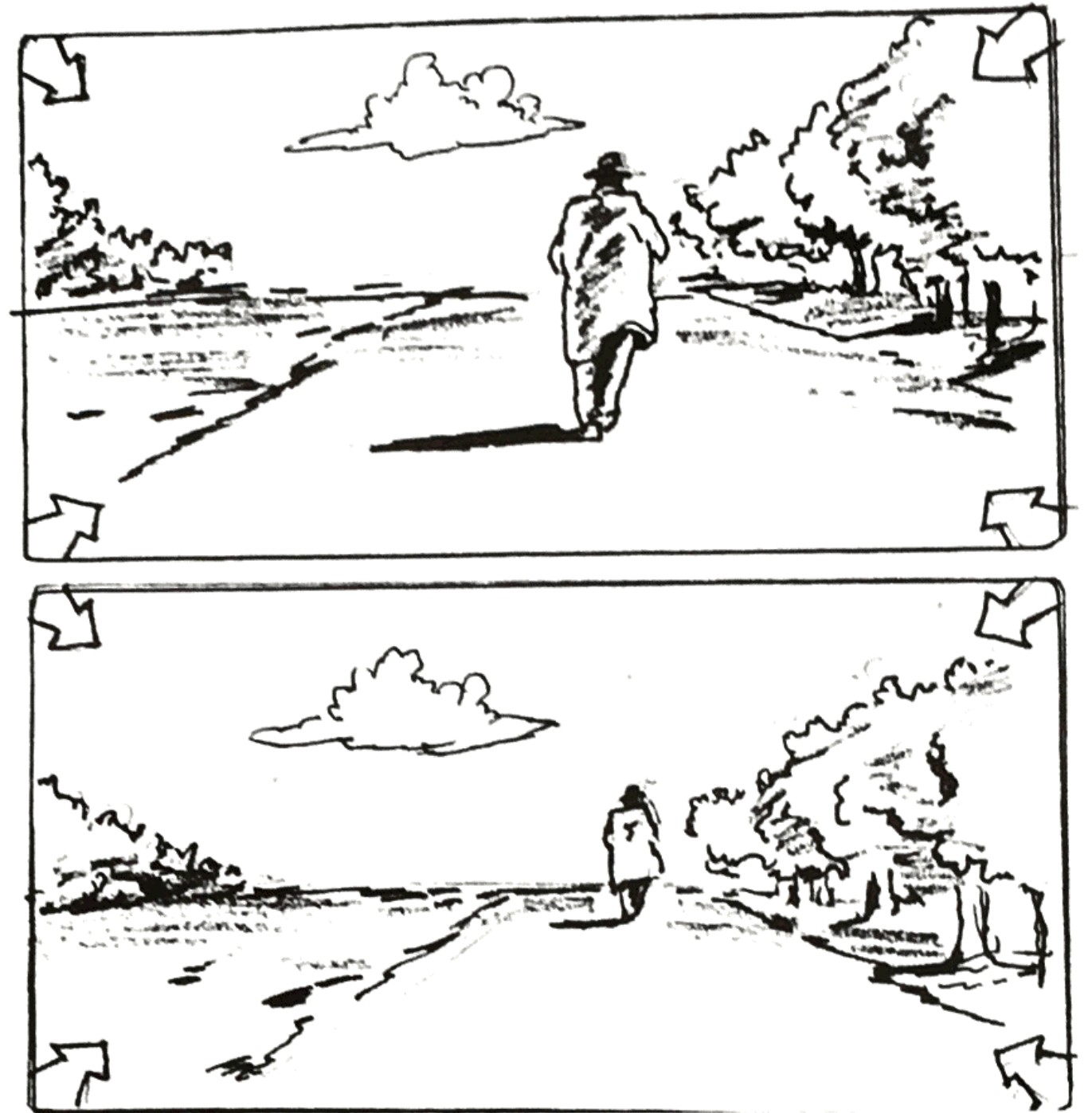
Vertigo

EXPAND DOLLY

What does it look like?

With *Expand Dolly*, the camera follows an actor who is moving away. As the camera moves forward, the actor walks faster than the camera— distancing himself from the audience.

Expand Dolly adds finality to a scene, and is a nice setup for a transition or a fade.



Expand Dolly

CONTRACT DOLLY

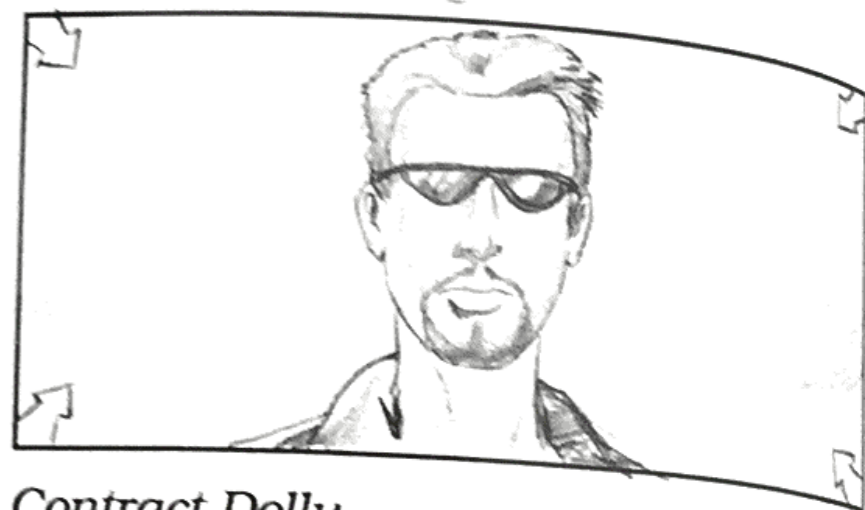
What does it look like?

A *Contract Dolly* moves the camera forward as an actor walks toward the camera at the same time, making a simple action more dramatic. Combining two opposite actions increases the intensity of the character's forward movement.

If the camera can't be moved, an equally dramatic effect can be achieved when the actor walks toward the camera, and the camera tilts up to keep the actor's close-up in frame.

Where can I see it?

Contract Dolly is used during an airport chase scene in *Face/Off*. In *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a distraught Indiana Jones runs up to the camera, demonstrating a modified version of this technique.



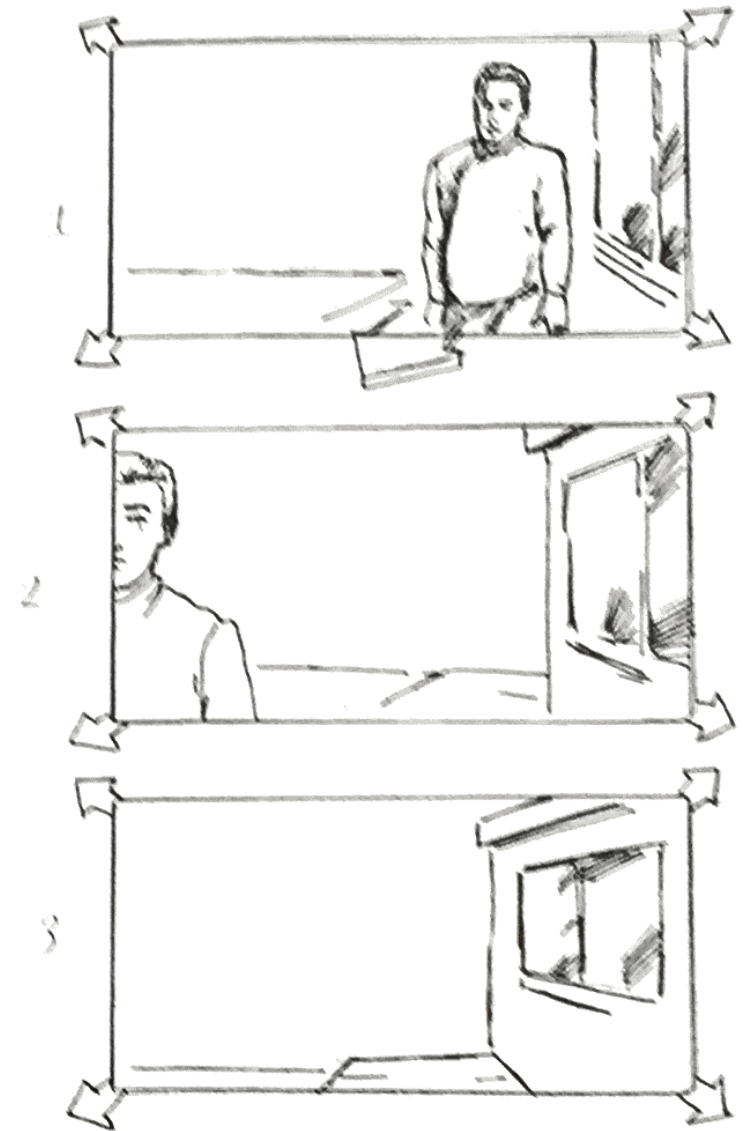
Contract Dolly

COLLAPSE DOLLY

What does it look like?

Collapse Dolly starts out with the camera moving backwards while facing an actor. The actor walks faster than the camera, eventually overtaking it. The actor then passes out of frame to the left or right.

Collapse Dolly is a good technique for adding finality to a scene.



Collapse Dolly

EXERCISES

- **Try to think of unique ways to move the camera.** Examples: merry-go-rounds, swings, inside a car, on roller coaster, walking along, on top of a skateboard, on a bike, lowered to the ground, or dancing. Each and every one of these movements can add its own unique kinetic energy to a scene.
- **Build your own dolly.** It can be as simple as a board with wheels. You might use something that you already have: a wheelchair, a stroller, a bicycle. Or, simply walk along to visualize dolly movements as you look around.
- **Practice combining movements.** Examples: camera moves forward and actors move toward the camera; camera moves backward and actors move past the camera; camera moves sideways and actors move away from the camera. Learn how different combinations of movement can be used to affect the audience.
- **Practice the Track Through Solid technique.** You might do this by using a table that can be split into halves, or a thin wall that divides two separate scenes.