THE SILENT FALL

A PROJECT REPORT

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE

OF

MASTER OF DESIGN

IN

VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Submitted by

ISHA MANAV
(2K23/MDVC/04)

Under the supervision of

PROF. NEERAJ RATHEE

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN
DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
(Formerly Delhi College of Engineering)
Bawana Road, Delhi-110042
MAY,2025

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, **Isha Manav**, Roll no. **2K23/MDVC/04**, student of **M.Des (Visual Communication),** hereby declare that the project dissertation titled **"THE SILENT FALL"**, which is submitted by me to the Department of Design, Delhi Technological University, Delhi in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Design, is original and not copied from any source without proper citation. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, or other similar title or recognition.

Place: Rohini, New Delhi   (Isha Manav)

Date: January 2025 (For a Period of 4 Months)

DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN

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<u>CERTIFICATE</u>

I hereby certify that the Project Dissertation titled **"THE SILENT FALL"**, which is submitted by **Isha Manav,** Roll No**. 2K23/MDVC/04**, Department of Design, Delhi Technological University, Delhi, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Design, is a record of the project work carried out by the student under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, this work has not been submitted in part or full for any Degree or Diploma to this University or elsewhere.

Place: New Delhi   (PROF. NEERAJ RATHEE)

Date:

The Silent Fall

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<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</u>

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My heartfelt thanks go to my friends, whose constant encouragement, creative input, and emotional support played a vital role in pushing me through every phase of this project.

Last but not least, I am deeply grateful to my family. Their patience, understanding

and unwavering support have been the foundation of this journey. Their belief in me kept me going even through the toughest times.

ABSTRACT

This thesis documents the creation of *The Silent Fall*, a Black-and-white manga that explores a post-apocalyptic world transformed by a mysterious force known as *The Veil,* which causes the mass disappearance of humanity. Through the journey of Aisha–a lone survivor searching for answers–the story investigates themes of isolation, survival, and the psychological effects of a crumbling reality. Inspired by Eastern and Western horror influences such as *Tomie, A Quiet Place, and The Last of Us*, the project blends symbolic monster design, emotional storytelling, and atmospheric visuals. By integrating traditional manga techniques with contemporary fears, *The Silent Fall* aims to deepen the role of comics as a medium for expressing psychological and social challenges in visual communication design.

Table of Content

Table of Figures

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Genesis

The genesis of this thesis lies in my imagination and a deep fascination with post-apocalyptic fiction, horror narratives, and the psychological impact of isolation. The idea for *The Silent Fall* began unexpectedly during a journey. While traveling one day, I passed through an isolated and partially ruined place — abandoned, silent, and unsettlingly still. In that moment, a thought struck me: *what if everyone in the world simply disappeared?* That brief encounter with desolation ignited my imagination. I began visualizing a world stripped of human presence, where silence replaced the chaos of daily life, and the remaining few struggled not just to survive, but to understand what had happened. From this seed, *The Silent Fall* was born — a story that explores absence, memory, and the haunting remnants of humanity through visual storytelling.

Influenced by cinematic horror such as *A Quiet Place* and *The Last of Us*, and inspired by the narrative depth and visual tone of manga artists like Junji Ito and Tsutomu Nihei, I set out to develop a character-driven manga that could exist somewhere between horror, poetry, and introspection.

1.2 Project Brief

The Silent Fall is a black-and-white manga that unfolds in a post-apocalyptic setting where most of humanity has mysteriously disappeared due to a phenomenon called *The Veil*. Through the eyes of the protagonist Aisha, the story explores the nature of survival in a surreal and increasingly hostile world. Along the way, she encounters other survivors — Ravi, a gruff yet tender protector, and Zoya, a quiet child with an uncanny sense of perception.

As the trio journeys through a hauntingly empty world over the course of six days, they encounter strange monsters, distorted memories, and truths that blur the lines between reality and hallucination. The story is presented in manga format with a slow pace, atmospheric composition, and psychological tension.

1.3 Objective

- To explore themes of isolation, fear, grief, and connection through horror.

- To construct a complete visual narrative using manga techniques and horror visual language.

- To blend Western horror sensibilities with Eastern manga aesthetics.

- To experiment with character-driven storytelling, minimal dialogue, and surreal world-building.

- To lay the foundation for a longer series or digital/scrolling adaptation.

CHAPTER 2: TARGET AUDIENCE

2.1 Primary Audience

The Silent Fall primarily targets readers of psychological horror and post-apocalyptic fiction aged 16–35, particularly fans of manga and graphic novels who appreciate emotionally resonant storytelling.

2.2 Secondary Audience

Secondary audiences include horror film enthusiasts, manga competition curators (e.g., Kyoto International Manga Award), and digital manga readers on platforms such as Webtoon, Tapas, Webcomics or INKR.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Horror in Manga & Western Media

I studied works like *The Last of Us*, *A Quiet Place*, and *The Mist* to understand pacing and emotional storytelling in horror. From Junji Ito's *Tomie* and *Uzumaki*, I learned how psychological horror could be expressed through grotesque visuals and minimal exposition.

Elements from kaidan (ghost stories) and yōkai folklore contribute to the eerie atmosphere and character designs. Incorporation of Western legends, such as the Wendigo, adds layers of horror and connects the narrative to a broader mythological context.

Figure 1 japanese kaiden(ghost stories as ukiyo-e print

3.2 Symbolism and Mood

Eastern horror emphasizes atmosphere, silence, and ambiguity, while Western horror often leans into threat and spectacle. This project blends both by using silence

and ambiguity to unsettle, while also including visible threats (The Hollowed, The Mawlings) as symbolic manifestations of fear.

The Veil serves as a metaphor for the boundary between reality and the unknown, drawing from various cultural interpretations of liminality.

3.3 Visual References

- *Tomie* (Junji Ito) – for emotional horror and recurring dread

Figure 2 tomie (junji ito)
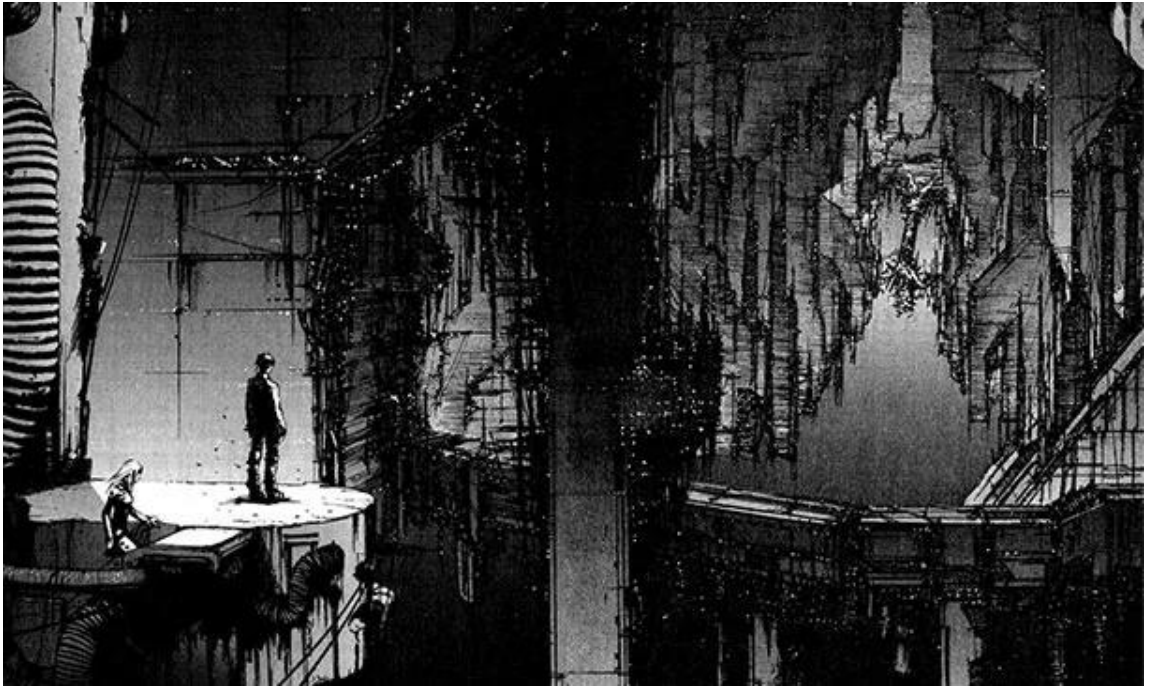
- *Blame!* (Tsutomu Nihei) – for scale and emptiness

Figure 3 blame!

- *Pan's Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro) – for symbolism in creature design

Figure 4 Pan's Labyrinth

- *Attack on Titan* – for environmental storytelling and monsters

Figure 5 Attack on Titan

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

At the beginning of the project, I was unsure which theme or subject I should pursue for my manga. I explored several ideas, but none of them felt substantial enough to form the core of a visual narrative. The turning point occurred when I came across a desolate and partially ruined place while traveling — the haunting silence and abandonment of that space inspired the fundamental question that would shape this project: *What if everyone in the world disappeared?*

From that moment, I became determined to create a comic based on a post-apocalyptic scenario that explored themes of loss, silence, and survival. To build a

solid foundation, I conducted thorough research. I studied manga such as *Tomie* and *Uzumaki* by Junji Ito to understand how emotional and psychological horror could be conveyed through atmosphere and subtle storytelling. I also examined *Attack on Titan* for its use of environmental storytelling and spatial scale. For narrative and tonal references, I turned to cinematic works like *A Quiet Place* and *The Last of Us*, focusing on how these stories built emotional arcs and tension in a quiet, decaying world.

Once the research phase was complete, I began developing the story. I focused first on writing enough of the plot to establish the central narrative, characters, and world-building. After finalizing the core story elements, I moved on to designing the characters needed to support the plot. This involved visual exploration through sketches and iterations, ensuring that each character reflected both their internal arc and role within the environment.

Simultaneously, I developed a plot timeline and structure that would keep readers engaged across the story's six-day timeline. The pacing of the story was designed to alternate between moments of intense tension and quieter, emotional beats, allowing readers to experience both fear and reflection.

After completing the scripting and character development, I transitioned into the visual execution phase. I began by planning the panel layout, referencing traditional Japanese manga formatting, which reads from right to left. I collected environmental and cinematic references to guide the background designs, aiming to evoke a sense of vastness and isolation. Each panel was carefully composed with a cinematic mindset, thinking in terms of shot types, depth, and perspective to bring dynamism to the 2D format.

My illustration process followed several consistent stages:
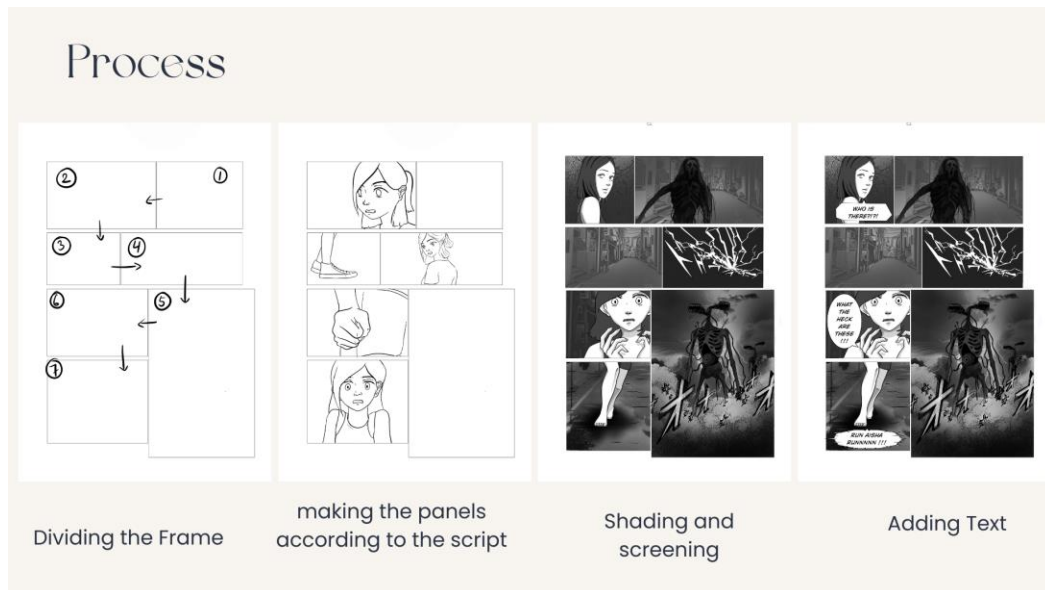
- **Penciling and inking the character panel.**

Figure 6 Process of inking

- **Designing and integrating the background**, using reference perspective grids to match spatial depth.
- **Coloring the elements** while maintaining a grayscale palette.
- **Applying screen tones** by changing the blending mode of the colored layer to "Screen Tone – Cross X L4," emulating the halftone effect used in print manga.
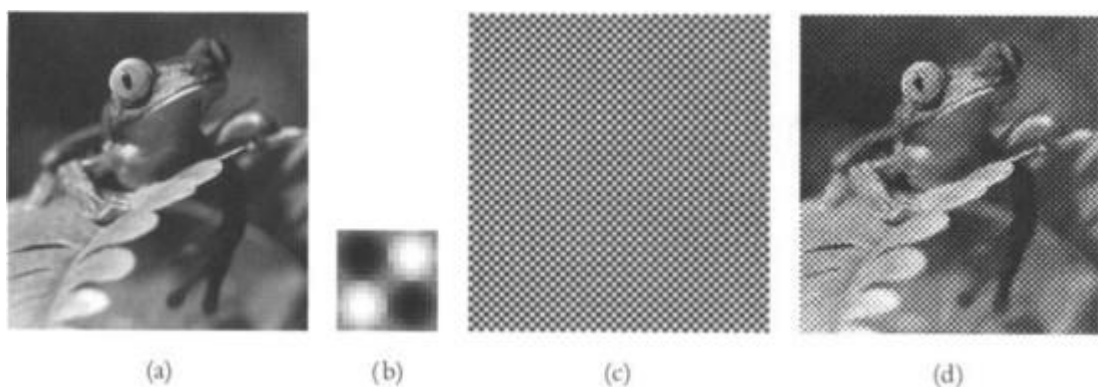

Figure 7 Screen Tone- Cross X L4

- **Adding manga balloons** for dialogues and narration boxes.

Figure 8 Dialogues and Narration Boxes/Balloon
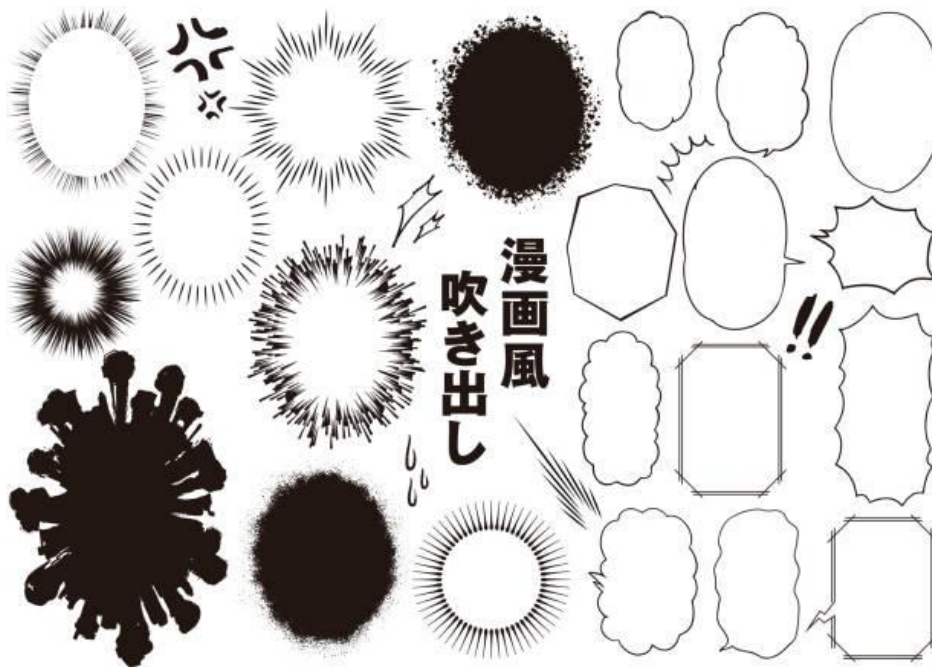
- **Inserting text** using the manga-standard font **"CC Wild Words Roman"**,

  which balances clarity with stylistic authenticity.

Figure 9 CC WILD WORDS ROMAN FONT

This systematic yet flexible workflow helped maintain consistency across the visual

narrative, while also allowing room for experimentation and revision. For all the work,

i used the software, Ibis Paint X.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH

5.1 Post-Apocalyptic & Horror Narrative Studies

I explored how depopulation affects the psyche — how emptiness, rather than violence, can become the source of horror. The disappearance of people in *The Silent Fall* is metaphorical as much as literal. *The Last of Us* inspired world-building, emotional weight, and character-driven storytelling. The manga utilises stark black-and-white imagery, unsettling character designs, and repetitive motifs to evoke a sense of dread. Drawing inspiration from *Tomie*, the manga incorporates psychological horror elements and visual techniques to create an atmosphere of unease.

5.2 Sound and Silence

From *A Quiet Place*, I learned how silence could serve as a narrative tool. In my story, the presence of noise (monsters attracted to sound) and the value of silence help shape survival tension and pacing.

5.3 Character Psychology

Each character's arc reflects a psychological response to trauma:

- Aisha: determination and survivor's guilt
- Ravi: grief turned to protectiveness
- Zoya: innocence blending with uncanny insight

CHAPTER 6: STORY SYNOPSIS

6.1 Setting

The story is set over six days. Each day represents a stage in emotional recovery: shock, denial, grief, fear, hope, and realisation. Dialogue is sparse, allowing visuals to convey mood. A World Enshrouded by The Veil, A mysterious, dense fog that surrounded the earth and caused a large percentage of the people to abruptly and mysteriously vanish. Cities lie in ruins, nature reclaims urban spaces, and technology stands abandoned. The environment is both hauntingly beautiful and perilously unpredictable. The pervasive silence is broken only by the whispers of the wind and the distant echoes of unseen entities, creating an ever-present sense of dread.

6.2 Aisha's Journey

Aisha, a strong and reflective young lady, sets out on a mission to learn the truth about The Veil and what happened to her family. As Aisha travels through the barren earth, she comes across pockets of survivors, each of whom has a unique tale of hope and grief. There are many obstacles in her way, both internal and external. As Horrible beings referred to as "Watchers" search for the remaining people. Aisha makes shaky relationships along the way, discovering the importance of trust and the intricacies of human nature in a broken world.

6.3 Story

The Silent Fall

Prologue

The world had gone quiet.

When Aisha woke up that morning, she felt something unnatural in the air. The silence was thick, heavy, pressing against her ears like a suffocating whisper. It wasn't just the absence of sound; it was the presence of something deeper— something wrong.

She stepped outside her small apartment, only to find the city of Uttur draped in an eerie, smoky fog. The sky was a dull, bruised gray, and the streets were lined with unmoving cars, some crashed into poles, others abandoned mid-road. Yet, there were no bodies. No people.

At first, she thought she was alone. But then she saw them—the survivors, scattered and afraid, staring at the distant blackened skyline.

And then she saw the monsters.

The Fall of Humanity

A few days before, a cosmic event had altered the Earth's atmosphere. A massive pulse of unknown energy, called *The Veil*, had swept across the planet overnight, erasing nearly 90% of humanity. But not in the way one would expect. The people didn't die—they simply *vanished*, as if swallowed by an unseen force.

The remaining 10% had survived for one reason: **they were flawed**. Some had artificial limbs, others had metal implants, pacemakers, or deep scars from past surgeries. Those with artificial interference in their bodies seemed immune to *The Veil*.

Aisha, who had a metal pin in her wrist from a childhood accident, was one of the lucky ones.

But luck was relative.

For when the world emptied of most humans, something else came to fill the void.

The Journey

Aisha soon found other survivors—an old war veteran with a mechanical leg, a young girl with hearing implants, and a scientist who had metal rods in his spine. Each of them carried wounds, scars of the past that had saved them in the present.

Together, they had to find out what *The Veil* truly was, why it had spared them, and most importantly—how to fight back.

As they moved through the dead city, they discovered signs of an ancient presence—markings on walls, symbols hidden beneath buildings. The event that erased humanity had happened before.

And the monsters?

They weren't invaders.

They were *the remnants of those who had disappeared.*

Their fate was clear: find a way to escape *The Veil*, or risk becoming part of it.

The silent fall of humanity was only the beginning.

6.4 Script/Panel layout

1. The world has gone quiet.
   (N: A dark, atmospheric fog-covered landscape.)

2. Close-up of Aisha's face as she wakes up, eyes opening groggily.
   (N: Something felt wrong the moment I opened my eyes.)

3. She sits up in bed, looking around her dimly lit apartment.
   (N: No birds, no traffic, no voices.)

4. Aisha walks to her window, pulling the curtain aside.

5. Outside, the city of Uttur is covered in thick grey fog.

6. Empty streets. Crashed cars. No people.
   (N: Where the hell is everyone?)

7. She is shocked. (Face view.)

8. She walks outside her apartment building.

9. (Wide shot of the street): Abandoned vehicles, flickering streetlights, debris scattered everywhere.

10. Aisha stands in the middle of the street, shocked. Alone.
    (N: The whole damn city is gone.)

11. Shadow moving (of the Hollowed) in the distance.

12. Aisha turning, scared.
    (N: Who is there?)

13. A sound coming from the distance. *Dunn dunn.*
    (As if something big is approaching; ground is shaking.)

14. In the distance, shadows of the Watchers in mountain-like structures.
    (N: What the heck are those!!)

15. Aisha runs to her room.

16. Packs her bag.
    (N: I need to hide. What is this creature? Where is everyone?)

17. Aisha walks cautiously through the fog.
    (By the noise of someone moving.)
    (N: I need to keep quiet.) *(with scared face)*

18. The Hollowed passes inside the wall.

19. She hears footsteps behind her. *(Shocked face)*
    (N: Who could be there?)

20. She spins around.

21. Fist clenched.

22. A figure stumbles out of an alley.

23. Feared face.
    (N: Oh my god!!)

24. A bearded man with a metal prosthetic leg — Ravi — raises his hands in surrender.

25. Aisha lowers her guard, exhales.
    (N: You're alive too? What is happening in the world?)

26. Bearded man's face.
    (N: Everyone has disappeared from the world by an unknown power. And only flawed people are left.)
    (N: What is wrong with your body?)

27. Aisha's left hand in X-ray.
    (N: My left arm has metal scapula and metal rod inside.)

28. Another sound.

29. They both turn.

30. A girl is sitting scared — Zoya.

31. They run toward the girl.

32. Zoya face scared, with hearing implants.

33. Zoya hugs Aisha.
    (N: I was so scared.)

34. A blacked-out panel with a sound.

35. The group freezes. *(Aisha shushing.)*

36. A long shadow stretches across the street.
    (Hazy leg of the Hollowed in view.)

37. The Hollowed slithers into view – coming out of the wall.

38. Close-up of Aisha's horrified expression.
    (N: "Run.")

CHAPTER 7: CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

7.1 Humans

Aisha – The Survivor and Seeker

- **Role:** Protagonist.

- **Personality:** Quietly strong, introspective, resourceful.

- **Arc:** Starts as a confused and grieving young woman, gradually evolves into a determined leader. Her inner strength grows with each encounter, as she confronts fears, loss, and responsibility.

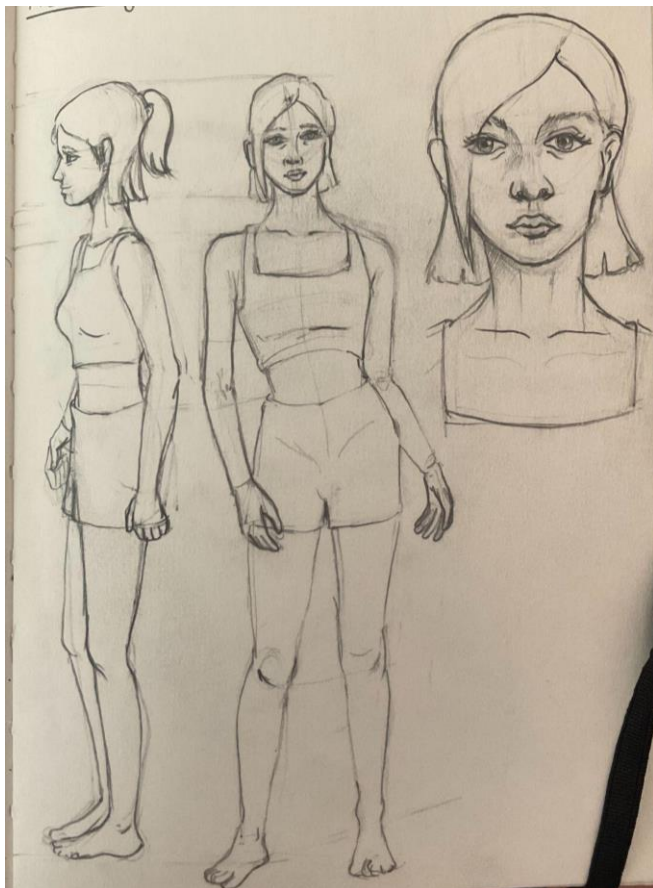- **Visual Cue:** Slender frame, determined eyes, often seen with a backpack and flashlight.

Figure 10 Aisha- The Protagonist

Ravi – The Protector with a Past

- **Role:** The emotional anchor and muscle of the group.

- **Appearance:** Big-built, slightly overweight, with a heavy coat, long hair and a beard reminiscent of Hagrid.

- **Personality:** Warm, wise, emotionally resilient but haunted by past losses.

- **Arc:** Begins as a loner with survivor's guilt, gradually opens up through his bond with Aisha and Zoya. Sacrifices personal safety for the group's well-being, and his arc represents healing and redemption.

- **Visual Cue:** Towering silhouette, usually seen holding tools or salvaged weapons.
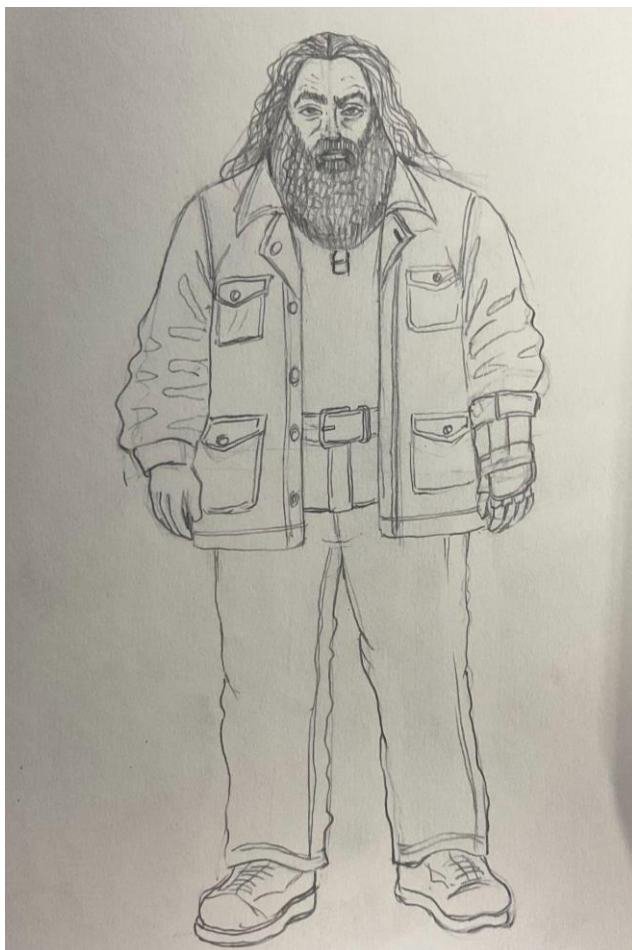

Figure 11 Ravi

Zoya – The Child Who Knows Too Much

- **Role:** The symbolic heart of the story.

- **Appearance:** Small, wide-eyed, always clutches a handmade toy.

- **Personality:** Curious, intuitive, and emotionally sharp beyond her years.

- **Arc:** Although young, Zoya perceives the monsters and "The Veil" in ways adults cannot. Her strange dreams and drawings begin to hint at the origins of the catastrophe. Her arc represents innocence clashing with horror, and possibly, a key to salvation.

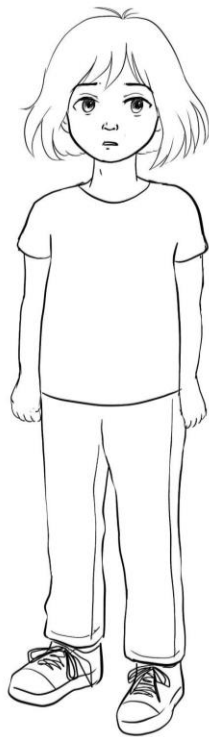- **Visual Cue:** Always framed in light or contrast, giving her an eerie yet endearing aura.

Figure 12 Zoya

7.2 Monsters

The Veil – The Sentient Shroud

- **Description:** More than just an environmental phenomenon, the Veil is a conscious entity that manipulates reality within its domain. It distorts time, space, and perception, creating illusions and altering memories. A crack in the space that connects an unseen dimension.

- **Behaviour:** The Veil feeds on fear and uncertainty, growing stronger as individuals succumb to paranoia and despair. It isolates survivors, making them question their sanity and the nature of their reality.

- **Inspiration:** Drawing from Lovecraftian horror, The Veil embodies the terror of the incomprehensible and the loss of control over one's environment.
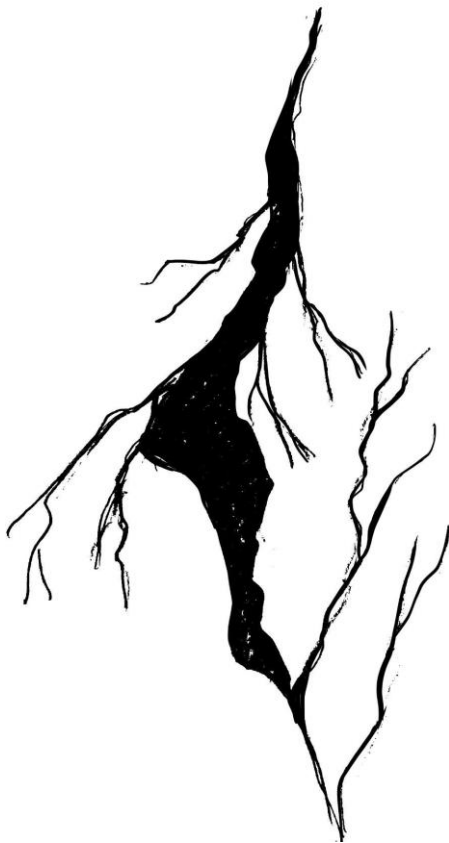

Figure 13 The Veil

The Hollowed – Echoes of the Lost

- **Description:** Shadowy, amorphous figures that drift silently through the mist. Their forms are ever-shifting, making them difficult to perceive clearly. They emit haunting whispers that resemble the voices of lost loved ones, luring victims into the fog.

- **Behaviour:** The Hollowed are passive yet omnipresent, serving as a constant reminder of the unknown. They do not attack directly but induce disorientation and despair in those who encounter them.

- **Inspiration:** These entities draw from the psychological horror elements found in Junji Ito's works, where the fear of the unknown and the unseen plays a central role.
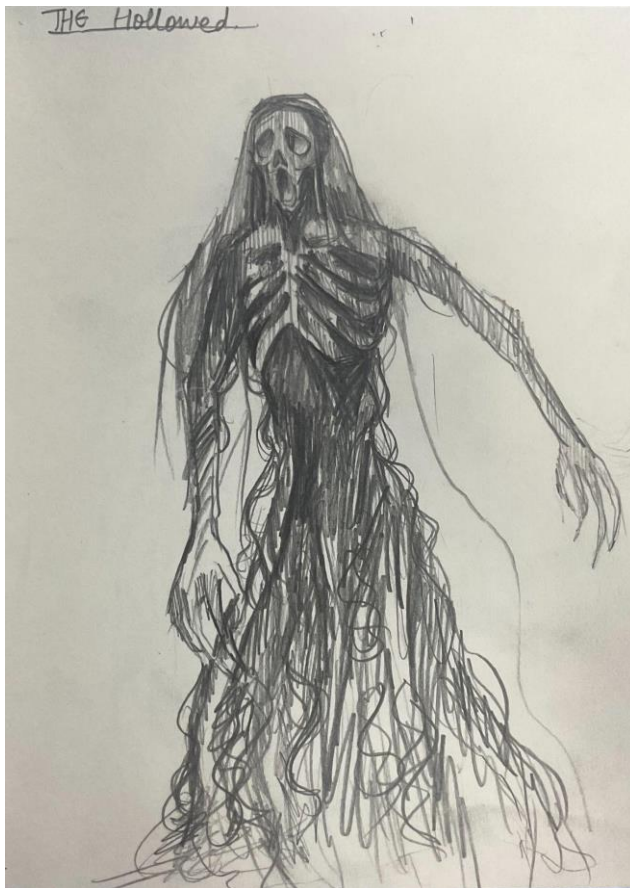

Figure 14 The Hollowed

The Watchers – Sentinels of Perception

- **Description:** Colossal, humanoid figures that remain motionless when observed but inch closer when unobserved. Their presence is often accompanied by a sense of being watched, even when they are not visible. The watchers are the giant figures roaming around the cities, they have a siren in place of a head and an eye in the stomach. When the remaining people are discovered, it gives siren to the veilborn.

- **Behaviour:** The Watchers exploit the human tendency to overlook the familiar, becoming increasingly threatening as attention wanes. They serve as a metaphor for ignored dangers that grow when left unchecked.

- **Inspiration:** These beings are reminiscent of the Weeping Angels from *Doctor Who* and the Titans from *Attack on Titan*, combining the fear of the unseen with the dread of overwhelming force.
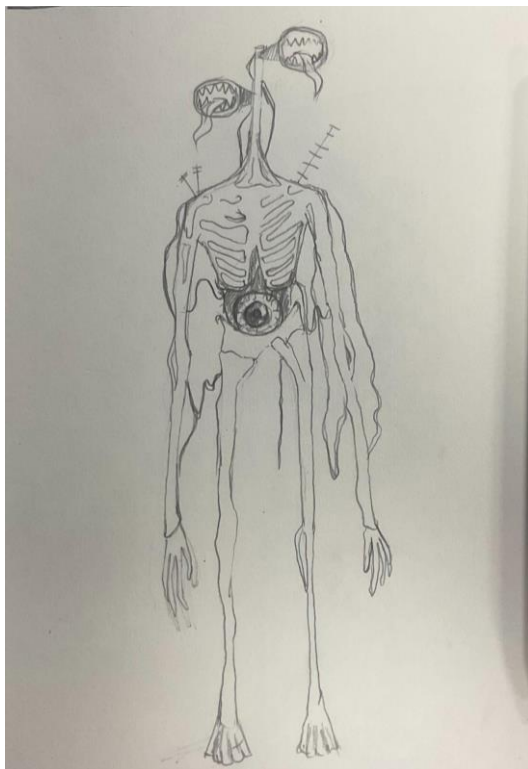

Figure 15 The Watchers

The Veilborn

- The Veilborn are the monsters that capture people after getting a signal from the watchers.
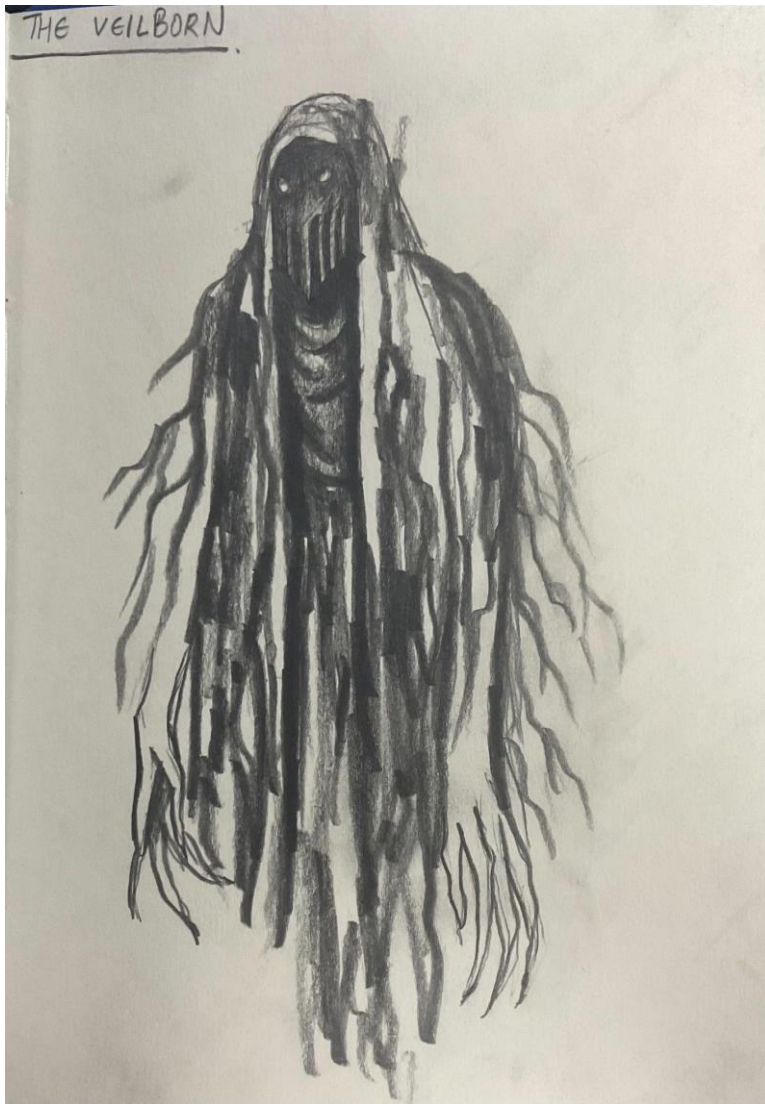

Figure 16 The Veilborn

EyeHead

- It is a giant ball of eyes that is the caretaker of the veil.

Figure 17 EyeHead

Wormer

- This monster is a sub-variant of the other dimension that devours human beings.

Figure 18 Wormer

7.3 Manga Pages

Figure 19 MANGA Page 1

Figure 20 MANGA Page 2

Figure 21 MANGA Page 3

Figure 22 MANGA Page 4

Figure 23 MANGA Page 5

CHAPTER 8: REFLECTION

This project became a reflection of my voice as a designer and storyteller. Through it, I discovered how manga could convey silence and subtlety just as powerfully as it does action. Balancing horror with emotion taught me how to make readers care before making them afraid.

There were many challenges — especially in maintaining pace and cohesion while designing disturbing yet symbolic monsters. Yet every revision, every sketch helped refine the message. The story is not about monsters, but about memory, trauma, and rebuilding trust.

From writing, illustrating, to editing, *The Silent Fall* helped me grow artistically, emotionally, and technically.

CHAPTER 9: FUTURE SCOPE

- **Extended Manga Series:** Develop full-volume chapters exploring other survivors and timelines, exploring themes like phobias and coping strategies.
- **Scrolling Format:** Reformat for Webtoon, Webcomics, Tapas, and INKR to reach digital readers.
- **Manga Competitions:** Plan to participate in the Kyoto International Manga Anime Award and similar contests to gain recognition.
- **Thematic Exploration:** Future arcs could explore themes like survivor's guilt, hallucination, and post-traumatic hope.
- **Long-Term Vision:** Build a platform that uses manga to address societal and emotional issues.

REFERENCES

1. Junji Ito – *Tomie, Uzumaki*
2. Tsutomu Nihei – *Blame!*
3. Naughty Dog – *The Last of Us*
4. John Krasinski – *A Quiet Place*
5. Guillermo del Toro – *Pan's Labyrinth*
6. Japanese Folklore & Kaidan Legends
7. Attack on titan