Take a look at progression number one, six shots of a couple talking in a restaurant. It's a basic progression that starts far away and neutral and ends up in an extreme close up featuring one character. The script may start out with some chit chat between the characters, and intensify to where in panel six the woman makes an important statement (ie: " I'm pregnant, or "I'm leaving you", or even "oh crap-- I left the oven on" etc etc). For all intents and purposes, this is correct. The shots slowly intensify to a visual climax.

PROGRESSION 1

Now look at progression 2; same six shots, but I've jumbled them around. For the script we're using in progression one, this would be considered wrong. The shots are all over the place. Sure the woman could say "I'm leaving you " in the close up in panel six, but what impact will it have after the extreme close up in panel one? How is it building intensity if we're going to a wide neutral shot, then close up , then out to medium shots?

PROGRESSION 2
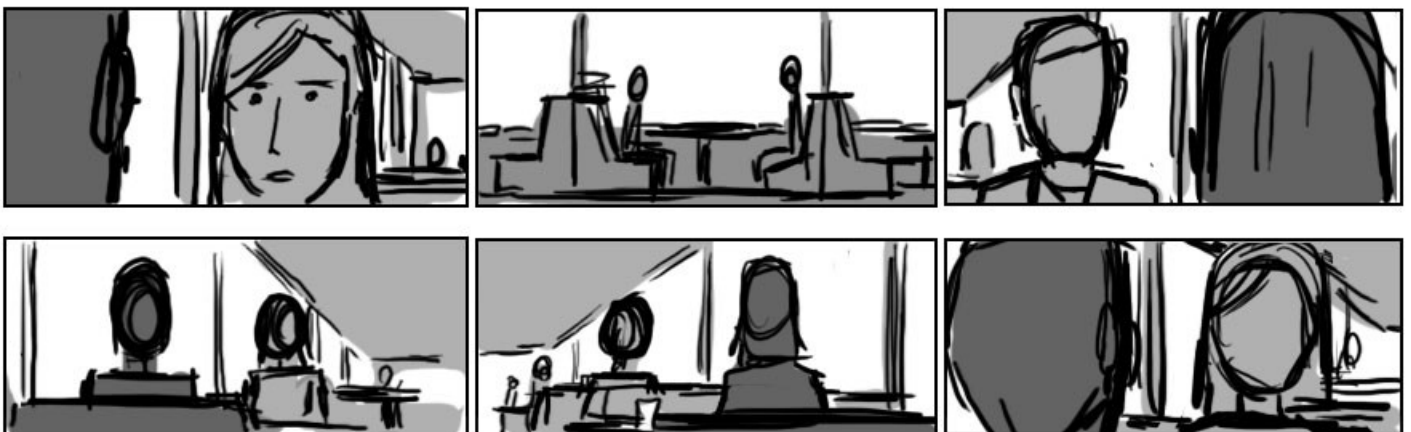
Now the tricky part. With a different script, the second progression could work. I added the panels at random, so I'll try to work backwards from this and come up with a scenario that

works. Say the woman gets a phone call from the man and he says " Sally, the money's gone; meet me at the cafe".

With that intro, the script for progression two may go like this:

panel one: (woman) "what do you mean the money's gone?"
panel two: (man)(looking around nervously and whispering) " I don't know, the suitcase was empty"
panel three: (man) "we've got to find that money"
panel four: (woman) "all right but being here is making me nervous, they could be following us"
panel five: (man) " what do you think we should do?"
panel six: (woman) "we need to get out of town"

The most important bit is the woman's reaction to the money being gone and the XCU opens the scene with a punch. The second biggest bit is "we need to get out of town", so that gets a close up in panel six although not as big as panel one. The lines of them talking about being scared of being followed are in wider shots to emphasize the people around them and that they're in a public space.

Now while this isn't perfectly ideal, I just wanted to illustrate that a progression like number one, although visually solid, isn't always the right one. Your shot progression will depend on what is happening in your scene. Make sure your shots best emphasize what's happening in the story.

SHOT PROGRESSION

Leon : The Professional

33:53 mins into the film.

Matilda has such a strong sense of who she is. See how the two characters (Matilda and Leon) get along so well, despite their difference in age and backgrounds. You can really feel the bond between the two.

Just before this scene begins there is a huge action sequence where Matilda's family, including her little brother, get shot up by the cops. Matilda narrowly escapes this ordeal because she is down at the milk bar getting milk. Leon, who lives at the end of the hallway, reluctantly lets her in to his home, saving her from being killed. Now she is telling him why she is crying.

The camera before this, for the most part, has been quite tense. There have been a lot of

truck ins, wide angle lenses, forced perspectives, and panning with the action. So this is the first scene that has really stayed up close and is steady. The camera, for the most part, is set up in the same position at a medium-close-up/close-up. This is a bold move because it means the story relies heavily on the actors.

LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL   [P2]

Light   Dark

10 "I was more of a mother to him.. Dark   Light

11 ".. than the God damn pig ever was.
"Hey. Don't talk like That about pigs.

12 "They're usually much nicer than people."

13 "They smell like shit."

14 "Not true. As a matter of fact I have one right now in my kitchen.... That's very clear.

15 "It see smells very nice.
"You don't have a pig in your kitchen."

16 PAUSE.
"Yes I do."

17 "I was just in There and I didn't see any God damn pig."
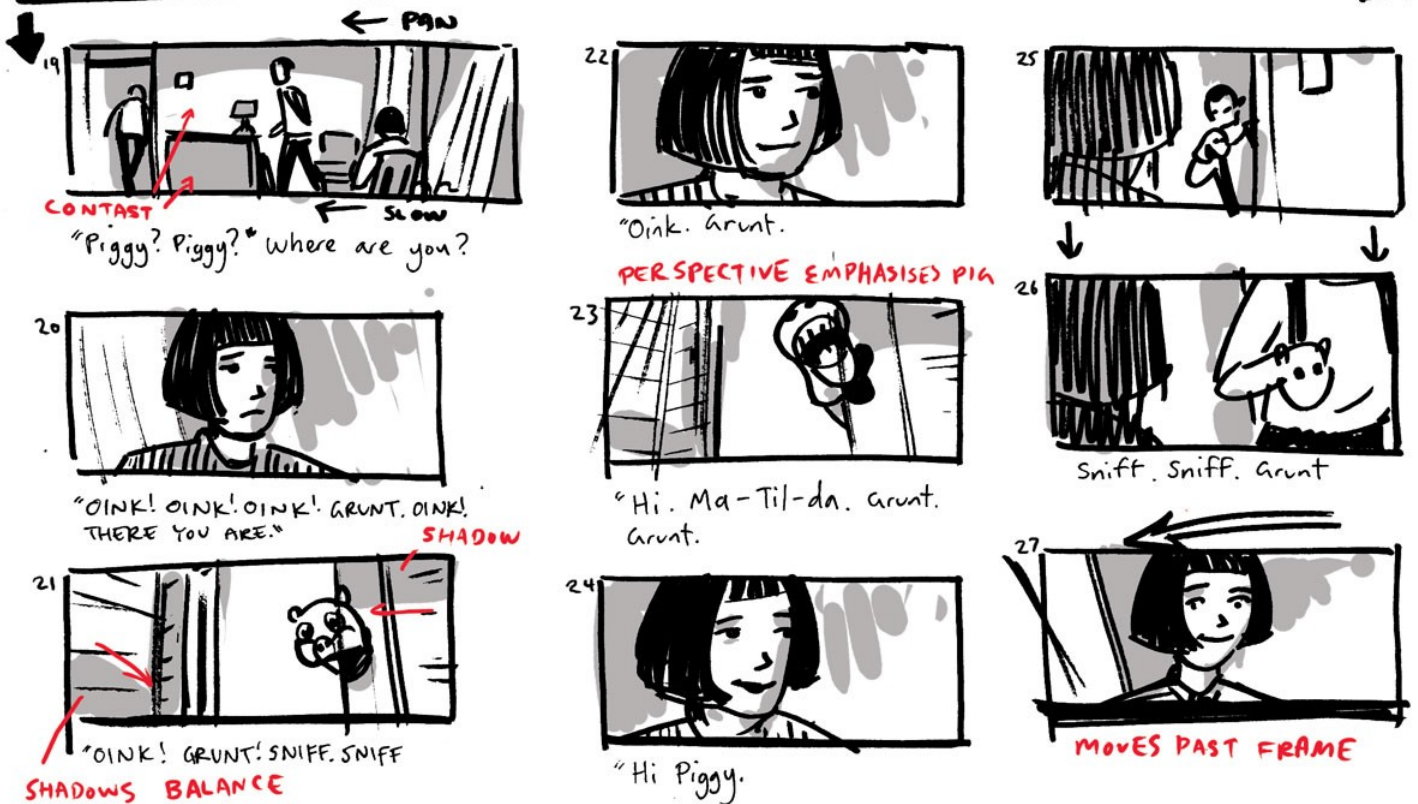CUT ON EXIT

18 "Don't move. I get him."

Looking at the first and second shot, we can see that the positioning of the characters, their clothes, and the background all draw our eye towards their face. This is where we find out who the characters really are, so the attention has to be on their expressions.

Frame 19: ← PAN / CONTRAST / ← SLOW
"Piggy? Piggy?" where are you?

Frame 20: "OINK! OINK! OINK! GRUNT. OINK! THERE YOU ARE." / SHADOW

Frame 21: "OINK! GRUNT! SNIFF. SNIFF" / SHADOWS BALANCE

Frame 22: "Oink. Grunt. / PERSPECTIVE EMPHASISES PIG

Frame 23: "Hi. Ma-Til-da. Grunt. Grunt.

Frame 24: "Hi Piggy.

Frame 25: (down arrow)

Frame 26: Sniff. Sniff. Grunt

Frame 27: MOVES PAST FRAME

Even though the shots are divided up into three, where the characters takes up the middle and the silhouettes and empty space fall to the side, Leon is positioned on the left side of the screen while Matilda is on the right. This is to be clear of who is talking, avoiding the 'pop cut'. It is only until frame 19 (page 3) where Leon actually walks away that Matilda takes up the other side. Then, only when he returns, do they go back to their original sides.

Moving back to frame 4 (page 1). The camera has cut in slightly closer. This is as Matilda reveals more about what has happened. It also cuts in equally close to Leon, who is more interested in what she has to say. As she starts crying in frame 7 the camera does a slight truck in, putting a bit more emphasis on what is happening. The camera only ever trucks in slightly, so not to bring attention to the movement. It moves like this right until the end of the scene, where everything has been revealed. Here it trucks into an extreme close up to make it obvious of what the characters are thinking.

Looking at frame 10 and 11 (page 2), I have made a note about the light and dark. This is another method the director has used to make the characters stand out. It also gives the shots a sense of balance.

Going to frame 19 (page 3), when we cut to a wide as Leon gets up, the lighting on the back wall creates an bridge from the doorway where Leon has gone to chair where Matilda is sitting.

Two frames along, where the pig comes into screen, the shadows on the top right and bottom left balance the shot. This shot also uses a deeper perspective, shot from below, than the previous to bring attention to the puppet pig. Only until frame 25, when Leon is shown holding the puppet that the camera returns to an eye level perspective.

LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL — P4

28 "How are you today? Grunt."

29 "I've seen better days."

3 CHARACTERS

30 Matilda starts to cry again.

31 COMPENSATES THE SPACE

32 "what's your name?"

33 "Leon."

34

35 EXTREME CLOSE UP. "cute name." SHOT UP AT HER

36 CAM TILTS W/T HAND

37

38

39 "Do you have any where to go to? Any family?..."

Moving to frame 35 (page 4), the camera jumps to an extreme close-up, shooting up at

Matilda, as she says, "Cute name." to Leon, openly showing her attraction to him. This is makes her feelings obvious to us, letting us connect with her more.

LEON - THE PROFESSIONAL

CLOSE

51

"Cleaner." Fidgets
"You mean you're a hitman?"
"...... Yeah."

CLOSER

52

Track in

"Cool."

CLOSER

53

Track in

EXTREMELY CLOSE

54

FIN

In summary, the camera in this scene is quite subtle in its movements allowing the actors to give their performance. It's a stark contrast from the previous scenes which have been very action driven. I responded to this moment so well because the actors are so convincing. They are real people and they have a real bond between each other. Luc Besson is a very action driven director so I am glad he included a scene like this to break up the pace.