

Chapter 2: Fooling around with Photoshop

Selection Tricks

What is so hard about selection? You may ask. Isn't selection just selecting an image or a portion of an image? So what's there to learn?

Here's my question to you then: Are you able to make near-perfect selection? If you think you can, you are given the privilege to skip this chapter.

Let's see... What do we need? There are two different methods to go about selection: the **Extract** way and the **Manual** way. First up, the manual way. This is definitely my preferred choice of all times.

Here is the list:

- ✂ Magnetic Lasso
- ✂ History Brush
- ✂ Adjustment Layer (Levels, Contrast)
- ✂ And... The Spacebar

A Quick Revision...

- ✂ What is the Magnetic Lasso
 - The magnetic lasso tool (Photoshop), the border snaps to the edges of defined areas in the image and it is especially useful for quickly selecting objects with complex edges set against high-contrast backgrounds. Using it is relatively simple. Just define a starting point by clicking on the border of the portion of image that you will like to select out of the original image.

- ✂ History Brush
 - There will always be some imperfect parts of our selection and copy. The history brush can be used to return the missing bits that we did not select properly with the magnetic lasso.

One thing to take note will be that the history brush can only return image to the origin (meaning the original image without any alterations), if you wish to select portion of image out of a image that you have altered, save the altered image as a jpeg, then close it and reopen it to begin the selection process.

✂ Adjustment Layer (Levels, Contrast)

- There may be image that is too dark or without clearly defined edges for selection. Add an adjustment layer and you can tone up the contrast and brightness by using adjustment layer, which have relatively no effects on your image. Discard it after you're done.

✂ The Spacebar

- This helps to pause any process for re-navigation, sometimes we need to zoom the image to a much bigger size than 100%, and our portion for selection may go out of screen size scope, so while select, we'll need to navigate. The spacebar is just the tool for it. **Press Ctrl+ to zoom in, Ctrl- to zoom out.**

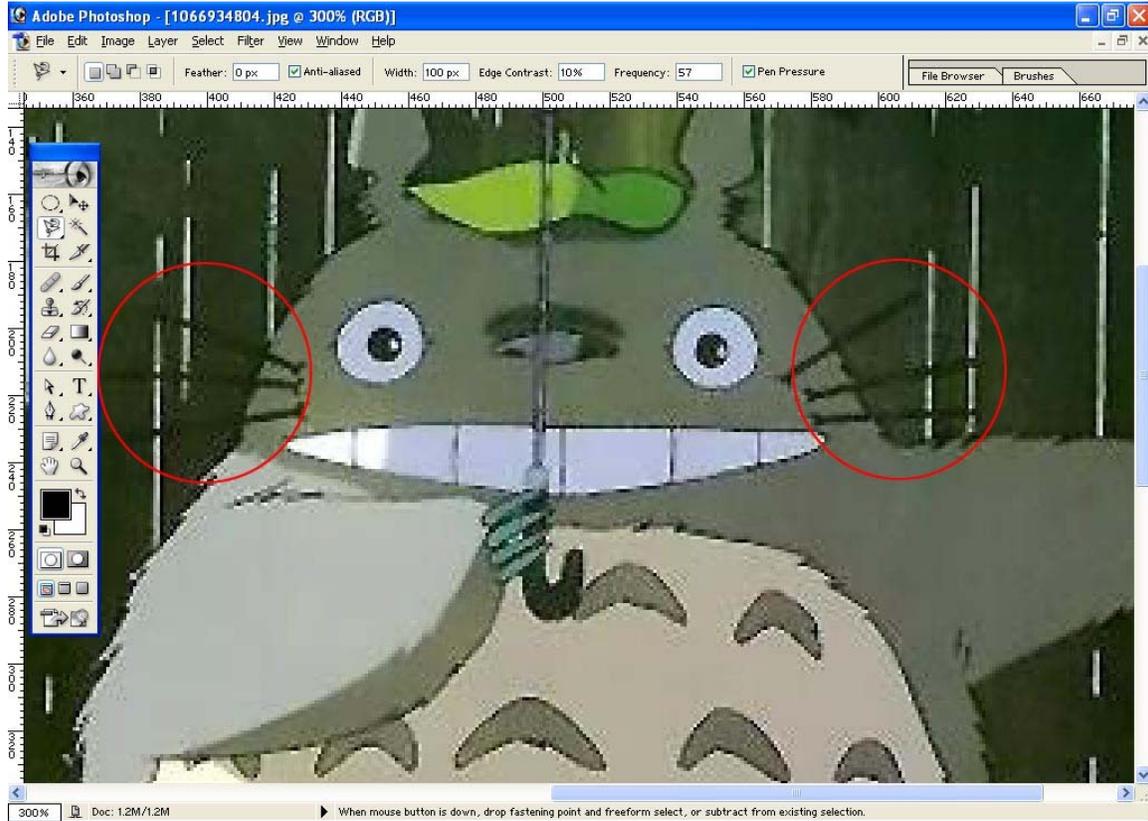
Lets' get down to selection now!

Example: *Totoro wants out!!*



The scene is set. It is a night scene whereby Totoro, May and her little sister are waiting for bus at a dimly lit bus stop. Totoro is ready for a “little” exercise of popping out of the image, how can we let Totoro pop out if he is part of the image? We need to get Totoro onto a new layer. Here we go!

We have to address some problems before we can embark on our mission.



The whiskies of our darling Totoro practically 'blends' into the background, it will be hard to make a proper magnetic lasso selection. Another point that we have to be conscious of will be that the umbrella end is barely visible and definitely not



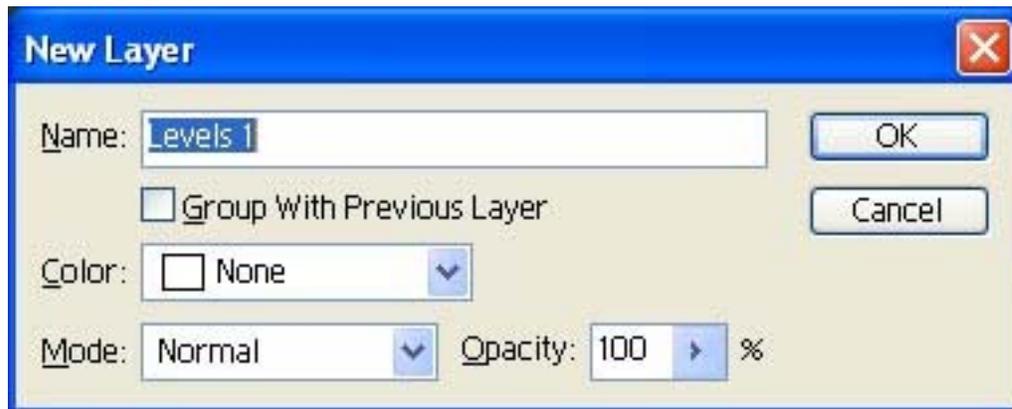
clearly defined enough for magnetic lasso selection. So what is there for us to do? Is it then impossible for us to fulfill Totoro's dream of popping out of the image?

Believe in this: Nothing is impossible in Photoshop when it comes to image creation and editing.

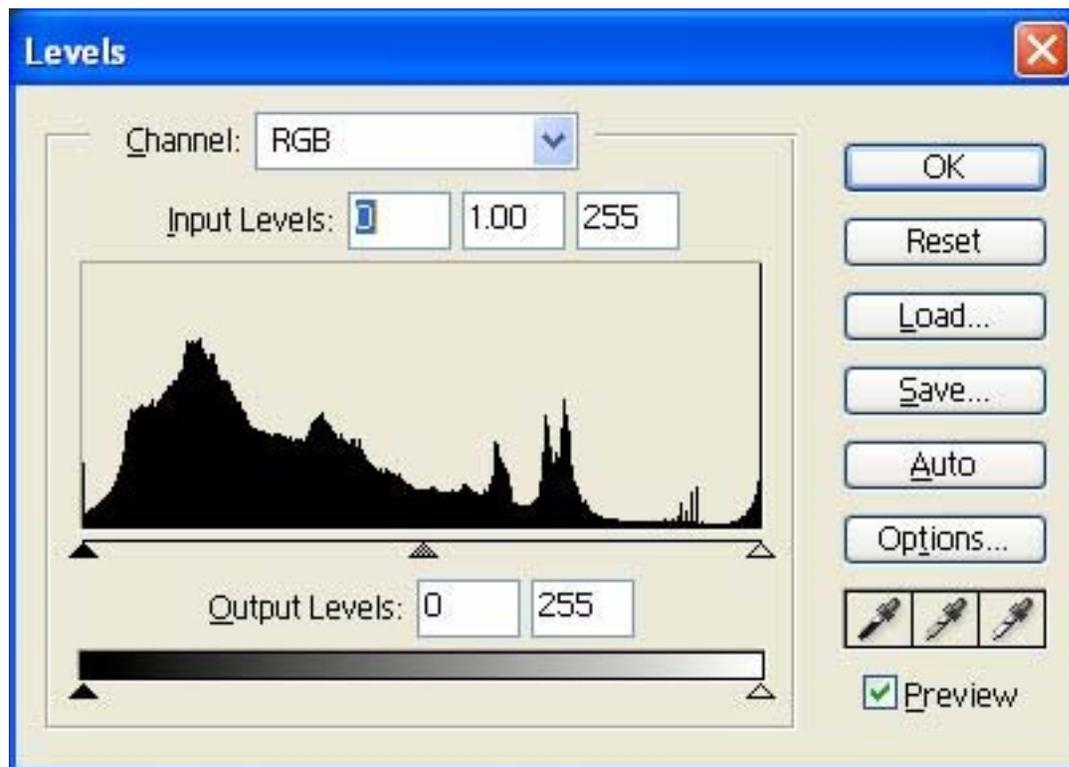
Remember that I mentioned Adjustment Layers?

We'll add a Levels Adjustment Layer.

Layers > New Adjustment Layer > Levels

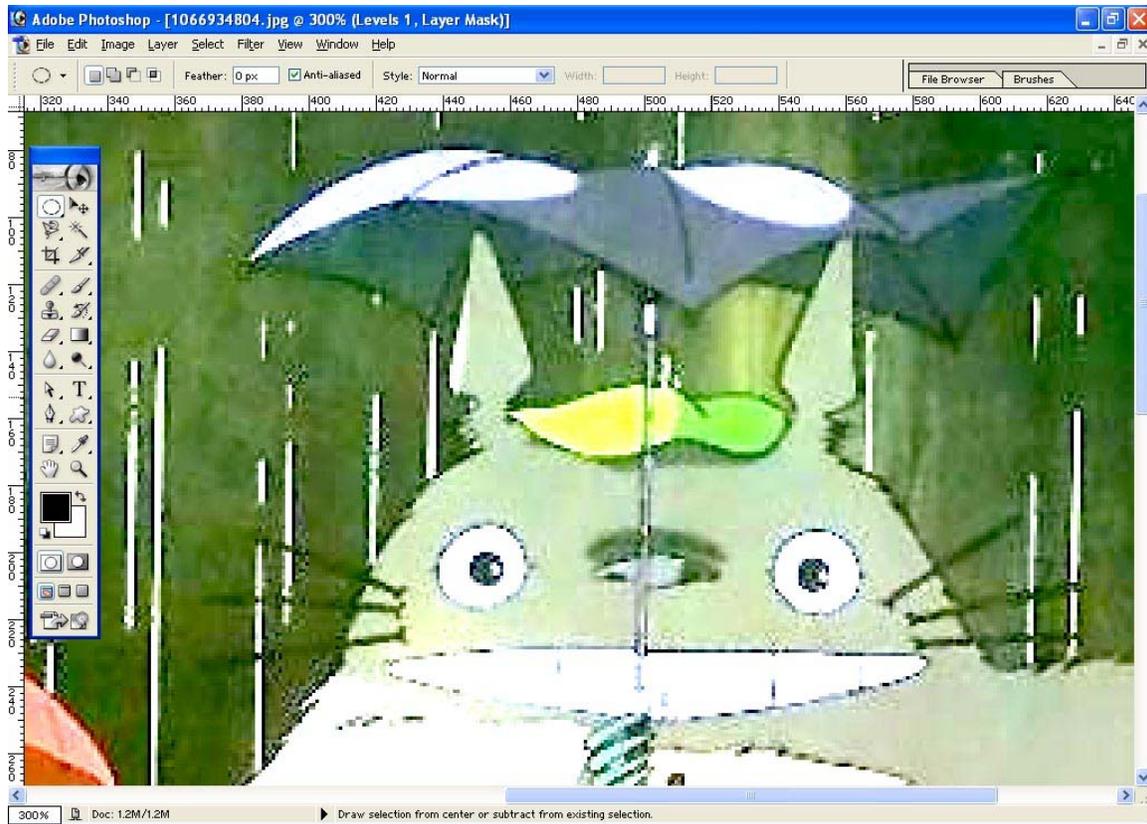


Just Click Ok.



You will get this dialog box. Play with the sliders to increase brightness/contrast of the image. Ultimately, your motive is to increase the brightness to help you with the selection.

Here are my settings: Input Levels: 20, 1.4, and 125



Ok, the image looks too bright. But we have achieved our motive of brightening it so the whiskies and the umbrella end can get a better 'definition' of edge and contrast in order for magnetic lasso to work.

Select the magnetic lasso tool and start the selection by clicking on any point of the image portion that you will like to select, any point will do.

Press the spacebar and hold down whenever you need a little clicking rest or whenever you need to re-navigate since you have zoomed in to the image for better selection. After you are done with going round the edge of Totoro, click on the start point of your magnetic lasso to close the selection.

However, the magnetic lasso will only allow border selection. How can we remove the spaces in between Totoro's ears and underneath the umbrella then?

Recall from **Chapter 1**, how can we minus away selection? After you have finalized the selection, meaning you have closed the magnetic lasso path, hold down **Alt key** and using the magnetic lasso tool, select the parts to minus away.

Alternatively, you can do this after you have copied Totoro onto a new layer, then you will use the magnetic lasso tool to select parts to remove and just press delete.

Check that you are on the background layer with Totoro and not the adjustment layer. Click on the background layer if you're not. Don't worry; you will not lose your selection just by switching layers in the layers palette. Press **Ctrl-J**, this is for you to put whatever that is in the selection onto a new layer.

If there are any imperfect areas/edges, do not bother to redo the selection. Select the History brush from your toolbox and brush through those portions that are imperfect. Use the eraser to erase away any excess areas as well.

You are done.



I reduced the master opacity of the background layer to show the Totoro that I've managed to cut and placed into a new layer.

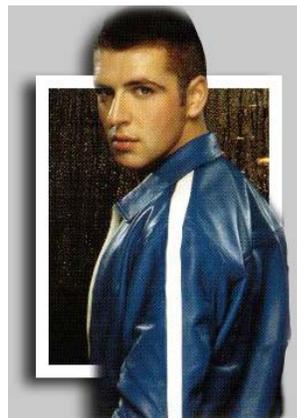
I'll show you all a nice photography trick here.



How does this look?

Totoro has succeeded in popping out of the image. You can try this effect for real-life photos also.

Examples:



Here's the trick exclusively for readers of this whole web course.



Taking the rectangular marquee tool, make a rectangular selection.

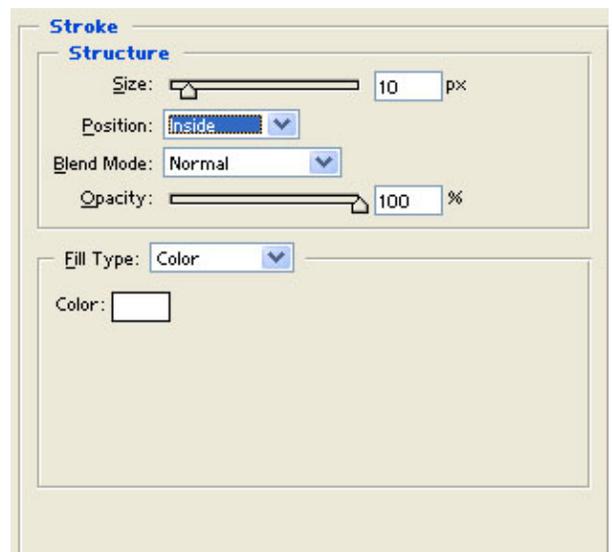
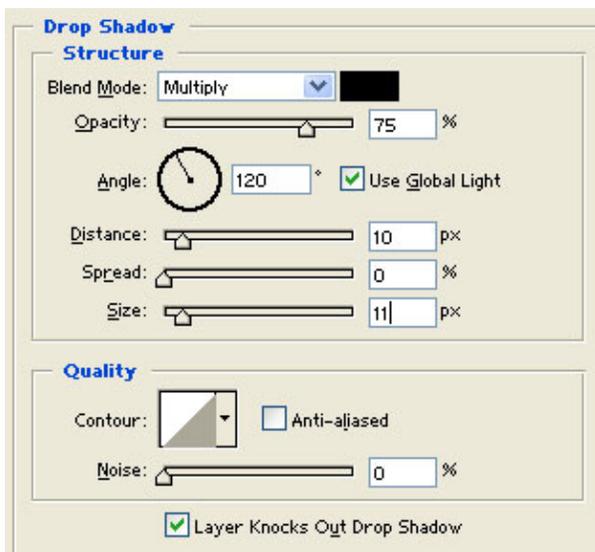
Duplicate the background layer twice and delete away the background layer, you should have background layer copy, background layer copy2. Background copy will be on top of background copy2.



Select < Inverse

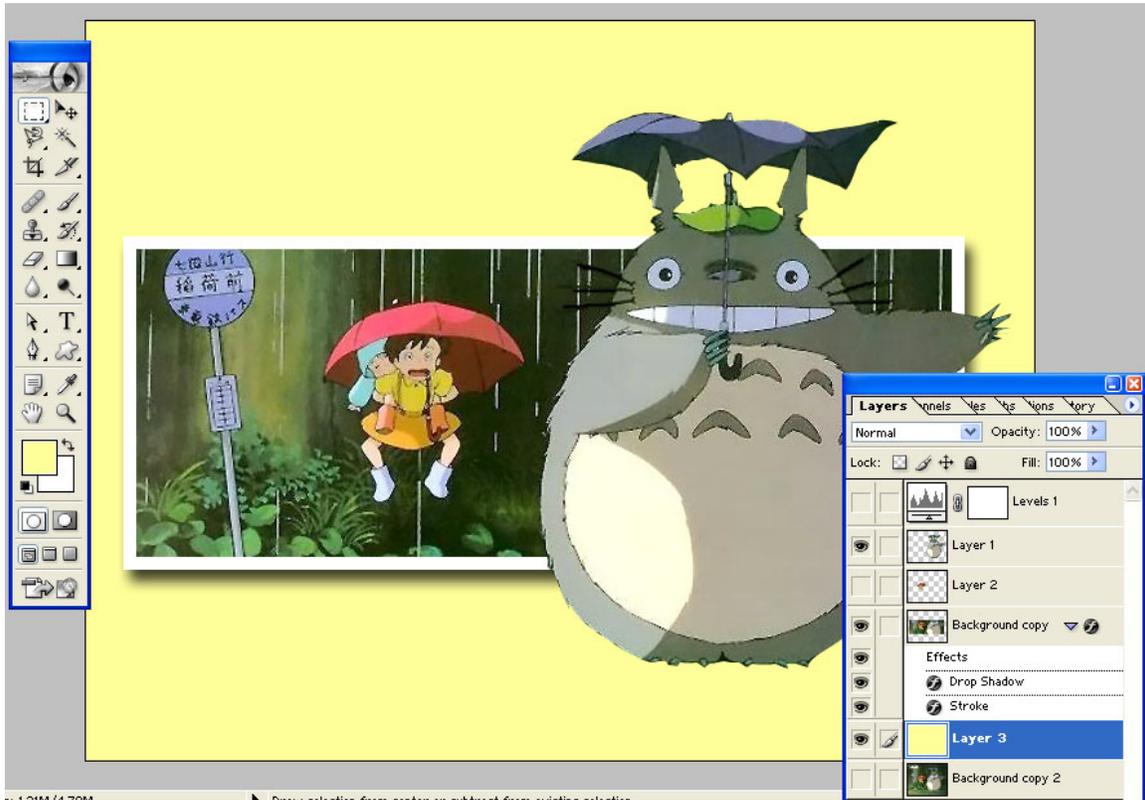


Ensure that you are on the background copy layer. Press Delete

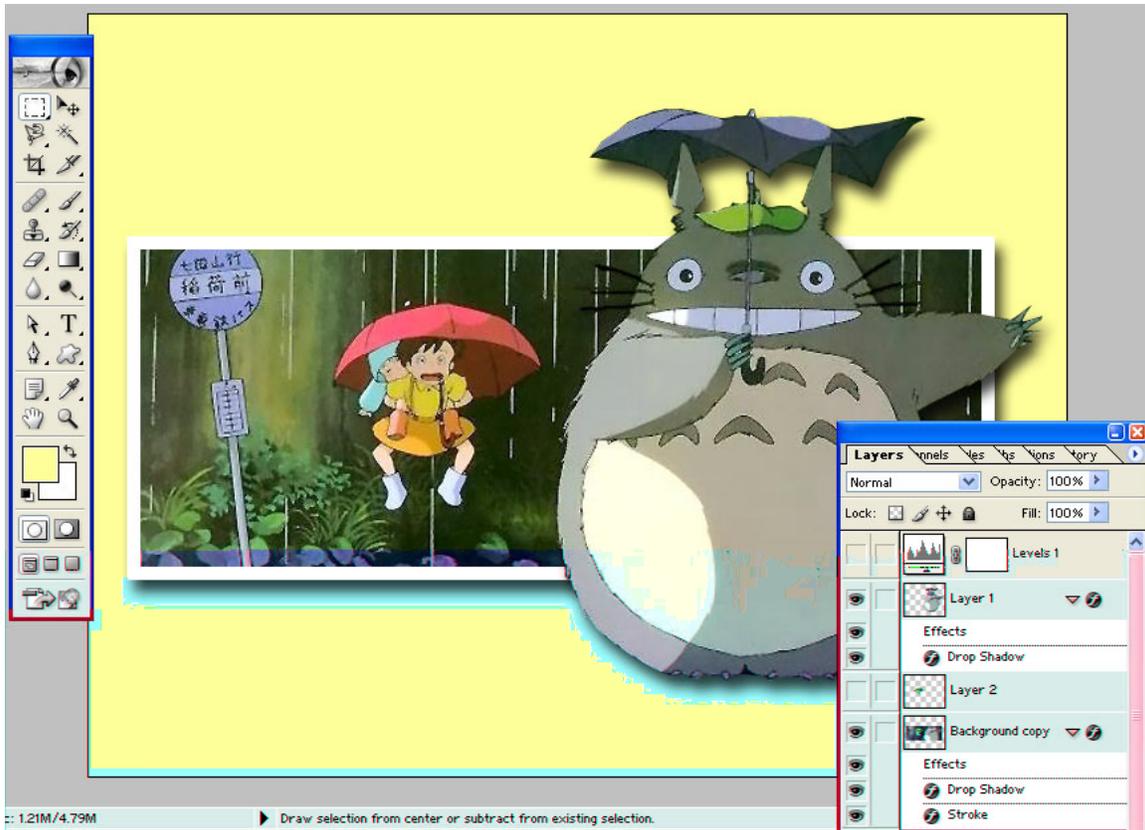


Click on the “f” icon on your layers palette and apply these two layer styles effects to the background copy layer to obtain the polaroid picture effect for the trick.

There's a lot more to layer styles. Play around and experiment yourself whenever you want to. There are unlimited variations.



Create a new layer, above background copy 2 layer. Fill it with a light colour of your choice.



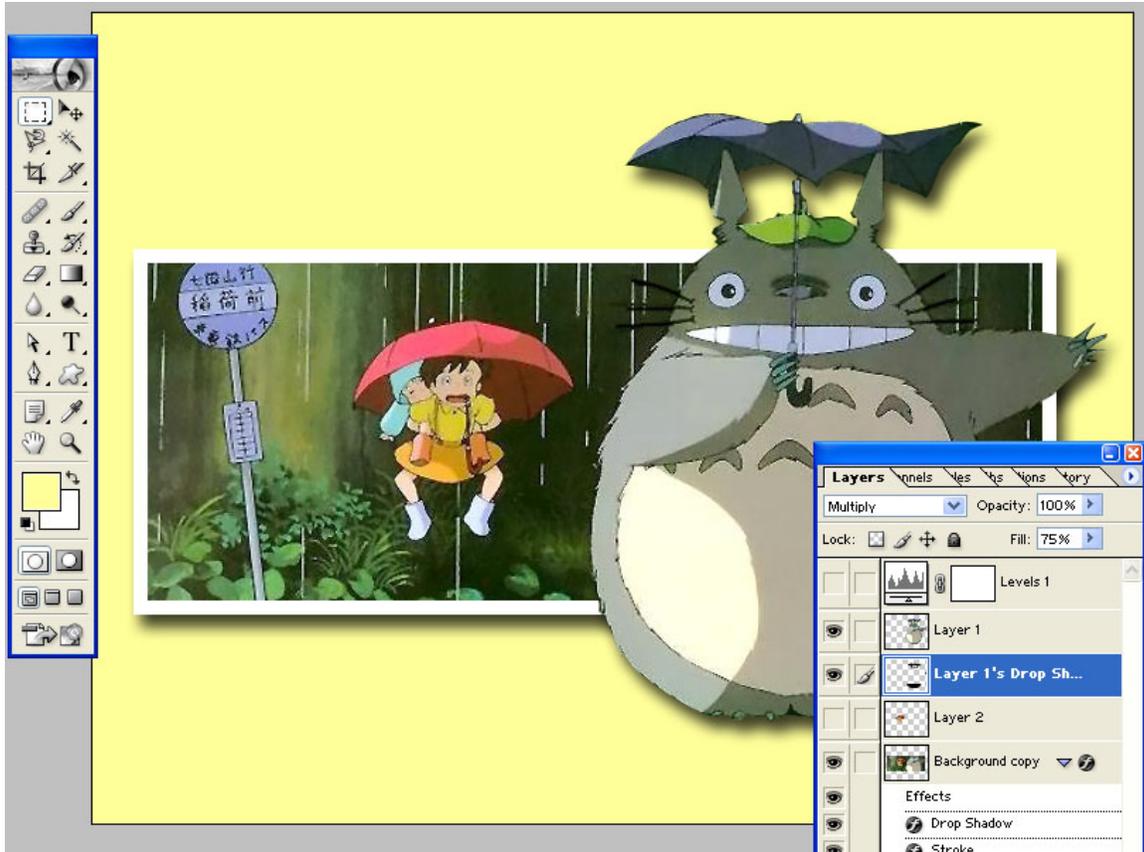
Drag the drop shadow effect from the background copy to the layer with Totoro.

Totoro doesn't look that popping out of the image, does he or it? He/It has a drop shadow on top of the Polaroid background which tends to give the feeling that Totoro is a 'cut n paste' product and not part of the original background, it defeats the original purpose of making Totoro pop out.

We'll correct that.

Under the Totoro layer, there will be an area which lists out the effects used in this very layer, right click on the word "effect" and select "Create Layer". Click ok.

Ctrl-Click on the background copy layer to bring up the rectangular marquee of the background copy.



Ensure that you are on the Totoro's Drop Shadow layer. Press delete.

Now it looks like Totoro has indeed popped out of the image.

If you want a proper bus stand, go back to background copy 2 layer and make a small rectangular marquee just enough to hold the bus stand base.

Right click within the marquee and select transform selection. Rotate the selection to a nice angle.

Ctrl J. Move this new layer on top of the background copy layer. Remember the previous lesson on layers? Layers interact on top-down sequence.

Repeat the stroke and drop shadow effects to get the Polaroid effect or *alternatively, you can drag the entire effect from the background copy layer to this layer/right click copy layer style and at this new layer, right click paste layer style.*



You can use the **Extract Tool** to extract portions of any image as well, the only criticism that I have about this tool will be the fact that some selections made are not perfect and we are not in full control for the extraction of images. In the case of the Totoro, I doubt that it will work well. Marquees and the above method may need a lot of practice but they work well and produce 100% satisfactory results. As the saying goes "No pain, no gain."

Here's the Extract way for show:



Step 1:

Select an image.



Step 2:
Filter > Extract

Using the highlighter, go about the outline of the portion that you want to extract.



Step 3:

Using the paint bucket tool in Extract, fill your selection.

Click Ok.

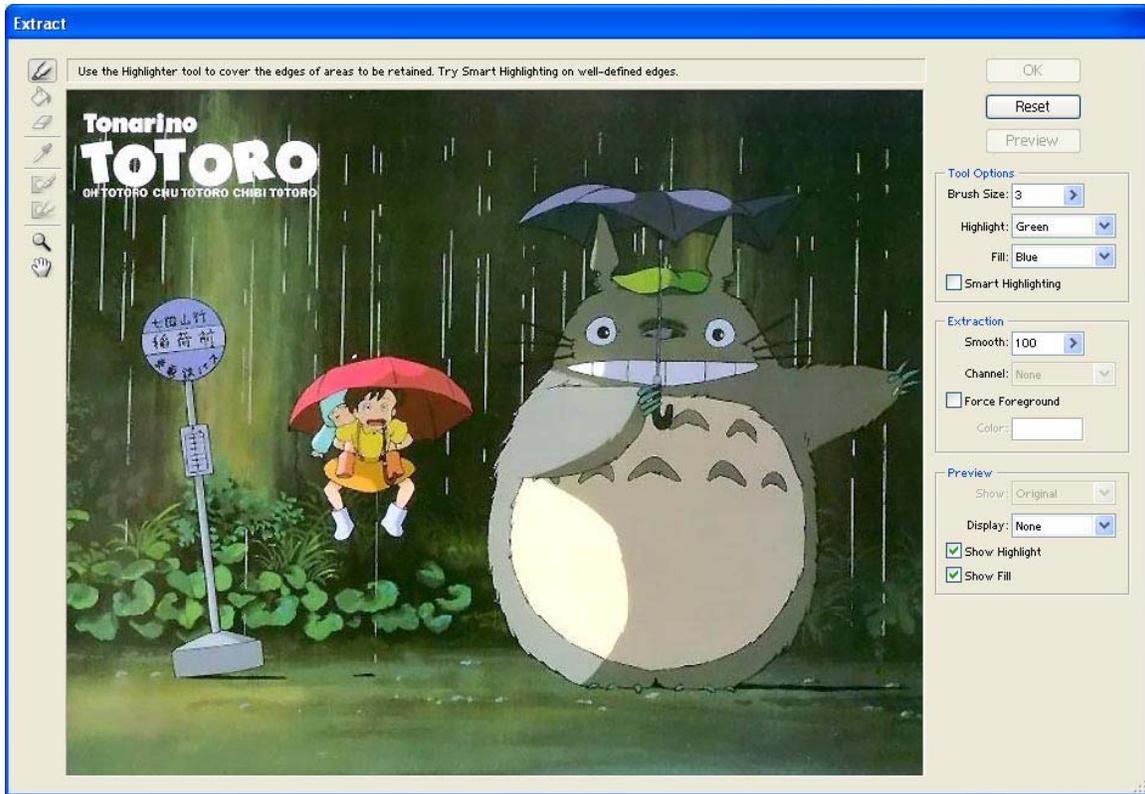
Step 4: Using the airbrush and eraser, paint/erase areas with blemishes.



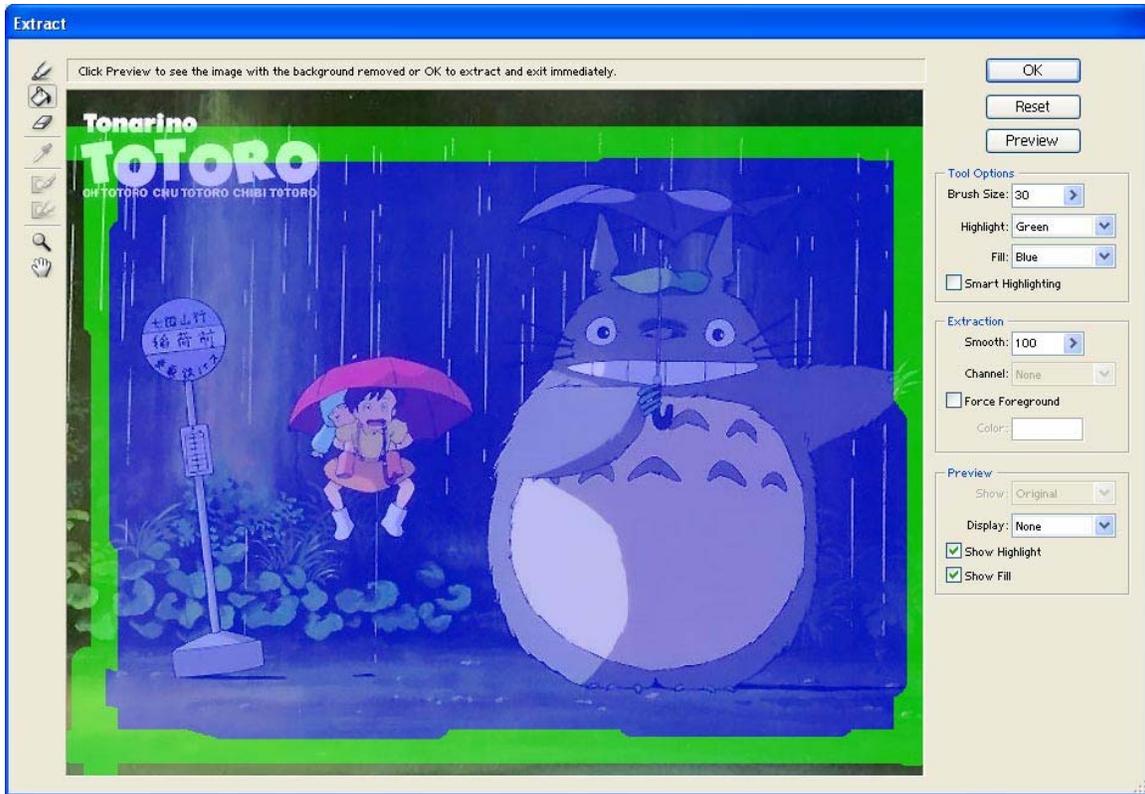
Step 5:
Add a background for your image or move it to another image.

Here is another exclusive trick with the Extract tool for you: Rugged framing borders!

Filter > Extract



The Highlighter is for you to highlight the edges for selection. Increase brush size to about size 30. Paint Bucket is for you to finalise selection. Eraser is also used to create blemishes in the framing to achieve the rugged border effects.



Here's what I did.
Using the highlighter, I made a frame selection around.
Using the eraser, I erased parts of the frame.
Fill with the paint bucket to finalise the selection. Press Ok.



That's it. This effect is cool for metallic creations.

The section on Selection Tricks with ends here. It is hoped that you have learn something out of this chapter, on how to select image accurately.

Next, we will be moving on to **Let's Merge!** where we will be touching on how to fake images, merging images to create fakingly real compositions that shocks.