

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

THE WITNESS IN SEAT 4

3 Male (M + M + M) | Genre: Mystery/Crime | Runtime: 6 - 9 Mins

OFFICIAL STORY LOGLINE:

A parked city bus becomes a noir interrogation chamber when Inspector Salim questions two nervous men about a stabbing on the last route. What first seems like a witness in Seat 4 turns out to be a dead man's phone recording the truth, exposing a hidden smuggling link and a lie built from fear.

DIRECTOR'S DRAMATIC VISION & TONAL CONCEPT:

- Noir claustrophobia inside a single bus: broken overhead lights, dusty windows, and streetlight spill create a trapped, morally gray world.
- The mystery should unfold through small physical details—seat 4, torn ticket stubs, a cracked phone, a bag, a puncher—so every object feels like evidence.
- Pacing starts controlled and investigative, then tightens into a reveal-driven pressure cooker, ending in a cold, still silence.
- Performance style should be restrained and internal: Salim is precise and cutting, Tarun is visibly anxious, Faiz is quiet until the confession breaks him.
- The visual language should favor shadows, reflections, and partial visibility to keep the audience uncertain until the phone playback reveal.

CAST AT A GLANCE & CHARACTER ARCS:

• **character:** Inspector Salim | **age:** 44 | **look:** Rolled sleeves, stern eyes, notebook in hand; grounded, authoritative, observant. | **dramatic_arc:** Begins as a methodical interrogator who suspects both men, then pieces together the truth through evidence and forces the confession with calm authority.

• **character:** Tarun | **age:** 27 | **look:** Bus conductor in uniform shirt, anxious body language, constantly clutching or touching the ticket puncher in his pocket. | **dramatic_arc:** Starts defensive and jittery, tries to hide what he saw, then cracks under pressure as he realizes the phone and the lie have trapped him too.

• **character:** Faiz | **age:** 31 | **look:** Neat jacket, quiet demeanor, small bag held close, controlled face that gradually hardens and then breaks. | **dramatic_arc:** Appears calm and detached, but the phone reveal exposes his connection to the victim and his attempt to delete the recording; he ends in confession and fear.

FESTIVAL & AUDIENCE TARGET: Ideal for Short Film Festivals, Indie Showcases, and YouTube Creator Channels. Focus on tight performances, sound design, and authentic Hinglish dialogue delivery.

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ART, WARDROBE & PROP MASTER

1. SET DESIGN & SPATIAL DEPTH PLAN: The bus interior must feel compact, worn, and slightly neglected, with dusty windows, faded upholstery, and a narrow aisle that forces confrontations into close proximity. Seat 4 should be visually distinct only through evidence: dust, a faint sticky mark on the cushion, and a hidden torn stub near the metal frame. The driver's cabin step and front door area should be accessible for the phone discovery. Broken overhead lights should be practical or simulated with visible flicker. Add subtle grime on handrails, scuffed floor vinyl, and aged plastic seat backs to reinforce the bus's history and the noir texture. Keep the space physically layered: foreground aisle, midground seats, and background driver's cabin, so blocking can compress the characters into a trap-like composition.
2. COSTUME & WARDROBE CONTINUITY: • Inspector Salim: Rolled-sleeve shirt, practical dark trousers, no flashy accessories. Wardrobe should read as working police authority and remain consistent throughout with slight sweat and dust accumulation from the bus interior. • Tarun: Bus conductor uniform shirt, slightly worn and utilitarian. The pocket holding the ticket puncher should be clearly usable in blocking. Continuity note: shirt should remain increasingly tense and rumpled as he gets more agitated. • Faiz: Neat jacket over a simple shirt, clean and controlled at first. The jacket should support the small bag concealment and remain visually tidy until the confession, when the body language breaks the polish.
3. HERO PROPS MASTER CHECKLIST (PRACTICAL ON-SET ASSETS): • prop: Notebook details: Inspector Salim's notebook, used for route times, stoppages, and ticket stubs; should look practical and slightly worn. • prop: Ticket puncher details: Held in Tarun's pocket and later clattering to the floor; should feel metallic, compact, and slightly heavy in the hand. • prop: Small bag details: Faiz's close-held bag; plain, unremarkable from outside, but central to the reveal when opened. • prop: Torn ticket stub details: One torn ticket from Tarun's pocket and a second torn stub found near Seat 4's metal frame; both should look aged and partially damaged. • prop: Black phone details: Small black phone with a cracked screen, found near the driver's cabin step; the screen must visibly light up and play the shaky video. • prop: Flashlight details: Used by Salim to inspect under Seat 4 and the floor; beam should cut through dust and darkness.
4. PRACTICAL SFX & MAKEUP (MUA): Keep makeup naturalistic and grounded. Salim should have subtle under-eye fatigue and a slight sheen from the bus heat. Tarun should show visible nervous sweat, especially on the forehead, upper lip, and neck, with flushed skin as the questioning intensifies. Faiz should remain controlled at first, then show a gradual breakdown: tension in the jaw, moisture in the eyes, and a slight pallor when the phone is revealed. No heavy SFX injuries are required because the stabbing is not shown directly; the only physical distress comes from stress, fear, and the oppressive lighting reacting on skin.

ACTOR MASTERCLASS & HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES

STORYDILSE PRODUCTION BIBLE

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ACTORS & CASTING DIRECTOR

STANISLAVSKI SUBTEXT & CHARACTER DRIVERS:

- **character:** Inspector Salim | **super_objective:** To uncover the truth hidden inside the bus and force the real story into the open. | **subtext:** He already senses deception; every question is a trap designed to make the lie collapse under its own details.
- **character:** Tarun | **super_objective:** To avoid being blamed for what he saw and preserve his own safety. | **subtext:** He is terrified that knowing too much makes him guilty, so he hides behind half-answers and nervous corrections.
- **character:** Faiz | **super_objective:** To protect himself from exposure and keep the victim's recording from becoming evidence. | **subtext:** His calmness is a mask; beneath it is panic that the phone will reveal his connection to the victim and the smuggling deal.

CANONICAL HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES (CLIMACTIC SCENE):

SALIM Last route pe stabbing hua tha. Main simple sawaal puchhne aaya hoon. Seat 4 mein kaun tha?
TARUN Sir... koi tha.
FAIZ Haan. Seat 4 occupied thi.
SALIM Dono ek hi line pe? Interesting. Naam?
TARUN Face yaad nahi.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: CINEMATOGRAPHY & SOUND DEPT**1. CINEMATOGRAPHY CONCEPT & LENS PALETTE:**

Use a restrained noir approach with mostly 35mm and 50mm lenses for intimate interrogation coverage, plus a tighter 85mm for emotional pressure and detail inserts. Framing should trap characters within seat backs, aisle lines, and the bus's narrow geometry. Camera movement should be minimal and deliberate: slow push-ins during lies, static holds during silence, and a controlled handheld or subtle drift only for the phone reveal and confession. Favor over-the-shoulder compositions, reflective surfaces, and partial occlusions from poles and seat frames to maintain mystery.

2. 3-TIER LIGHTING SCHEMATIC:

Tier 1: Broken practical overheads as the base, flickering irregularly to create unstable exposure and tension. Tier 2: Streetlight spill through dusty windows to carve faces with warm sodium-yellow edges and noir shadows. Tier 3: Flashlight and phone-screen motivated light for evidence reveals, especially under Seat 4 and during the playback, with the phone screen becoming a cold, clinical source that isolates the truth. Progression should move from broad flicker to focused evidence light, ending in a dim, suspended stillness.

3. SOUND DESIGN & FOLEY ATMOSPHERE:

Build a tight acoustic profile: low bus cabin hum, faint metal creaks, distant depot ambience, and the soft buzz of failing overhead lights. Foley should emphasize the ticket puncher, notebook pages, torn paper, footsteps on the bus floor, and the clatter when the puncher drops. The phone playback must sound distorted, compressed, and intimate, with breath, a knife flash moment, and a brief chaotic drop in audio. Silence after the reveal should feel heavy and almost physical.

4. COLOR GRADING LUT & PALETTE:

Use a desaturated noir LUT with deep blacks, muted blues, dirty greens, and sodium-yellow streetlight highlights. Skin tones should remain slightly cool under the broken lights, with warmer edge light from outside. The phone screen should introduce a colder cyan-white contrast. Keep contrast high but preserve detail in the shadows so the bus interior remains readable while still feeling secretive and enclosed.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: PRODUCER & LINE MANAGEMENT

TIME	ACTIVITY / SCENE BLOCK	KEY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED
08:00 - 09:30	Bus interior prep, dusting, seat continuity, prop placement	Art, Props, Continuity
09:30 - 11:00	Lighting rig with flicker practicals and streetlight spill simulation	Camera, Gaffer, Grip
11:00 - 12:00	Blocking rehearsal for aisle interrogation and seat 4 reveal	Director, Cast, AD
12:00 - 13:30	Shoot interrogation coverage and evidence inserts	Camera, Sound, Script Supervisor
13:30 - 14:30	Shoot phone reveal, playback reaction, and confession beats	Camera, Sound, Cast
14:30 - 15:00	Pickup inserts: ticket stub, puncher drop, notebook close, final silence	Camera, Art, Sound

LOCATION HACK & BUDGET SAVING TIPS:

Shoot entirely on one bus set with controlled practicals and one exterior streetlight source. Use real bus seats and aged textures instead of building full interiors. Keep the phone playback as a simple preloaded video on a cracked-screen prop phone, avoiding VFX. Use a single flashlight and one flickering overhead practical to create most of the visual drama. Limit cast movement to the aisle and Seat 4 area to reduce coverage needs. Capture sound cleanly on set because the scene depends heavily on silence, small foley, and the phone reveal.

• **Mandatory Licensing:** Completely free for student/commercial production with on-screen credit: 'Story & Screenplay by Story Dil Se (storydilse.in)'.

