

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

THE THIRD SEATBELT

1 Male + 2 Female (M + F + F) | Genre: Slice of Life/Family | Runtime: 6 - 9 Mins

OFFICIAL STORY LOGLINE:

Monsoon rain traps a fractured family inside a parked car, where a teenage daughter finally forces her parents to confront the silence they've been hiding behind. In one intimate cabin, a small ride becomes the moment they choose honesty over habit.

DIRECTOR'S DRAMATIC VISION & TONAL CONCEPT:

- Intimate, pressure-cooker realism: keep the entire film emotionally claustrophobic, with the car cabin feeling like a sealed emotional chamber.
- Monsoon as metaphor: rain, fog, and reflections should externalize the family's suppressed tension, then gradually soften as truth is spoken.
- Performance-first staging: prioritize micro-expressions, pauses, and eye-lines over movement; the drama lives in what is avoided and what finally gets said.
- Pacing should start dry and restrained, then tighten with each exchange until Mini's reveal breaks the emotional dam.
- Visual language should remain grounded and observational, with subtle push-ins and restrained handheld only when the emotional temperature rises.
- End on release, not resolution: a small shared laugh and the act of opening the seatbelt should feel like the first honest breath.

CAST AT A GLANCE & CHARACTER ARCS:

- character:** Raghav | **age:** 36 | **look:** Rumpled polo shirt, slightly tired face, practical middle-class father energy, keys always in hand or near hand. | **dramatic_arc:** Begins defensive and avoidant, trying to manage time and mood with jokes. By the end, he admits his fault and shifts from evasion to direct honesty.
- character:** Neha | **age:** 34 | **look:** Seatbelt on, sunglasses initially on, composed but visibly exhausted, controlled posture with sharp stillness. | **dramatic_arc:** Starts dry, cutting, and emotionally guarded. Her sunglasses come off as the truth surfaces, revealing fatigue, hurt, and finally a small opening toward reconciliation.
- character:** Mini | **age:** 16 | **look:** School uniform, earbuds hanging around the neck, quiet but observant, emotionally contained with a teenager's alert stillness. | **dramatic_arc:** Begins as the silent witness, then becomes the moral center and catalyst. She moves from pretending not to care to openly exposing the family's emotional distance, ending with a controlled but powerful release.

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.

SET ARCHITECTURE & PROPS

STORYDILSE PRODUCTION BIBLE

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ART, WARDROBE & PROP MASTER

1. SET DESIGN & SPATIAL DEPTH PLAN:

The entire set is the interior of a parked car during monsoon night, designed as a tight emotional box. The windshield must carry heavy rain streaks and shimmering traffic-light reflections from outside. Cabin surfaces should feel slightly fogged up from humidity and breath, with condensation on glass and a soft haze in the air. Dashboard glow should create a warm, low-level practical source, while wet-road reflections add intermittent color movement across faces. The back seat must feel physically close enough to intensify Mini's presence as an observer. Textures should include matte upholstery, slightly worn seatbelts, a tissue box within easy reach, and a visible phone/keys ecosystem that suggests everyday domestic friction. Spatial layering should be clear: driver side, passenger side, and rear seat all readable in one frame, with the car interior becoming progressively more emotionally compressed as the scene advances.

2. COSTUME & WARDROBE CONTINUITY:

- **Raghav:** Rumpled polo shirt, casual and slightly disordered as if he has been sitting in the car for a while. Wardrobe should stay consistent throughout, with no major change, only subtle dampness or creasing from the humid environment.
- **Neha:** Neat but tired look with sunglasses on initially, seatbelt fastened. Clothing should read as practical and composed. Continuity note: sunglasses are removed mid-scene and remain in hand or off-face afterward.
- **Mini:** School uniform, clean but lived-in, with earbuds hanging around the neck. Wardrobe should reinforce her position as the youngest and the most observant. Continuity note: seatbelt is on until the final beat, then unbuckled at the end.

3. HERO PROPS MASTER CHECKLIST (PRACTICAL ON-SET ASSETS):

- **prop:** Car keys | **details:** Raghav's keys are actively handled and later placed on the dashboard. Mini also has an extra set of car keys, which becomes the reveal prop. Keys should be visibly distinct enough to read as two separate sets.
- **prop:** Phone | **details:** Raghav checks the route on his phone. It should feel like a habitual avoidance tool, something he reaches for instead of direct conversation.
- **prop:** Tissue box | **details:** Placed within Neha's reach. She points to it early and later closes it. It should be a practical, everyday object with emotional weight in the scene.
- **prop:** Umbrella | **details:** Mentioned in dialogue and later picked up by Raghav. It should be a simple, believable family-car umbrella, not stylized.
- **prop:** Seatbelts | **details:** All seatbelts must be clearly visible and functional. Mini's final unbuckling is a key emotional action.
- **prop:** Sunglasses | **details:** Neha wears them at the start and removes them mid-scene, marking the shift from guardedness to emotional exposure.
- **prop:** Earbuds | **details:** Mini's earbuds hang around her neck, signaling her attempt to stay detached while actually listening to everything.

4. PRACTICAL SFX & MAKEUP (MUA):

Keep makeup naturalistic and humidity-reactive. Raghav should have slight facial shine, mild under-eye fatigue, and a lived-in monsoon dampness. Neha needs controlled makeup with subtle signs of exhaustion that become more visible once sunglasses are removed; her eyes should carry tiredness and restrained emotion. Mini should appear youthful and mostly untouched, but by the reveal her eyes should look slightly wet, with a controlled emotional break rather than overt crying. Add light sweat, humidity sheen, and faint fogged-glass reflections on skin where practical. No heavy SFX required; the realism comes from moisture, breath, and the visual pressure of the environment.

ACTOR MASTERCLASS & HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES

STORYDILSE PRODUCTION BIBLE

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ACTORS & CASTING DIRECTOR

STANISLAVSKI SUBTEXT & CHARACTER DRIVERS:

- **Raghav:** {'super_objective': 'To keep the family functioning without confronting the emotional damage directly.', 'subtext': 'If I can keep things light, maybe I can avoid the truth and still get through the night.'}
- **Neha:** {'super_objective': 'To protect herself from further disappointment while still holding the family together.', 'subtext': 'I am tired of carrying this alone, but I do not want to be the first one to break.'}
- **Mini:** {'super_objective': 'To force her parents to acknowledge what they have been refusing to say.', 'subtext': 'If I do not make them speak now, this silence will keep becoming our normal.'}

CANONICAL HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES (CLIMACTIC SCENE):

RAGHAV

Bas do minute mein nikal jayenge.

NEHA

Do minute tumhari definition mein hamesha 20 minute hote hain.

RAGHAV

Arre, aaj toh rain bhi attendance le rahi hai.

NEHA

Aur tum bhi.

MINI

Mummy, papa, aap log directly ek dusre se baat kar sakte ho na? Main middleman nahi hoon.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: CINEMATOGRAPHY & SOUND DEPT

1. CINEMATOGRAPHY CONCEPT & LENS PALETTE:

Use a restrained, intimate camera grammar with 35mm and 50mm equivalents for most coverage, reserving a tighter lens for emotional reveals and the key Mini confession. Framing should favor medium close-ups and over-the-shoulder compositions that preserve the cramped geometry of the car. Movement philosophy: minimal, patient, and reactive—slow push-ins as tension rises, with very subtle handheld only when the emotional balance shifts. The windshield and side windows should be used as reflective layers to trap faces inside the frame and let rain, traffic lights, and fog become emotional texture. Keep the camera at eye level or slightly below eye level to preserve honesty and avoid melodrama.

2. 3-TIER LIGHTING SCHEMATIC:

Tier 1: Establishing monsoon night look with soft dashboard practical as the base and wet-road reflections as moving accent light. Keep the cabin dim, warm, and slightly fogged.

Tier 2: During the confrontation, increase contrast subtly with passing-headlight sweeps and controlled edge light on faces, especially when Neha removes her sunglasses and Mini begins speaking.

Tier 3: At the emotional release, soften the contrast slightly so skin tones feel more human and less defensive, while maintaining the rain-lit exterior shimmer. The final beat should feel warmer inside the car without changing the naturalistic nighttime realism.

3. SOUND DESIGN & FOLEY ATMOSPHERE:

The sound bed should be dominated by monsoon rain hammering the windshield, with occasional heavier bursts when the emotional tension spikes. Add soft cabin tone, faint AC or car interior hum if appropriate, and the subtle rustle of seatbelts, tissue box handling, phone taps, and keys. Outside traffic should remain muffled but present, with one horn blare as a sharp punctuation point. Dialogue must feel intimate and close-mic'd, as if the car is acoustically trapping every word. The sound mix should emphasize silence between lines as much as the lines themselves.

4. COLOR GRADING LUT & PALETTE:

Use a cool, rainy exterior palette with wet blues, slate grays, and traffic-light greens/reds reflected on glass. Inside the cabin, preserve a warm dashboard amber to keep the family emotionally human against the cold weather. Contrast should be moderate, with soft highlight roll-off on rain streaks and windshield reflections. The grade should feel naturalistic, slightly desaturated, and emotionally restrained, with a gentle warmth emerging only in the final shared laugh.

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: PRODUCER & LINE MANAGEMENT

TIME	ACTIVITY / SCENE BLOCK	KEY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED
08:00 - 09:00	Car interior prep, art dressing, continuity check for keys, tissue box, sunglasses, earbuds, and seatbelts	Art, Props, Wardrobe
09:00 - 10:30	Rig dashboard practicals, rain simulation, windshield wetting, and reflection tests	Camera, G&E,, SFX
10:30 - 12:00	Blocking with all three actors, eyeline mapping, and performance rehearsal inside the car	Director, Camera, Cast
12:00 - 13:30	Shoot dialogue escalation and Mini reveal coverage	Camera, Sound, Cast
13:30 - 14:30	Shoot emotional release, keys on dashboard, seatbelt unbuckle, and final laugh	Camera, Sound, Cast

LOCATION HACK & BUDGET SAVING TIPS:

- Shoot entirely in a parked car on a controlled set or covered location to avoid weather dependency.
- Use practical rain on glass and reflected light sources instead of expensive exterior rain setups.
- Keep the camera package lean: one main camera, one prime lens set, and minimal grip to preserve space inside the car.
- Use a real dashboard practical and nearby off-camera LED sources bounced through diffusion for the cabin glow.
- Limit coverage to carefully planned master, singles, and inserts so performance continuity stays strong and the shoot remains fast.
- Build emotional intensity through sound design and actor timing rather than expensive production design changes.
- If needed, shoot the car interior on a static rig with removable doors or windows for easier camera access.

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

