

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: DIRECTOR & EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

DEADLINE AT THE CAFÉ

1 Male + 2 Female (M + F + F) | Genre: Pure Comedy | Runtime: 6 - 9 Mins

OFFICIAL STORY LOGLINE:

A blank-page writer, his no-nonsense editor, and a sharp-tongued waitress collide in a neighborhood café when a sixty-minute deadline exposes that the real talent has been ghostwriting his career all along. In the middle of coffee, receipts, and public humiliation, the trio turns a professional crisis into a perfectly timed comedy of truth.

DIRECTOR'S DRAMATIC VISION & TONAL CONCEPT:

- Warm, intimate café realism with a clean comedic rhythm: the space should feel cozy, public, and slightly too small for the amount of truth being spoken.
- Visual comedy should come from contrast: Rohit's chaotic body language against Anjali's controlled stillness and Tina's effortless precision.
- Keep pacing brisk and escalating, with each line landing sharper than the last; pauses and reactions are as important as punchlines.
- The espresso machine hiss and the ticking timer should function like a pressure-cooker metronome throughout.
- The final beat should feel like a quiet victory for wit over ego, with the café sunlight making the ending feel oddly triumphant.

CAST AT A GLANCE & CHARACTER ARCS:

- **character:** Rohit | **age:** 34 | **look:** Hoodie-wearing, caffeine-stained, slightly rumpled, visibly under-slept, with the physical energy of someone trying to look productive while failing in public. | **dramatic_arc:** He begins as a defensive, excuse-making writer hiding behind process and confidence, then gets cornered into exposing his dependency on Tina. By the end, he is demoted from creator to coffee-runner, forced into comic humility.
- **character:** Anjali | **age:** 32 | **look:** Sharp blazer, glasses, composed posture, efficient and polished, with an amused face that can turn into a lethal deadpan in one beat. | **dramatic_arc:** She starts as the calm deadline enforcer, then shifts into amused observer once the truth surfaces. Her arc is from controlled pressure to playful authority, ending with her reclaiming the situation and assigning new roles.
- **character:** Tina | **age:** 29 | **look:** Waitress in apron, practical café uniform, alert eyes, quick hands, and a relaxed confidence that makes her seem like she owns the room without trying. | **dramatic_arc:** She begins as the observant server with dangerous timing, then reveals herself as the real engine behind Rohit's work. Her arc is from background witness to undisputed power player, ending as the one typing and controlling the outcome.

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:

A small neighborhood café interior with one dominant corner table placed near a front window. The set should feel compact and lived-in, with enough public visibility to make the characters self-conscious. Use warm wood textures, slightly worn tabletop edges, ceramic cups with subtle café branding, and a visible espresso machine in the background as a constant source of motion and sound. The front window should cast soft morning sunlight across the table, creating a gentle diagonal pool of light that shifts subtly as the scene progresses. Add layered depth through background chairs, a counter edge, a receipt pad, and small café clutter so the space feels functional but not crowded. The corner table must clearly hold the laptop, two coffee cups, notebook, receipt, pen, and timer as story-critical objects.

2. COSTUME & WARDROBE CONTINUITY:

- **Rohit:** Hoodie with a slightly worn, caffeine-stained look. Keep it casual and unkempt to support his chaotic energy. Continuity note: hoodie should remain visibly rumpled throughout, reinforcing his stalled state.
- **Anjali:** Sharp blazer and glasses, clean and structured silhouette. Her wardrobe should stay crisp and controlled, signaling authority and precision. Continuity note: no visible disarray; she should look increasingly amused, not less composed.
- **Tina:** Waitress apron over practical café attire. The apron should be functional, slightly used, and believable for a working café employee. Continuity note: she should remain neat and efficient, with no costume changes that reduce her grounded, working-class practicality.

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

- **prop:** Laptop | **details:** Open laptop with a nearly empty screen at the start, later showing the typed line: 'Ek café mein teen log...'. It must be clearly visible to the audience.
- **prop:** Two coffee cups | **details:** Standard café cups placed on the table, one delivered by Tina. They should feel warm, practical, and used as part of the conversational rhythm.
- **prop:** Notebook | **details:** Contains random doodles, one line, and a grocery list. The visible contents must support the joke about 'research.'
- **prop:** Receipt | **details:** A physical receipt that Tina slides onto the table. The back must visibly contain script notes, and later the line: 'If you want brilliance, tip on time.'
- **prop:** Pen | **details:** Used by Tina to twirl and write on the receipt. It should be simple, practical, and easy to see in close-ups.
- **prop:** Timer | **details:** A tabletop timer that is actively ticking and later stopped by Anjali. It should be visually prominent and central to the pressure of the scene.

4. PRACTICAL SFX & MAKEUP (MUA):

Keep makeup natural and grounded for a morning café scene. Rohit should have slight under-eye fatigue, mild caffeine-stained dishevelment, and a faint sheen of stress as the scene escalates. Anjali should remain clean, polished, and lightly matte, with only subtle expression changes carrying the comedy. Tina should look fresh, alert, and work-ready, with minimal makeup and a practical café shift appearance. No heavy SFX is needed; use slight sweat or skin shine only if required to reflect deadline pressure under warm sunlight. Ensure all three faces react well to bright window light and close-up comedic timing.

DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: ACTORS & CASTING DIRECTOR

STANISLAVSKI SUBTEXT & CHARACTER DRIVERS:

- **Rohit:** {'super_objective': 'To preserve the image of being a capable writer while avoiding exposure.', 'subtext': 'He wants to be seen as creative and in control, but every excuse reveals fear, dependency, and embarrassment.'}
- **Anjali:** {'super_objective': 'To force the truth out and get the script delivered on time.', 'subtext': 'She is amused by Rohit's collapse, but her calmness hides a sharp need to restore order and expose the real situation.'}
- **Tina:** {'super_objective': 'To claim credit, control the narrative, and stop enabling Rohit's fake competence.', 'subtext': 'She is tired of being invisible and enjoys finally turning her quiet competence into public authority.'}

CANONICAL HINGLISH AUDITION SIDES (CLIMACTIC SCENE):

ANJALI*((deadpan))*

Sixty minutes. Script. No drama. No excuses.

ANJALI*((reading the screen))*

Your cursor is doing more work than you.

TINA*((placing coffee))*

Black coffee. For the man with the blank page.

ROHIT*((defensive))*

Main process mein hoon.

ANJALI*((reading the notebook))*

"Milk. Bread. Existential crisis."



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: CINEMATOGRAPHY & SOUND DEPT

1. CINEMATOGRAPHY CONCEPT & LENS PALETTE:

Use intimate comedy coverage with a mix of medium shots, over-the-shoulders, and tight reaction close-ups. Favor a 35mm or 50mm feel for natural café perspective, with occasional tighter focal lengths for punchline reactions and receipt/laptop inserts. Camera movement should be restrained and observational, letting performance and timing drive the humor. Slow push-ins can underline escalating embarrassment, while static framing during deadpan lines will maximize comedic impact. Keep the camera at table height often enough to make the audience feel like a nearby customer overhearing everything.

2. 3-TIER LIGHTING SCHEMATIC:

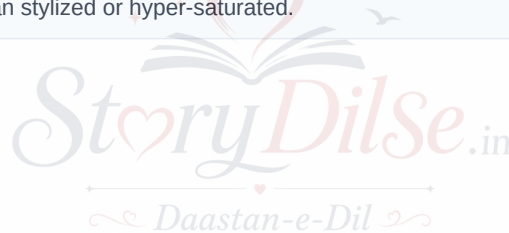
- 1) Opening: soft warm morning sunlight from the front window as key light, with gentle fill from practical café ambient sources. The mood should feel inviting and ordinary.
- 2) Mid-scene escalation: maintain warm key light but introduce slightly stronger contrast on faces as the conversation sharpens, especially on Rohit, to emphasize pressure and exposure.
- 3) Final beat: preserve the same natural sunlight, but let the table area feel brighter and cleaner as the truth lands and the alliance forms. The espresso machine background remains a darker, textural anchor while the foreground stays warmly lit.

3. SOUND DESIGN & FOLEY ATMOSPHERE:

The espresso machine hiss should be constant and recognizable, acting like a pressure underscore. Add subtle café room tone: distant cups, low public murmur, chair shifts, receipt paper rustle, pen taps, laptop key clicks, and the soft ticking of the timer. The sound mix should support punchlines by briefly dropping ambient clutter under key lines, then returning the hiss and room tone to keep the café alive.

4. COLOR GRADING LUT & PALETTE:

Use a warm, natural LUT with soft morning golds, creamy highlights, and gentle brown café tones. Keep skin tones flattering and realistic. Contrast should be moderate, with slightly richer shadows in the café interior and sunlit highlights near the window. The palette should feel cozy, lived-in, and lightly comedic rather than stylized or hyper-saturated.



DEPARTMENT HANDOUT: PRODUCER & LINE MANAGEMENT

TIME	ACTIVITY / SCENE BLOCK	KEY DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED
08:00 - 09:00	Load-in, art dressing, table prop placement, wardrobe check	Art, Wardrobe, Props
09:00 - 10:00	Block actors and rehearse timing for deadpan exchanges	Director, Cast, AD
10:00 - 11:00	Rig and balance window sunlight, practical café ambience, and table coverage	Camera, G&E;
11:00 - 12:30	Shoot master and dialogue coverage for opening and escalation	Camera, Sound, Cast
12:30 - 13:30	Shoot insert shots of laptop, notebook, receipt, timer, and coffee cups	Camera, Props, Script Supervisor
13:30 - 14:30	Shoot final reveal, receipt line, timer stop, and ending reaction beats	Camera, Cast, Sound

LOCATION HACK & BUDGET SAVING TIPS:
Shoot in a real café during off-hours to avoid building a full set. Use one window as the primary source and supplement with a soft LED bounced through diffusion. Keep the entire story centered on one table so coverage stays efficient. Use practical props already available in the café: cups, receipt pad, pen, timer, and laptop. Prioritize strong performances and clean audio over complex camera moves. For comedy, hold on reaction shots longer than feels comfortable; that costs nothing and improves the jokes. Use inserts sparingly but clearly so the receipt and laptop beats land without extra setup.

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

