



AFTER THE APPLAUSE

A Slice of Life/Romance 2-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

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LOGLINE: After a performance, an actress and the woman who runs the lights remain alone in the theater, both pretending they are only discussing cues and missed timings. As the applause fades from memory, their conversation becomes a soft confession of loneliness, ambition, and the fear of being seen outside the roles they play. The twist is intimate and hopeful: one has been leaving the other secret notes in the script every night, and tonight she finally signs her name.

CAST / CHARACTERS: FORMAT: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast) | Character 1: Nandita (31)

LOCATION: An empty theater auditorium after a show with dim work lights, red velvet seats, a dusty stage, and one spotlight still glowing faintly.

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INT. EMPTY THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Dim work lights. Red velvet seats. Dusty stage. A faint spotlight still glows center stage.

NANDITA (31), rehearsal clothes, smudged eyeliner, script in hand, stands near the third row. Tired, radiant.

JHANVI (30), black T-shirt and cargo pants, headset around one ear, spotlight remote in hand, emerges from stage right.

A beat. They clock each other like professionals first.

NANDITA

Last cue thoda late tha.

JHANVI

Tumhara entrance thoda jaldi tha.

NANDITA

Main? Main toh hamesha on time hoti hoon.

JHANVI

Stage pe ya life mein?

Nandita smirks. Jhanvi hides a smile.

NANDITA

Dono mein struggle chal raha hai.

Nandita sits in a seat, flips through the script.

NANDITA (CONT'D)

Audience ko lagta hai theatre glamorous hota hai. Asal mein hum log makeup, insecurity aur unpaid overtime ka combo hain.

JHANVI

Technicians ke baare mein bhi wahi. "Lights on kar dete hain." Bas.

NANDITA

Tum log lights on nahi, mood on karte ho.

Jhanvi looks at her, surprised by the warmth.

JHANVI

Waah. Compliment bhi cue ki tarah deliver kiya.

NANDITA

Training hai.

A small silence. The auditorium hums.

JHANVI

Applause ke baad sabse zyada khali lagta hai.

NANDITA

Haan.

(soft)

Kabhi-kabhi lagta hai log mujhe nahi, mere character ko dekh rahe the.

JHANVI

Main lights ke peeche khadi hoti hoon. Sabko clearly dekh sakti hoon. Khud ko dekhna phir bhi mushkil hai.

Nandita studies her.

NANDITA

Tum hamesha itni serious rehti ho?

JHANVI

Tum hamesha itni dramatic rehti ho?

NANDITA

Sirf stage pe.

JHANVI

Sirf tumhare saamne.

A beat. That lands.

Nandita turns a page and freezes. A folded NOTE CARD falls out.

NANDITA

Yeh...

She opens it. Reads.

INSERT - NOTE CARD

"Second pause perfect tha. Don't let the silence apologize."

Nandita looks up, stunned.

NANDITA

Yeh tum likhti thi?

Jhanvi looks away, suddenly shy.

JHANVI

Haan.

(beat)

Har night.

NANDITA

Main soch rahi thi koi secret admirer hai.

JHANVI

Secret hi rehna tha. Tumhari face pe smile dekh ke himmat nahi hui.

NANDITA

Kyun?

JHANVI

Kyunki tum stage pe sab kuch de deti ho. Mujhe laga stage ke baad koi poochta hi nahi ki tum theek ho ya nahi.

Nandita is moved, quiet.

NANDITA

Maine har note sambhal ke rakha. Kyunki pehli baar kisi ne mujhe role ke bahar notice kiya tha.

A soft beat.

Nandita closes the script and pulls out a taped note card from the last page.

NANDITA (CONT'D)

Main bhi kuch likh ke laayi thi.

She hands it to Jhanvi.

INSERT - NOTE CARD

"Kal rehearsal ke baad coffee? Sirf cues nahi, tumse baat karni hai. —Nandita"

Jhanvi reads it. Her smile breaks open, warm and real.

She clicks the spotlight remote. The faint spotlight warms slightly.

JHANVI

Coffee after cues. Dangerous habit hai.

NANDITA

Main risk lene ki aadat seekh rahi hoon.

Jhanvi steps closer. Nandita steps onto the stage mark tape.

JHANVI

Kal?

NANDITA

Kal.

They hold each other's gaze. No performance. Just two women, seen.

The empty theater feels full.

FADE OUT.