

TWO SEATS AWAY

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

Genre: Slice of Life/Romance	Format: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast)	Runtime: 5 - 8 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast) Character 1: Imran (33)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Imran aur Dev ka café booth ek aadat ban chuka tha. Roz ka time, wahi rain-streaked window, wahi do cups coffee, wahi muted afternoon light. Imran apni soft shirt aur glasses ke saath quietly ek paperback kholta, kabhi receipt ko fold karta, kabhi canvas tote se naya novel nikaal leta. Dev denim jacket mein baithta, beard ko thumb se rub karta, watch ko baar-baar dekh■■■, jaise kahin der na ho rahi ho—ya shayad kuch aur. Dono hamesha ek hi booth mein hote, par beech mein jo space tha, woh sirf table ka nahi tha. Kabhi “extra sugar?” ya “same as usual?” se zyada baat nahi hoti thi. Phir bhi, unki silence mein ek strange familiarity thi, jaise dono ek hi song ka alag-alag verse sun rahe hon.

Bahaar baarish tej ho jaati hai. Café mein hawa thodi aur thandi lagne lagti hai. Imran apne novel ke page par atak jaata hai; Dev ka phone ek baar phir screen on karke off ho jaata hai. Dev ke haath mein umbrella hai, jo woh har baar chair ke paas rakh deta hai, jaise usse bhi pata ho ki aaj jaana mushkil hoga. Imran notice karta hai ki Dev ka coffee cup almost untouched hai. Dev notice karta hai ki Imran ne apni coffee pehli baar sugar ke bina mangayi hai. Dono ek dusre ko dekh kar turant nazar hata lete hain. Yeh chhoti-chhoti cheezein unke beech ek aisi tension banati hain, jo awkward nahi, bas unsaid hoti hai.

Tabhi ek sharp click ke saath power chali jaati hai. Jazz ruk jaati hai. Café ka ambient hum gayab. Sirf rain ki tapping aur cups ke andar bachi hui coffee ki halki steam. Andhera itna nahi hota ki chehre na dikhein, bas itna ki sach bolna aasaan ho jaaye. Imran pehle bolta hai, almost apne aap se—“Aaj bhi aa gaye?” Dev halka sa hansa, par uski hansa mein thakaan thi. “Haan. Aaj bhi.” Phir ek pause. Is baar dono ke beech ka silence pehle jaisa safe nahi, balki fragile lagta hai.

Dev apni watch utar kar table par rakh deta hai. “Main ghar jaldi nahi jaata.” Imran usse dekhta hai, phir apni napkin ko unfold karta hai. “Main bhi.” Dev ek second ruk kar seedha pooch leta hai, “Kyun?” Imran ka jaw set hota hai. “Ghar mein koi intezaar nahi karta.” Dev ki aankhen thodi neeche ho jaati hain. “Mere ghar mein bhi. Bas awaaz bahut hoti hai. Aur sawal bhi.” Imran slowly nod karta hai. Dono pehli baar ek dusre ko dekhte hain, bina polite mask ke.

Imran batata hai ki bookstore ke baad yahan aana uske liye ek pause hai—jahan koi usse kuch expect nahi karta. Dev bolta hai ki uska office aur ghar dono mein woh khud ko guest jaisa mehsoos karta hai. “Yahan aake lagta hai, main invisible ho sakta hoon,” Dev kehta hai. Imran softly replies, “Mujhe laga tha main hi invisible hoon.” Is line par Dev ki smile aati hai, phir woh seedha poochta hai, “Phir tum roz isi booth mein kyun baithte ho?” Imran ka jawab simple hai: “Kyuki tum bhi yahin baithte the.”

Dev ka expression badal jaata hai. “Main isliye aata tha kyunki tum aate the.” Ab dono ke beech ek naya silence hai—iss baar heavy nahi, luminous. Imran ka haath napkin par ruk jaata hai. Dev apne umbrella ko table ke edge se thoda aur andar kheench leta hai, jaise ab uski zarurat kam ho. Imran dheere se kehta hai, “Hum dono coffee ke liye nahi aa rahe the.” Dev uski taraf dekhta hai, almost smiling. “Shayad.”

Baarish window par aur tez ho jaati hai. Café ka ek staff member torch leke door se bolta hai ki power thodi der mein aa jayegi. But in that blackout, something else has already switched on. Dev apna phone table par face-down rakh deta hai. Imran apni paperback close karta hai. Dono ke beech ab koi polite barrier nahi, bas ek honest, trembling possibility hai. Dev bolta hai, “Kal bhi aaoge?” Imran pehli baar bina jhijhak ke kehta hai, “Agar tum aaoge.” Dev ka throat tight hota hai, phir woh halki si hanski ke saath bolta hai, “Main toh tab se aa raha hoon, jab se tumne pehli baar mujhe namaste kiya tha.” Imran ka chehra soft ho jaata hai. “Maine socha tha tum bas polite ho.” Dev quietly: “Main bas darr raha tha.”

Power wapas aati hai. Jazz phir se chal padti hai. Light unke faces par girti hai, par ab kuch bhi pehle jaisa nahi. Dev umbrella uthata hai, phir ruka hua sa Imran ki taraf dekhta hai. Imran canvas tote ko shoulder par shift karta hai. Dono khade hote hain—booth ke do seats se, lekin ek dusre ke bilkul paas. Door ki taraf jaate hue Dev halka sa kehta hai, “Coffee thandi ho gayi.” Imran muskurata hai, “Haan. Par baat garam ho gayi.” Dev laugh karta hai, aur us laugh mein relief bhi hai, aur naya sa pyaar bhi.

Exit par, rain ke beech, Dev umbrella kholta hai. Imran uske saath step match karta hai. Unke beech ab woh distance nahi jo months se tha; ab woh space hai jo dono ne finally cross kar liya hai. Aur jab Dev pehli baar bina watch dekhe Imran ki taraf dekhta hai, dono ko samajh aata hai ki woh café mein coffee ke liye nahi, ek dusre ke courage ke liye intezaar kar rahe the.