

THE BORROWED VOICE

A Sci-Fi/High-Concept 2-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Sci-Fi/High-Concept	Format: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast)	Runtime: 5 - 8 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast) Character 1: Manav (25)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Manav ek chhote, claustrophobic recording studio mein ghusta hai jahan foam panels walls ko nigal rahe hain, desk lamp ki peeli roshni mein waveform monitor halka sa pulse kar raha hai. Uske kaan mein headphones, gale mein lanyard, haath mein portable recorder. Uska kaam simple hai: Dr. Iyer ke naye device ko test karna—ek aisi machine jo ek insaan ki voice ko perfectly copy kar sakti hai. Dr. Iyer, safed lab coat aur reading glasses mein, bilkul surgical calm ke saath uska welcome karta hai. Woh explain karta hai ki yeh sirf voice clone nahi hai; voice ke saath attached emotional residue bhi store ho sakta hai. Manav muskura kar bolta hai, “Sir, main sound engineer hoon, therapist nahi.” Dr. Iyer bina smile kiye reply karta hai, “Aaj dono ka kaam ek hi hai.”

Shuru mein session kaafi technical aur almost boring lagta hai. Manav script pages par diye gaye sentences repeat karta hai—numbers, vowels, random lines. Audio interface pe meters green se yellow tak jump karte hain. Dr. Iyer waveform monitor ko dekhte hue har take ko annotate karta hai, jaise koi surgeon heartbeat track kar raha ho. Manav thoda mazak karta hai, kabhi mic ko “apna naya ex” bol deta hai, kabhi headphones adjust karte hue complaint karta hai ki “yeh machine mujhe judge kar rahi hai.” Dr. Iyer dry tone mein bolta hai, “Machine judge nahi karti. Sirf record karti hai.”

Phir ek odd cheez hoti hai. Playback mein Manav ki voice thodi delayed aur strangely deeper aati hai. Woh lines jo usne kabhi script mein nahi padhi, suddenly speaker se nikalti hain: “Agar main yahan se bahar gaya, toh main phir se wahi aadmi ban jaunga jo sabko sunta hai, khud ko nahi.” Manav freeze ho jaata hai. Dr. Iyer calmly bolta hai ki echo artifact ho sakta hai. Manav phir se record karta hai, is baar aur focused. Lekin playback aur bhi personal ho jaata hai: “Tu hamesha sound se bhaagta raha hai, Manav. Kyunki silence mein tera khud ka version zyada loud hai.”

Manav ka chehra pale padne lagta hai. Woh Dr. Iyer se puchta hai ki yeh lines script se kaise aa rahi hain. Dr. Iyer, pehli baar, thoda emotional lagta hai—but sirf ek second ke liye. Woh batata hai ki device voice ko nahi, “intention” ko map karta hai. Jo insaan bol raha hota hai, uske andar ka “next self” bhi capture hota hai. Manav laugh karta hai, but woh laugh defensive hai. “Toh aap keh rahe ho machine future predict kar rahi hai?” Dr. Iyer answer deta hai, “Nahi. It's recording the version of you that already exists—if you keep making the same choice.”

Ab tension sirf scientific nahi, personal ho chuki hai. Manav ko yaad aata hai ki usne yeh test paison ke liye nahi, actually escape ke liye accept kiya tha—apni current life, apni stalled career, aur us fear se door rehne ke liye ki agar woh thoda aur wait karega, toh kabhi jump hi nahi karega. Playback mein voice aur clear hoti jaati hai: “Main jaunga, aur phir bolunga ki main busy tha. Main ruk jaunga, aur phir bolunga ki waqt nahi tha.” Yeh lines sunke Manav ka throat tight ho jaata hai. Woh samajh jaata hai ki yeh machine uski present voice nahi, us future self ki voice pakad rahi hai jo room chhod kar wahi excuses banata rahega.

Climax mein Dr. Iyer Manav se kehta hai ki session stop kar dete hain. Par Manav, ab obsessive clarity ke saath, headphones utaar kar mic ke saamne khada ho jaata hai. Woh dheere se bolta hai, “Agar yeh mera future hai, toh main usse record nahi karunga. Main usse interrupt karunga.” Woh script pages ko side karta hai aur apni asli awaaz mein, bina prepared lines ke, bolta hai ki woh dar raha hai, ki woh change chahta hai, aur ki usse sabse zyada khauf is baat ka hai ki woh khud ko sunega hi nahi. Waveform monitor ek jagged line banata hai—raw, imperfect, alive.

Dr. Iyer finally admits that device ka original purpose bhi yahi tha: logon ko unki hidden self se confront karwana. Lekin Manav ke test ne ek aur layer reveal ki—future self sirf prediction nahi, warning bhi hai. Playback mein aakhri line aati hai, aur is baar voice Manav ki hi lagti hai, par ek ajnabi maturity ke saath: “Agar tum yeh sun rahe ho, toh matlab tum abhi tak room mein ho.” Silence. Manav aur Dr. Iyer ek dusre ko dekhte hain. Door ka lock click karta hai, jaise room ne decide kar liya ho ki ab exit tabhi milega jab choice clear ho. Manav ek deep breath leta hai, recorder ko pocket mein rakhta hai, aur mic off karta hai. Uske chehre par pehli baar fear ke saath relief bhi hai—kyunki ab usne apni voice borrow nahi ki, use choose kiya hai.