

THE HOSTAGE CLAUSE

A Mystery/Crime 2-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Mystery/Crime	Format: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast)	Runtime: 5 - 8 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast) Character 1: Rana (38)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka waqt hai. Ek commercial building ke basement ke andar ek locked storage room, jahan stacked cartons deewar ki tarah khade hain aur ek hi bulb baar-baar jhilmila raha hai. Door ke neeche se aati patli roshni bas itna batati hai ki bahar koi corridor zinda hai, andar nahi. Isi claustrophobic andhere mein Rana, 38, ek office accountant, pasine se tar-batar, loosened tie aur button-down shirt ke saath, chair par ya floor par adha bandha hua sa lagta hai. Uske saamne Imtiaz, 42, dark hoodie, gloves, boots aur chehre par mask pehne khada hai. Uski body language bilkul controlled hai—na zyada gussa, na zyada jaldi. Bas ek thandi, measured presence.

Rana ki saansein tez hain. Woh baar-baar keh raha hai ki uske paas kuch nahi hai. Usne paisa nahi chhupaya, usne kisi ko loot nahi kiya. Imtiaz uski baat ko ignore karta hai aur sirf ek sawal puchta hai: "Payroll kisne badla?" Rana confuse ho jaata hai. Kidnapper ko company cash ya black money ki jagah payroll ke names mein interest hai—yeh baat usko aur darrati hai. Imtiaz ek ledger nikalta hai, uske pages par highlights, underlines aur kuch names circle kiye gaye hain. Woh names un logon ke hain jo company se quietly gayab ho gaye: security supervisor, junior clerk, warehouse head, do outsiders. Rana samajhne lagta hai ki yeh simple kidnapping nahi, kuch aur hi hai.

Shuruat mein Rana defensive hota hai. Woh bolta hai, "Main accountant hoon, goon nahi." Imtiaz ka jawab aata hai, "Exactly. Accountant ho. Isliye toh yahan ho." Woh flashlight se ledger ke pages par light daalta hai aur Rana se kehta hai ki missing funds ka route usne nahi, kisi aur ne banaya. Company ke accounts mein ek dummy vendor, fake reimbursements, aur payroll ke through cash siphon hua. Rana ko yaad aata hai kaise CEO ne pichhle teen mahine se usse late-night entries karwaayi thi, kaise signatures ke liye pressure tha, kaise "audit ke baad dekh lenge" bola gaya tha. Dheere-dheere uske chehre par samajh aur guilt dono aa jaate hain.

Imtiaz jab ledger ka ek page kholta hai, Rana ek name dekhkar freeze ho jaata hai—apna hi naam. Uske neeche ek aur naam hai jo usne saalon se nahi suna: Imtiaz Qureshi. Rana ki awaaz dheemi ho jaati hai. Woh pehchaanne ki koshish karta hai. Imtiaz mask ke peeche se bas itna kehta hai, "Do saal pehle tum mujhe partner bolte the." Flashback ke bina bhi room ka temperature aur neeche chala jaata hai. Rana ko yaad aata hai: woh aur Imtiaz ek time par same audit-and-logistics consultancy mein kaam karte the. Phir ek internal fraud case aaya, blame shift hua, Imtiaz ko nikaal diya gaya, aur Rana ne apni naukri bachane ke liye kuch nahi bola. Us waqt usne socha tha ki woh bas bach gaya. Ab pata chalta hai ki us din se Imtiaz ne sab yaad rakha tha.

Imtiaz batata hai ki kidnapping ka maksad paise se zyada confession hai. Use missing funds ka exact stash bhi pata hai, lekin woh paisa uske liye endgame nahi. Woh payroll list se CEO ke saare hidden connections nikaal raha hai—kis employee ko hush money mila, kis contractor ko fake bill, kis guard ko overtime ke naam par bribe. Rana ko samajh aata hai ki CEO ne un dono ko alag-alag sacrifice kiya: Imtiaz ko scapegoat banaya, aur Rana ko silent accomplice. Ab Imtiaz usse keh raha hai ki ya toh woh sach bole aur ledger mein saare names confirm kare, ya phir woh bhi usi fraud ka permanent witness ban ke reh jaaye.

Rana pehle darr ke maare jhooth bolne ki koshish karta hai, phir toot jaata hai. Woh confess karta hai ki funds ka ek hissa CEO ke private shell account mein gaya tha, aur baaki cash building ke maintenance vault ke piche ek false panel mein chhupaya gaya tha. Lekin Imtiaz us paise par react nahi karta. Woh sirf phone nikaalta hai aur ek recording play karta hai—CEO ki awaaz. “Agar audit hua, toh blame accounting pe daal dena. Rana manageable hai. Imtiaz already gone hai.” Rana ki aankhen phat jaati hain. Ab uske saamne koi theory nahi, proof hai.

Climax mein Imtiaz apna mask thoda sa uthata hai. Rana usse pehchaan leta hai—wahi face, wahi old scar, wahi aankhon mein woh purana resentment. Imtiaz ka naam sunte hi Rana ki guilt aur tez ho jaati hai. Imtiaz kehta hai, “Main paise ke liye nahi aaya tha, Rana. Main us aadmi ko girane aaya hoon jisne humein use karke phenk diya.” Woh Rana ko ek choice deta hai: abhi phone se CEO ko call kar, ledger ka ek photo bhej, aur bol ki missing funds ka asli trail mil gaya hai. CEO panic karega aur apna hand reveal karega. Ya Rana phir se chup rahe—aur is baar dono ke liye koi bachav nahi hoga.

Rana ka haath kaanp raha hai, par woh phone uthata hai. Is baar woh sirf victim nahi, witness bhi hai. Jab woh number dial karta hai, bulb ek pal ke liye aur dim ho jata hai. Door ke neeche ki roshni waise ki waise rehti hai, jaise building ko abhi bhi pata ho ki andar kuch khatarnak pal raha hai. Imtiaz carton ke piche ledger chipka deta hai. Rana call par “Sir, humein ek problem mil gayi hai” bolta hai, aur uski awaaz mein pehli baar sach ki dhaar hoti hai. End mein, jab CEO ki awaaz line par aati hai—“Kya bakwaas hai?”—Imtiaz aur Rana dono ek dusre ko dekhte hain. Ab game paise ka nahi, power ka hai. Aur iss locked room se shuru hua confession ab ek larger takedown ka pehla step ban chuka hai.