

ONE MORE ROUND

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: Tarun (38)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat kaafi ho chuki hai. Café band hai, chairs tables par ulte pade hain, aur bahar baarish front window par patli patli lakeerein bana rahi hai. Andar sirf pendant lamps ki warm roshni aur espresso machine ki halki si steam hai. Tarun, 38, linen shirt ke upar apron pehne, reading glasses naak par tikaye, counter saaf kar raha hai. Uski movements measured hain, jaise har cheez ko control mein rakhne ki aadat ho. Tabhi bell nahi, bas front door halkasa khulta hai aur Kabir, 40, motorcycle jacket aur jeans mein, helmet haath mein liye andar aata hai. Uske chehre par wohi hesitant smile hai jo yaad bhi hai aur ajnabi bhi.

Kabir casually bolta hai ki “ek coffee milegi?” Tarun bina dekhe pehle mana karta hai, phir uski awaaz mein wohi purani dryness aa jaati hai—“Café band hai.” Kabir receipt pad ki taraf ishara karke kehta hai, “Toh phir one more round?” Tarun rukta hai. Yeh phrase dono ke beech ek chord ki tarah kaanp jaata hai. Pehle woh bas coffee ka round lagta hai, phir conversation ka, phir un saalon ka jo beech mein kho gaye. Tarun cup nikaalta hai, machine on karta hai, aur Kabir counter ke saamne baith jaata hai, helmet ko apni god mein rakhkar, jaise kisi confession ko pakad ke baitha ho.

Conversation pehle light hoti hai. Kabir café ko “same, but thoda zyada sad” bolta hai; Tarun jawab deta hai, “Aur tu same, but thoda zyada late.” Dono hans dete hain, lekin hasne ke neeche kuch aur hi chal raha hota hai. Tarun poochta hai ki itne saalon baad achanak kyun. Kabir bolta hai, “Travel tha. Kaam tha. Life thi.” Tarun aankh utha ke dekhta hai, “Aur sach?” Kabir cup ko ghoorta hai. “Sach mein darr tha.” Yeh pehla crack hota hai.

Baarish tez ho jaati hai. Espresso machine ki hiss aur cups ki halki khankhanahat ke beech unke beech ka silence zyada bolne lagta hai. Tarun ko yaad aata hai ki Kabir hamesha bina sugar ke coffee mangta tha, aur Kabir ko yaad aata hai ki Tarun hamesha zyada puchta nahi tha. Dono ne ek dusre ko samajhne se zyada assume kiya tha. Kabir finally admit karta hai ki uss waqt jab sab kuch “almost” tha, woh dar gaya tha—label se, logon se, aur sabse zyada khud se. Tarun ke chehre par koi dramatic reaction nahi aata; bas uski aankhon mein ek purana thakan bhar aati hai. Woh kehta hai, “Mujhe laga tu simply chala gaya.” Kabir softly bolta hai, “Main gaya tha. Par khatam nahi hua tha.”

Tarun receipt pad uthata hai, jaise kisi practical cheez se emotional moment ko sambhalna chahta ho. Woh ek order likhta hai, phir doosra, phir ruk jaata hai. Kabir notice karta hai ki Tarun ke left haath mein ab bhi woh purani ring ka

halka sa tan hai—divorce ka nishaan. Kabir kuch bolne ko aage badhta hai, phir ruk jaata hai. Tarun apni reading glasses utarta hai aur pehli baar usse seedha dekhta hai. “Tu coffee ke liye aaya hai ya closure ke liye?” Kabir ek lambi saans leta hai. “Main yahan rehne aaya hoon.”

Tarun ko lagta hai shayad koi joke hai, par Kabir apna helmet counter par rakh deta hai aur ek folded paper nikaalta hai—rent agreement ka printout, local address, aur keys ka chhota sa bunch. “Do hafte pehle wapas aaya. Socha pehle saamne aa jaun. Agar tu mujhe dekh ke door kar de, toh bhi theek. Par ek aur baar bina bole gayab nahi hona chahta tha.” Tarun ki aankhon mein gussa, hairani aur relief sab ek saath aa jaate hain. Woh hansi ke saath bolta hai, “Bahut dramatic ho gaya hai tu.” Kabir shrug karta hai, “Thoda late hoon, compensate kar raha hoon.”

Final beat mein Tarun ek naya cup nikaalta hai, lekin is baar coffee nahi, paani. Kabir confuse hota hai. Tarun receipt pad par kuch likhkar uski taraf slide karta hai: “One more round. Par is baar bill nahi, answer tera hoga.” Kabir padhkar muskuraata hai. Tarun counter ke peeche se aage aata hai, unke beech ka gap pehli baar itne saalon mein kam hota hai. Kabir helmet side mein rakh deta hai, jaise ab nikalne ka plan nahi. Tarun dheere se poochta hai, “Ab?” Kabir seedha jawab deta hai, “Ab, agar tu bole toh, main yahin rukta hoon.” Bahar baarish chal rahi hai, andar espresso machine ki halki roshni dono ke chevron par ek naya, soft sa promise likh deti hai. Aur is baar one more round coffee ka nahi, dobara ek dusre ko chunne ka hota hai.