

THE WOMAN IN THE BOOTH

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: Inspector Dev (40)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Inspector Dev jab roadside café ke kone wale booth mein enter karta hai, bahar ki baarish ki aawaz aur neon sign ki neeli laal roshni glass par kaanp rahi hoti hai. Andar bas do log hain—Dev, jo apni rain-speckled trench coat ke saath thaka hua, par alert lag raha hai, aur Sana, black apron mein ek nervous waitress, jiske haath mein notepad aur tray hai. Closing time ke kareeb ka mahaul hai: khaali tables, thandi hoti coffee, aur ek aisi silence jo har chhoti saans ko bhi suspect bana deti hai. Dev police file khol kar seedha point par aata hai: ek aadmi, Arjun Mehra, jo yahin last seen tha, ab missing hai. Sana pehle normal customer service tone mein bolti hai—“Sir, mujhe yaad nahi”—par uski aankhon ki bechaini uske lafzon ko jhooth bana deti hai.

Dev usse ek-ek detail nikalne ki koshish karta hai: Arjun ne kya order kiya tha, kis ke saath aaya tha, kitne baje gaya tha. Sana har jawab ko adha sach aur adhi chuppi mein badal deti hai. Kabhi kehti hai ki woh akela tha, kabhi kehti hai ki usne phone par kisi se bahut tez awaaz mein baat ki. Dev notice karta hai ki Sana ka notepad sirf orders ke liye use nahi ho raha—uske corner mein baar-baar ek hi face ka rough sketch bana hua hai. Woh face Arjun ka hai. Dev ka suspicion aur gehra ho jata hai. Woh poochta hai, “Tum usse pehchanti ho?” Sana ka haath tray par tight ho jata hai. Woh bolti hai, “Har customer ko yaad rakhna mera kaam nahi, sir.” Par uski nazar sketch par tik jaati hai, jaise woh khud us face se bach rahi ho.

Dev file se ek photo nikalta hai: Arjun ka missing person shot. Sana ka chehra pal bhar ke liye safed pad jaata hai. Dev us reaction ko pakad leta hai aur pressure badhata hai. Dheere-dheere sach ke tukde nikalne lagte hain. Sana batati hai ki Arjun pehli baar aaya nahi tha—woh pichhle kuch raaton se aa raha tha, bas coffee ke liye nahi. Woh booth mein baith kar kisi ka intezaar karta tha, phir apne aap se baat karta tha, jaise kisi se dar raha ho. Usne Sana se kaha tha ki agar kabhi koi usse pooche, toh woh use dekhi hi na. Dev ko lagta hai yeh witness statement hai, par phir Sana confession jaisa kuch bol deti hai: Arjun ne usse ek chhota sa envelope diya tha, aur kaha tha, “Agar main na milun, toh police ko mat dena. Pehle isse dekhna.”

Dev ka tone thoda soft hota hai, par eyes aur sharp. Woh puchta hai envelope kahan hai. Sana hesitate karti hai, phir apni apron ki pocket se ek folded sketch paper nikalti hai. Dev usse kholta hai. Usme Arjun ka face nahi, balki Inspector Dev ka sketch hota hai—tired eyes, rolled sleeves, trench coat, sab kuch. Dev stunned. Sana bolti hai ki

Arjun ne kaha tha, “Aaj raat agar Inspector Dev aaye, toh samajh lena main sach ke kareeb tha.” Phir Sana finally confess karti hai: Arjun missing nahi hua tha—woh us café se nikalte waqt usse follow karne wale kisi aadmi ko dekh chuka tha. Usne Sana ko apni safety ke liye yeh sketch diya tha, aur bola tha ki agar Dev aaye, toh usse bas itna kehna: “Woh booth ke neeche tha.”

Dev booth ke neeche flashlight se dekhta hai. Wahan kuch nahi, sirf gum aur purani chewing gum ka residue. Lekin Dev ko ek aur clue milta hai—booth ke underside mein tape ka nishaan aur ek chhota sa metal sliver. Woh samajh jata hai ki Arjun ne yahin kuch chipaya tha. Sana ka chehra dekh kar Dev realize karta hai ki woh culprit nahi, witness bhi nahi—woh bas us raat ka pehla banda thi jisse Arjun ne trust kiya. Dev usse seedha poochta hai, “Truth bolo, Sana. Arjun kaun tha?” Sana ki aankhon mein aansu aa jaate hain. Woh kehti hai, “Woh mera bhai tha.”

Twist aur emotional hit yahin aata hai: Arjun koi random missing man nahi, balki Sana ka bhai tha jo ek corruption ring ke khilaaf evidence lekar bhaag raha tha. Usne police par trust nahi kiya tha, isliye Dev ko pehle test karna chaha. Dev file ke last page mein chhupa hua photo dekh leta hai—ek police badge aur ek familiar face. Dev ka expression hard ho jaata hai: file mein jis officer ka naam tha, woh uska purana partner tha. Arjun ne isi booth mein evidence chhupaya tha aur shayad yahin se uthaya bhi gaya. Ab Dev ke saamne case aur personal dono ho jaata hai.

Final beat mein rain aur tez ho jaati hai. Sana ka notepad ab orders ke liye nahi, statement ke liye use ho raha hai. Dev police file band karta hai aur bina drama ke bolta hai, “Aaj raat se jo sach niklega, uska naam report mein hoga.” Sana uski taraf dekhti hai—ab darr kam, hope zyada. Booth ki warm yellow light mein dono ek nayi understanding share karte hain: ek cop jo late aaya, aur ek behen jo ab tak chup thi. Bahar baarish continue karti hai, lekin andar pehli baar café ka silence empty nahi, dangerous lagta hai.