

THE THIRD PASSENGER

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: Armaan (29)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka andhera city ke edge par ek khali road shoulder ko aur bhi bechain bana raha hai. Armaan, 29, checked shirt mein, thaka hua cab driver, taxi ke andar dashboard ki halki neeli roshni mein phone aur GPS ko baar-baar tap kar raha hai. Meter chal raha hai, par uski aankhon mein woh yaqeen nahi jo kisi normal ride mein hota hai. Tabhi Laila, 25, hoodie aur backpack mein, notebook aur metro card pakde, cab ke paas aati hai. Woh short ride maangti hai—bas “do stops, max.” Armaan bina zyada baat ke usse baithne deta hai, kyunki raat ke is waqt har ride ka matlab kam se kam ek chhota sa paisa hota hai.

Shuru mein sab normal lagta hai. Laila apne notes dekhte hue bolti hai ki usse late ho raha hai, exam ka pressure hai, aur metro band ho chuki hai. Armaan apni tired, practical tone mein bas haan-hun karta hai. Lekin GPS pe route ajeeb tarike se reroute hone lagta hai. “U-turn karo,” screen bolti hai. Armaan gusse mein kehta hai ki woh toh already same lane se aa chuke hain. Woh cab ko modta hai, aur kuch hi seconds baad wahi road sign, wahi broken streetlight, wahi closed tea stall phir se saamne aa jata hai. Meter ka number bhi stuck lagta hai—na distance badhta, na fare.

Laila pehle mazaak samajhti hai. Woh kehti hai, “Bhaiya, aapka GPS bhi night class mein hai kya?” Armaan uski baat ko ignore karta hai, par jab woh dashboard phone par ride history kholta hai, uska chehra palat jata hai. Recent trip mein do passengers dikhte hain. Ek Armaan aur ek Laila. Lekin ride summary mein “Third Passenger” bhi listed hai. Naam nahi, bas ek blank entry. Laila ka mood bhi dheere-dheere badalta hai. Woh apne metro card ko haath mein aur tight pakad leti hai, jaise usse yaad aa raha ho kuch jo usne bhoolne ki koshish ki thi.

Dono car se bahar dekhte hain. Road khali hai. Koi aur car nahi. Koi awaaz nahi. Sirf passing headlights ka reflection windshield par aata hai aur car ko ek sealed capsule jaisa bana deta hai. Armaan ko achanak yaad aata hai ki usne is route par pehle bhi ek ride li thi—ya shayad drop ki thi—aur uss waqt bhi GPS ne same street par laa diya tha. Laila apni notebook kholti hai aur uske pages par wahi time, wahi road, wahi conversation ke fragments likhe milte hain—lekin handwriting uski nahi lagti. Ek page par likha hota hai: “Agar meter nahi badla, toh koi aur humse pehle yahan tha.”

Ab tension sirf ajeebness ki nahi, survival ki ho jaati hai. Armaan aur Laila ek dusre se sawal karte hain—kab se yahan ho, kahan ja rahi ho, ride kisne book ki, aur meter kyun freeze hai? Laila ke metro card par entry timestamp aur cab ke ride history ka time ek hi minute mein repeat hota hai. Armaan ko lagta hai shayad system glitch hai, lekin phir dashboard phone khud-ba-khud ek old notification kholta hai: “Trip ended. Passenger dropped. Fare paid.” Neeche location wahi road shoulder hai, aur time stamp future ka hai.

Climax tab aata hai jab Laila achanak khamosh ho jaati hai. Woh apni notebook ka last page kholti hai, jahan ek line likhi hoti hai: “Armaan ko mat batana ki main pehle bhi yahan thi.” Armaan usko dekhta hai—aur uska chehra pehli baar sach mein darr se white ho jata hai. Laila dheere se bolti hai ki usse yaad aa raha hai: ek taxi, ek raat, ek accident, aur ek passenger jo pichhli seat mein tha—jo woh khud thi. Ya phir Armaan? Ya dono? GPS screen par ek naya prompt blink karta hai: “THIRD PASSENGER DETECTED.” Is baar seat par koi physically nahi, par rear-view mirror mein ek extra silhouette dikh jati hai.

Final twist mein Armaan samajh jaata hai ki loop un dono ko nahi, unki “last ride” ko repeat kar raha hai. Jo passenger listed tha, woh koi aur nahi, unmein se ek ka future version hai—already dead, phir bhi ride complete karne ko phansaa hua. Meter finally ek digit badhata hai, aur cab ke andar cold air bhar jaati hai. Laila dheere se apna metro card Armaan ko deti hai aur kehti hai, “Ab yaad aa gaya. Main yahan se utar chuki hoon.” Armaan windshield mein dekhta hai—road khaali hai, par rear door ka lock khud-ba-khud khul jata hai. Cut to black on the sound of a seatbelt clicking in the back, and a final GPS line: “Route recalculating for passenger three.”