

THE PHOTOGRAPH RULE

A Emotional Drama 2-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Emotional Drama	Format: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast)	Runtime: 5 - 8 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 2-Character Short Film (Duo Cast) Character 1: Aarav (40)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Shaam ka waqt hai. School principal Aarav ke dining room ko ek temporary photo corner mein badal diya gaya hai. Khidki se naram daylight aa rahi hai, side table par family photographs ki line lagi hai, aur ek soft lamp room ko us garmi se bhar raha hai jo sirf yaadon mein hoti hai. Aarav, formal shirt aur spectacles mein, ek purani photo frame ko itni narmi se pakde khada hai jaise woh koi zinda cheez ho. Neha, family friend aur photographer, camera bag kandhe par liye, quietly setup check kar rahi hai. Dono ke beech purani jaan-pehchaan hai, lekin aaj room mein dosti se zyada kuch unsaid hai.

Aarav bolta hai ki bas ek final photograph chahiye. Family ritual ke liye. Har saal ki tarah. Neha camera nikaalti hai, frame dekhkar ek pal rukti hai, aur phir seedha puch leti hai ki empty chair frame mein kyun rakhi ja rahi hai. Aarav smile karta hai, par us smile mein thakaan aur zid dono hain. Woh kehta hai, "Ritual hai, Neha. Chair rehni chahiye." Neha, jo hamesha professional rehti hai, gently mana kar deti hai. Uske hisaab se empty chair photo ko disturb karegi, composition toot jayega, aur family portrait mein ek absence ko itna prominently dikhana theek nahi. Aarav ka tone thoda sakht ho jata hai. Woh kehta hai ki log photo mein chehre dekhte hain, par kuch yaadein jagah dekhkar bhi pehchaani jaati hain.

Neha ko lagta hai Aarav bas grief ko ek ritual bana raha hai. Woh bolti hai ki kab tak kisi non-existent presence ko frame mein rakhenge? Aarav ka jawab sharp hota hai: "Non-existent?" Room mein silence gir jaati hai. Photo album side table par band pada hota hai. Aarav us album ko uthata hai, dheere se kholta hai, aur ek purani photograph nikaal kar Neha ko dikhata hai—ek chhoti si ladki, school uniform mein, smile karte hue. Neha ka chehra thoda badalta hai. Woh pehchaan leti hai. Aarav ki beti. Lekin uske baad jo Aarav bolta hai, woh room ka temperature hi badal deta hai.

Woh batata hai ki log sochte hain usne apni wife ko kho diya tha aur bas wahi dukh uski zindagi mein bacha. Par sach yeh hai ki uski beti, Mira, bhi uske saath nahi rahi. Accident ke baad sabko laga woh bhi "gone" hai, kyunki Aarav ne kabhi theek se bataya hi nahi. Usne school, rishtedaar, family friends—kisi ko nahi bataya ki Mira ki death sirf ek tragedy nahi thi, balki uske liye ek unfinished ritual thi. Har saal woh uski birthday table par ek chair khali rakhta hai. Har family photograph mein woh chair uski jagah hoti hai. Kyunki Aarav ke liye photo family ka proof nahi, family ki missing heartbeat ka proof hai.

Neha pehle stunned rehti hai. Uska guarded face dheere-dheere pighalne lagta hai. Woh puchti hai, “Tumne mujhe kabhi bataya kyun nahi?” Aarav ka jawab simple hota hai: “Kyuki jab dard sach mein bada hota hai, aadmi usse bol nahi paata. Bas set karta rehta hai.” Neha ki aankhon mein guilt aa jaata hai. Woh samajh jaati hai ki usne composition ko dekhkar emotion ko reject kar diya tha. Aarav koi dramatic memorial photo nahi chahta tha; woh bas ek aisi tasveer chahta tha jahan Mira ki absence ko chupaya na jaaye, balki respectfully jagah di jaaye.

Climax mein Neha camera uthati hai aur pehli baar poochti hai ki chair kahan rakhni hai. Aarav chair ko dining table ke paas sahi angle mein set karta hai. Phir woh photo frame ko us chair par gently rakh deta hai—frame ke andar Mira ki purani smiling photo. Neha lens ke peeche jaakar breath leti hai. Room mein koi background music nahi, bas daylight, lamp, aur do logon ki sambhalti hui saansein. “Ready?” Neha poochti hai. Aarav sirf ek baar head nod karta hai.

Click.

Us ek photograph mein empty chair khaali nahi lagti; woh ek presence ban jaati hai. Aarav ki aankhen frame par tik jaati hain. Neha camera neeche karti hai, aur pehli baar uski awaaz mein professional distance nahi hota. Woh softly bolti hai, “Ab samjhi. Yeh photo unke liye nahi thi jo dekhte hain. Yeh unke liye thi jo yaad rakhte hain.” Aarav bas itna kehta hai, “Aur jo kabhi bhoolna nahi chahte.”

Ant mein Neha album ko side table par rakhne mein Aarav ki madad karti hai. Dono ke beech koi big emotional speech nahi hoti, bas ek naya samajhna hota hai. Room phir se quiet ho jaata hai, lekin ab us quiet mein absence nahi, acceptance hai. Photo corner ka kaam ek final image se poora ho jata hai—ek aisi tasveer jo family ritual bhi hai aur ek chhupi hui beti ke liye silent goodbye bhi. The Photograph Rule simple hai: kabhi kabhi frame mein sabse important cheez woh hoti hai jo dikhti nahi, sirf mehsoos hoti hai.