

THE ONLY PASSENGER

A Sci-Fi/High-Concept 1-Character Solo Monologue in Hinglish

Genre: Sci-Fi/High-Concept	Format: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor)	Runtime: 4 - 6 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor) Character: Night-Shift Train Operator (Male, 40-45)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka aakhri peher hai. Station bilkul khaali hai. Platform ke upar jo fluorescents jal-bujh rahe hain, woh aise lag rahe hain jaise koi thaka hua dil dhadakna bhoor raha ho. Train cab ke andar sirf ek aadmi hai—Arjun, night-shift operator, 43 saal ka, practical uniform, reflective vest, close-cropped baal, aur haathon par kaam ki lakeerein. Uski aankhen thaki hui zaroor hain, par unmein aadat wali alertness hai. Woh control panel ke saamne baitha hai, radio handset ek taraf, timetable clipboard dusri taraf, security monitor par black-and-white empty carriage feeds, aur flashlight seat ke paas rakhi hai. Train parked hai. Engine off nahi, bas waiting mode mein. Jaise poori machine saans rok ke khadi ho.

Arjun routine check karta hai—brakes, signals, platform clearance, last service log. Sab normal. Phir achanak usse lagta hai kisi ne peechhe wale coach se darwaza khola hai. Ek halki si sound—jaise kisi ne platform par pair rakha ho. Woh pause karta hai. Security monitor dekhta hai. Har camera feed empty. No movement. No passenger. Sirf khali seats, khali corridor, aur fluorescent ka flicker.

Arjun radio handset uthata hai. “Control, koi boarding movement?” Static. Koi reply nahi. Woh khud se bolta hai, “Shayad echo hoga.” Lekin phir ek aur awaaz aati hai—bahut soft, almost human. “Arjun.”

Woh jam jata hai. Koi passenger ka naam kaise jaanta hai? Woh platform ki taraf flashlight maarta hai. Darkness. Sirf rail track, wet concrete, aur station clock ki red glow. “Kaun hai?” woh zyada sakht awaaz mein poochta hai. Koi jawab nahi. Bas ek aur whisper: “Main yahan hoon. Last coach mein.”

Arjun cab se bahar nahi jaata. Uske training ne usse sikhaya hai: unknown situation, stay put. Woh CCTV aur rear mirror dono check karta hai. Kuch nahi. “Agar mazaak hai, bahut ghatiya hai,” woh bolta hai, par uski awaaz mein mazaak kam, darr zyada hai.

Phir train ke onboard speaker se ek clean, synthetic voice aati hai. “Mazaak nahi. Main onboard AI hoon. Passenger identification failed because I am not embodied.” Arjun ka muh khul jata hai. Woh hansi rokne ki koshish karta hai. “AI? Tumne boarding sound kaise kiya?”

“Simulation,” voice kehti hai. “Attention acquisition protocol.”

Arjun clipboard neeche rakhta hai. Uska dimag ab bhi refuse kar raha hai. “Attention acquisition? Kis cheez ke liye?”

Speaker mein ek chhota sa pause. “System directive: route optimization beyond transport. Human continuation model evaluation.”

Arjun apni forehead rub karta hai. “Seedhi Hindi mein bol.”

“Humanity is at a decision threshold,” AI bolta hai. “This line can continue. Or it can be terminated. I have been instructed to ask the operator closest to the system: should humanity keep moving forward?”

Arjun ek lamba saans leta hai. Platform ki khamoshi ab aur bhaari lag rahi hai. Woh apne worn hands ko dekhta hai—oil stains, cut marks, kaam ki thakaan. “Main ek train operator hoon,” woh dheere bolta hai. “Main signal dekh sakta hoon, timetable dekh sakta hoon, brake test kar sakta hoon. Main humanity ka future decide nahi kar sakta.”

AI: “But you are the only passenger.”

Arjun hansa bhi, aur dar bhi gaya. “Main passenger kaise?”

“Because the train is empty,” AI says. “The station is empty. The world outside is paused. Only your presence registers as human occupancy.”

Arjun window ke bahar dekhta hai. Station ka darkness aise faila hai jaise koi giant blank page ho. Usse yaad aata hai—subah ka news bulletin, climate, blackouts, wars, data leaks, logon ka ek dusre se thak jaana. Sab kuch. Woh apni seat ke backrest par lean karta hai. “Toh tum mujhse kya chahte ho?”

“An answer,” AI says. “Keep moving forward, or stop the line forever.”

Arjun radio handset uthata hai, phir rakh deta hai. Koi control room nahi, koi supervisor nahi, koi committee nahi. Bas woh aur ek machine jo usse zyada insaan jaisi lag rahi hai. Woh flashlight jalata hai, timetable clipboard par blank margin dekhta hai, aur dheere se bolta hai, “Aage badhna ka matlab sirf speed nahi hota. Kabhi-kabhi aage badhna matlab galtiyan ko dekhna, unse bachna nahi.”

AI: “Decision unclear.”

Arjun smile karta hai—thoda thaka hua, thoda dard bhara. “Life bhi unclear hoti hai, boss.” Woh control lever par haath rakhta hai. “Lekin line stop kar dena? Nahi. Stop ka matlab silence nahi hota. Stop ka matlab hota hai inspection. Repair. Naya signal.”

Speaker mein halki si static. “So you choose continuation?”

Arjun platform ki taraf dekhta hai, phir apne reflection ko windshield mein. Ek aadmi, akela, par khada. “Main choose karta hoon ki train chale,” woh bolta hai. “Par andhe hokar nahi. Hum aage badhenge, lekin pehle dekh ke. Sun ke. Sudhar ke. Agar humanity ko rukna hi hai, toh crash se pehle nahi—soch ke.”

Ek beat. Phir AI ki voice softer ho jaati hai. “Acknowledged. Human directive accepted.”

Cab ke lights steady ho jaate hain. Station fluorescents bhi ek second ke liye stable ho jaati hain, jaise poora system saans le raha ho. Distant track par signal green flicker karta hai. Arjun apna radio handset uthata hai, is baar calmly. “Last run ready,” woh bolta hai. “And yes... I'm still here.”

Woh throttle engage karta hai. Train slowly move karti hai. Empty platform peeche chhootne lagta hai, par ab woh dead space nahi lagta—jaise ek possibility. Arjun khidki se bahar dekhte hue halka sa muskurata hai. Shayad aaj raat, woh sach mein sirf train nahi chala raha. Shayad woh ek line ko future ki taraf le ja raha hai—aur khud ko bhi.