

THE QUIET HOUR

A Psychological Thriller 1-Character Solo Monologue in Hinglish

Genre: Psychological Thriller	Format: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor)	Runtime: 4 - 6 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor) Character: Night Security Guard with Memory Gaps (Male, 41-47)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ke 1:13 baje, office lobby itni khamosh thi jaise kisi ne sound ko bhi overtime pe bhej diya ho. Main—Raghav, 44 saal, night security guard—apni cap seedhi karta hoon, flashlight ko haath mein pakad ke polished floor par apni hi parchai dekh raha hoon. Yeh floor ajeeb hai. Har step ko double bana deta hai. Jaise main akela nahi hoon. Jaise koi aur bhi mere saath chal raha ho, bas thoda peeche.

Mujhe yaad rehta hai ki shift 10 baje start hui thi. Ya shayad 9:45? Main voice recorder on karta hoon aur bolta hoon, 'Note one: main lobby mein hoon. Sab theek hai.' Phir main pause karta hoon kyunki monitor par corridor empty hai, lekin monitor ke corner mein time stamp blink kar raha hai. 1:13. Aur mere wristwatch pe 1:07. Chhota sa gap. Chhota sa jhoot. Lekin raat mein chhote jhoot hi bade darr ban jaate hain.

Main ek access card uthata hoon jo desk ke paas pada milta hai. Mera hi card hai. Mera photo, mera naam, mera badge number. Bas problem yeh hai ki main usse yaad nahi karta ki maine kab nikaala. Key ring bhi mere haath mein hoti hai, aur usmein ek extra key hai—woh key jis par red tape laga hai, jise use karne ki manaahi hai. Building manager ne kaha tha, 'Bas emergency ke liye.' Par mujhe yaad nahi ki maine usse kab dekha. Ya kab us door ko khola tha jiske paas motion sensor light sirf tab jalti hai jab koi uss taraf jaata hai.

Main voice note 2 record karta hoon: 'Agar main kal subah tak normal raha, toh iska matlab main thak gaya tha. Agar normal nahi raha, toh... toh mujhe yaad dilaana.' Main khud pe hanshi nahi aati. Kyunki hanshi ke saath bhi darr chipka hua hai.

Phir monitor flicker karta hai. Ek camera angle lobby ke back corridor ko dikhata hai. Aur wahan main khud ko dekhta hoon. Same uniform. Same cap. Same tired eyes. Bas ek difference—jo version camera mein hai, woh mere se thoda zyada seedha chal raha hai. Jaise uske andar anxiety nahi, sirf kaam hai. Woh access card swipe karta hai. Door khulta hai. Woh andar jaata hai. Main screen ke saamne jam jaata hoon, kyunki mujhe yaad hi nahi ki maine woh door khola tha.

Main voice recorder ka button daba ke bolta hoon, 'Main yahan hoon. Main lobby mein hoon. Toh camera mein kaun hai?'

Koi jawab nahi. Sirf vending machine ka cold hum, aur motion light ka ek aur click. Main us door ke paas jaata hoon. Polished floor mein mera reflection lamba ho kar khinch jaata hai. Har step pe lagta hai jaise floor mujhe pehchaan raha hai, aur phir bhi accept nahi kar raha.

Door ke paas ek chhota sa reader hai. Main apna access card lagata hoon. Red light. Denied. Main phir try karta hoon. Red light. Denied. Mere haath kaanp rahe hain. Phir monitor pe woh second me main dikhta hoon, door se nikal kar lobby mein wapas aata hua. Main screen par dekhte hi piche mudta hoon—par lobby khaali hai. Sirf main.

Ab main dono versions ko ek saath sambhalne ki koshish karta hoon: jo screen pe hai, aur jo mere saamne khada nahi hai. Main apne recorder mein bolta hoon, 'Shayad main time lose nahi kar raha. Shayad time mujhe replace kar raha hai.'

Aur tab desk ke neeche se ek aur voice note beep hota hai. Yeh mera hi recorder hai, lekin pehle se record hua. Main play karta hoon.

Meri hi awaaz: 'Agar tum yeh sun rahe ho, toh door khol chuke ho. Aur agar yaad nahi hai, toh matlab tum pehle hi andar ja chuke ho.'

Main freeze ho jaata hoon. Kyunki us voice note ke end mein ek aur line hai—bahut dheemi, almost whisper: 'Main tum hoon. Tum abhi tak nahi samjhe.'

Main monitor ki taraf dekhta hoon. Screen black ho chuki hai. Sirf mera reflection dikh raha hai. Lekin reflection mein main cap seedhi kar raha hoon... aur main yahan, apni cap touch bhi nahi kar raha. Mere haath mein flashlight hai. Reflection ke haath mein bhi flashlight hai. Par uska beam lobby ke dusre kone ki taraf point kar raha hai—jahan motion sensor light abhi-abhi on hui hai.

Main dheere se bolta hoon, jaise khud ko samjha raha hoon, ya kisi aur ko: 'Agar main asli hoon, toh mujhe yaad hona chahiye.'

Aur phir, pehli baar, mujhe ek minute yaad aata hai. Main door khol raha hoon. Main andar ja raha hoon. Main... main bahar aa raha hoon. Ya shayad koi aur aa raha hai.

Raat ki khamoshi mein sirf ek hi sach bachta hai: jo kuch missing tha, woh minutes nahi the. Woh main tha.