

COFFEE FOR ONE

A Slice of Life/Romance 1-Character Solo Monologue in Hinglish

Genre: Slice of Life/Romance	Format: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor)	Runtime: 4 - 6 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor) Character: Quiet Neighborhood Café Regular (Male, 30-36)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Subah ka waqt tha, aur café ka woh kona—window ke paas—hamesha ki tarah shaant, warm, aur thoda sa udas sa lag raha tha. Sunbeams steam aur dust ke beech se kat rahe the, jaise koi purani yaad roshni ban kar room mein tair rahi ho. Main apni usual seat par baitha tha, soft sweater ki sleeves ko baar-baar thumb se kheenchta hua, jeans mein thoda sa uncomfortable par phir bhi safe mehsoos karta hua. Mere saamne coffee thi, aur mere saamne hi woh empty chair thi jahan kabhi-kabhi lagta tha jaise koi baith sakta hai—koi jo mujhe dekh kar bas ek halka sa smile de de. Main roz aata tha. Roz same order. Roz same cup. Roz same table. Aur roz, usi barista ki awaaz ka intezaar karta tha, jo ek simple “Good morning” ko bhi aise bolti thi jaise woh kisi gaane ka first line ho.

Aaj kuch alag tha. Shayad coffee thodi zyada strong thi, ya mere andar ka darr thoda kam. Main ne decide kar liya tha. Aaj bol dunga. Bas itna hi. “Hi, I know this is random, but would you like to grab coffee sometime?” Simple. Clean. No drama. No filmy line. Bas seedha, dil se. Main ne napkin ko fold kiya, us par ek rough sa sentence likhne ki koshish bhi ki—phir mita diya. Pen ko ungliyon mein ghumaata raha, sugar packet ko bina zarurat ke kholta raha. Mere haath thode kaanp rahe the, par dil strangely calm tha. Jaise andar koi kah raha ho: aaj nahi bola toh kab?

Phir maine dekha. Counter ke paas movement hui. Uski back meri taraf thi, aur phir woh apna apron adjust karti hui side mein gayi. Main ne socha, abhi. Abhi jaakar bol deta hoon. Main chair se thoda sa utha, cup ko ek haath se pakde hue, aur apni saans ko steady kiya. “Bas normal reh,” maine khud se kaha. “Bas ek insaan se baat karni hai.” Main line ki taraf badha, lekin tabhi ek chhota sa bell jaisa sound hua—door khulne ka. Usne shayad kisi se brief gesture kiya, apna bag uthaya, aur bina kisi dramatic moment ke café se bahar nikal gayi. Itna fast, itna quiet, jaise scene khatam hone se pehle hi film ka reel cut ho gaya ho.

Main wahi ruk gaya. Mere muh par jo line thi, woh hawa mein reh gayi. Main wapas apni seat par aa gaya, jaise kisi ne mere andar ka volume low kar diya ho. Ab café mein sirf grinder ki awaaz thi, fridge ka soft hum tha, aur street traffic ka faint hiss. Main empty chair ko dekh kar bolne laga—haan, usi empty table ko, jaise woh hi mera witness ho. “Theek hai. Great timing, universe. Bahut supportive ho tum log.” Main hansa bhi, par woh hansa aadhi thi. “Main itna bhi late nahi tha, yaar. Bas... thoda sa.”

Maine coffee ka sip liya. Thandi ho rahi thi. Jaise mere himmat ka temperature bhi usi ke saath gir gaya ho. Main receipt ko ulta seedha padhne laga, bas time ka matlab samajhne ke liye. Phir napkin ko khola. Kuch likha tha. Pehle laga kisi aur ka hoga. Par nahi—mere cup ke neeche, cup sleeve ke andar, ek chhota sa folded note tha. Mere haath ne dheere se usse nikala. Ek second ke liye mujhe laga main galat padh raha hoon. Phir maine word by word padha, aur meri saans ruk gayi.

“Same seat. Tomorrow. Ask properly. —M”

Main bas note ko dekhte reh gaya. Phir cup ko. Phir window ke uss corner ko, jahan sunbeam ab aur bright lag rahi thi. Mere chehre par jo smile aayi, woh pehli baar fake nahi thi. Woh shy thi, surprised thi, aur bilkul sach thi. Main ne note ko carefully fold kiya aur sweater ke andar rakh liya, jaise koi bahut precious cheez ho. Phir maine empty chair ki taraf dekha aur softly bola, “Okay. Tomorrow.”

Aur pehli baar, café ka woh kona empty nahi laga. Lag raha tha jaise kisi ne mere liye ek seat reserve kar di ho—sirf coffee ke liye nahi, himmat ke liye bhi. Main ne cup ko dono haathon se pakda, window se aati roshni mein usse dekhte hue, aur dheere se muskuraya. Aaj main bol nahi paaya. Par shayad har kahani ka best line pehle din mein nahi bolna hota. Kabhi-kabhi uska jawab cup ke neeche milta hai, aur kabhi-kabhi ek simple note mein, jo yeh kehta hai: kal phir aana. Is baar, ready rehna.