

THE NEIGHBOR UPSTAIRS

A Horror/Supernatural 1-Character Solo Monologue in Hinglish

Genre: Horror/Supernatural	Format: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor)	Runtime: 4 - 6 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 1-Character Solo Monologue (Single Actor) Character: Insomniac Music Teacher (Male, 27-35)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ke 2:13 baje hain, aur main phir se jaag raha hoon. Ya shayad main kabhi soya hi nahi. Mere small apartment ke living room mein bas ek ceiling lamp jal rahi hai aur laptop ki blue light mere chehre pe aise pad rahi hai jaise koi interrogation chal rahi ho. Main, Arjun, 31 saal ka music teacher, casual t-shirt aur pajama pants mein, headphones neck pe latkaye, sofa pe aadha giraa hua, aankhon ke neeche kaala ghera liye, metronome ko ghur raha hoon jaise usne meri zindagi kharab ki ho. Main insomniac hoon. Aur insomniac log do cheezein bahut clearly sunte hain: fridge ki humming, aur woh cheezein jo sunni nahi chahiye.

Shuru mein mujhe laga upstairs neighbor kuch practice kar raha hai. Piano nahi. Guitar bhi nahi. Kuch aisa jo kisi real instrument se nikal hi nahi sakta. Notes aate the, phir toot jaate the, phir wapas jud jaate the, jaise koi bachcha badal ko scale pe rakh ke bajane ki koshish kar raha ho. Main pehle irritate hua. Phir curious. Phir... uneasy. Kyunki woh melody ajeeb thi. Aisi lag rahi thi jaise main use pehchanta hoon. Jaise kisi ne mere dimaag ke andar se ek purani dhun nikaal li ho.

Main laptop pe music sheet khol ke compare karne laga. Koi match nahi. Metronome on kiya—tick, tick, tick—par upar wali dhun usko bhi ignore kar rahi thi, jaise rhythm uske liye rule hi na ho. Phir mujhe ek chhoti si feeling hui. Jaise ceiling ke upar koi mere room ko dekh raha ho. Main hasa, kyunki main akela tha aur darne ke liye koi valid reason nahi tha. Lekin ek insomniac ka dimaag logic se zyada shadows pe kaam karta hai.

Phir melody rukti nahi thi. Woh dheere-dheere aise badhi jaise kisi ne mera naam gungunana shuru kar diya ho. Pehle "Aar..." phir "jun..." Aur main seedha baith gaya. Mere kaan ke paas headphones thode aur heavy lagne lage. Main ne volume mute kiya. Laptop band nahi kiya. Kyunki agar music band ho jaata, toh sirf wahi sound bachta jo main sunna nahi chahta tha: silence ke andar ka silence.

Main khada hua. Ceiling lamp ke neeche mera shadow lamba aur patla lag raha tha. Room ki hawa bhi jaise thodi thodi vibrate kar rahi thi, aur upar se jo notes aa rahe the, woh ab mere heartbeat ke saath sync ho rahe the. Mera music sheet table pe pada tha. Uske margins pe, bina soche, main ne pencil se kuch lines likh di—jaise woh tune mujhe dictate kar rahi ho. Tab mujhe yaad aaya: years ago, is apartment mein aane se pehle, mera ek old room tha.

Ek door. Ek balcony. Aur ek raat main itna thak chuka tha ki door band karna bhool gaya tha. Bas ek open door. Bas ek chhoti si galti.

Mujhe hanshi bhi aayi aur rona bhi. Kya bakwaas yaad aa rahi hai. Par melody ab bilkul clear thi. Woh mere naam ke saath khatam ho rahi thi. Jaise koi mujhe bula raha ho, ya yaad dila raha ho.

Main gusse mein ceiling ki taraf dekhta hoon. “Bas,” main bolta hoon, “jo bhi ho, chup ho ja.” Phir main ek haath se ceiling ko zor se knock karta hoon. Thak-thak-thak. Ek second. Do second. Phir... khamoshi.

Aur us khamoshi mein, upar se ek awaaz aati hai. Bilkul saaf. Bilkul kareeb. Aur bilkul meri hi tarah thaki hui.

“Arjun... tumne door khula kyun chhoda tha?”

Mere haath se pencil gir jaati hai. Meri saans ruk jaati hai. Laptop ki blue light ke andar mera chehra pehli baar sach mein dikhai deta hai—pale, darahua, aur ek aise insaan jaisa jisne kisi purani galti ko kabhi band hi nahi kiya. Main dheere se ceiling ko dekh raha hoon. Jaise woh ab ceiling nahi, ek aankh ho.

Aur pehli baar, raat ke beech mein, mujhe samajh aata hai: upstairs neighbor practice nahi kar raha tha. Woh mujhe yaad kar raha tha.