

THE RAIN CHECK

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: Shy Bookstore Clerk (Male, 22-29)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka pehla andhera bookstore ki khidkiyon par halki baarish ki tarah chipak gaya tha. Main counter ke peeche khada tha, apni soft flannel shirt ki sleeve baar baar seedhi karte hue, jaise usse seedha karne se mere andar ka nervousness bhi sidha ho jayega. Glasses ke upar se front door ko dekh raha tha. Har baar chhoti si bell ki aawaz aati, mera dil ek second ke liye ruk jaata. Par phir sirf hawa hoti, ya koi late customer, ya rain ka aur ek thanda jhonka. Aaj usne aana tha. Ya shayad maine hi decide kar liya tha ki aaj aayegi.

Do ghante pehle woh aayi thi. Blue umbrella, wet sleeves, aur aise book shelf ko dekh rahi thi jaise kisi purane dost ko pehchaan rahi ho. Usne ek romance novel uthaya, phir ek aur, phir mujhse poocha tha, "Koi aisi book jo thodi sad ho, but hopeful bhi?" Maine bina soche usse woh book recommend kar di jo mujhe sabse zyada pasand thi. Kaise batata ki us book ke peeche ka reason plot nahi tha, balki woh line thi jo main har baar padhkar uski yaad kar leta tha? Main bas smile karke bol diya, "Ye try kijiye." Aur jab usne kaha, "Main thodi der mein le jaungi," tab mujhe laga shayad zindagi ne finally mujhe ek clean chance diya hai.

Phir maine jo kiya, woh poore din ki sabse badi himmat thi. Book ke beech mein ek chhota sa handwritten note tuck kar diya. Us par sirf itna likha tha: "Agar aapko book pasand aaye, ya bina book ke bhi baat karni ho, toh yeh mera number hai." Neeche receipt ka ek chhota sa corner bhi tha, jaise proof ke liye ki yeh sab real hai. Note rakhte waqt meri ungliyan kaanp rahi thi. Maine bookmark ko bhi carefully page ke beech set kiya, jaise koi secret safe jagah ho. Uske baad se main bas wait kar raha hoon. Aur rehearse kar raha hoon.

Main mirror ke saamne bhi do baar bol chuka hoon: "Hi, did you like the book?" Nahi. "Aap wapas aa gayi?" Bhi nahi. "Main bas..." Nahi, bilkul nahi. Har line ya toh zyada desperate lagti, ya zyada cool. Mujhe cool banna hi nahi aata. Main to woh type hoon jo counter ke neeche receipt ko seedha karta rehta hai kyunki haath khaali hone par awkward lagta hai. Phir bhi, aaj baarish ke beech, kisi unknown courage ne mujhe ek note likhne diya.

Jab front door khula, bell ki aawaz aayi aur main seedha ho gaya. Mainne dekha—woh wapas aa gayi thi. Uske haath mein wahi book thi, thodi wet, thodi folded, jaise woh usse sach mein apne saath le gayi ho. Usne kuch bola nahi. Bas smile ki. Aur us smile mein aisa kuch tha jaise usne meri saari rehearsals sun li ho. Mainne apna gala saaf

kiya aur bola, “Aap... book ke liye aayi hain?”

Woh hansi, ek soft si hansi, aur book ko counter par rakh diya. Phir usne book ko thoda khola, aur beech se mera note nikaal liya. Mera dil literally floor pe gir gaya. Main samajh gaya—usne book nahi, note dhoondha tha. Usne receipt ka corner dekha, phir mujhe dekha, aur bas itna bola, “Mujhe laga tha aap shayad number chhupa rahe ho.”

Mainne aankhon se hi poocha, “Kaise?” Woh note ko halka sa hila kar boli, “Because you wrote it like you were scared I'd miss it. I didn't.” Us pal mujhe laga rain ka sound bhi dheere ho gaya hai. Mainne pehli baar uski taraf seedha dekha. Aur phir, bina kisi rehearsed line ke, bas sach bol diya: “Main aapko book se zyada, aapse milne ka excuse de raha tha.”

Woh smile aur bhi soft ho gayi. “Good,” usne kaha. “Mujhe bhi sirf book nahi chahiye thi.”

Bas. Itna hi. Ek note, ek book, ek baarish, aur ek aisi shaam jo closing time ke baad bhi khatam nahi hui. Main ab bhi shy hoon. Main ab bhi awkward hoon. Par aaj mujhe samajh aaya ki kuch log books ke beech milte hain, aur kuch log bookmarks ki tarah—silently, exactly right page par. Aur kabhi-kabhi, rain check ka matlab delay nahi hota. Kabhi-kabhi, woh bas ek aur chance hota hai.