

DON'T OPEN THE OVEN

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: Recently Separated Home Baker (Female, 30-36)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka kitchen chhota hai, par aaj uski deewaren bhi jaise saans le rahi hain. Countertop lamp ki peeli roshni mein atta, mixing bowl, aur grandmother ki purani recipe card ek chhoti si duniya bana rahe hain. Main apron pehne khadi hoon, baalon ka messy bun aur sleeves par safed flour, jaise koi half-finished version of myself. Divorce ke baad ghar mein jo khamoshi aayi thi, usne pehle daraya tha, phir aadat bana di. Lekin aaj... aaj khamoshi alag hai. Aaj oven ki light jal rahi hai, aur fridge magnet clock ki halki tik-tik ke beech mujhe lag raha hai jaise kitchen mujhe dekh raha hai.

Main cake batter ko bowl mein fold karte hue recipe card padhti hoon. Nani ki handwriting. Thodi tedhi, thodi sakht, bilkul unki tarah. "Timer ring hone tak oven mat kholna." Bas itna hi likha hai. Main hasti hoon, khud par bhi, nani par bhi. Bachpan mein woh bhi aise hi dhamki deti thi—"jaldi mat kar, sabr ka aata sabse achha uthta hai." Aaj bhi unki awaaz mere kaan mein waise hi aati hai, jaise kisi purane radio se nikal rahi ho. Main oven ka handle dekh kar bolti hoon, "Nani, main koi chori chhupke nahi kar rahi, bas cake bana rahi hoon."

Tab oven ke andar se awaaz aati hai. Dheemi, khurduri, bahut hi familiar. "Mat kholna." Main freeze ho jaati hoon. Mera haath mixing bowl ke edge par jam sa jata hai. Pehle mujhe lagta hai shayad phone ka voice note hoga, ya fridge ka koi electrical hiss. Main apne aap se kehti hoon, "Nahi, nahi, bas thakaan hai. Separation ke baad dimaag bhi bakwaas karne lagta hai." Par phir awaaz dobara aati hai—"Abhi mat kholna." Yeh meri nani ki awaaz hai. Same pause, same breathless authority. Mere gale mein dry flour atak jata hai.

Main timer ko dekhti hoon. Abhi bhi kuch minute baaki hain. Kitchen ki garmahat achanak kam lagne lagti hai. Oven ke aas-paas ka glass dhundhla sa ho jata hai, jaise kisi ne andar se saans li ho. Main ek kadam peeche hat-ti hoon aur khud se bolti hoon, "Theek hai. Main wait karungi. Jaise tum kehti thi." Awaaz andar se halki si kaanpti hai. "Bas wait mat kar... bulana mat."

Yeh line mujhe dara deti hai. Nani kabhi aise nahi bolti thi. Unki awaaz mein hamesha assurance hoti thi, par yeh awaaz... yeh jaise kisi ko bahar aane ki permission ka darr ho. Main recipe card ko ulat-pulat kar dekhti hoon. Piche kuch likha nahi. Sirf ek daag, shayad purana ghee ka. Timer ki tik-tik ab zyada loud lagti hai. Kitchen ke shadows

fridge aur oven ke beech lambi ho kar phail rahe hain. Main bolti hoon, “Kaun ho tum?”

Oven ke andar se sargoshi aati hai. “Wohi jo tumne yaad kiya.” Main saans rok leti hoon. Mujhe yaad aata hai—nani ki maut ke baad maine unki recipe card sambhal ke rakhi thi, par kabhi unka cake nahi banaya. Har baar kisi na kisi bahane se taal diya. Shayad kyunki unke haathon ki meethi khushboo ko dobara mehsoos karna mujhe unki kami aur gehri kar deta. Shayad isliye aaj, jab sab kuch toot chuka tha, main unka cake banana chahti thi. Ek aakhri connection. Ek aakhri ghar.

Par ab mujhe lag raha hai ki maine sirf yaad nahi kiya, invite bhi kar diya. Oven ki light flicker karti hai. Andar se ab awaaz aur narm ho gayi hai—“Door mat kholna... woh mere saath aayega.” Main kaanp uthti hoon. “Woh kaun?” Main khud ko zor se sambhalti hoon. “Nani, agar aap ho, toh seedha bolo. Main dar rahi hoon.”

Silence. Phir bilkul mere peeche se—nahin, mere andar se—ek aur awaaz nikalti hai, jo nani jaisi lagti hai par nahi bhi. “Timer ring hone do.” Main dheere se oven ki taraf badhti hoon, aur meri aankhon mein aansu aa jate hain. Mujhe samajh aa raha hai: jo andar hai, woh trapped nahi. Woh waiting hai. Jaise koi mehmaan, jise darwaza kholne ki bas ek permission chahiye. Main haath handle par rakhti hoon, phir wapas kheench leti hoon.

Timer achanak tezz beep karne lagta hai. Kitchen ka temperature aur neeche girta hai. Main apni saans ki awaaz sun sakti hoon. Oven ke andar se ab koi begging nahi, sirf ek khamosh, khinchti hui presence hai. Main recipe card ko seene se laga leti hoon aur thartharati awaaz mein bolti hoon, “Nani... agar aap andar ho, toh main darwaza nahi kholungi.”

Beep band hota hai.

Oven ke glass par ek halki si tap hoti hai. Ek baar. Phir do baar. Jaise koi andar se ungli se message de raha ho. Main aankhen band kar leti hoon. Aur phir, bilkul kaan ke paas, ek meethi si, thandi awaaz kehti hai: “Toh phir kisne bola tha ki mujhe bake karo?”