

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE SERVICE

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: Beachside Bartender (Female, 19-24)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Shaam ka rang orange se pink mein ghul raha hai aur mere tiny beach bar ki string lights abhi-abhi blink karna shuru hui hain. Main counter ke peeche khadi hoon, sun-faded tank top aur denim shorts mein, baal namak aur hawa se thode aur bhi messy, aur haan, aaj makeup bhi almost zero. Yahan sab kuch waise hi hota hai—thoda sa untidy, thoda sa dreamy, aur kaafi zyada real. Samundar ki lehron ki awaaz shutter ke bahar se aa rahi hai, jaise koi purana gaana repeat pe chal raha ho. Main cocktail shaker ko haath mein ghumati hoon aur khud se kehti hoon: another ordinary evening. Lekin phir bar top par ek bottle aakar rukti hai. Bilkul cinematic. Bilkul suspicious.

Bottle ka glass thanda hai, us par namak ki ek patli si parat lagi hui hai, aur andar ek folded handwritten note. Main pehle has deti hoon. Kyunki honestly, kaun aaj ke zamane mein message in a bottle bhejta hai? Pirates? Romantic idiots? Ya koi aisa banda jo apni feelings seedha bol nahi sakta? Main bottle ko lantern ke neeche uthakar dekhti hoon. Note ko nikaalti hoon. Paper thoda moist hai, corners pe beach ki hawa ka asar. Main note kholti hoon aur padhte hi meri eyebrows upar. "If you found this, you're probably the most interesting thing on this beach."

Main slow smile karti hoon. "Arre wah. Flattering bhi, creepy bhi." Main note ko dobara padhti hoon. Neeche likha hai: "If you're serving drinks, serve one for me. I'll be back at sunset." Main ek second ke liye bottle ko dekh rahi hoon, phir bar towel se counter saaf karte hue bolti hoon, "Toh yeh joke hai? Ya pickup line? Ya koi dare?" Main sochti hoon us aadmi ke baare mein jo abhi kuch der pehle bar se gaya tha—blue shirt, quiet smile, aur woh aadat jo logon mein hoti hai jab woh kuch kehna chahte hain par ruk jaate hain. Kya woh hi tha? Kya yeh uska hi style tha? Bottle? Note? Sunset? Thoda overdramatic, but okay. Beach town mein sabko apna little theatre chahiye hota hai.

Main cocktail shaker mein ice daalti hoon. Chik-chik ki awaaz bar ke silence ko todti hai. "Chalo, theories banate hain," main khud se bolti hoon. "Option one: prank. Option two: confession. Option three: date request disguised as poetry, because apparently direct bolna extinct ho gaya hai." Main note ko bar ke neeche chipka deti hoon, phir turant nikaal leti hoon. "Nahi, nahi. Evidence sambhal ke rakhna chahiye." Main bottle ko roshni mein ghumati hoon. Uske neck par ek chhota sa thread tied tha—jaise kisi ne haste-haste, ya nervous hoke, bahut carefully bandha ho.

Phir mera phone vibrate karta hai. Ek text. Unknown number. Main screen dekhkar aankh sikodti hoon.

“Did you find it?”

Main ek lambi saans leti hoon aur phone ko counter par rakh deti hoon, jaise woh mujhe dekh raha ho. “Oh. Toh mystery ab live ho gayi.” Main reply type nahi karti. Instead, main note ko uthakar us par bolti hoon, “Sun lo, mister unknown. Tumhare paas sirf ek shot hai impress karne ka.” Phir phone phir vibrate.

“Depends. Are you laughing or blushing?”

Main seedha hanshi nikaal deti hoon. “Bohot annoying ho tum.” Phir thoda rukkar, softer tone mein, “Aur thoda cute bhi.” Yeh bolte hi mujhe khud pe hanshi aati hai. Main bar towel se glass polish karti hoon, lekin meri nazar baar-baar door ke shutters ki taraf ja rahi hai. Bahar sky aur dark ho rahi hai, lekin horizon pe ab bhi ek last strip of gold bachhi hai. Jaise koi decision lene se pehle universe bhi thoda time maang raha ho.

Main note ko dobara padhti hoon. “I’ll be back at sunset.” Sunset toh ho raha hai. Aur woh bhi abhi? Main bottle ko counter pe seedha khada karti hoon, jaise koi guest ho. “Theek hai,” main bolti hoon. “Agar yeh confession hai, toh brave. Agar joke hai, toh expensive joke. Aur agar date request hai... toh thoda charming.” Main apne aap se aankh maar deti hoon in the reflection of the bottle. “But what if he actually meant it?”

Phone vibrate karta hai again. Message: “I’m outside. I left because I got nervous. Still nervous.”

Main freeze ho jaati hoon. Samundar ki awaaz ek second ke liye aur loud lagti hai. Main bar ke edge pe dono haath rakhkar khadi ho jaati hoon. “Oh.” Sirf itna nikalta hai. Phir main has bhi deti hoon, softly, disbelief mein. “Toh tum prank nahi ho. Tum human ho.” Main bottle ko dekhti hoon, phir note ko, phir door ki taraf. “Aur tumne itna drama kiya sirf yeh bolne ke liye ki tum nervous ho?”

Main ek step lene lagti hoon, phir ruk jaati hoon. Bar ke bahar hawa string lights ko hila rahi hai. Main lighter uthati hoon, uski chhoti flame ko dekhkar muskurati hoon. “Life bhi na... kabhi-kabhi sabse simple cheez ko ocean ke paas bhejti hai aur phir hum usse myth bana dete hain.” Main note ko fold karke apni pocket mein rakh leti hoon. Bottle ko counter ke center mein place karti hoon—like a tiny altar to bad timing and good intentions.

Main door ki taraf dekhkar dheere se bolti hoon, “Agar main bahar gayi... toh mystery khatam. Agar nahi gayi... toh shayad ek aur story bach jaayegi.” Main ek beat rukti hoon, phir warm smile ke saath apne aap se kehti hoon, “Par honestly? Main bartender hoon. Drinks serve karna mera kaam hai. Aur agar koi itna cute tareeke se khud ko bottle mein bhej ke aaye... toh kam se kam ek reply toh banta hai.”

Main counter se nikalti hoon, door ke shutter ko haath lagati hoon, aur sunset ke last glow mein ek chhota sa decision leti hoon—ocean ke mystery ko chase karne ka. Ya us ladke ko. Shayad dono ko. Aur maybe, just maybe, yeh wahi moment hai jahan ek joke, ek confession, aur ek date request ek hi cheez ban jaate hain: a beginning.