

THE SECOND KEY

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: Single Mother Moving Into a New Apartment (Female, 33-39)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka waqt hai. Ek naya apartment, almost khaali, jaise kisi ne abhi-abhi saans lena start kiya ho. Main—Naina, 35—apne simple sweater aur jeans mein, ponytail tight karke, moving box ke upar baithi hoon aur ek ghadi se zyada se bas deewar ko dekh rahi hoon. Single lamp ka peela sa light aur blinds ke beech se aati moonlight floor par lambi, tedhi stripes bana rahi hai. Har cheez unfinished lag rahi hai, jaise ye ghar nahi, kisi scene ka set ho jahan abhi actor aana baaki hai.

Main thak chuki hoon. Ek single mother hone ka matlab hota hai ki thakaan bhi schedule ke saath aati hai—subah ka tiffin, school ka bag, rent, bills, aur phir raat ko khud ko samjhana ki “bas aur thoda.” Aaj mere saath mera beta Arjun nahi hai. Usko meri behen ke paas chhoda hai, kyunki shift ke baad move karna tha. Mere haath mein framed photo hai—Arjun ka aur mera, ek park bench par liya gaya purana sa photo. Main usko unpack karte hue smile karti hoon, lekin smile ke beech hi mujhe ek cheez milti hai: ek extra key.

Pehle toh mujhe lagta hai shayad landlord ne galti se de diya. Ya kisi aur flat ka hoga. Main usko apni key ring ke saath jod deti hoon, phir sochti hoon—nahin, pehle check kar leti hoon. Kyunki life ne mujhe ek cheez sikhai hai: jo cheez extra ho, woh aksar problem hoti hai. Main apartment ke corners dekhti hoon. Kitchen, bathroom, bedroom. Sab normal. Phir meri nazar us door par padti hai.

Main kasam se bol rahi hoon, usse pehle kabhi notice nahi kiya tha. Layout mein bilkul out of place. Ek aisa door jo wall se thoda alag, thoda zyada saaf, thoda zyada naya lag raha tha. Jaise kisi ne baad mein chipka diya ho. Mera dil ek second ke liye rukta hai. Main flashlight uthati hoon, key ko dekhti hoon, aur khud se bolti hoon, “Naina, tu thak gayi hai. Dimag kaam kar raha hai, imagination nahi.”

Lekin jab main key lock mein daalti hoon, woh perfectly fit ho jaati hai.

Door khulta hai.

Andar ek room hai. Aur woh room... mere old home jaisa hai. Bilkul. Same yellow curtain. Same cracked blue mug. Same wall shelf. Same sofa ka cover. Even us corner mein wahi toy pada hai—Arjun ka chhota sa red dinosaur. Main usko dekhte hi saans andar kheench leti hoon. Mere haath ka flashlight ka beam hilne lagta hai. Yeh possible nahi hai. Humne woh ghar chhoda tha. Paint, furniture, sab. Phir yeh room kaise?

Main andar kadam rakhti hoon aur mujhe ek aur jhatka lagta hai: sab kuch Arjun ke hisaab se arranged hai. Chhoti chair table ke paas. Crayons neatly line mein. Bed pe uska favorite blanket folded. Ek plate mein biscuit rakhe hain. Jaise koi bas uske aane ka wait kar raha ho.

Phir ek awaaz aati hai. Dheemi, bachche ki awaaz. Koi mujhe dekh kar nahi, jaise room ke andar se, wall ke andar se bol rahi ho.

“Tum late ho gayi.”

Meri body freeze ho jaati hai. Main zor se bolti hoon, “Kaun hai?”

Koi jawab nahi. Bas ek aur awaaz, thodi naraz, thodi udaas.

“Main kitni der se wait kar raha hoon.”

Mere gale mein kuch atak jaata hai. Main ek step peeche hat-ti hoon. Door ke paas framed photo ka reflection mirror jaisa chamak raha hai. Aur mujhe suddenly yaad aata hai—yeh photo mainne packing ke time li thi. Isme Arjun ke saath ek aur shadow jaisi shape thi, jo pehle kabhi notice nahi hui thi. Main photo ko aur kareeb laati hoon. Shadow nahi. Ek chhota sa haath. Kisi aur ka.

Mere phone ki screen blink karti hai. Ek voice note. Unknown number. Main play karti hoon.

“Mom?”

Woh Arjun ki awaaz nahi hai. Lekin us jaisi hai. Bahut jaisi.

“Tumne mujhe yahin chhod diya tha. Ab wapas aa gayi ho, toh daro mat. Bas andar aao.”

Mera dil itna zor se dhadakta hai ki mujhe lagta hai sab sun raha hoga. Main room ke beech khadi hoon. Peeche apartment mein moonlight aur lamp ka mix, aage woh staged room, aur beech mein main—ek maa jo bachche ko protect karne aayi thi, aur ab khud kisi cheez se protect nahi kar pa rahi.

Main dheere se bolti hoon, “Arjun?”

Toh room ke andar se, bed ke neeche se, ek chhota sa toy khud ba khud roll karke mere pair ke paas aa jaata hai. Dinosaur. Phir ek aur awaaz, is baar bilkul paas.

“Second key toh mil gayi. Pehli kab laayi thi?”

Main door ki taraf mudti hoon. Lock ke neeche ek aur keyhole chamak raha hai, jo pehle nahi tha. Main samajh jaati hoon—yeh room sirf khulne ke liye nahi tha. Yeh mujhe pehchaan-ne ke liye tha.

Aur jab main peeche dekh kar apne apartment mein wapas aati hoon, toh moving boxes mein se ek box khud ba khud hilti hai.

Us par likha hai: ARJUN'S ROOM.

Main bas ek hi baat bol paati hoon, aansuon aur darr ke beech:

“Main aa gayi hoon... bas please, ab aur late mat karna.”