

THE NAME ON THE CUP

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: Quiet Hospital Pharmacist (Female, 31-38)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka hospital hamesha thoda zyada sach bolta hai. Din mein jo cheezein shor mein chhup jaati hain, woh raat ko apni awaaz dhoondh leti hain—machine ka hum, fluorescent light ka thanda sa jhaag, aur pharmacy window ke counter par pada woh coffee cup, jo har shift ke end pe mujhe milta hai. Main usse pehle notice nahi karti thi. Ya shayad karti thi, bas admit nahi karti thi. Cup garam hota tha, lid tight hota tha, aur uske upar chipka label—kabhi “Asha,” kabhi “Anita,” kabhi “Naina,” kabhi “Meera.” Sab galat. Har naam ek chhoti si galti, jaise koi mujhe dekh toh raha ho, par theek se pehchan nahi pa raha ho.

Main hamesha sochti thi, koi naya intern hoga. Ya housekeeping mein se kisi ne galti se. Phir ek din maine label maker ka roll check kiya. Hospital ke labels se match nahi kar raha tha. Matlab koi apna personal label maker laa raha tha. Yeh baat thodi funny thi, thodi suspicious bhi. Main has di thi akeli, counter ke peeche, apne aap se. Itni mehnat karke bhi naam galat? Ya to insaan bahut careless tha, ya bahut nervous.

Phir maine observe karna shuru kiya. Har raat same time ke aas-paas, jab prescription tray khali hoti, jab last buzzer bhi thoda dheema padta, tab cup aa jaata. Kabhi window ke paas, kabhi plant ke neeche, kabhi sticky note ke saath: “For the lady at pharmacy.” Lady. Bas. Itna hi. Jaise poora hospital mujhe jaanta ho aur woh sirf mujhe ek shape, ek routine, ek quiet presence samajh paaya ho.

Main uss cup ko haath mein leti thi, lid pe chhota sa steam ka ring dekhkar, aur sochti thi—kya kisi ne mujhe notice kiya hai? Really notice kiya hai? Mere glasses ke peeche wali tiredness, cardigan ke sleeve par chipki pen ki ink, low ponytail ka thoda sa untidy end, sab kuch? Ya bas coffee ke bahane se koi apni himmat test kar raha hai?

Phir ek raat maine decide kiya ki bas. Main shift ke baad zyada der ruki. Lights aur thodi dim ho gayi thi. Plant ke patte machine ki hawa mein halki si hil rahe the. Main prescription tray ke paas khadi thi, pen haath mein, jaise main koi report likh rahi hoon, lekin asal mein main intezaar kar rahi thi. Aur tab—footsteps. Dheere. Hesitant. Main turant window ke neeche wali side mein chup gayi, jaise koi detective hoon jo apni hi zindagi ka clue pakadne wali ho.

Woh aaya. Main uska chehra nahi dekh paayi, bas hospital hoodie ka edge, haath mein coffee cup, aur label maker ki chhoti si beep. Usne cup rakha, label chipkaya. Maine apni saans roki. Label par likha tha: “Priya.”

Mujhe itna hasi aayi ki agar main uss waqt bahar aa jaati, shayad poora plan kharab ho jaata. Priya. Ek aur galat naam. Itne saalon mein shayad pehli baar mujhe kisi ki nervousness itni pyaari lagi. Main bahar aayi. Woh ek second ke liye freeze ho gaya. Mere haath mein pen tha, aur uski aankhon mein woh expression—jaise kisi ne uska secret khol diya ho, par gusse se nahi, bas surprise se.

Mainne bola, “Coffee achhi hai. Names... thode adventurous hain.”

Woh shayad kuch bolna chahta tha, par shayad uski training sirf cup dene tak thi. Usne apne phone pe kuch type kiya, phir screen meri taraf ki. Text tha: “Main puchh nahi paaya.”

Main chup rahi. Usne phir type kiya: “Aap ka naam?”

Bas. Itna simple. Itne mahino ka label maker, itni raaton ka coffee ritual, aur asal sawal itna chhota. Main pehli baar uss sterile window ke andar nahi, uske bahar khadi thi—apni zubaan ke saath, apne naam ke saath. Mainne dheere se kaha, “Mera naam... Ria hai.”

Usne jaise saans li ho. Phone pe type kiya: “Ria. Achha naam hai.”

Maine cup uthaya. Iss baar label par usne koi aur naam nahi chipkaya. Bas ek sticky note tha, handwritten, thoda tedha: “Ria.” Neeche chhota sa likha tha, “Ab sahi?”

Main has di. Sach mein has di. Aur uss laugh mein hospital ki thakaan bhi thi, shaam ki khamoshi bhi, aur woh naya sa, soft sa ehसास bhi—ki kabhi-kabhi koi tumse baat karne se pehle tumhara naam seekh leta hai. Aur kabhi-kabhi naam se pehle, koi tumhari aadat, tumhari timing, tumhara coffee ka taste, tumhari silence—sab jaan leta hai.

Us raat ke baad cup par galat naam nahi aaya. Kabhi kabhi sirf “Ria” aata. Kabhi ek smiley. Kabhi kuch nahi. Aur mujhe samajh aaya, romance hamesha loud nahi hota. Kabhi woh ek hospital pharmacy window ke paas quietly rakha gaya coffee cup hota hai, jiske label pe likha hota hai—finally, the right name.