

THE TAPE RECORDER

A Mystery/Crime 3-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Mystery/Crime	Format: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast)	Runtime: 6 - 9 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast) Character 1: Inspector Hemanth (45)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ke 1:17 baje, city ki bheegi hui roshni radio station ke narrow window se andar chipak rahi thi. Cramped booth ke andar red on-air sign abhi bhi jal raha tha, jaise koi warning ho. Inspector Hemanth bina kisi drama ke booth mein ghusa — plain shirt, shaved head, face par wohi unreadable sakhti. Uske saamne Rajat khada tha, stylish casual wear mein bhi pasina poori tarah chhupa nahi pa raha tha. Mixing console ke paas Faisal baitha tha, worn jacket aur tired jaw ke saath, jaise usne poori raat steering wheel pe guzaar di ho. Booth mein ek tape recorder pada tha, aur uske paas caller log khula hua tha.

Hemanth ne seedha sawaal maara: live radio show par murder confession kaun tha? Rajat ne turant haath utha ke bola ki usne sirf call receive kiya tha, voice distorted thi, aur woh host hai, killer nahi. Faisal ne bhi safai di ki woh bas station ke bahar taxi wait kar raha tha, jab usne show sunte hue apni gaadi mein woh confession pehchana — lekin voice uski nahi thi. Teeno ki baat mein ek ajeeb si tension thi, aur Hemanth ke liye sabse important cheez thi details. Usne caller log dekha: anonymous line, late-night slot, no name, no number. Phir tape recorder uthaya aur replay dabaya.

Tape par awaaz aayi: "Maine usse maara. Maine body ko shift kiya. Aur jo bhi sun raha hai, woh samajh jaaye — main abhi bhi usi room mein hoon." Rajat ka chehra safed pad gaya. Faisal ne instinctively darwaze ki taraf dekha. Hemanth ne un dono ko observe kiya, phir booth ki chhoti chhoti cheezein notice karni shuru ki: mic ke paas ek cigarette ash, console ke neeche ek taxi receipt, aur tape recorder ke side mein ek faint grease mark — jaise kisi ne usse jaldi mein yahin chhoda ho. Confession mein ek line thi: "Main signal ke baad tape ko rewind karunga." Hemanth ne turant poocha — kaun tape record karta hai? Rajat ne kaha, "Main live show karta hoon, sir. Main record nahi karta." Faisal ne bola, "Main sirf bahar tha."

Phir Hemanth ne caller log aur console ke buttons ko compare kiya. Confession mein ek tiny detail thi: speaker ne bola tha, "Mic ke left side wali crack ko mat chhoo." Booth mein sirf host ko pata hota ki mic stand ke left side mein chhoti crack hai. Rajat ne defensive hoke kaha ki ye general booth detail bhi ho sakti hai. Hemanth ne mixer ke neeche lagi tape strip dekhi, jo signal chain ko manually route karne ke liye use hoti thi. Usne tape recorder ko console se joda aur record button ke saath ek hidden splice pakad liya — confession live call nahi tha, balki pehle se

recorded voice tha, jo broadcast ke waqt live call ki tarah chala diya gaya. Booth mein silence jam gaya.

Hemanth ne dheere se kursi ghumai. Rajat ke nervous charm mein pehli baar ek crack dikh gaya. Faisal ki guarded aankhon mein bhi kuch hil gaya. Inspector ne ek aur detail pakdi: tape ke reel par fingerprint smudge, aur uske paas pada caller log page corner se fold tha — exactly waise hi jaise booth mein baithkar koi page palat-ta hai. Hemanth ne final line boli: “Voice tum dono mein se kisi ki nahi thi. Kyunki confession voice changer se nahi, pehle se record karke chalaya gaya tha. Aur ye recording booth ke andar bani thi. Matlab killer yahin tha, jab tape record hua.”

Rajat ne palat kar Faisal ko dekha. Faisal ne Rajat ko. Dono ne ek dusre par suspicion daala, lekin Hemanth unke beech seedha khada tha. Phir red on-air light flicker hui. Tape recorder se halki si mechanical click aayi. Aur ek nayi awaaz, almost whisper jaisi, speaker se nikli: “Inspector... aap late ho gaye.” Hemanth ka face pehli baar hard se hard bhi nahi raha. Booth ke andar koi teesra nahi tha — lekin real killer ka sabse bada weapon yahi tha: usne confession ko sirf broadcast nahi kiya tha, usne investigation ko bhi pehle se record kar liya tha. Final beat par Hemanth tape recorder ki taraf dekhta reh gaya, Rajat aur Faisal frozen the, aur red light ab bhi jal rahi thi, jaise room khud abhi bhi live ho.