

THE BIRTHDAY LIE

A Slice of Life/Family 3-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Slice of Life/Family	Format: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast)	Runtime: 6 - 9 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast) Character 1: Vivek (38)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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Raat ka waqt hai. Ek chhota sa living room, jahan wall par fairy lights tedhi-medhi latki hui hain, table par birthday cake ka box pada hai, aur corner mein half-inflated balloons aise dikh rahe hain jaise kisi ne enthusiasm ka bhi inflation kam kar diya ho. Vivek, office shirt ke sleeves rolled up karke, chehre par fake cheerfulness ka plaster lagaye, table ke aas-paas chakkar kaat raha hai. Anil, casual T-shirt mein, ek balloon ko muh se phoolta hua, doosre haath se gift bag sambhale hue, har minute koi naya suggestion de raha hai. Dono ko lagta hai ki unka surprise plan bahut hi “natural” aur “effortless” hai. Problem bas itni hai ki dono ke efforts ek doosre ko irritate kar rahe hain. Aur Sanjana, 12 saal ki sharp-eyed ladki, school uniform mein, birthday card pakde, quietly sofa par baithi sab dekh rahi hai.

Vivek bolta hai ki party simple honi chahiye, “classy” aur “warm.” Anil bolta hai ki birthday hai, funeral nahi, thoda fun hona chahiye. Vivek cake box ko dekh kar tension mein hai ki cake time par set hoga ya nahi. Anil balloons ko dekh kar kehta hai ki agar balloon phat gaya to “party ka mood bhi phat jayega.” Dono ek doosre par fake warmth aur genuine taunts ka mix fekte rehte hain. Har line mein family ka purana sarcasm jhalakta hai, lekin uske neeche ek aur layer hai jo dono chupane ki koshish kar rahe hain. Sanjana bas card ko ungliyon se fold-unfold karti rehti hai, jaise kisi baat ka intezaar ho.

Woh birthday card actually usne khud banaya hai. Card ke front par ek simple drawing hai: teen stick figures, ek cake, aur neeche likha hai, “Happy Birthday, Papa.” Par woh card table par rakhne ke bajay apne haath mein hi rakhti hai. Jab Vivek usse kehta hai, “Tu toh bol rahi thi birthdays pasand nahi,” Sanjana seedha jawab deti hai, “Mujhe birthdays pasand nahi hain. Mujhe jhooth pasand nahi hai.” Room ka tone ekdum change ho jaata hai, lekin Vivek aur Anil turant us line ko joke mein badalne ki koshish karte hain. Anil has kar bolta hai, “Arre, ye toh philosopher nikli.” Vivek bhi muskurata hai, par uski smile thodi late aur thodi toot-ti hui lagti hai.

Phir Sanjana un dono ko ek-ek karke corner mein le jaane jaisi baat karti hai, bina uthkar. Woh kehti hai ki woh samajh gayi hai ki ye party uske liye nahi, unke liye hai. “Aap dono itna fake kyun kar rahe ho?” Woh quietly poochhti hai. “Aap log birthday celebrate nahi kar rahe. Aap kisi aur cheez se bach rahe ho.” Anil pehli baar chup ho jaata hai. Vivek ka haath cake box par jam jaata hai. Fairy lights ki uneven glow mein room aur zyada sachcha lagne lagta hai.

Sanjana batati hai ki jab se Maa gayi, har saal koi na koi bahana ban gaya—kabhi cake late, kabhi mood nahi, kabhi office, kabhi tabiyat. “Mujhe birthday se problem nahi hai,” woh kehti hai, “mujhe us silence se problem hai jo har saal aata hai.” Yeh line room mein aise girti hai jaise balloon ka pin nikla ho. Anil ki playful energy pehli baar break hoti hai. Woh apni T-shirt ke sleeve se aankh rub karta hai, phir mask lagaane ki koshish karta hai, but fail. Vivek bhi finally apni over-cheerful acting chhod deta hai.

Climax mein Sanjana card table par rakh deti hai aur bolti hai, “Mujhe cake nahi chahiye tha. Mujhe bas itna chahiye tha ki aap dono sach bol do. Ki aap Maa ko miss karte ho. Ki aap aaj bhi unki yaad se bachne ke liye party banate ho.” Ek lambi khamoshi. Phir Vivek dheere se kehta hai, “Haan.” Anil bhi, hichkichate hue, “Bahut.”

Bas itna sach kaafi hota hai. Sanjana ki aankhon mein relief aata hai, gussa kam hota hai. Woh card ko palat kar table par rakh deti hai. Vivek cake box kholta hai. Anil ek balloon ko finally knot karta hai. Teenon milkar fairy lights ko seedha karte hain, jaise kisi purane ghar ko ek aur chance de rahe hon. Party ab bhi perfect nahi hai, balloons ab bhi uneven hain, cake box bhi simple hai, par ab fake warmth nahi hai. Sirf wohi cheez hai jo pehle se honi chahiye thi: ek family jo dard ko naam de sakti hai, aur uske baad thoda sa has bhi sakti hai.