

IRRFAN AND I

Written by

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INT. MY HOME - DAY

SUPER: 29TH APRIL 2020

It's lockdown in Mumbai. I have been working from home for the past one month. The phone rings. It flashes M.P's name on the screen. It gives me tremors. M.P is supposed to be my informer in Irrfan's agency. I let the phone ring for a while and then take the call fearing the worst. A beat.

M.P.

He has started improving. Man, this guy is a hell of a fighter. Doctors are hopeful that he will bounce back.

I take a deep breath and cut the line.

LITTLE LATER

I argue with Rekha for serving me less *PANEER* in last night's dinner. I complain to her of being biased when it comes to choosing between me and Aasmaan.

My phone beeps. I check my WhatsApp messenger (still bickering with Rekha). It's a message from a friend from America. It reads - 'Saddened to hear about Irrfan Khan'. I check my Twitter (Still squabbling fiercely with Rekha) to verify the authenticity of it. No news. I rule out the possibility.

I bring myself to hear what Rekha is saying with tears in her eyes.

REKHA

What kind of pettiness is this?

The phone rings again. It's M.P once more. I pick it up hurriedly this time.

There are sobs on the other side.

A bomb explodes in my heart.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO GRAVEYARD - DAY

Face masked with a N95 mask and hands covered with a pair of surgical gloves, I travel in my car on the deserted road leading to the Muslim cemetery.

I blankly look outside my window. Nothing is in focus as the visuals blur in my eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CRICKET GROUND - MORNING

SUPER: WINTERS OF 1994, MUMBAI (then Bombay).

I meet Irrfan Khan at the cricket nets.

ME

Would you like to play a match this Sunday?

He smiles gently and speaks while blinking his eyes in slow motion as his neck tilts to the right.

IRRFAN

I don't like to play matches, Vishal Sahab. I enjoy just practicing.

I feel stumped and smile back stupidly.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. ZAINA KADAL BRIDGE DOWNTOWN KASHMIR - DAY

SUPER: FEBRUARY 2014

We are shooting at the bridge in the infamous, vulnerable downtown of Srinagar, against the advice of the security forces.

After a point, the crowd becomes unmanageable.

The security personnel lose patience with me and take Irrfan away citing security concerns. The young boys who wanted selfies with Irrfan are also dispersed.

Irrfan travels back in a car. A boy runs out from a lane situated at the square leg direction of the car. He bends his shoulder back and throws a stone like a professional cricketer at the car to run him out. The wind screen shatters into pieces. In panic, the security guard with a LMG wants to open fire on the boy. Irrfan stops him just in time.

CUT TO:

INT. DAACHI GAON FOREST, SRINAGAR - LATER

I meet Irrfan at another location expecting him to be upset but find him smiling at me.

IRRFAN

Vishal Sahab, kya throw maara saale ne.. Aisa graceful ki Jonty Rhodes yaad aa gaya.
(Vishal Sahab, what a throw it was.. So graceful that I was reminded of Jonty Rhodes.)

All of us burst into laughter.



CUT TO:

INT. SRINAGAR, PAPA 2 - SET OF 'HAIDER' - DAY

A detainee's prison set in the dungeon of a big palace. Irrfan, dressed as a detainee in a torn grey PHIRAN, his hair long and disheveled, sits at his mark.

His big eyes are fixed on an insect on the wall. He is totally immersed in his character.

The unit speaks in whispers as they prep for the shot.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO GRAVEYARD - DAY

My car reaches the graveyard. I get down to walk towards the police barricades. The media follows as M.P waits for me near the barricade and escorts me towards the graveyard.

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. BATHROOM INSIDE THE GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

Walking through the faces covered with masks and handkerchieves, I arrive in front of a room. A board hangs above it, it reads- "Yahan body ke nahaane ka intezaaN hai".

I notice the word 'IntezaaM' wrongly spelled here.

This is the bathroom meant to bathe the bodies before burial.

I step forward and enter inside.

There is a platform in the room. He lies on top of it, tightly wrapped in a white shroud, his head turned towards me.

I walk forward to face him.

I am looking at his face endlessly. Time has stopped.

I realize how heavy his eyelids are.

A lullaby in Irrfan's voice echoes in my head.

IRRFAN (V.O.)

*Aa ja ri nindo tu aa ja.. Ifu ki
aankhon mein..*

*(Come dear sleep, come.. Settle
into Ifu's eyes..)*

CUT TO:

INT. MY OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: AUGUST 2018

The same song continues on a WhatsApp message on my phone. It's from Irrfan - he has sent it from a London hospital where he is being treated for cancer.

IRRFAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(Singing)

*Aa ja ri nindo tu aa ja.. Ifu ki
aankhon mein..*

*(Come dear sleep, come.. Settle
into Ifu's eyes..)*

(He then sings the reply
of Sleep)

*Aati hoon bhai main aati hoon Ifu
ki aankhon mein..*

*(Yes, yes, I'm coming.. Descending
into Ifu's eyes..)*

He stops singing and speaks with his trademark chuckle.

IRRFAN

Vishal Sahab ab aapko acting ke
saath meri singing bhi jhelni
padegi..

*(Vishal Sahab, now you will have to
suffer my singing along with my
acting..)*

This is first time I am hearing his voice after he went to London for his treatment. My eyes are filmed with water as I punch the keys on my phone.

ME

Coming to London in a week.

He replies back.

IRRFAN

Keep some time for me.

I smile from ear to ear.

CUT TO:

EXT. A PARK IN LONDON - DAY

I walk with anticipation through the park lane covered with tall deep green trees.

I arrive at an open ground. It's a Sunday and parents play with their kids all over. A few couples are also sprinkled in the corners.

I look for him.. And there he is, at the other end of the ground, waving at me.

LATER

We sit under a huge tree and he sips the coffee he had bought earlier from the cafe nearby.

A long silence hangs between us.

IRRFAN

I feel so liberated Vishal Sahab.
Aisa lagta hai jaise badan ke uppar
se saikdon badan utar gaye hon..
Rooh par kitne bojh lekar ghoomte
hain hum log.. Ek baar zindagi ki
miyaad tay ho jaaye, to ik dhundh
si chhat jaati hai aankhon se..
Jaise baarish ke baad dhoop mein
sab chamakne lagta hai na.. Sab
vaisa.. Nahaya dhoya sa ho jaata
hai..

(I feel so liberated Vishal Sahab.
It seems like innumerable layers
have finally left my body.. We
carry so much weight on our souls..
When the length of your life is
determined, then your vision
becomes crystal clear.. Like after
a rainstorm, everything seems to
shine in the sunlight.. Everything
seems cleansed and stands
revealed..)

Suddenly a pigeon falls right between the two of us. We both are startled. He leans forward to look at it.



The pigeon's neck is twisted, it struggles to breathe.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

He is dying.

He runs to a nearby tap, throws away the coffee from the cup and fills it with some water.

He rushes back and tries to put a few drops into the dying pigeon's beak.

LITTLE LATER

We sit silently again, looking at the dead pigeon lying close by. Irrfan breaks the silence with his chuckle.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

Life is more melodramatic than films. Ab agar ye moment film mein daal dein, to kitna melodramatic lagega..

(Life is more melodramatic than films. Now if this moment was in a film, how melodramatic would it feel..)

I smile sadly.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

Ab aap isse aur dramatic mat banaiye aur ek tasveer kheenchiye meri, kabootar ke saath.. Ek udd gaya aur ek ka uddna baaqi hai.. (Now, don't make it more dramatic than it is and click a photo of me and the pigeon.. One has flown away and one is yet to fly..)

He laughs at his own cheap joke.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM INSIDE THE GRAVEYARD - DAY

Tears have drenched my N95 mask as I stand still, looking at his serene calm face.

I want to cry aloud. I can't. My throat is choked.

A montage, jumbled up in sound and aspect ratio, plays in my head as I try to stifle my screaming voice.

The visuals have colors screeching out in my head like that of an ungraded rush print.

I/E. MONTAGE VARIOUS FROM FILMS - DAY/NIGHT

- Irrfan wiping Tabu's tears with a pistol.
- Irrfan whirling as PC (Priyanka Chopra) follows him in the snowy jungle.
- Irrfan leans into the lens and whispers.

IRRFAN

Chale bhi aao ki gulshan ka
karobaar chale
(Come back so that my garden blooms
again.)

- Irrfan cries holding Tabu in his arms as she asks.

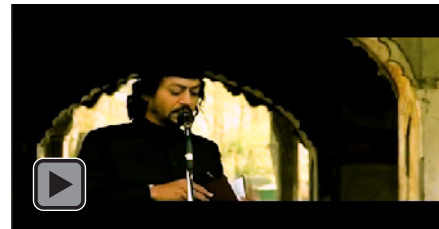
TABU

Humara ishq to paak tha na Miyaan?
(Our love was pure, wasn't it..
Miyaan?)

- Irrfan on stage at Nishat Bagh, Srinagar, dressed as a poet.

IRRFAN

Ik baar to yun hoga thoda sa sukoon
hoga..
(Someday it will be such that there
will at last be some peace..)



- Irrfan looks through the small glass window of the hospital door to witness Samira and Guddu playing with his kid. He pulls back his face leaving a drop of sweat on the glass. The drop travels from the top to the bottom on the glass as the emotions in his eyes travel from hatred to gratitude.

- In a frame full of snow, Irrfan dressed in a cream *PHIRAN* walks from out focus to in focus. There is a lump of snow on his goggles. He wipes it with his hand.

A title appears on the screen - "INTERVAL"

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNNY SUPER SOUND - DAY

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 2014

The first screening of *HAIDER*.

Irrfan comes out in the interval looking for me. He finds me hiding and smoking in a corner.

IRRFAN

I am surprised Vishal Sahab.

ME

(Anxiously)

Kya hua Irrfan saab?

(Why, Irrfan saab?)

IRRFAN

Aisi entry deni thi film mein, to phir paise kyun diye?

(If you were going to give me such an introduction, why on earth did you pay me?)

I laugh. He walks forward and hugs me tightly in his arms.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

(Whispers)

Thank you so much.

I tighten the hug.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAAR DUKAAN - LANDOUR, MUSSOORIE - EVENING

SUPER: DECEMBER 2007.

I sit on the steps of a church which is engulfed in heavy fog. On the speaker of my phone, I listen to the line ringing on the other side. As it is picked up, I cut the line.

It rings back immediately. I take a deep breath and take the call.

IRRFAN

(On Phone)

Galti se laga tha ya jaanboojh kar kaata..

(Did you dial by mistake or did you cut it intentionally..)

I reply in a smiling voice.

ME

Dono..

(Both..)

IRRFAN

Kab tak gussa rahenge *Ishqiya* ke liye? Film bhi hit ho gayi hai aur director bhi.. Ab to maan jaaiye.. (How long will you stay angry with me about *Ishqiya*? The film and director both are a hit.. Let it go now..)

ME

Aap mana lijiye.. (Help me do that..)

IRRFAN

Kaise? (How?)

ME

Ek film bana raha hoon.. (I'm making a film..)

IRRFAN

7 *Khoon Maaf?*

ME

Ji.. Usmein ek husband ka role hai.. Sabne mana kar diya hai karne se.. (Yes.. There is a character of a husband.. Everyone has refused to do it..)

He cuts me off mid sentence.

IRRFAN

Mujhe chhodkar.. (Except me..)

I shake my head smilingly.

ME

You are strange Irrfan Sahab!

He replies with a chuckle.

IRRFAN

Am I?

CUT TO:

INT. PARIS AIRPORT - DAY

SUPER: OCTOBER 2003

We both are at the airport in Paris, waiting for our connecting flight to Marrakesh.

Maqbool is to premiere there in the film festival.

IRRFAN
Cigarette peeyenge?
(Will you have a cigarette?)

ME
Smoking zone nahin hai yahaan..
(There is no smoking zone here..)

IRRFAN
(Faking a European accent)
What?

He takes out a cigarette and smells the tobacco.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)
Light hai aapke paas?
(Do you have a lighter?)

ME
Nahin..
(No..)

IRRFAN
Mere paas hai..
(I have one..)

He takes out a lighter from under the buckle of his belt and shows me.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)
Yahaan to lighter ke saath travel karna allowed hai par apne yahaan phinkva dete hai, saale security waale.. Isiliye main belt mein chhupa kar chalta hoon..
(We are allowed to travel with lighters here but in our country, the security makes us throw it away.. That's why I hide it in my belt..)

ME
Metal detector?

IRRFAN
Main buckle dikha deta hoon..
Mostly to sab maan jaate hain..
(MORE)

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

Par koi agar buckle check karne ke liye haath lagaata hai belt par, to main gudgudi ki aisee acting karta hoon ki woh bhi hasne lagta hai..
(I show them the buckle.. Most of them are convinced by that.. But if someone does put his hand on my buckle to check, I put on such a show of being ticklish that he himself starts to laugh..)

He gets up and shakes his body so funnily to show me the act of tickling that I burst out laughing. But my laughter vanishes immediately - Irrfan lights his cigarette.

I watch him in shock as he coolly takes a few puffs. He has smoked half of it when a security personnel approaches us.

THE SECURITY PERSONNEL

Sir, smoking is not allowed here.

Irrfan acts like a person who understands only a few words of English.

IRRFAN

What?

THE SECURITY PERSONNEL

Smoking!!

Irrfan takes a puff and replies innocently.

IRRFAN

Yes.. Smoking..

He offers him a drag.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

Take..

THE SECURITY PERSONNEL

No, no.. It's not allowed here..

IRRFAN

(Taking another drag)

What?

The security guy is frustrated. He gestures with his finger to communicate a 'No'.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

Oh!!

(Looks at me)

No.. smoking..

I am scared and amused both. Irrfan looks back at him and takes the last puff.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)
Sorry brother.

He goes to stub the cigarette at a nearby dustbin as the security personnel shakes his head.

CUT TO:

INT. MY OFFICE - MAKE UP ROOM - DAY

SUPER: JANUARY 2017

Irrfan sits in the make up room of my office, facing the mirror with lights shining on his face. The make up designer works on designing a scar on his forehead.



It's for a gangster's character in the film I am making with him and Deepika Padukone.

IRRFAN
Mazaak nahin kar raha hoon.. Jab tab aap 7 Khoon Maaf mein meri kahaani ka poora edit nahin daalte YouTube par.. Main shooting pe nahin aaunga..
(I'm not joking.. Until you put my full unedited story from 7 Khoon Maaf on YouTube.. I won't come for the shoot..)

ME

Edit mil nahin rahe hai Irrfan Sahab.. Sab khojne mein lage hain..
(I can't find the edit, Irrfan Sahab.. Everyone has been hunting for it..)

IRRFAN

Khoj lijiye.. Varna phir mujhe khojte rahiyega..
(Find it if you can.. Otherwise you'll be searching for me later..)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BATHROOM INSIDE THE GRAVEYARD - DAY

Sutapa (Irrfan's wife), her mouth covered with her *DUPATTA* steps into the room. She turns around immediately on seeing me still standing there.

I am confused whether I have taken too long or time has stretched itself.

I come out to give others some space to see his face for the last time.

Sutapa sits on the parapet with her two young sons. All three of them look lost and defeated.

I see a friend and fellow filmmaker sitting a little further away. I join him keeping the social distancing rule intact.

LITTLE LATER

The caretaker of the graveyard, claiming to be 80 years old, tells me and my filmmaker friend about how he has survived a paralysis attack, two heart attacks and three wives.

GRAVEYARD CARETAKER

Jab corona ki dead body aati hain na yahaan, to sab bhaag jaate hain qabristan se.. Akela main handle karta hai.. Sab will power ka khel hai pyaare..
(When a victim of corona comes here, everyone runs away from the graveyard.. I'm the only one who takes care of it.. It is all a question of will power, my dear..)

LITTLE LATER

Irrfan, now his face also covered in the shroud, is put into the casket. The casket is then covered with a colorful sheet.

It's lifted to be taken to an open space where a *NAMAZ* is to be offered.

I shoulder the casket.

CUT TO:

INT. NAMAZ HALL - DAY

I stand outside the prayer room as all the relatives offer a namaz.

CUT TO:

INT. IRRFAN'S HOME - DAY

SUPER: YEAR 2018

Tabu and I stand outside Irrfan's home in Mumbai. She lets me push the bell switch. We look at each other anxiously.

This is the first time we are going to see Irrfan after the news of his cancer broke a few months back.

LITTLE LATER

Tabu and I sit silently in a small cozy room between the bedroom and the living room.

This is where he does his creative meetings and script narrations.

He enters wearing a white *KURTA PYJAMA* and a cream *SHAWL*.

We hug and remain in embrace, God knows for how long.

Irrfan starts to narrate his cancer treatment tales like a script. He makes it sound so hilarious that Tabu and I fall down laughing.

He mimics doctors and their strange physical habits. At this point Sutapa joins us, she scolds Irrfan to not make fun of his specialist doctor.

In a long dissolve, afternoon merges into a deep gloomy evening.

He looks outside his window and speaks in a philosophical tone.

IRRFAN

Badan mein bahaut saare genres ki scripts ek saath chal rahi hai.. Kabhi koi thriller aage aa jaata hai to kabhi koi comedy.. Kabhi time ke against race chalti hai to kabhi time aise maddham pad jaata hai ki, kitni bhi taqat se dhakelo.. Hilta hi nahin hai.. (Many different genres of scripts are playing out inside my body.. Sometimes a thriller takes control and sometimes a comedy.. Sometimes its a race against time and sometimes time slows down so much that no amount of strength can push it forward..)

He looks at us and smiles.

IRRFAN (CONT'D)

Kamaal ka experience ho raha hai.. Bas ek hi cheez hai.. Ye saala dard.. Jab hota hai to jhela nahin jaata.. (It's an amazing experience inside me.. Except for one thing.. The pain.. When that happens, it is unbearable..)

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

At the graveyard, the casket is lifted up again.

It has to cover 40 steps before it's taken to the grave.

The path is small so it's taken in the opposite direction, towards the exit gate.

I also shoulder the casket.

The caretaker of the graveyard orders us to turn around. I don't want to but I am overpowered by others and the casket now moves towards it's final destination.

CUT TO:

EXT. GULMARG, KASHMIR - DAWN

SUPER: MARCH 2006

A few Art Department workers dig a grave in the snow in Gulmarg, Kashmir.

The first day of shoot for 7 *Khoon Maaf* is coming to an end. It's a night shift. The crew, which landed in from Bombay the same evening, has been shooting non stop since 6pm. The energies are low.

There is a feverish chaos in the direction department.

Wassiullah has to be buried before daylight breaks in.

The Art Department has finished digging up the grave.

Irrfan, sitting nearby with his eyes closed, is called for. He gets into the snowy grave and lies down.

"Oh God!! How cold it must be inside" - This thought crosses every unit member's mind in different languages and expressions.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

At the graveyard, Irrfan's body is laid inside the grave as the gravediggers prepare for the burial.

The Gravedigger's voice calls out.

THE GRAVEDIGGER

Kisi ko aakhiri deedar karna ho to
aage aa jaaye..

(Whoever wants to see him for the
last time, please come forward..)

I move forward through the silence.

I stand at the edge of the grave and look at Irrfan for the last time in this timeline.

CUT TO:

EXT. GULMARG, KASHMIR - DAY

A slate is clapped in front of a movie camera. I announce.

ME

Action..

The assistant standing outside the grave in which Irrfan lies, starts to throw snow over him in order to fill it up.

Later this scene will have to be edited out of the film. But for now, the snow which has turned quite hard in the night, hits Irrfan on his face but he doesn't twitch. He keeps lying there as if he is dead.

The lullaby in Irrfan's voice fades in on the soundtrack.

IRRFAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(Singing)

*Aa ja ri nindo tu aa ja.. Ifu ki
aankhon mein..*

*(Come dear sleep, come.. Settle
into Ifu's eyes..)*

(He then sings the reply
of Sleep)

*Aati hoon bhai main aati hoon Ifu
ki aankhon mein..*

*(Yes, yes, I'm coming.. Descending
into Ifu's eyes..)*

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Back at the graveyard, the lullaby continues over the soundtrack as the grave is filled with soil.

I wish I could edit out this scene from my life.

FADE TO BLACK.