

THE NIGHT SHIFT

ROZY, THE BAR DANCER

Voice Over

(Proceedings from the Maharashtra State Legislature in the background)

Rozy: Society should not decide that. Women should know how to carry themselves. And they know it. Just because a girl is wearing a short dress doesn't mean she's doing something wrong. Society will not decide what women have to do.

Voice Over

Rozy: I could not pay my fees. Moreover, I had family issues. My mother was the earning family member and would work as domestic help. But we couldn't get the amount of money we wanted. That's why I had to come to this field. I wanted to do Hotel Management, in fact.

Voice Over

Rozy: I was crying, I did not want to work there. It was a very new experience for me. Guys were there, sitting and smoking. It was normal. They came for their enjoyment. But it was quite weird for me. Initially, it was quite weird, but days passed, years passed, I got used to it.

Kunal: What part of this was weird to you?

Rozy: Just guys smoking and drinking. Only that. Nothing bad was going on over there. Nothing bad. Later on, I got used to this too.

Voice Over

Kunal: Did it feel like a very normal thing to do?

Rozy: It wasn't so normal, but the bottom line was, we had to perform and earn money. It was like a stage show, kind of. Many actresses, performers, do stage shows and they get paid for it. I told myself that this wasn't a bad thing. You are just getting paid for your performance, that's it.

Kunal: But how long did it take for you to digest this part?

Rozy: Say, almost 6-7 months to digest the fact that I had to do it.

Kunal: So, you kept feeling weird till then?

Rozy: Yes. Because, suddenly, like people do it, they perform... You know what our job is? We don't get the chance to learn the trade. We just have to dance on whatever songs they tell us. This was a bit weird, initially. But now, we can do it. As

THE NIGHT SHIFT

we girls get used to it, it gets easier. But I must add that this isn't a bad thing at all; the bar line is not a bad line to be in. It is not at all bad.

Voice Over

Kunal: Have you had such an experience, ever?

Rozy: I have had. There was a guy who was throwing money at me. I didn't like this. I told the manager that I did not like it, you please ask him to go. Maybe, later on, he would do something wrong. I have had many such experiences.

Kunal: But he was just throwing money at you?

Rozy: That was just part of it.

Kunal: So, there was more to it?

Rozy: Ya, I mean, things happen. Many things happen. But, safety is always available for us.

Voice Over

Ramesh, the customer: I was 35 and she was 18. Back then, I still felt good that I could win a pretty girl's affection, you know.

Voice Over

Solanki: I completely stopped going to work. Instead, I invested all my savings in a small flat, so that I could stay with her.

Voice Over

Solanki: She was doing what was best for her. I should have done what was best for me, you know.

Rozy: We are performing. If a guy is coming to the bar, we didn't call him. They came on their own. They came alone or with their friends. We didn't tell them to give us money. They can come here and just sit. It's not a problem. We didn't ask them to spend money. It's their wish and they will, if they want to. And they did. It's not that we ask them to do something. No. It all depends on them. If they want to spend money they will, if they don't want to, they won't.

Voice Over

Rozy: I told them that I was working in this field. They were initially opposed to it; they didn't agree to it. They said it was not a good thing and even told me that I would be working late at night. But later, I explained it and even showed them how

THE NIGHT SHIFT

these bars work and showed them nothing 'wrong' was happening and it is completely safe. That's when they agreed to it.

Kunal: How important was it for you to have their approval?

Rozy: It was important because this was the income that was sustaining my household. So, it was very important for them to understand me and where I am. It was very important for me.

Voice Over

Rozy: We have fixed drivers, also. Depends. If we have fixed drivers, then it's cool. If not, they give us designated cars and autos, depending on where we live, and they send us home. So, that's how we travel.

Kunal: Did your family feel the apprehensions that I am feeling, about the safety of the late-night commute?

Rozy: Sometimes when I don't answer their calls, they get worried thinking it is too late. So, it is my mistake that I am not answering their calls. Otherwise, no, they don't have such apprehensions. I have a fixed driver. So [my mother] can even contact the driver and find out where I am.

Voice Over

Kunal: There is a perception that the women who work in bars are exploited, that men harass them. That the woman, you, are helpless.

Rozy: No, nobody can touch us. We have guards outside. If you have been to a bar, you must have seen that whenever someone tries to touch us, everyone comes and prevents that. The customers might be drunk but the bar takes all precautions. We have every safety measure available to us. They even ensure that we reach home safe. Even inside the bar. They offer us all the safety precautions you can think of.

We draw the line and tell men to behave. If they are behaving in a wrong way or trying to say or do something, we can actually tell them to leave from there. It's not like we are helpless in the bar. We are not.

Voice Over

Bharat Thakur: Look, there has never been an incident in our industry where a dancer is going home and has been assaulted or molested or she has been kidnapped while she is going back home late at night. But, we can offer many examples of such instances happening in other sectors, where women have been harassed or exploited.

Voice Over

THE NIGHT SHIFT

Rozy: I must say, it is not at all a bad field. It is a good field and you'll make a good amount of money. There are so many women who have had financial issues; thousands of such women have been able to solve their financial issues by coming into this field. Many, many girls.

Voice Over

Rozy: Respect...I don't know about the respect. But, they give us respect. We don't care about the world at all, of course, we don't.

Voice Over

Kunal: Given us a choice, if let's say you earn the same amount of money you earn today in a day job, would you much rather do that than this?

Rozy: Yes, I would prefer working in the day. If there is safety, that is, and if I get the same money, then yes. But, if there is no safety, then I would prefer working here. Here, they take care of our safety, ensure we reach home safe.

Kunal: By safety, do you mean job security or physical safety?

Rozy: Job security, everything. Related to me, what time I leave from there, that I should reach home safely. Here, they take care of our safety and ensure we get home safe.

Voice Over

Rozy: Since I was a child, I was always very stubborn, but I was also very weak. If someone came and told me something, I would not be able to respond. Not anymore, though. I will not hear a word anymore. I will give it back.

Kunal: Has the 'new' Rozy ever created any problems for you?

Rozy: Never ever. Instead, it has only made my life better. Now, I can confidently talk to people, like I am talking to you now. Earlier, I couldn't.

Voice Over

Kunal: What do you have there, as a tattoo?

Rozy: It says, "Stay Strong!" (Laughs)

Kunal: When did you get that?

Rozy: Two years ago. It is all about staying strong! How strong you are and how you deal with people.

Kunal: Is that a message that you have for yourself?

THE NIGHT SHIFT

Rozy: Yes, that I must always stay strong. (Smiles)

This transcript has been lightly edited for clarity. The customer's name has been changed and his story has been dubbed by an artist to voice to conceal his identity.