

Ch 26: Blood Versus Bond

Next Morning

The sunlight gently spilled into the room, chasing away the darkness of the night.

Jharna was with Miransh.

She was feeding him, laughing with him, playing with him—like nothing in the world could ever go wrong.

Their laughter echoed in the room as they played hide and seek.

Jharna closed her eyes, counting joyfully.

“...eight, nine, ten! Ready or not, here I come!”

But when she opened her eyes—

He wasn't there.

Her smile faded.

She looked around.

“Ansh?” she called softly, then louder—“Ansh?!”

Panic clawed at her chest as she searched every corner.

She ran down the hallway, through the garden, barefoot, desperate.

Tears welled up in her eyes.

And then—

She saw him.

Her Ansh.

Standing at a distance, playing with something in his tiny hands.

Relief washed over her like a wave.

A trembling smile returned to her lips.

She took a step forward—

But before she could reach him...

Meera appeared.

Silent. Steady.

She stood protectively in front of Miransh, hiding him behind her.

Her voice was calm, but sharp as a blade.

“I'm taking my son with me now.”

Jharna froze.

Her head shook—once, twice—frantic.

“No... no... please...”

But the more she reached for them, the further they drifted away.

Meera and Miransh turned into silhouettes.

And then—

They disappeared.

Gone.

Vanished.

Jharna jolted awake with a gasp.

Her chest was heaving.

Sweat clung to her forehead.

Her hands were shaking.

Her eyes darted around in fear—until they landed on the small, sleeping form beside her.

Miransh.

He was right there.

Safe.

She let out a broken sigh of relief.

Her hand reached out to touch his soft hair.

And then her eyes moved—

To Ivaan.

He, too, had fallen asleep on the floor, one arm draped across the edge of the bed, as if protecting her even in slumber.

Jharna stared at him.

A storm of guilt and helplessness swirled inside her.

Her thoughts whispered:

“I was going to tell you everything, Ivaan. I was ready. But now... I don’t know anymore.”

“I don’t know what to do.”

She pressed her fingers to her forehead, overwhelmed.

“How do I let go of Ansh? I can’t breathe without him. He’s not just Meera Di’s son anymore... he’s my life.”

“But Meera Di... she’s his mother too.”

Her throat tightened.

“How do I live knowing I snatched her child?”

And in that silence—

The war inside her heart only grew louder. She sat on the edge of the bed, staring at the wall—eyes open, but lost somewhere far away.

Her mind whispered the truth her heart had been resisting:

“No... I have to talk to Meera di.”

“I can’t let Ansh go—not from myself, and not from her.”

“I have to meet her... face her again.”

The decision weighed heavy, but it was the only path forward.

With that, she slowly rose from the bed, her steps quiet, careful not to wake the two hearts she held dearest.

Moments Later

Ivaan stirred from his sleep. His eyes fluttered open.

His arm reached out instinctively—only to find the bed empty.

He jolted up slightly.

“Jharna?” he whispered to the darkened room.

But then—

The sound of running water came from the bathroom.

He exhaled. Just the shower.

He got up and walked to Miransh, who was still curled up in sleep. Gently, Ivaan pulled the blanket over him with a soft touch, then lay down beside him.

But sleep didn’t return.

He picked up his phone and opened the CCTV footage from the night before.

His eyes narrowed.

There—on the screen—he saw a woman talking to Miransh.

Her face hidden behind a mask.

His jaw tensed.

“Who is she?”

“The reason Jharna is so disturbed... Is she another friend like Aashiya?”

“What are you hiding, Jharna?”

His thoughts were spinning—when he heard the bathroom door click open.

He looked up.

Jharna stepped out.

Their eyes met.

But only for a second.

She quickly turned her face away, pretending not to notice him.

She moved toward the door—but Ivaan stopped her.

He grabbed her wrist.

Gently.

Firmly.

She froze.

Slowly, she turned to face him.

His voice was low, filled with a strange calm that hid the storm beneath:

“I know you won’t tell me even if I ask.”

“But I’ll still find out who that woman is—”

“She’s my sister.” Jharna interrupted softly.

Ivaan’s expression shifted instantly—shock freezing him in place.

She pulled her hand free from his grip and looked him in the eye.

“Yes. She’s my elder sister.”

“We’re bound by blood.”

There was a crack in her voice, but her gaze was steady.

“You once told me you don’t care about my past but present. So I’m

telling you this much. She's my real sister."

"And I know you have a thousand questions swirling in your head right now... but I can't answer them."

"Because I don't want to lie to you..."

"And the truth... I'm not ready to say it."

She paused.

Her voice softened even further.

"But I want to ask you something."

Ivaan didn't move. He just stared—silent, unreadable.

Jharna took a step closer, her voice a whisper:

"Can I... bring my sister into this house?"

The air between them grew still.

Both stood face to face, searching for answers in each other's eyes.

One... asking for permission.

The other... seeking the truth.

In the Park

The morning sun peeked through the leaves, casting golden patterns on the pavement.

But Meera didn't notice.

She stood near the fountain, checking her watch impatiently—her foot tapping, her face set in irritation.

Just then, a car pulled up near the park gate.

Inside, Ivaan scanned the woman standing alone.

He narrowed his eyes, trying to recognize her...
but failed.

From the passenger seat, Jharna spoke softly, "You wait here. I'll bring Di."

Ivaan gave a small nod, and Jharna stepped out of the car, taking slow, deliberate steps toward her sister.

Meera saw her and folded her arms, her expression instantly turning cold.

“Whatever you want to say, say it quickly. I don’t have time,” she snapped. Jharna gave a bitter smile.

“I know, Di. I know you’re very angry with me... but trust me, I—” Meera cut her off harshly,

“Jharna, I’m not interested in anything you have to say.”

“I’m only here for one reason—my son.”

“I don’t need your explanations. Do you really think your words can bring back the five years I lost?”

Jharna sighed, a flicker of pain passing through her eyes.

“You’re right, Di. No explanation can heal wounds or reverse time... so I’ll get straight to the point.”

From inside the car, Ivaan watched the sisters closely, picking up on every movement, every expression.

Jharna took a breath.

“Come home with me, Di.”

Meera scoffed, a sarcastic smile tugging at her lips.

“Home? Which home?”

“My home was the one where my mother, father, and my little sister lived.”

“The home you’re talking about—it’s yours. Not mine.”

“I just want my son. Once I have him, I’ll leave.”

Something inside Jharna snapped. Her frustration poured out in a trembling voice.

“Stop it, Di! Stop saying ‘my child’ over and over again.”

“Ansh is my son too! Please try to understand—if you gave him birth, then I raised him.”

“The love you have for him—I have it too. Maybe even more, because I lived every day watching him grow.”

She blinked back tears.

“And let’s say... just for a moment... that I give him to you. Then what?”

“You don’t know anything about him. He doesn’t even know you.”

“He doesn’t open up to people easily, Di. He doesn’t trust quickly.”

Meera straightened her spine, her voice cold and steady:

“He’s my son. I’ll manage.”

Jharna sighed deeply.

“Be practical, Di. Say what’s possible, not just what’s emotional.”

“Okay—fine. Let’s assume you’re right. Then prove it.”

Meera’s eyes narrowed.

“You want a mother to prove her motherhood?”

Jharna’s voice softened but didn’t waver.

“I know whatever I say right now, you’ll twist it... because you’re hurt. I get that.”

“But the only right thing right now... is for you to come home with me.”

“Spend some time with Ansh. Try to connect with him. Then decide what you really want.”

Meera didn’t respond.

Her silence hung heavy in the air.

Jharna reached for her hand.

This time, Meera didn’t resist.

She allowed herself to be led toward the car.

Ivaan watched them approach.

Jharna opened the backseat door and looked at her sister.

Meera glanced from her to the seat... then looked ahead—and locked eyes with Ivaan.

Something stirred in her.

A strange familiarity.

A flicker of something unspoken.

But she brushed it away.

Without a word, she stepped into the backseat.

Jharna took her place beside Ivaan in the passenger seat.

He started the engine.
The car pulled away from the park—
carrying three people,
three truths,
and one fragile bond hanging in the balance.

Maurya Mansion

The morning light filtered softly into the living room, where the entire family had gathered—lost in light conversation and the calm of a quiet morning.

Just then, little footsteps echoed from the staircase.

Miransh came down, his hair still messy from sleep, rubbing his eyes.

“Have you all seen Momma and Superhero anywhere?” he asked, his voice filled with innocent confusion.

Everyone looked at him, puzzled.

Shikha gently replied,

“Miransh beta, they must be in the room. We thought you three were still resting after yesterday’s long day.”

But Miransh shook his head.

“No, Dadi. They’re not in the room.”

A flicker of concern crossed Abhimaan’s face.

“Where could they go this early in the morning?”

Adhik stepped forward, already reaching for his phone.

“Let me call bhai.”

He quickly dialed Ivaan’s number.

The phone rang...

And just as it did—

The sound of the front door opening drew everyone’s attention.

All eyes turned to the entrance.

There they were—Ivaan and Jharna—walking in.

But they weren’t alone.

Beside them was a woman none of them recognized.

A stranger.

Elegant, composed, and unfamiliar.

Meera.

The family instinctively moved forward, curiosity and confusion in their eyes.

Who was this woman?

Why was she with Jharna and Ivaan?

And then—

A bright voice broke the moment.

“You’re back!!”

It was Miransh—his face lighting up with joy.

Jharna smiled instantly, bending down and spreading her arms, ready to scoop him up in her embrace.

But what happened next—

shattered something inside her.

Miransh ran right past her—

straight to the woman standing behind.

Meera.

Before anyone could react,

he wrapped his little arms around her waist and hugged her tightly.

As if he had known her all his life.

As if something invisible connected them.

A wave of silence crashed over the room.

The smiles on everyone’s faces slowly faded into surprise.

And Jharna—

stood frozen, her arms still open mid-air.

Her heart sank.

Her smile faltered.

She slowly turned around—

Only to see her son clinging to someone else.
To her sister.
To his biological mother.
Tears welled up in her eyes.
And without a sound, they began to fall—
one by one—
onto the marble floor beneath her feet.
A mother's arms, left waiting.
A mother's heart, suddenly trembling.

Sitara's Note

Some truths don't shatter like glass —
They dissolve quietly, drop by drop, like tears.
This chapter was hard to write. Every word felt like a weight on my chest.
Jharna's pain. Meera's rage. Miransh's innocent choice.
All of it—raw and real.
What do you do when love becomes a tug of war?
When two mothers stand on either side of the same heartbeat?
In this chapter, no one is wrong.
And maybe that's what hurts the most.
As a writer... I didn't choose who got hugged.
I just watched it happen, and wrote what the heart saw.
That moment—when Jharna stood with arms open and empty..
That wasn't just fiction. That was a wound.
Thank you for walking through this storm with me.
I'll be honest—
That's all for today.
I can't write anymore.
Not tonight.
But I hope... this chapter made you feel.
Because if it did—then Sitara's pen still has a purpose.
Until next chapter,
– Sitara Chandria