

Ch 27: A Familiar Stranger

Miransh threw his little arms around Meera.

Jharna stood frozen—arms wide open, heart wide shattered.

The sight hit her like a wave crashing over fragile glass.

Everyone around them stood in confusion, watching silently, unable to understand what just unfolded.

Meera, on the other hand, was living a moment she had waited five long years for.

Her son—her baby—was in her arms.

Tears brimmed in her eyes, but she didn't blink. She didn't want to miss a second.

She hugged him back, fiercely and protectively, as if the world might try to snatch him away again.

Her heart screamed: “You're finally here... in my arms... my child...”

Meanwhile, Jharna was numb. She couldn't feel her tears, her legs, or her breath. Her arms, still stretched, waited in vain. Her eyes stared in disbelief.

And Ivaan—he was watching her.

Her trembling lips.

The hollowness behind her eyes.

The silence of her pain.

He felt it all.

Just then, Shikha's voice broke the silence.

“What is going on? Will someone tell me who this girl is? Ivaan, who is she?”

Before anyone could respond, Miransh stepped back from Meera and turned to Shikha.

With innocent excitement, he said, “Dadi, she's the photo-aunty.”

Everyone confused.

Photo-aunty?!

The family looked at one another in confusion.

Miransh walked over to Jharna and gently cupped her tear-stained cheeks.

“Momma... she’s the same aunty you talk to in photos. The one who made you cry. I’ve seen you, Momma. You missed her a lot, didn’t you? But now she’s here! You won’t be sad anymore, right?”

Hearing his little voice, Jharna’s tears broke loose.

She hugged him tightly, burying her face in his tiny shoulder.

But Meera’s smile faded.

The truth struck her.

Miransh didn’t hug her because he recognized her.

He hugged her because he saw how much his mother missed her.

Jharna was his world.

And she was just someone from a photo.

Meera’s chest tightened. Her arms, moments ago full, now felt empty.

Everyone around was still lost in the whirlwind of confusion.

And then—Ivaan spoke up.

His voice was calm but heavy, “She is Jharna’s sister. Meera.”

A new wave of shock passed through the room.

Especially Abhimaan.

His eyes narrowed.

“Meera...? No. No, it can’t be. This isn’t the same Meera...”

“Jharna’s last name is Kashyap... if this is her sister, then—”

“No. People can share surnames. It doesn’t have to mean anything...”

He shook his thoughts away, but doubt lingered like a shadow.

Everyone was still trying to process the revelation.

And then Jharna stepped forward.

Her voice trembled as she said, “I know this is shocking. But it’s true.”

She turned to Meera and spoke again, this time addressing everyone, “Five years ago... we were separated. I thought I lost her forever.”

Deepa, trying to lighten the mood without thinking, muttered under her breath, “Feels like a movie...”

Everyone stared.

She fumbled, “I-I mean... where was Meera all this time?”

All eyes turned to Meera.

She didn’t speak.

Jharna gathered her strength and answered instead.

“She was in a coma.”

Gasps. Widened eyes.

Jharna continued, her voice barely above a whisper, “Three years... she was unconscious. And when she woke up... she’s been searching for us ever since.”

In the corner, Vihaan whispered to Adhik, amused, “This honestly feels like a movie, doesn’t it?”

But there was no response.

He turned and saw Adhik staring at Meera. Not blinking. Not breathing.

Vihaan raised a brow, then slapped the back of his head.

Adhik snapped out of it, blinking rapidly.

Vihaan said, “Seriously? Leave at least one girl alone. She’s Bhabhi’s sister.”

Adhik gulped.

Meanwhile, Ivaan looked around and said firmly, “No more questions.

From today onward—Meera will stay with us.”

Meera’s eyes widened. She looked at him—surprised, unsure.

Before she could respond, Miransh clapped excitedly, “That means... superhero, Momma won’t be sad anymore!”

Ivaan chuckled and picked him up.

“She won’t, Champ.”

He carried him away toward the bedroom.

Shikha turned to Jharna gently, “Jharna... you should take Meera to her room.”

Jharna nodded quietly.

She looked at Meera, who still hadn't spoken.
Without waiting, she guided her sister toward the hallway.
Meera followed.

Abhimaan's Room

Abhimaan stood near the window, lost in thought.
“Can she really be the same Meera? But if she is... and Jharna is her sister... then that means—”
“No. This doesn't make sense. How can it be her after all these years? Suddenly, out of nowhere...”
He rubbed his temple, uneasy.
“Maybe I'm just overthinking. It has to be someone else with the same name.”
But his thoughts were restless.
“Still... if this really is Meera... then everything from the past—all the secrets, all the pain—it'll all come out.”
Just then, Shikha entered the room.
She saw him, deep in his thoughts, his expression tight.
Abhimaan didn't even notice her at first, still spiraling inside his mind.
“This can't be Meera. He would never let her come back. If he was ever meant to return... he wouldn't have left in the first place. But... if it is her —”
“Then the truth we buried years ago... will come crashing down.”
Shikha's voice broke the silence.
“You're thinking about Meera, aren't you?”
Abhimaan snapped out of his trance, startled.
His eyes widened as he looked at her. Does she know something?
But Shikha continued gently, “I've been thinking about her too. Poor girl... what she must've gone through. Being in a coma for all those years...”

Abhimaan let out a quiet sigh, hiding the storm within him.

“No... I need to find out the truth.”

“I need to know—if she’s the same Meera... or just a haunting coincidence.”

In Meera’s Room

Jharna closed the door behind them.

Meera stood in the middle of the room, arms crossed, her eyes burning with restrained rage.

Jharna took a breath, trying to stay calm.

“Di, I know you’re angry but—”

“But what?!” Meera snapped, cutting her off.

“Why did you bring me here, Jharna? And why did your husband say I’ll be staying here? Let me make one thing clear—I’m not staying. I’ve come to take my son, and I’m leaving.”

She started pacing, her frustration rising again.

Jharna rolled her eyes and picked up a cotton dupatta from the nearby chair.

Before Meera could protest, Jharna swiftly wrapped it around her mouth like a gag.

Meera froze—completely stunned.

Jharna put her hands on her waist and said with mock sternness,

“You haven’t changed at all, Di. Still the same—too angry to listen to anyone. And guess what? I’m not the same old quiet Jharna either. I know exactly how to get you to listen to me now.”

Meera glared at her with an intense death stare.

Jharna scrunched her nose playfully.

“What? Don’t give me that killer look. You don’t scare me.”

Meera, furious, started gesturing to remove the dupatta.

Jharna grinned and gestured “no” like a stubborn child.

Meera narrowed her eyes and suddenly tickled Jharna's stomach. Jharna gasped and dropped the dupatta immediately. "That's cheating!" she yelped. Meera removed the cloth, victorious. "Excuse me, I didn't cheat. I improvised." Jharna stepped closer with a mischievous smile. "Oh really? Let's see you escape now!" She lunged at Meera and started tickling her back. Meera shrieked in laughter, trying to dodge—but Jharna was relentless. They tumbled onto the bed, laughing, giggling, gasping for breath like two kids again. "Di, no! Stop! Please!" Jharna squealed. "No way," Meera laughed. "Mumma isn't here to save you anymore. I'm not letting you go now!" But just as the words left her mouth— They both fell silent. A heavy stillness settled between them. The laughter died. Meera's smile faded. She looked away, her chest rising with emotion, "Everything's changed, Jharna. Everything's been taken from me. My parents... my home... my child..." A tear slipped from her eye. Jharna cupped her face gently, wiping it away with her thumb. "Nothing has changed, Di. Remember what Papa always said? 'Family makes home.'"

"For years, we were alone. But today—we're together again. I promise I'll fix everything. I'll bring us back to what we imagined during your pregnancy... when everything felt possible."

Meera brushed her hands away, her voice heavy, "It's easy to say big

things, Jharna. But what exactly will you fix?

Will you return the five years I lost?”

She turned away to leave.

But Jharna called out, “Why are you still clinging to what can never come back?

Can’t we try... just try to be happy with what we do have now?”

She walked over to her sister, voice trembling but honest, “I know you blame me. I know you think I abandoned you.

But I only left for Ansh.

Those people—they wanted to kill him, Di.”

“That nurse... she told me you didn’t survive.

She placed Ansh in my arms and disappeared.

Before I could even process what was happening—

I had to run. I had no choice. I didn’t know what else to do.

That city... it stole everything from me.

I couldn’t breathe there.

I left only to protect Ansh.”

Meera turned slowly, her eyes sharp and broken, “Even if I forgive you for that day...

how do I forgive you for raising my son without me?”

“For making him a stranger to his own mother?”

Jharna tried to speak—but Meera raised a hand, silencing her.

“No, Jharna.

There’s no forgiveness for that.”

Jharna stepped closer, tears flowing.

“Then punish me.

However you want.

Just... please come back to me.

Be my Meera Di again.”

She looked into her sister’s eyes—pleading, desperate.

Meera's eyes shimmered with unshed tears.
But her voice was cold.
“It's not that easy.”
And with that—she walked into the bathroom and shut the door.
The silence left behind was deafening.
Jharna stood there, alone with her tears.
But her heart whispered with quiet determination.
“I know you're hurt, Di. I know you're angry.
But you don't hate me.
I promise... I'll bring everything back.
Just like we dreamt of, back when you carried Ansh...”
She wiped her cheeks and took a shaky breath.
Then she smiled—softly, bravely.

The afternoon light filtered softly through the window of Ivaan's room,
casting golden rays over the floor where a colorful puzzle lay scattered.
Ivaan and Miransh sat together, cross-legged, surrounded by half-finished
pieces.
But while Miransh was focused on the puzzle—
Ivaan's mind was elsewhere.
His gaze was blank, distant.
Memories floated in front of him like flickering frames.
His first meeting with Jharna...
Then Miransh entering in his lives...
Aashiya's secrets...
And now—Meera.
So many revelations.
So many questions.
And still... so many missing answers.
Miransh groaned in frustration, breaking his train of thought.

“Ugh! This puzzle just doesn’t fit together! Nothing’s matching.”

Ivaan blinked, pulled back into the moment.

He looked down at the puzzle in front of him.

Miransh sighed and muttered to himself, “Let’s just start over. We’re definitely missing something important.”

Ivaan gave a faint smile at his words—but something about them echoed deeper inside him.

“We’re definitely missing something...”

He repeated the words in his head, almost like a whisper.

“Yes. Something doesn’t fit. Something’s off.”

His thoughts began spinning again.

“Why does Meera feel so familiar to me?”

“She disappeared five years ago. Now suddenly, she’s here. In Mumbai.”

“And I’ve only ever been to Shimla once—on Jharna’s birthday. Never before that.”

“So if Meera and I never met back then...”

“Then why—why does it feel like I’ve seen her before?”

His eyes narrowed slightly.

“Why does her presence stir something inside me I can’t explain?”

He looked at the scattered puzzle pieces between him and Miransh.

And somewhere, deep down—

He realized...

This wasn’t just about Meera.

It wasn’t just about Jharna or Miransh.

Something else...

Something long buried...

Was about to surface.

Something that would change everything.

Sitara's Note

This chapter is the turning point.

A moment where hearts collide, truths tangle, and pain finds a voice.

Through Miransh's innocent hug, we saw how love can bloom even in confusion... and how heartbreak can hide behind smiles.

Jharna stood with arms wide open but received only silence.

Meera, who waited five long years, was hugged not as a mother—but as a memory someone else held.

That's the tragedy of lost time—it steals not just moments but identities.

You'll notice that the chapter began with joy but ended with unresolved wounds.

Because real life—and real stories—don't always give us clean closures. Sometimes the apology isn't accepted. Sometimes forgiveness needs time to grow roots.

And then there's Ivaan.

He's starting to sense something larger. Like a shadow in the mirror that doesn't belong.

Because this story isn't just about two sisters or one child—it's about something deeper, something hidden in the folds of the past.

A truth that's been waiting to be seen. A puzzle... that doesn't quite fit.

So here we are.

Everyone under one roof.

But not on the same page.

Yet.

Thank you for walking through this emotional storm with me.
Don't worry—storms shake things up, but they also clear the sky.
Until next chapter,
– Sitara Chandria