

Ch 28: Memory Lane

Maurya Mansion

Meera sat alone on the edge of the bed, her fingers clutching the bedsheet tightly.

Her stomach ached with hunger, but more than that—it was hesitation that gripped her.

The house was new. The faces unfamiliar. She had been up for a while now, but stepping out?

That required courage she wasn't sure she had anymore.

Just then, a knock broke her spiral of thoughts.

Her heart leapt. She rushed to the door, hoping—expecting—Jharna.

But it wasn't her.

It was Adhik.

He stood there, holding a breakfast tray, a shy smile plastered on his face.

Meera blinked, confused.

“You?”

Adhik scratched the back of his neck and offered a smile.

“I thought you might be hungry... May I come in?”

Meera paused... then nodded slightly.

He stepped inside and placed the tray carefully on the table.

“Thank you,” Meera said, her voice hesitant.

Adhik chuckled nervously, “No need to thank me. Really. It's... my pleasure.”

She looked at him, puzzled.

“I mean,” he clarified, “you're Bhabhi's sister. Taking care of you is... natural.”

Just then, Jharna arrived, clearly in a rush.

Her brows furrowed. “You? Here? At 7 AM?”

She checked the time again, confused. “You don't get out of bed before ten!”

Adhik grinned awkwardly, “Come on, Bhabhi! I've started waking up

early... gym, remember?”

Jharna folded her arms, suspicious.

“Since when?”

Adhik glanced at Meera, then said quickly,

“I mean... I go to the gym early and then rest for a bit afterward. That’s all.”

Jharna narrowed her eyes.

Meera gave a faint, polite smile.

Adhik clapped his hands. “Okay! You enjoy your breakfast. I’ll get going.”

And just like that—he slipped out.

Jharna watched him leave, still confused. Then she turned to Meera.

“Sorry, Di. I was just coming to call you for breakfast. Got a bit late—Ansh had to get ready for school.”

At the word “school,” Meera froze.

Her eyes clouded over. Her voice cracked.

“His first day... his PTM... his annual day... his sports day... I missed everything.”

A sudden wave of pain hit her.

She rushed to the table and began eating quickly—almost desperately.

Jharna just watched her.

The pain... was visible. The regret... undeniable.

But what could she possibly say?

With a heavy heart, she quietly stepped out and closed the door behind her.

Afternoon — Cafe

Vihaan and Sagarika sat in a cozy corner, fingers interlaced, eyes locked in silent joy.

The hum of soft music, the clinking of cups, the gentle rustle of pages—All added to the gentle bubble they had created around them.

Vihaan smiled.

“I never thought I’d meet someone like you.”

Sagarika just smiled in return.

But her smile faded instantly.

She saw someone walk in—the one person she didn’t want to see.

Chhaya.

Vihaan turned to look. His jaw clenched.

He muttered under his breath, “Perfect. The day just had to take a turn.”

Chhaya noticed them too.

But she didn’t react. She walked right past them—her expression blank.

Vihaan stood up immediately.

“Let’s leave.”

Sagarika followed without a word.

Just as they turned—

Thud.

Chhaya collapsed onto the cafe floor.

Gasps echoed across the room.

Staff rushed toward her, calling for help.

She was trembling, her hands clutched around her head.

Vihaan and Sagarika stood frozen.

Sagarika’s hand tightened around Vihaan’s.

But they didn’t move.

Vihaan’s voice was calm—cold.

“Karma... always makes sure you pay. Sometimes... in the same lifetime.”

Sagarika nodded.

“You’re right.”

And they walked out.

Maurya Enterprises

Abhimaan stood alone in his office—the silence hugging him tighter than the walls.

It had been days since he last came here.

The place that once kept him distracted... now only reminded him of what he had lost.

He walked to his bookshelf, fingers brushing the dusty spines of unread books.

He pulled one out.

A photo slipped out.

An old one. A familiar one.

He stared at it.

A bittersweet smile curved on his lips... and a tear escaped his eye.

“One accident... and everything was lost.

Whoever said time is the greatest force... was right.

And no matter how deeply you bury the truth—

It always finds its way back.”

He tucked the photo back inside the book and shut it gently.

Closing not just the book... but perhaps an old chapter of his own life.

He exhaled, long and heavy—

And returned the book to the shelf.

A Dimly Lit Room

Chhaya lay on a bed, the pale sheet barely covering her trembling body.

Her breathing had calmed, but her face was still flushed from the episode.

A middle-aged man stood beside her, concern clouding his features.

The doctor had just left after checking her vitals.

He gently asked, “Are you feeling better now?”

Chhaya gave a weak nod. “Yes... Mama.”

A moment of silence passed before she looked up again, worry tightening her voice.

“Where’s Tia Di?”

Before he could respond, the sound of hurried footsteps echoed from the hallway.

He sighed, almost with relief.

“She’s here.”

The door opened.

And she walked In — Chhaya’s sister — Tia, aka Sagarika.

Tia (Sagarika) rushed to the bedside and sat beside Chhaya, immediately placing her cool palms on her forehead, soothing her gently.

Flashback Begins

Just minutes earlier—

Vihaan and Sagarika had exited the cafe after witnessing Chhaya’s sudden collapse.

Vihaan said, “Let’s go somewhere else.”

Sagarika nodded, forcing a smile.

“Yeah, just give me a second—I need to use the washroom.”

“Okay,” Vihaan replied. “I’ll wait in the car.”

As soon as he turned the corner, she rushed back into the cafe.

Chhaya was still on the ground, shaking.

Without hesitation, Sagarika ran to her, wrapped her arms around her, whispering comfort into her ears as the same time she pulled out her phone and quickly dialed a number.

Within seconds, she was speaking, “Please come quickly. She’s not okay.”

Gradually, Chhaya started coming to her senses.

Sagarika helped her onto a chair.

“Are you alright now?”

Chhaya nodded slightly.

But her voice was urgent.

“You shouldn’t be here. What if Vihaan suspects something? Please go.”

Sagarika said softly, “I’ve already called Shaurya Mama. He’ll be here any minute. Just hold on.”

Chhaya managed a faint smile. “Okay... go now, Di.”

Sagarika gave her a final comforting glance—

Then walked out.

Flashback Ends

Chhaya now looked at her sister, her voice tinged with concern.

“Vihaan didn’t suspect anything, right?”

Sagarika—or rather, Tia—brushed the question aside.

“Are you okay now?”

Chhaya let out a bitter chuckle.

“What does it matter? Your one and only goal in life is still revenge against the Mauryas, isn’t it?”

Tia looked away, her jaw clenched.

Shaurya, their uncle (mama), finally spoke—his voice laced with exhaustion and sorrow.

“How long will this go on, Tia beta?”

Tia didn’t even flinch. Her voice was steady. Cold.

“Until I get my revenge.”

Shaurya's voice rose slightly, pained.

“You’ve sacrificed your entire life for this madness.

You dropped that chandelier at Abhimaan Maurya’s event...

You set fire to his office...

You drugged Shikha and made it look like he did it...

You planted Chhaya in Ivaan’s life...

And now you’ve entered their home yourself—through Vihaan.

Tia... how long will you keep doing this?”

Tia shot to her feet, her hands clenched into fists.

“Until they pay!” she screamed.

“Until they all pay for what they did to me... to us!

They ruined our lives, Mama!

They took everything!

Even Chhaya’s condition—they are responsible for that too!”

Her eyes burned with fury, breath heaving, voice shaking from the sheer

intensity of her rage.

“I will not stop.

Not until each one of them is broken.

Not until they feel the same pain we’ve lived with for years.”

Chhaya and Shaurya exchanged a long, heavy glance.

The fire in Tia’s heart was far from dimming.

And now... it threatened to consume everything in its path.

Maurya Mansion

Meera stood near the window, sipping water slowly. Her thoughts were tangled, heavy—but the sudden buzz of her phone pulled her back to the present.

She picked it up.

A message from Jharna.

Just a single line... with a location pin.

“Come to this location.”

Meera frowned, confused.

No context. No explanation.

Still, something about the message urged her to go.

Aashiya stood at the door of an apartment building. She rang the bell.

The door opened with a soft click.

Jharna stood there, smiling warmly.

This was her home before marriage—the space she once shared with Malini and baby Miransh.

Aashiya stepped inside and asked curiously, “You really think Meera di will come?”

Jharna smiled with certainty. “She will. A hundred percent.”

Just then, a cheerful voice piped up from inside the room.

“Pretty Aunty!”

Aashiya turned around to find Miransh in his school uniform, beaming. She grinned, “Heyyy, my little cutiepie!”

Miransh puffed his chest, “Wait, let me change first! Then we’ll play.”

Without waiting, he dashed into his room.

Aashiya turned to Jharna and chuckled, “He might be someone else’s son, but that mischief? It’s all you.”

Jharna laughed.

Before she could respond, the doorbell rang again.

Their eyes immediately darted to the door.

Jharna opened it.

And there stood Meera.

She stepped inside quickly, words tumbling out, “What are you even up to these days, Jharna? All this drama—”

But her voice faltered mid-sentence.

Because her eyes fell on Aashiya.

Aashiya got up with a bright smile and walked toward her.

Without hesitation, she pulled Meera into a hug.

Meera hugged her back—tightly. Words didn’t come, but something in her heart softened.

Aashiya whispered, “You have no idea how happy I am to see you again.”

Meera gave a faint smile.

Just then, Miransh came bounding out of his room—now in comfy clothes.

He stopped short, looking at the three women.

Eyes narrowed.

“Is there some secret gathering going on here?”

He raised a finger dramatically.

“Wait! Let me call Superhero too!”

“NO!”

All three women said at once.

Their voices overlapped in perfect unison.

Miransh blinked in surprise.

Jharna walked over and bent down to him.

“Betu, your Superhero must be very busy right now, right?”

He tilted his head, thinking... then nodded.

“True. Okay!”

The moment passed.

Meera turned to Jharna, serious now.

“Why did you call me here?”

Jharna stepped closer, her voice soft with memory.

“Di... this is the place where Ansh took his first steps...

Where he spoke his first words...

Where he fell down the first time and cried...

Where he got ready for his first day of school.”

Meera’s eyes instantly welled up.

Her lips parted—but no words came.

Her heart ached with the weight of years lost.

Jharna continued gently, “I recorded everything. Every little moment.

Today... I want to show you those memories.

Will you watch them with me?”

Meera didn’t respond aloud.

But in her silence... was a silent yes.

Her eyes betrayed her longing.

Her soul screamed for the years she never got to live.

Jharna turned to Aashiya, “Can you order some snacks and drinks, please?”

Aashiya nodded, reaching for her phone.

Later... Outside the Apartment Building

A confused delivery boy stood between two doors, looking at his phone screen.

He scratched his head, muttering under his breath,

“Apartment 669... juices and snacks...

Apartment 996... wine and snacks...”

He blinked... then squinted.

Suddenly, he started repeating in reverse—

“Apartment 996... juices and snacks...

Apartment 669... wine and snacks...”

Sitara's Note

When the delivery guy forgets who ordered juice and who ordered wine...

Let's just say—

Someone's evening is about to get unexpectedly wild,

And someone else? Still waiting for their wine.

Next chapter? Damn, I can't wait to write it.

What about you? Wanna read?

See you soon, where wrong deliveries stir up the right kind of drama.

– Sitara Chandria