

Ch 29: Truth, By Mistake

Jharna's Apartment

Laughter echoed softly through the room.

On the TV screen, a tiny Miransh was shown wobbling his first few steps, then toppling over onto a pillow. The next clip played—a close-up of him chewing on a remote, his wide eyes full of innocent mischief. Another followed—him rolling over for the first time, giggling as Jharna clapped behind the camera.

The room was filled with warmth.

Jharna and Aashiya sat beside Meera on the couch. All three were smiling, eyes glued to the screen. But it was Meera's expression that stood out. A kind of smile had bloomed on her face—gentle, soft, and unfamiliar after years of sorrow. Her eyes shimmered with tears, but this time, they weren't made of pain. They held joy. Long-lost, long-denied joy.

Jharna couldn't stop watching her. This was the first time since Meera had returned that her tears weren't shaped by grief. Aashiya noticed too, grinning as she popped another piece of chips into her mouth. The atmosphere was heavy in emotion but light in spirit.

Well—except for one person.

Miransh.

He stood behind the couch, arms folded, his face twisted into a pout.

“Ugh! This is so embarrassing,” he muttered.

Watching the women giggle over his childhood moments—especially the clip where he had accidentally wet the bed—was simply too much for his big-boy pride to handle.

With an exaggerated sigh, he turned and tiptoed away from the room like a ninja avoiding a war zone. Entering a quiet corner room, he slammed the door dramatically behind him and grabbed the phone.

He dialed the one person who would understand him.

His Superhero.

Ivaan picked up almost instantly. "Hey, champ—what's up?"

Miransh huffed. "Those three ladies are bullying me!"

Ivaan blinked, confused. "What? Who?"

"Pretty Aunty, Photo Aunty, and my momma! They're watching my baby videos! They saw the one where I peed on the bed!"

Ivaan chuckled under his breath but tried to sound serious, "That does sound... tragic."

"Come save me," Miransh said in a deadpan voice. "Now."

Before Ivaan could respond, the call disconnected.

Miransh tossed his phone onto the bed, flopped down on his stomach, buried his face in the pillow, and muttered, "Humiliation level: 100."

Back in the living room, the emotions were still flowing.

Jharna wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. "He always hated carrots.

But that one time, I made its halwa, and he ate the whole bowl."

Meera laughed. "You tricked him?"

Jharna nodded proudly. "With love."

Aashiya smirked, "You should patent your parenting hacks."

She reached for the snack bowl, still munching while the video continued.

No one had touched the drinks until now.

Jharna's eyes fell on the glass beside her. Without thinking much—still caught in the warm glow of nostalgia—she picked it up and took a sip.

It was the wine.

But the sweetness didn't sting her lips. Maybe it was the moment. Maybe it was the laughter. Maybe, just maybe, it was the feeling of wholeness she hadn't felt in a long time.

The wine tasted like peace.

And she didn't notice—this wasn't the drink she had ordered at all.

Chhaya lay curled up on a soft bed, her frame fragile under a light blanket.

Tia (Sagarika) sat beside her, gently placing a cool compress on her

forehead. She moved with quiet tenderness, adjusting pillows, rubbing her sister's back, handing her water.

The room was calm, but heavy.

Until Chhaya broke the silence.

“What are you planning now... with the Mauryas?”

Tia gave her a small, unreadable smile.

“I found a treasure,” she said cryptically.

Chhaya frowned. “Treasure?”

Tia leaned closer, her voice dropping, “Miransh isn't Jharna's real son.”

Chhaya sat upright in shock. “What?!”

Tia's smirk deepened. “And the best part? She told me that herself.”

Chhaya looked utterly baffled. “But... that doesn't make sense. Jharna loves that kid more than anything. You can feel it—he's her whole world.

If what you're saying is true... why would she ever tell you that?”

“She didn't,” Tia said, brushing her fingers over Chhaya's hand. “Her child did.”

Chhaya stared at her, stunned.

“What... what do you mean?”

Tia's eyes glinted, filled with dark amusement.

“Let's just say... kids are honest. And curious. And sometimes... they spill the biggest secrets without knowing what they've done.”

Chhaya's brows drew together, still confused.

But Tia?

She already had her next move planned.

Flashback

It was the day Aashiya had first met Jharna.

Back then, Miransh had been playing his usual spy games. He had secretly planted a small camera inside Jharna's room—hoping to catch some dramatic footage of her and Ivaan fighting. What he didn't realize... was

that the camera would capture something else entirely.

A quiet, private moment.

A confession.

Jharna's voice, soft and broken:

“Miransh is not my son. He's Meera Di's.”

And that moment... got recorded.

Cut to the day Shikha had fallen ill. When Sagarika (Tia) came to Maurya Mansion.

She found Miransh shaking a tiny device in his hand, brows furrowed.

“What are you doing, Miransh?” she asked, walking toward him.

He looked up at her, eyes full of innocence.

“I had put this camera in Superhero's room. I wanted to see if he and Momma were fighting.”

He frowned. “But I think it's broken now. It's not working.”

Sagarika took the camera gently from his hands.

She examined it.

It wasn't broken—just out of battery.

She smiled and crouched beside him. “Ah, Miransh—I'll give you a better camera, brand new. But can I keep this one?”

Miransh looked confused. “But... it's trash now. What will you do with it?”

Sagarika grinned, “I love collecting broken things. It's kinda my hobby.”

He thought for a second. Then nodded, pleased. “Okay!”

He ran off—probably onto his next secret mission.

Sagarika looked down at the camera in her hand.

She had no idea what was inside it then...

But later that night, when she charged it and watched the footage—

She found gold.

Back to the Present

Tia (Sagarika) was smiling to herself, that same camera now safely tucked in her drawer. Her fingers tapped the side of the table rhythmically, the plan forming in her mind like a well-rehearsed dance.

Chhaya, watching her from the bed, still looked puzzled. And concerned.

“I’m scared, Di...” she whispered. “What are you going to do with this?”

Tia didn’t look at her. Her eyes were distant, sharp.

“This,” she said calmly, “will be my final move.”

She stood and walked slowly to the window, her voice cold and certain.

“I don’t want to kill Ivaan. No, that would be easy. That would be mercy.”

She turned back, her eyes like ice.

“I want to leave him alive... but hollow. A man who breathes—yet is already dead from the inside.”

Chhaya swallowed hard. A chill ran through her body.

Because in that moment...

She knew—

Tia wasn’t just planning revenge anymore.

She was ready to burn everything.

Jharna’s Apartment

Meera’s eyes were fixed on the screen, watching Miransh’s childhood clips—his first crawl, first steps, his babbling laughter, even those messy, giggling moments of his toddler days.

And meanwhile, Jharna? She was sipping her drink... and then sipping again... and again.

Aashiya, watching her with raised brows, finally asked, “Umm... is it that good?”

Meera turned her head, eyes narrowing. Jharna did look a little... off.

Curious, Aashiya took a full glass and downed it in one go.

A moment passed. Her face scrunched.

“Eww! This tastes weird!”

Meera immediately looked more closely at the bottle on the table.

Just then, Jharna lazily leaned against her shoulder, murmuring, “Di... I-I missed you.”

Her voice cracked, too sweet, too slurred.

Suspicion clicked in Meera’s mind. She gently moved away and picked up the bottle. Her eyes scanned the label.

Tiny font. Clear words.

“Contains Alcohol.”

Her eyes widened in shock.

Aashiya was about to pour herself another glass when Meera snatched it away.

“Wait! This has alcohol in it!”

Jharna gasped dramatically, her palm over her mouth. “Haww!”

Aashiya blinked. “What?!”

Meera asked sharply, “Who ordered this?”

Aashiya raised her hand sheepishly. “Me. But I swear—I didn’t know it was alcoholic! I just ordered juice and snacks!”

She panicked. “Oh God—I drank a whole glass of it. I need to go home. I really need to go now!”

She darted to the door and flung it open—only to come face to face with Ivaan.

Her eyes went wide as saucers.

She snapped to attention.

“Sir...!” she saluted reflexively.

Ivaan stared, confused.

Meera appeared behind Aashiya, saw him, and under her breath muttered, “Satyanaash!...”

Ivaan raised a brow. “What?”

Meera smiled tightly. “Nothing!”

She grabbed Aashiya by the arm and dragged her back in. Ivaan followed, quietly closing the door behind him.

Then he saw her.

Jharna—stumbling, smiling at the wall, hair slightly messy.

“Jharna?” he called.

She turned. Her face lit up.

“Husband!!!”

She sprinted—or tried to—and ended up tripping straight into his arms.

He caught her just in time.

“You can’t even walk properly now?” he muttered.

But before he could steady her—

—she kissed him on the cheek.

He froze.

Then she wrapped her arms tightly around him, resting her head on his chest.

Aashiya and Meera immediately turned their backs, facing the wall like it was suddenly very interesting.

Ivaan regained his senses.

“What the hell is going on here?”

Meera turned, trying to explain.

“Uhh... well, um...”

“Words,” Ivaan snapped.

“She’s drunk!” Meera blurted.

“What?!” Ivaan stared at Jharna, who only giggled in return.

He looked at Meera with disappointment. “You were drinking? With Miransh in the house? Don’t you people have any shame?”

Meera pointed defensively. “Excuse me? I didn’t drink a drop! It was her! She ordered this drink” She jabbed a finger at Aashiya.

Aashiya gasped dramatically and rushed to Ivaan, grabbing onto his leg like a toddler.

“Sir, please don’t fire me! I didn’t mean to! I didn’t know it was wine!”

Ivaan tried to shake her off, “Let go—”

But she clung tighter. Crying now.

Meera taunted him, “Wow, what a heart you have. Going to fire her for one tiny mistake?”

Ivaan gave her a helpless look.

One leg held hostage by Aashiya, the other half-dragging Jharna—who had now wrapped her arms around his waist.

At that moment, Miransh stepped out of the room, blinking at the chaos.

“What is happening, Photo Auntie?”

Meera turned quickly, “Nothing, beta. Come here.”

Ivaan hissed to Aashiya, “Let go! I’m not firing you!”

Her face lit up. She let go instantly and ran to Meera like a child reporting to her mother.

Meera patted her head and wiped her fake tears.

But peace was short-lived.

Because Jharna leaned in and planted a kiss on Ivaan’s neck.

He shivered on the spot.

Meera immediately snapped, “If you two are going to do all this, please go to your room!”

Ivaan didn’t say a word. He just picked up Jharna bridal-style and carried her straight into the bedroom.

Door shut.

Silence.

Meera turned to Miransh and smiled, “Hungry?”

He nodded. “I only eat Momma’s food. And after that, Superhero’s.”

Meera’s smile faded.

She sighed, “Your Momma and Superhero are... busy right now. But if they knew you were hungry, they’d feel sad, right?”

Miransh nodded thoughtfully. “Hmm... Sandwich?”

Meera smiled again. “Coming right up.”

Just then, Aashiya leaned closer and whispered, “Di... Jharna is drunk very much. What if she accidentally tells Ivaan sir the truth about you and Miransh?”

Meera paused. Her eyes darkened slightly.

She replied calmly, “That might not be a bad thing.”

But Aashiya shook her head. “No, Di. Ivaan sir cares about Jharna and Miransh. If he hears the truth like this, while she’s drunk... he’ll think it was never meant to be shared. That it was just a slip. He might take it the wrong way. It could create a huge misunderstanding between them.”

Meera stood silent... thoughtful.

The weight of truth was already heavy.

And now... it threatened to tip everything over.

Sitara's Note

Some truths are too delicate to be shouted—But even a drunken whisper can shake the ground beneath us.

Jharna's laughter held a kind of freedom... but freedom mixed with wine often forgets what secrets are meant to stay hidden.

And now, Meera stands at a crossroads—

Should she protect the truth?

Or finally let it breathe?

Meanwhile, Tia holds a different kind of truth... one that's loaded, charged, and ready to explode.

The pieces are moving.

The heart is tugging.

And somewhere between laughter and betrayal, a storm is quietly brewing.

Are you ready to watch everything unravel?

Because this...

is just the calm before the twist.

With truth & fiction,

—Sitara Chandria