

Ch 30: A Whisper Away

Jharna's Apartment

Ivaan carried Jharna into the room and gently laid her down on the bed. Just as he stood to leave, she reached out, her arms open, a drunken smile tugging at her lips.

“Husband!” she called sweetly.

Ivaan couldn't help but smile. He leaned down and hugged her softly.

In a whisper, she asked, “Do you love me?”

The question caught him off guard. He pulled back slightly, startled by her sudden vulnerability.

She looked into his eyes again, slower this time, her voice fragile, “Do you... love me?”

He cleared his throat awkwardly and gave a small nod.

Her expression melted into one of quiet guilt. “But I don't deserve your love.”

He frowned.

“I don't deserve yours... or Meera di's... or even my Ansh's,” she murmured. “I'm a liar.”

He opened his mouth to protest, but she kept going, words tumbling out, her voice cracking.

“I'm not a good wife—I kept the truth from you. Not a good mother—my Ansh doesn't even know who he truly is. And not a good sister—my Meera Di suffered a lot because of me.”

Ivaan looked at her, confused and shaken. “Jharna... what truth?”

She took a deep breath, looking at him as if ready to finally unburden everything.

“Miransh... he's not—”

“Jharna!!”

A sharp voice cut through the moment.

Both turned toward the door. Meera was standing there, breath uneven, face pale.

Ivaan's confusion deepened. Meera rushed in, forcing a smile. "You must be hungry, right? Come, I've made sandwiches."

She tried pulling Jharna up gently, but Jharna resisted, her voice trembling. "Di... let me tell Ivaan the truth."

Meera's heart jumped in panic. Ivaan looked back and forth between the sisters, his suspicion now visibly rising.

Meera forced a light tone, "First, you need to eat. And Miransh—he hasn't eaten either. He says he won't eat without you."

The name struck a chord in Jharna's mind. She repeated softly, "Miransh... my Ansh... Ivaan, Ansh is—"

"Jharna!" Meera raised her voice, almost scolding.

Jharna shrank back, confused, hurt. "Di... why are you scolding me? I just wanted to tell him the truth. You wanted that too, didn't you?"

Her voice broke.

Ivaan's eyes narrowed. "What truth?"

Jharna opened her mouth again, "That he—"

"Jharna!" Meera cut in desperately. "For my sake... please—don't say anything."

Ivaan looked at her, stunned, then he turned to Jharna. She looked torn, lips sealed, and mimed zipping her mouth shut.

Ivaan stared at both of them, heart racing.

Meera let out a shaky breath, but before she could speak—

"What's going on here?" Ivaan's voice had hardened. "Ever since you came back, it's like I've stepped into some secret game. What are you hiding?"

Meera crossed her arms, putting on a fake defensive tone, "Oh please. It's between us sisters. She's drunk—was about to blurt something stupid, so I stopped her. Why are you so curious about what girls talk about anyway?"

Ivaan stepped closer, cold now.

"I'm not a fool, Meera. I can see something's off. I can feel it. You're all

hiding something from me.”

Jharna turned toward Ivaan with narrowed eyes.

“Why are you scolding my di?” she asked, her voice slurred but firm.

Ivaan softened immediately, “I’m not scolding her, Jharna. I was just asking.”

But Jharna frowned deeper.

“Listen, Mr. Black Beast,” she said, poking a finger at his chest, “you cannot scold my di!”

Meera burst out laughing.

“Black Beast?!”

Jharna now spun toward her.

“Di! You can’t laugh at my husband!” she said with a pout.

Now Ivaan let out a small chuckle, shaking his head.

Meera folded her arms, sighing with a teasing smile.

“You both are seriously made for each other. Completely crazy.”

With that, she turned and walked out of the room, muttering, “How did I get stuck here?”

Back in the room, Jharna turned to Ivaan again with wide, innocent eyes.

“Am I crazy?” she asked softly.

Ivaan smiled, brushing a strand of hair behind her ear.

“No. You’re mine.”

Jharna smiled, her eyes glistening, resting her head on his shoulder.

Outside the Room

Meera stepped out, rubbing her temples in frustration.

“What a mess,” she muttered under her breath.

Then her eyes fell on Miransh, sitting calmly on the couch, legs swinging, happily munching on a sandwich.

She paused and smiled faintly.

At least someone’s evening is under control.

Walking up to him, she asked casually,

“Miransh, beta, where’s Aashiya?”

Miransh took another bite, chewing thoughtfully.

“She’s gone,” he said nonchalantly.

Meera blinked. “Gone?!”

Her eyes widened.

“What?! Where did this girl disappear to—especially in that drunk state?”

She glanced around nervously, heart pounding.

This night wasn’t going to end quietly.

She smacked her forehead.

Vertigo Office

Inside the glass-walled cabin, Amaan sat hunched over his laptop, his brows slightly furrowed, jaw clenched in deep concentration. The glow of the screen reflected on his face as he typed swiftly, occasionally pausing to take a sip of coffee from the mug beside him.

The silence was sharp. Focused.

Until—

Click.

The cabin door creaked open.

Amaan didn’t look up at first. But as footsteps echoed closer, he instinctively lifted his gaze.

And froze.

Standing at the door... was Aashiya.

His eyes narrowed in confusion.

“You?” he asked, his tone sharp, caught between surprise and suspicion.

Aashiya stood by the door, her fists clenched tightly at her sides. Her heart was pounding, but she gathered all the courage she could muster and stepped forward.

“I hate you,” she blurted out, her voice shaky but determined.

Amaan looked up sharply, eyes narrowing. “What?” he asked, stunned.

She took another deep breath. “You’re terrible. Absolutely the worst.”

He stood slowly, closing his laptop and walking toward her, disbelief flashing in his eyes. “Excuse me?” he said, his voice a mix of shock and disbelief.

But Aashiya didn’t stop.

“You’re taking revenge for that day, aren’t you? That’s why you always punish me. Every time. You’re... a bad person. I don’t like you!”

Amaan paused for a beat, observing her closely.

Her slightly unsteady stance, her flushed cheeks, the boldness in her words—he understood immediately.

She was drunk.

Because the Aashiya he knew—reserved, cautious, always on edge around him—could never say this while sober.

A slow, amused smirk curved his lips.

“Really?” he asked, voice low. “You don’t like me?” He took a step closer.

“Are you sure?”

She gulped.

In one swift motion, Amaan reached out, gently pulling her closer with one hand... while the other hand moved to the door behind her.

Click.

He locked it.

A shiver raced down her spine.

His voice dropped, teasing—intense, almost dangerous. “So, you don’t like me?” he repeated, drawing even closer. Their breaths mingled in the sliver of space between them.

She could barely breathe.

He leaned in—closer... and closer—until his forehead touched hers.

Silence.

Their heartbeats were loud. Fast. Tangled.

Then, for the first time ever, he said her name—not "Ms. Aashiya"...

But softly. Gently.

“Aashiya.”

She blinked up at him. “I... I don’t hate you,” she whispered, her voice barely audible.

A slow smile spread across his face. “So... you love me?”

Her eyes darted away, unsure. “No,” she whispered, shaking her head. She tried to pull away, but his grip held her firmly—yet gently.

Their eyes locked.

He tilted his head, voice quiet but certain.

“You don’t love me?”

She slowly moved her head side to side—no.

He leaned in again, his fingers lifting her chin with care. His eyes searched hers.

“But I do,” he murmured.

She froze.

And then—her eyelids fluttered... her body went limp.

Before he could say anything else—

She collapsed into his arms.

Unconscious.

Amaan stared down at her, his breath caught in his throat.

And just like that... the confession hung between them, suspended in the silence.

Jharna’s Apartment

Jharna stood on the bed barefoot. Ivaan was on the carpet below, steady and still, his gaze locked with hers.

Their eyes spoke a language words often fail to capture.

Her delicate hands rested gently on his shoulders. His arms wrapped around her waist, fingertips grazing the skin at her sides—bare, warm, and trembling slightly under his touch.

There was silence.

The kind that felt sacred.

“Ivaan...” she whispered, voice barely audible, “why do you love me?”
He looked up at her, eyes soft. She continued, “I don’t deserve it... any of it.”

His hands tightened around her, grounding her.

“You know what? Even I don’t know.” he said softly, “I’m the lucky one—because I get to call you my wife.”

She gave a broken smile. “I think I’m both... lucky and unlucky.”

Before he could ask what she meant, she slid down into his arms, pressing her forehead against his shoulder. Her voice trembled.

“If one day... you find out I’ve hidden something from you...” she paused, breath catching, “will you leave me? Will you stop loving me?”

Ivaan didn’t answer right away.

Instead, he slowly brushed his fingers through her hair, letting the silence cradle the weight of her words.

Then, in a voice as certain as sunrise, he said, “It won’t matter. Whatever it is... it won’t change how I feel. Even if I try—I couldn’t stop loving you.”

Her eyes welled up. She smiled.

A smile filled with pain, and love... and fear.

Chhaya’s Apartment – Late Night

Tia aka Sagarika was busy on her laptop, her fingers flying across the keyboard with calculated ease. A faint, satisfied smile curled on her lips as the screen glowed in the dim room.

Chhaya, curled up on the couch, silently watched her sister.

A soft “ding” broke the quiet—an email sent notification flashed.

Tia leaned back slightly, eyes fixed on the screen.

“Done,” she whispered with a smirk.

Then, slowly, she began to laugh.

It wasn’t the kind of laughter that brought light.

It was sharp. Cold. The laughter of someone who had just sealed a trap.

Chhaya swallowed hard, uneasily shifting in her seat. Tia stood up, adjusting her dress. She walked over to Chhaya, gently brushed her fingers through her hair like an older sister tucking in a child. “Take care,” she said softly. “I have work to do.” Chhaya only nodded, her throat too tight to speak. Tia turned and walked away, heels clicking faintly against the marble floor. As the door shut behind her, Chhaya whispered to the silence, “This night... is going to be very long.”

Jharna’s Apartment – Midnight

Meera paced around the living room, tidying things half-heartedly, clearly distracted. Her phone buzzed.

Aashiya’s message blinked on the screen:

“I’m at home.”

Meera exhaled deeply, finally relieved.

She tucked the phone away... and then noticed Miransh sitting on the couch, flipping through channels on the TV restlessly—one after another, not stopping at a single one.

She walked over and sat beside him.

“Not sleepy yet?” she asked softly.

“I am,” he replied, not looking at her. “But I can’t sleep without my Momma.”

Meera’s heart clenched.

She smiled gently, trying to mask the ache.

“Want me to try?”

Miransh turned to her immediately, “No. You’re not my momma.”

Those words hit her like a slap—but she didn’t flinch. Instead, she softened her tone further.

“Do you want to hear something about your momma?” she offered.

He paused. She continued, “When she was a little girl... she couldn’t sleep without hugging me. Every night, I was her pillow.”

Miransh blinked, surprised.

“Really?”

Meera nodded. “I was like her second mother. So in that way... I’m sort of your mother too.”

He tilted his head. “You mean... Momma’s mumma?”

She chuckled lightly, “Yes. Something like that. So if I can’t be your momma, how about you make me your mumma?”

She looked at him, eyes searching.

Will he accept me?

Miransh didn’t answer.

He simply leaned forward, wrapped his little arms around her, and buried his face into her side.

Meera’s eyes welled up. She slowly wrapped him in her arms and began patting his back gently.

Moments later, Miransh had drifted off, breathing soft and peaceful.

Meera sat there still, her hand resting protectively on his back.

The night finally gave in to sleep...

But a storm had already opened its eyes.

And the next morning?

Was going to change everything.

Sitara's Note

There are some nights when the truth hangs heavy in the air—when hearts tremble on the edge of confessions, but silence steals the moment.

Tonight was one such night.

Some truths were almost spoken, some love almost confessed, and some wounds almost healed.

But “almost” isn’t enough.

As the storm brews quietly beneath the calm, I wonder.. when morning arrives, will love be enough to survive the truth?

— Sitara Chandria