

Ch 31: One Wrong Step

Next Morning – Open Field

The sun had barely risen when Tia aka Sagarika stood on a vast stretch of open land. The air was crisp, the silence only broken by the sound of her slow, deliberate footsteps on the dry soil.

Her lips curved into a victorious smile.

“I’ve done it,” she whispered to herself. “Now... your countdown has begun.”

The wind carried her words away, but the storm she had set in motion was already on its way to destroy lives.

Jharna’s Apartment – Bedroom

Jharna slept soundly, her head resting on Ivaan’s chest, his arms protectively wrapped around her. The peace of the moment was fragile—like it didn’t belong to them.

Her eyelashes fluttered as she slowly woke. Seeing Ivaan beside her, she smiled softly. Her fingers reached up, tracing the sharp lines of his jaw, the bridge of his nose... stopping at his lips. She lingered there, admiring him like a precious painting she could never tire of.

Without opening his eyes, his voice came low and teasing,

“Raat ka nasha abhi tak utra nahi hai kya?”

She froze.

“You... You were pretending to sleep?”

He cracked one eye open, smirking.

“Is lying down with my eyes closed called pretending to sleep now?”

Her eyes widened. Before she could get up, his hand wrapped around her wrist, pulling her back down toward him.

“What are you doing?” she asked nervously, her heartbeat skipping.

“Reminding you,” his voice was quiet but firm, “that I’m only yours.”

She gulped. His breath was warm against her ear as he leaned closer.

“And you don’t need to wait for me to be asleep to take advantage of me.” Her cheeks flushed crimson. She quickly broke free, escaping into the bathroom and locking the door. Pressing her palms to her burning face, she tried to steady her breath.

Outside, Ivaan chuckled to himself—until his phone buzzed. He picked it up, glanced at the screen... and his smile faded. His brows furrowed sharply.

Amaan’s House

The curtains swayed gently with the morning breeze. Aashiya stirred awake, stretching—until she noticed the unfamiliar ceiling above her. Her eyes darted around. This... wasn’t her room.

The minimalist decor, the neatly arranged bookshelves, the framed photographs on the wall—

Her gaze stopped.

Amaan’s face stared back at her from one of the frames.

Her heart dropped. “Oh no...” she whispered, and then memories from last night came rushing back.

His voice. His closeness. His words—

He said... he likes me.

A sudden cough snapped her out of her thoughts. She turned.

Amaan stood at the doorway, his expression unreadable.

“You can go home now,” he said curtly.

Her stomach tightened. His tone was cold—was it because of last night?

She stood up quickly, words spilling out.

“I’m sorry, sir, about last night. I was—”

He cut her off.

“Aashiya. I said go. This isn’t the time for these talks.”

She blinked in confusion. Questions clouded her eyes, but before she could speak again, he sighed and pulled out his phone.

“Here. Look at this.”

She stepped closer, and as the video played on the screen—her eyes widened in shock.

Jharna's Apartment

Jharna stepped out of the bathroom, still blushing faintly from earlier. But the bedroom was empty.

She walked into the living area and found Meera feeding Miransh, who was munching happily on toast. Jharna smiled.

The moment Miransh saw her, he lit up.

“Mommam!” he exclaimed, running to hug her tightly.

Meera smiled faintly at the sight. Jharna asked, “Di, have you seen Ivaan?”

Meera nodded, “Yeah. He gave me a death stare and rushed out without saying anything.”

Jharna frowned, confused. Just then, her phone rang. Aashiya's name flashed on the screen.

She picked up.

“Check the news,” Aashiya said quickly.

“What happened, Aashiya?”

“Just check the news, Jharna. Now.”

Frowning, Jharna reached for the remote and turned on the TV.

Her breath caught. Meera froze. Miransh stared at the screen.

The news channel was playing a video—her voice, her face—confessing to Aashiya that Miransh wasn't her son, but Meera's.

Miransh turned to her, his small face clouded with confusion.

“Mommam... what are they saying? I'm your baby, right?”

Jharna and Meera exchanged a panicked glance.

Meera reached for him, “Listen, Miransh—”

But he pushed her away, his little voice breaking, “You're not my mommam!” He clung to Jharna instead.

Tears welled in Jharna's eyes.

“Mommam... I came from your tummy, right?” His voice trembled,

desperate for reassurance.

Jharna's lips parted, but no words came. How could she tell this innocent child that the world he knew was a lie?

Meera's own tears slipped down her cheeks. Her mind screamed—
I wanted the truth to come out... but not like this.

“Momma!” Miransh cried again, shaking her.

Jharna wrapped her arms around him tightly, rocking him. Her voice was soft but firm.

“Ansh... it's true. I'm your momma. But—” she glanced at Meera, her throat tightening—

“But you didn't come from my tummy. Your real momma... is Meera di.”

The words fell heavy in the room.

Miransh's eyes widened, then filled with tears.

“No. She's not my momma!” he shouted, and ran to his room, slamming the door.

Jharna collapsed to her knees, her hands trembling.

Her heart was pounding so hard it hurt. Her thoughts were a blur.

And then it hit her.

If this video is out... then Ivaan knows too.

On the Road

The tires hummed steadily against the asphalt, but inside the car, the air was thick with silence.

Ivaan's grip on the steering wheel was tight, his jaw locked. His eyes stayed on the road, but his mind wasn't here—it was tangled in fragments of the past days.

Meera's sudden return.

Jharna's fragile health.

Meera deciding to stay with the Mauryas.

Jharna's half-finished sentences— "Miransh isn't—"
Jharna's unease whenever he came too close to her.
Meera's nervous eyes the night Jharna was drunk.
One by one, the pieces fell into place.
And now... everything was painfully, dangerously clear.
The sharp trill of his phone shattered his thoughts.
An unknown number flashed on the screen. He hesitated, then answered.
A distorted, robotic voice filled his ear.
"If you want to save your wife... come to the location I've sent you."
Ivaan's eyes narrowed. "Hello? Who is this—"
Click.
The line went dead.
His frown deepened. Quickly, he checked his phone. A location pin had
appeared in his messages.
No hesitation.
He spun the steering wheel sharply, the car screeching as he reversed
direction.

Jharna's Apartment

The hallway echoed with the sound of fists knocking against wood.
"Miransh! Open the door, baby!" Meera's voice wavered between pleading
and panic.
Beside her, Jharna banged harder, desperation etched into every
movement. But the door stayed stubbornly shut.
Meera's breathing quickened. "I'm scared, Jharna. What if he's not okay?"
Jharna didn't answer. Her eyes were vacant, her mind somewhere far
away.
Her phone rang suddenly, the shrill sound making her flinch. An
unknown number.

She answered. “Hello?”

That same robotic voice hissed through the line.

“If you want your husband to stay alive... get to the location I’ve sent you.”

Click.

The call ended before she could respond.

“Hello?! Wait—who are you?!” Jharna shouted into the dead line, her voice shaking.

Meera grabbed her arm. “What happened?”

Jharna’s lips trembled. “Ivaan... he’s in danger.”

Her voice cracked as she added, “Please... take care of Ansh for me. I have to go.”

She turned to leave, but Meera stepped in front of her, eyes wide with fear. “No, Jharna. Where are you going? I can’t handle him without you. Please—don’t go!”

Jharna gripped her sister’s hands tightly. “Di... you will handle him. You wanted time with your son—I’m giving you that time now. Please, take care of my Ansh.”

Before Meera could respond, Jharna pulled free and rushed out the door. Meera stood frozen, her chest aching. Her voice broke into a whisper.

“I’m scared... Please, let nothing go wrong.”

Chhaya’s House

The flicker of the TV cast uneasy shadows across the room.

On the screen, Jharna’s video played on repeat—each word like a slow-turning knife.

Chhaya’s gaze was fixed on it, her hands twisted together in her lap.

Beside her, Shaurya paced restlessly, phone pressed to his ear.

He ended yet another call with a sharp sigh. “Tia’s not answering.”

Chhaya’s voice was barely above a whisper. “She’s going to do something dangerous... I can feel it.”

Shaurya's eyes met hers, and for a moment, neither spoke. The heavy silence between them said it all—he felt it too. The air carried the kind of stillness that always came before a storm.

Maurya Mansion

The living area was heavy with shock. Everyone had gathered, their eyes fixed on the TV.

Jharna's voice—shaky yet clear—confessing that Miransh wasn't her son echoed in the room.

Gasps, murmurs, disbelief.

“I can't believe it...” Deepa said, her voice trembling. “Miransh isn't Jharna's son?”

Shikha shook her head in disbelief. “But she loves him so much.

Remember? She came here just to find him. She fought the entire world for that boy... and he's actually Meera's son?”

Adhik leaned forward, his brows furrowed. “If Miransh is Meera's son... that means there was someone else in her life.”

Abhimaan's thoughts were darker, more tangled. Until now, I was only suspicious of Meera. But if Jharna says their parents are dead... then that means...

The sound of hurried footsteps broke his chain of thought.

Vihaan entered the room, his expression tense. “Guys—neither Ivaan bhai nor Jharna bhabhi are answering their phones.”

Shikha's stomach knotted instantly. “I'm scared. What if... what if Ivaan found out the truth from this video? If he did—God knows what he might do.”

The room fell silent again, but this time... it was the kind of silence that carried dread.

Open Field

Jharna slammed the brakes and brought the car to a screeching halt. Her heartbeat was pounding in her ears as she threw the door open and stepped out.

The vast, empty field stretched endlessly before her. And there—standing alone in the middle of it—was Ivaan.

A wave of relief crashed over her. She took a shaky breath and called out, her voice trembling, “Ivaan!”

His head snapped toward her, confusion flashing in his eyes.

She started walking toward him, but his voice cut sharply through the stillness—urgent, commanding.

“No! Jharna—don’t come here!”

She froze mid-step, startled. “I know you’re angry with me,” she said, her voice pleading. “You have every right to be. But please... give me one chance to explain.”

Her feet moved forward instinctively.

“Jharna, stop!” His voice was sharper now, almost panicked. “I said, don’t come any closer!”

But she couldn’t just stand there and watch him from afar. Ignoring his warning, she took another step toward him.

That’s when he tossed his phone to the side.

Her brow furrowed. “What are you—?”

BOOM!

A deafening explosion tore through the ground several meters away.

Jharna’s eyes went wide in shock. She whipped her head back toward Ivaan, her chest tightening.

His voice was steady, but his eyes told a different story. “This place is filled with land mines.”

Her breath caught.

“And right now...” He took a slow breath. “...I’m standing on one.”

He held her gaze, his expression grim.

“If I move... it will go off.”

Jharna was stunned hearing him.

Her breath caught in her throat, and for a moment, it felt as if the ground beneath her own feet had vanished.

Sitara's Note

And just like that... the peaceful morning turned into a ticking time bomb.

Quite literally.

One video. One revelation. And now... one wrong step could cost a life.

Ivaan on a landmine.

Jharna frozen in shock.

And somewhere out there—Tia's game is only beginning.

The storm we've been building up to is finally here... and trust me, no one is walking away without scars.

Next chapter—

Will it be a rescue... or a goodbye?

Stay with me.

– Sitara Chandria