

The Secrets Of Meera by Flameillumination Chapter 13

Chapter 13 The Attraction

Daniel, Neha and Meera entered the Ballroom and collected their masks. Daniel wore a grey mask; Neha selected a silver one and Meera took a red one matching her dress. They put on their masks, moved ahead together, and looked at the sea of people moving around the large room. The magnificent ballroom had a high ceiling and an open floorplan. Floor to ceiling windows, marble floor, intricate metal works on walls, large platinum bordered mirrors were giving sophisticated vibes whereas the ceiling spotlights, fairy lights all around the windows, hand-painted mural on the ceiling of people dancing and crystal chandeliers gave the appearance of fairyland. The whole atmosphere was magical. The room was installed with a heating system, central cooling system, built-in speakers, and a small stage. The centre of the room was empty for dancing and chairs and table were placed near the walls that could seat at least 600 people. All the tables and chairs were draped in lilac cloths and beautiful flower arrangements of four different colours of hydrangea were decorated on the tables. Light ballroom music filled the air creating an enchanted environment. A big, beautiful ballot box was kept in the centre of the stage and two people were greeting patrons, collecting cheques and cash from them, and providing them with a receipt. “You two carry on, I will go spend time with my colleagues,” said Neha. “You won’t spend your evening with me,” asked Meera, disappointingly. “Sorry, your evening is going to be all meetings and I have no interest in that.” “Ok, enjoy,” answered Meera and Neha moved away from them. “Hello, Daniel.” The next moment a beautiful, middle-aged woman approached and greeted

him. “Hello, Ma’am,” replied Daniel. She offered him her hand which he graciously accepted and kissed on the back of her hand, gently. “Miss Meera Thakur meet Aura Guild, the queen of Guild Corporation.” Daniel

introduced the two ladies to each other. “Come on, Daniel! I am no queen.” She playfully hit Daniel on his shoulder. “Nice to meet you, Mrs Guild,” greeted Meera. It made Aura look at her closely. Her eyes widened and she looked at Meera entrancingly. “Oh my! You are very pretty,” exclaimed Aura. “Um... thank you.” Meera had no idea how to react to her compliment. “You are very welcome, dear. Have you met Arthur? He is a nice boy. You should meet him,” said Aura in a single breath. After entering the ball, the first person Arthur’s eyes fell on was the girl dressed in red. He The Awaction moved forward to be close to her when he saw his mother approaching and he hid behind Ryan. He knew his mother would again try to set him up with a girl for sure. She respected the death of Alice for about four months and after that started pestering him to go on dates with other girls, but he refused her repeatedly. He silently heard their conversation but when she started talking to Meera about him he appeared from behind Ryan and instantly stood next to his mother. His eyes met with Meera’s, and it felt as if he was drowning but one look from her was safely pulling him out of the waters, giving him second chance at life. Her red mask was highlighting her brown eyes even more exquisitely. Meera couldn’t take her eyes off his black mask covered face. His curly hair was softly playing with his mask. She wanted to touch it and place them back on his head away from his mask. It felt as if his violet eyes were directly staring at her soul.

The attraction between them was overwhelming. They both were in their world when Aura asked, “are all the girls from India as beautiful as you?” This broke their stare and Meera answered after looking away from Arthur, “I am not beautiful. The girls in India are more beautiful.” | Her answer was shocking to Arthur. How could she say that she was not beautiful? “You are kidding, right.” Aura too was shocked by her answer. “No, ma’am. That’s the truth.” “And is every girl as rich as you? Arthur, you should marry a rich girl not someone like Alice.” One could hear her dislike for Alice in her voice “Mother!” Grumbled Arthur.

“No, ma’am I am sorry, none of us Indians are rich, we all are farmers and snake charmers,”

mocked Meera because she hated how Aura spoke about her friend, Alice.

“What?” Meera’s answer stunned her.

“She is kidding mom, let’s go,” said Arthur through gritted teeth while painfully trying to pull his mother away from everyone. But Aura was in no mood to leave. “Wow! Your earrings are pretty. Are they diamond?” She raised her hand and tried to touch her, but Meera instinctively took a step back and bumped in Ryan who standing behind her. She stepped on his shoe and lost her balance. He urgently balanced her by placing his hand on her bareback. After she found her footing, she instantly got away from him. “Thank you and sorry for your shoe,” said Meera while looking at his spoiled shoe. “It’s ok, miss Meera.” Ryan smiled at her. Arthur got worried when he saw her stumbling but relaxed when Ryan helped her. Before his mother could embarrass him further, he said, “I am sorry on her behalf. Let’s go, Mom.” He started pulling her away. “But I want to dance with Daniel,” she said while being dragged away. “You can dance later. I have to talk to you, now.” He hauled his mother to a corner seat and

made her sit on the chair. Ryan followed him, but after a few steps, he halted, glanced back at Meera for a second and then continued on his path. “That was something else,” remarked Meera. “I am sorry too on her behalf. She has no filter; she speaks her mind every time. She is a little blunt but wishes no ill-will on anyone. Please don’t pay any heed to her.” “You are worrying too much. What have you done to the stoic Director I met yesterday?” “He is standing before a charming lady trying to entice her to work with him,” Daniel answered with confidence. “Ha-ha. Nicely done.” Meera was delighted with his reply. A waiter approached with

glasses of champagne and offered them to both. Daniel picked two glasses and offered one of them to Meera. She courteously took one. While they were sipping their drink he was pointing at different men and women and telling Meera about their position in Guild Corporation. When they finished their drink, he signalled a server to come and handed him the empty glasses. “May I have a dance with you?” Daniel stood in front of Meera with his right arm stretched out. “Of course. The pleasure is all mine. Would never miss a chance to dance with such a good dancer like you if you ask me.” “What? How do you I am a good dancer?” Daniel asked, surprised. “I do my homework, Mr Westside. I know you had 5 years of training in ballroom dancing,” she explained. Her reply made him smile and he said, “please call me Daniel and thank you for showing interest in me and my company. I feel like I have won half the battle already.” “Oh, flattery! Good going,” she teased Daniel. She had a huge smile on her face. Daniel took her arms, interlocked with his and escorted her to the dance floor. “Mother, you need to stop embarrassing me in front of our guests. Do you have any idea who she is?” Said Arthur while staring down at his mother. “No,” she replied casually. “Then how do you know she is rich?” Arthur sounded confused. “Only rich people are invited to this party, Arthur. What happened to you? Have you stopped using your brain?” Aura retorted. “Oh my god! I can’t talk to her. You explain.” Arthur moved aside from her in frustration and requested Ryan to talk to his mother. “Ma’am, she is the CEO of the NGO who is going to work with our CR department. Daniel invited her here to persuade her to work with us. She is best in humanitarian work right now. Many big companies and small companies from around the world are working with her NGO. She even did a lot of work with United Nations. If this JV is successful, it will be very advantageous for our company. Do you understand?” Ryan explained, 1020

“He means please don’t try to sabotage it again. You have no idea what she can do,” interjected Arthur.

“What can she do?” Asked Aura.

“She is dangerous, she is crazy. You never know how she will react. Stay away from her.” Arthur recalled how she screamed at him one moment and the next moment got scared from tiny needles. Explaining all that to his mother was very irritating for him, so he walked away from her exhaling big puffs of air to calm himself down. “What happened?” She was perplexed by Arthur’s answer. How a tiny girl can be dangerous was beyond her understanding. “He hurt her, and she scolded him in our building’s lobby in front of everyone. She said somethings that I can’t even repeat,” Ryan whispered. “Like what? Tell me,” Aura asked excitedly. “She said, him being arrogant is your fault. If she would have a say in his upbringing, she would recommend him getting slapped occasionally.” “What? She said, it’s my fault,” shrieked Aura. “In her defence ma’am, he hurt her and refused to apologise, so she reprimanded him brutally.” “Was she hurt badly?” “Well, yes ma’am. She bled for a long time. She has five stitches on her arm.” He cleared the picture for her. She sat there thinking for a while. Ryan spoke again, “will you be, ok? I must be with Boss.” “Go, go, I won’t take any more of your time.” “But...” He was worried that after he leaves her she might try to talk to Meera again. “Relax, I am not going to talk to her again. She held me responsible, I am angry. Go.” He smiled at Aura and ran to Arthur who was standing still surrounded by people trying to navigate to reach the dance floor.

A heavy, plump man approached Arthur and stood near him. “Boss, this is Mr Kanelli. He is the vice president of Tonique Pharmaceuticals.” Ryan introduced him to Arthur. “Pleasure.” He replied without looking at any of them as his eyes were busy searching for someone else. Mr Kanelli extended his hand for a handshake but as if it were invisible to Arthur, he moved *forward* into the crowd. At last, he stopped when he saw that beautiful girl clad in a red dress moving elegantly in Daniel’s

hands along with the music. Even though her face was half-covered she looked stunning. It was difficult to take eyes off her. Arthur realised that almost every man and every woman kept glancing at her. The power of attraction she held was unbelievable. There was no one he would rather look at. Her half-covered face, her smile, her elegant dance moves, her glowing skin, her shining hair, her hourglass figure was The Attraction — making it difficult for him to look away. “I have never seen you follow anyone in your whole life, not even Alice.” Ryan, who was following Arthur, suddenly spoke. “Good God! You startled me. Since, when were you following me?” “Boss, if you are planning to stand on the dance floor, it’s better to get a dancing partner. It looks odd to be standing alone by yourself.” He smiled and suggested.

“Point taken.”

Arthur looked around and found Holly sitting by herself. He went up to her and asked her to dance with him. He took her hand and escorted her to the dance floor and stood a few feet apart from Meera, continuously staring at her. The pull she had over him was undeniable. “Do you have any idea how gorgeous you are looking?” Daniel asked Meera. “Ok, enough with the flattery.” “Meera! I don’t show emotions easily. I don’t easily give compliments too. So, trust me when I say this, you truly are gorgeous,” said Daniel seriously. “In that case, thank you very much. I think I’m looking good, but gorgeous is a strong word.” “Please don’t be so naïve. Certainly, you have observed every man looking at you with admiration and every woman with wonder.” “Oh, come on, now you are simply exaggerating. There are many ladies here who are more beautiful than me,” she said embarrassingly. “Then, please do explain why you are the only one Arthur Guild is staring at?” “What? He... What? Nonsense, why would he be staring at me?” She vigilantly turned around and looked at Arthur who was dancing with a girl. She instantly recognised her as the girl Neha told her about, Holly. Watching her in his arms, felt

like someone stabbed her heart repeatedly. She thought, “is everything true whatever Neha told me? Is Arthur dating Holly? If he is dating her, why is he staring at me. Why am I staring at him? I need to stop.” She turned back to face Daniel. She suddenly felt uneasy, and a chill ran down her spine. She turned instantaneously at Arthur and saw a white cloud of smoke floating near him. Slowly Alice descended from a cloud wearing a beautiful white ball gown and intricately decorated white mask. She walked all around Arthur carefully looking at him. She then floated next to Meera. “He never looked at me the way he is looking at you,” said Alice. Her echoing voice drowned the sound of music. “Oh! The song is almost over and now I’ll have to exchange you with someone else,” said Daniel simultaneously. “I beg your pardon,” Meera said to both of them “I said, he never looked at me the way he is staring at you right now. It is as if you are pulling him towards you,” repeated Alice. “Oh! Sorry, that came out wrong. What I meant was that it’s kind of a rule for this ball to exchange the dancing partner after the completion of a song. This way every handsome man gets the chance to dance with every beautiful woman.” She kept staring at Alice and just a single word came out of her mouth, “Ok.” She looked at Daniel composed herself and said, “good rule. But what if someone wants to change a partner in between a song?” “That’s simple. All you have to do is ask.” The song finished and everyone changed their partner.

She had no idea what time it was, was it the same day or the next day, was it day or night. After Mike and Benjamin took out the food trolley, it was complete silence outside the door. While wandering in her memories, she felt drowsy but her alert mind was keeping her awake. She didn’t want to fall asleep. What if someone left her door open and she missed her chance to escape her captivity? What if someone harmed her while she slept? Memories after memories and scenarios after scenarios were running in her mind. She was failing in both of her tasks, to find the real culprit and to find a way to escape. She tried hard but her body and mind

failed her, and she dropped on the bed, her eyes heavy with sleep and mind full of past memories.