

The Secrets Of Meera by Flameillumination Chapter 4

“Ok let’s go inside,” interrupted Neha and pulled Meera out of Vivek’s embrace.

“Don’t be jealous. I am not going to steal your senior,” teased Vivek while flashing a sweet smile.

“I am your senior too,” said Meera.

“I meant her Di.”

“I am your di too,” joked Meera.

All three were in seventh heaven. With huge grins on their faces, they moved towards the lift. Vivek helped Meera to carry her bag and pressed the button for the 17th floor. After a few minutes, they entered a beautiful 2BHK.

“Welcome to our humble abode,” said Vivek.

“Give me that. I will put it in a vase,” said Neha while taking the bouquet out of Meera’s hand. She turned left and after a few moments came back empty handed.

Meanwhile, Meera was greeted by a cheerful and cosy living room. The first thing she noticed was a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf. Being an avid reader herself, she was instantly attracted to it. The colourful spines of books filled her heart with warmth. The whole room was decorated in pastel colours. A combination of pastel green, pink and blue with a cracked feature on walls was styled along with modern light fixtures, an electric marble fireplace, a metal frame centre table, and a sea-green sofa set. Multi-coloured plush carpeting and throw pillows made the entire

room feel exclusive and fun. Tinted glass lamps were placed on either side of the sofa. Two large windows had grey and blue curtains hanging from them.

“This is beautiful,” uttered Meera.

“Come on, come on. To your left is our open kitchen and dining hall. This is our room.” Neha began the tour excitedly.

“Wow! It’s like I am in a forest,” praised Meera.

“Yeah, sage green was my idea,” boasted Vivek.

“And ash-coloured accessories were my idea,” added Neha.

“You guys are the epitome of love and companionship. I love you both,” said Meera dotingly.

“You, too, should get married,” expressed Vivek.

“Shut up.” Meera hit him on his upper arm with slight irritation.

“I was waiting for you to hit me.”

“Let’s move on Di,” said Neha while giving Vivek the death stare.

Everyone who knew Meera was aware that the topic of marriage was a forbidden topic. She continued with her display, “you know every apartment is fitted with ac, fire safety, gas, rainwater harvesting, parking for visitors, housekeeping, and sewage treatment plant, electricity back up, security, elevator & Wi-Fi and so much more.”

“You are telling me all this to impress me because it’s your boss’s building, aren’t you?”

“Guilty,” said Neha with a sweet grin on her face.

“She always does that. Sometimes I think she is not in love with me but is in love with her boss,” interjected Vivek in a fake sad voice.

“I can tell you in full confidence, she is in love with her boss. You should find someone else,” mocked Meera.

“Di! Come on. This is your room and that is the bathroom. You freshen up and meet us in the dining room,” explained Neha.

“Ok I will take a shower and meet you in 20 minutes,” answered Meera.

“Great.”

Both left her in the room and walked out. Meera took a deep breath and took in the beauty of the room and the smell of fresh sheets in. The room was painted in patterns, in a combination of cool mint and pale blue colours. The classic white bedding showed how much Neha still remembered about Meera as white was her favourite colour.

She took a bath and went outside in a comfortable grey t-shirt and black pyjamas. The dining table was completely covered with Chinaware filled with scrumptious food. The vivid and intense smell of spices was mouth-watering. Neha had placed the flower she gifted to Meera in a vase in the centre of the dining table. They all sat and started talking and eating the yummy food.

“So, you guys still fight over who loves whom the most?” Enquired Meera.

“Yes, because I love her more,” answered Vivek.

“No, I love you more,” said Neha.

“No, I do.”

“No, I do.”

“I am an idiot because I chose the wrong topic. You guys will never change,” said Meera laughing.

“Why is Oliver not here?” asked Vivek innocently. Neha hit him on his head to shut him up, but it was too late.

“Because if he would have been here, I would have killed him,” said Meera, irritated.

“He chose a client over her, some big actress,” explained Neha in a whispering tone.

“Oh who?” asked Vivek excitedly.

“How would I know?” said Meera in a temper.

The ringing of the doorbell saved Vivek. He ran and opened the door and a short height, charming man with rugged features, blonde hair, blue eyes, and a trained, strong, well-toned body walked in. She used to tease him that due to his short stature and bulky body, his appearance resembled that of a Dettol antiseptic liquid bottle.

He smiled at Meera, but she ignored him.

“Hi Neha, Hi Sweetu!” greeted the blonde man. Meera paid no attention to him and kept concentrating on the food on her plate.

“Hi, Oliver! Your Sweetu is angry because you didn’t go to pick her up at the airport,” elucidated Neha.

Oliver moved a chair in Meera’s direction, went close to her, placed his hand on her palm and said, “Sweetu, Era, I am sorry. Just as your work is important for you, my work is important for me too.”

“Yeah right, work is more important than friends,” said Meera.

“You are one to talk. We have been inviting you to visit us for ages and now you have business here, so you came running,” argued Oliver.

“I didn’t come running, I came flying. And if you put your points forward like that, I will have to forgive you. But not before I hit you both,” said Meera to both Oliver and Vivek.

“Why me?” asked Vivek with surprise.

“You opened the door and let him in.”

“Your tiny fists kill us all, every time,” teased Oliver.

“You have a tiny fist,” said Meera.

“You are tiny.”

“Oh yeah, then you are microscopic.”

With their riposte, all rolled on the floor with laughter. They all had a hearty meal and sat in the living room enjoying wine. Slowly as the evening progressed, they went down the rabbit hole and started ruminating about their lives during their college days in India.

“Oh no, I was the most decent, most polite, quiet girl in the entire hostel. I just followed my naughty juniors,” replied Meera when everyone accused her of being the prankster in her graduation days.

“Yeah, we know, who followed whom,” said Oliver while rolling his eyes.

“You remember you guys stole the clothes of your warden and hid it,” recalled Vivek.

“Right, it was a coordinated attack and she planned it all. Half the hostel was involved,” added Neha.

“There was not much planning involved. Everyone was pissed because the warden was not getting the water heater repaired and it was in the mid

le of the winter season. So, one day she was far away in the kitchen and housekeeping was in her room, we saw an opportunity and acted. While she was cleaning the bathroom, we sneaked in, took away her clothes especially her warm clothes and expensive pair of shoes.” Meera had a huge smile on her face.

“And when she found out, she called everyone in the gathering area and all of us denied, that made her mad. She searched high and low but couldn’t find it. She then surrendered and asked about our demands and the next day the water heater was fixed. And we told her where she could find the clothes and shoes,” said Neha while sipping the wine.

“And they were hidden under her bed in a corner rolled in a bundle.” All said in unison and the atmosphere filled with merriment.

“And then there was that rumour which you started,” reminded Oliver.

“What rumour?” asked Meera.

“Oh, oh, I know, the ghost in white dress rumour,” prompted Neha.

At the exact moment, there was a white flash in front of Meera’s eyes and she looked at the window right in front of her. A familiar face with blank expressions was staring back at her. Her smile vanished and she stared back at that face. Snap of Oliver’s fingers broke her eyes contact and brought her back to the fun-filled environment.

“Where are you?” asked Oliver in a constant voice.

“Nowhere,” she lied and looked again at the window, but no one was there. The familiar face had vanished.

“What were you staring at?” inquired Oliver, again.

“Ghost dressed in white, outside that window,” replied Meera in an eerie tone.

Oliver glanced at the window, then stared back at Meera who had a mischievous smile on her face. He realised that the prankster played another one of her pranks and said in a scared yet annoyed voice, “ha-ha. Shut up. It’s not funny.”

“It’s a little bit funny. In the same way, it was funny when we started that rumour. And this time it really was Neha’s idea.”

“Hey! I just said that our hostel is boring as there are no ghost stories to share,” complained Neha.

“That planted the idea in my brain, thank you very much. So, I assembled all the cliches from ghost movies and spread the rumour that

‘our hostel is haunted by a young girl who was found dead in room number 229, ten years ago. No one knows how she died. Was it a suicide? Was it a murder? All we know is that she roams the hallway floating in the air, her long black hair free-flowing, and she is always clad in a full-length white dress. Whoever goes out in the hall at night she asks questions to them about her death first and then when they can’t answer her, she KILLS THEM’. Poor girls, no one dared to go outside at night,” snorted Meera.

“And we chose room 229 because there was no room with number 13. Due to superstition, the hostel owner removed 13 from every floor. There was 112 and 114 but not 113 or 212, 214 but not 213,” Neha stated further.

“If you add 229, it adds up to ‘13’,” enlightened Meera.

“And the funny thing was our hostel was a newly constructed building,” said Neha.

“Yeah, my batch was the first batch ever in the hostel.”

“And new girls believed you,” stated Oliver in disbelief.

“Of course, we were seniors,” clarified Neha.

Stories after stories were told, laughter after laughter echoed through the house and friends kept mellowing in nostalgia. After a few hours and two bottles of wine, they said bye to Oliver and retired early so Meera could get proper rest and get rid of jetlag. In retrospect, drinking alcohol after a long flight was not a good idea.

All the lights were off. The faint glow of footlight from the gallery outside her room was seeping from under her door. Her throat felt dry,

and she woke up from thirst. She turned towards the bedside table and reached for the water bottle. With her eyes still shut she opened the bottle and tilted it in her mouth. Nothing came out of it, it was empty.

“What? How is the bottle empty? It was full when I went to sleep,” she said in a surprised tone. She tried hard to open her eyes, but they refused as they were heavy with sleep.

“Sorry, I drank it.” A spectral yet affectionate voice resonated across the room. A chill ran through her body which jolted her out of slumber. Her eyes were wide open now. She was staring at the same face which she saw in the evening.

A beautiful woman with long red hair dressed in sleeveless, full-length, solid white dress with high thigh slit was standing in front of her. She jumped out of her bed and ran in the opposite direction of the ghost.

“No, no, no, this can’t be happening again. You are not real, you are dead,” Meera shouted.

“True that I am dead, but why do you say I am not real,” the ghost spoke in a reverberating tone.

“This is just a dream; this is just a dream. Wake up, wake up.” Meera closed her eyes with her hands and talked to herself.

“Meera, calm down,” said the ghost while floating towards her.

“What do you want?”

“You have to help me.”

“I came all the way to NY for you, Alice. You need to give me time and stop haunting me.”

“I am trying to help you, my friend. He killed me, punish him for me.”

Alice was just about to touch Meera when she woke up with a jerk, breathing heavily, drenched in sweat.

“Not again. Why do I keep having the same dream? What do you want, Alice?”

Inside the kidnapper’s house, Meera was still sitting on the floor beside the bed.

“Hi” Alice appeared suddenly and interrupted the flow of memories in which Meera was floating for the past few hours.

“What are you doing here?” Meera asked her as if talking to her was the obvious move.

“I am here to give you company. You are alone.”

“Really! How sweet. You can go now.”

“And leave you to reminiscence your past.”

“Yes, please.”

“Are you still afraid of me?”

“I am annoyed by you now.”

“That’s good. I don’t like those two.”

“Same here.”

“Who are they and who is their boss?”

“That’s what I was busy thinking about when you decided to come and haunt me again.”

“I know who he is, and you too know who he is.”

“Yeah, I know, you are in my brain so if you know someone, I must know them too.”

“Good girl.” And Alice vanished.

“Why does she keep appearing and disappearing all the time? It’s so frustrating,” screamed Meera.

Meera thought back to the first time Alice appeared in front of her. She kept repeating the phrase “he killed me, punish him for me”. Meera came to NY to solve this mystery but was unsuccessful till now. If she would have been successful, Alice would have stopped haunting her. Alone in the captivity, she wished Alice to reappear as loneliness was getting scarier with every passing minute.