

## The Secrets Of Meera by Flameillumination Chapter 9

She kept walking aimlessly, thinking about Alice and her murder till she reached the coffee lounge where Oliver was waiting for her.

The beautiful coffee lounge was painted in a way that looked like thick chocolate ganache was dripping down the walls. The open beams on the roof were in form of Kit-Kat bars. Even the pieces of furniture were of coffee colour. The cold air inside the shop made her shiver. The yellow light hung from the roof was a welcome change from the bright sunlight outside. She tuned out the loud sound of the coffee machine and clinking of chinaware and commotion in the lounge. The strong aroma of different kinds of coffee, the sweet smell of bakery goods, and the delicious smell of foods was enough to numb anyone's senses. But not Meera's, her brain was actively thinking about what Alice said and how she was losing precious time. She had to work out a plan, fast.

She was in her thoughts when she heard Oliver's voice, "you look like you saw a ghost."

"Huh," she replied staring blankly at his face.

"What were you thinking about?" He asked perturbed.

"How to move forward with my plan?" She answered unemotionally.

"Oh, so you said yes to work with junior's boss." One could hear the excitement in his voice.

"What now?" Slowly she came to her senses.

"You were planning for future work of Spriha, right?"

"Yes, yes. What else? Do you think I am here to solve a murder?"

“Murder? What murder?” He was shocked.

“Oh, Mr Westside told me about Ms Colfer’s murder. Terrible news.”  
She was getting good at hiding that she knew everything about Alice.

“Yes, it was. The whole of NY went crazy when they heard the news.”

“What happened?” She wanted to hear the details from as many people as she could ask. That would help her figure out any details that she missed.

“He didn’t tell you.”

“No, just that she was murdered.”

“Ok, first let me order something for you, then I will tell you the deets.”

She gave him a thumbs up and he went to order food. True to his nature, he flirted with the server and placed the order. After a few minutes, he came back. As it was noon, the lounge was almost empty.

“So, where were we?”

“You were about to tell me the ‘deets’.”

“Oh right. First, some background. Once upon a time...” he started off the story, but Meera gave him a death stare.

“Be serious.”

“Sorry, that’s disrespectful. Ok, so, Alice Colfer was Arthur’s childhood friend and love of his life. Arthur Guild is known as a genius, and she was equal to him in every aspect. They were together in school and

college and always in competition. They were media darling, media nicknamed them ‘the conglomerate royalty’. They appeared in the news every other day.”

“Does she also belong to a conglomerate family?” She sounded surprised as this was the only thing she did not know about Alice, her family background.

“No, they met in kindergarten and became friends. Her father held a small position in Guild Corporation.” This was the first time she heard something about Alice’s father. Her friend never mentioned her family when they used to talk.

Oliver continued, “when they finished college, she got a job in GC and rose through ranks swiftly. She appeared on many magazines covers as an inspiring businesswoman.” Meera smiled as she had every single magazine in which Alice appeared. “Not only that she was an active participant in the company’s CSR efforts. A year and a half ago, it was announced that she will be appointed as the new CFO of GC. And a few months after that, Arthur and Alice announced their engagement. The entire city rejoiced. There was a huge party, it made national news. One month before their marriage, an evening the pair were coming out of their gym...”

“Their gym?” She interrupted.

“Ok, Arthur’s gym. I thought as they were almost married, so it is better to say their gym” he explained but Meera’s was still unable to understand. “Guild Corporation has numerous gyms and recreational facilities in their health and beauty department. Don’t you know? He is one of my biggest competitors.”

“Well, it is your fault you never told me about your competitors, and I thought your gym business is good,” she said annoyingly.

“It’s great but still, I have to always be on the lookout for competition.”

“Also, I am interested in their CSR department and nothing else. So, why would I research their additional industries?”

“Sure, not interested in different departments, but what about the boss? He is single now.” He repeatedly raised his eyebrow to taunt her.

“I will bury you right here right now,” she said with an expressionless face.

“With what? A tiny shovel in your tiny hands.” She rained kicks on his shins under the table.

“Hey, hey, ow, ow. Ok sorry,” he screamed and then apologized.

“Are you going to tell me the story or not?”

“Right, so they were coming out of the gym and before they could reach their car, there was a loud bang and instantly she collapsed, a few seconds after her bodyguard fell to the ground. There was complete chaos. It took minutes before anyone could comprehend when took place. Slowly they realized both Alice and her bodyguard were shot. The bullet perforated her body and hit the bodyguard behind her. The bodyguard recovered but she on dead on spot. The bullet dug a hole in her heart. There were few phone videos which showed Arthur Guild holding her in his arms drenched in blood, tears streaming down his face.” As Oliver continued the story, Meera clenched her fists as she remembered watching this exact clip on the internet after she heard the news. She tried hard to hold the tears in her eyes. It was more difficult for her to mourn

a friend whom she never met face to face. But now, after one year of her death, she started appearing as a spectral being asking her help to get justice.

Meera cleared her throat and asked, “what about the culprit? Who fired the gun?”

“No one knows. A year-long investigation has provided no result. People were very invested in getting justice for her for a few months, but everyone

lost interest after that. All police divulged was that she was shot with a 0.50 BMG caliber from the rooftop of the building in front of the gym.”

“A sniper? Her murder was a contract kill.”

“Yes, feels like a mafia movie, right?”

“No feels like a terrorist plot.”

“How is this terrorism?” He said with a hint of irritation.

“You are right, absolutely right.”

“What is happening to you? Since when you started talking like a moron.” She picked up the menu and threw it on his head which he caught easily. Abruptly he grasped something and asked, “Hey, how do you know that bullet is a sniper bullet?”

She looked at him as if the answer were an easy and obvious one and said, “just like you knew. I play video games too. I used to kick your ass in video games, remember?”

“Yeah, matching fruits games,” mocked Oliver. Slowly the lounge started filling with office workers who came for lunch but friendly banter between them continued.

“Keep telling yourself that. You know I am better than you.”

“Then let have a match.”

“Anytime.”

“Can I tell you one more thing?” He lowered his voice to signify that he had gossip to share.

“That’s why we are here, idiot.”

“I am not telling you now.” He turned his face away from Meera.

“I am so sorry, please continue, O God of Flirtation!” She folded her hands and tried to butter him up.

“Ha-ha, so there’s a rumour that after their marriage Alice would have had more power in the business. She would have been CFO and owner of half the GC property.”

“Half? What about prenups?”

“No idea, no one knows. Some even said that she would have replaced Arthur as CEO after marriage and the Board of Directors was in her support.” She looked out the window staring blankly at it and thinking about the things Oliver just told her.

The waitress came with their food. Meera beamed after seeing that he ordered a tea for her. But after taking a single sip she made a disgusted face and refused to touch it again.

“What weak shit is this ? Come home, I will make you masala tea. This is nonsense.”

“This is chai tea.”

She stared at him silently judging him.

“What ?”

“Tea literally translates to chai and vice versa. Will you call a present: gift present ? You lived in India for years and you still say, ‘chai tea’. Either call it chai or tea. Shame on you.”

“I am sorry, O intelligent one!” He teased the same way she mocked him a few seconds ago. He stood up from his chair and bowed down to her.

They laughed and chatted and enjoyed the lunch and procrastinated till evening, and then he accompanied her to Neha’s house. They went inside by opening the door with Neha’s key and found Vivek crashed on the couch. Oliver was about to wake him up when Meera stopped him.

“Oh sorry. I suppose he is tired. Let him sleep,” he whispered to avoid waking Vivek up.

“Are you out of your mind ? Such a golden opportunity and you wanted to wake him up like a regular human being, think different,” she scolded him in a murmuring tone.

“What shenanigans are you planning now ?”

“Nothing.” She went into her room and brought a black marker and carefully scribbled it all over Vivek’s face. When she was finished with

her art project, she warned Oliver, “if you laugh or do anything to give this away, I will shove ‘chai tea’ down your throat.”

They knew Neha would buzz the doorbell as she gave her key to Meera. They silently waited for her to come home. The silence was slowly becoming unsettling. After a long time, both heard the buzzing of the doorbell and ran into the kitchen to hide. Vivek woke up with a jump and he almost fell on the floor. He looked left and right to comprehend where he was. The doorbell rang again, and he became aware of his surroundings. He slowly walked towards the door, rubbing his eyes, and forcing them to remain open. He opened the door and the next moment a scream blew his ear off.

“What? What?” He said sleepily.

“Vivek?” Neha asked in a shocked voice.

“Yes, Vivek, who else?”

“What happened to your face?”

“What? What happened?” He ran towards the mirror on the living room wall, saw his face and screamed at his loudest.

Oliver and Meera saw everything while being hidden and came out bursting with laughter.

“Prankster strikes again!” Oliver raised Meera’s hand as if he were declaring a champion and spoke. Neha and Vivek were still breathing heavily after receiving the shock.

“I hate you,” said Vivek.



“Me too,” added Neha.

“Oh, my juniors, I love you.” She went ahead and hugged them.

“Hey! I am here too,” said Oliver and joined in the group hug.

“Well, to compensate for the prank, let me treat you. Dinners on me. Order whatever you want” announced Meera.

“Hurray!” All three shouted in unison.

All four had dinner together and kept laughing at how Vivek and Neha screamed.

“How’s your hand, Di?” Asked Vivek. She gave him a surprised look.

“Don’t look at me like that, she told me.” He pointed towards Neha.

“It’s fine, I guess.”

“How was your meeting? Asked Neha.

“Good could have been better.”

“What do you mean?”

“Your company is desperate. So, desperate that Mr Westside invited me to some ball.”

“Wow! The annual masquerade ball” exclaimed Vivek in enthusiasm.

“Why are you more excited than her?”

“Because he is not invited,” answered Neha.

“What ? Why ?”

“Only high-level employees get the plus one. I don’t, so we never go,” she replied.

“But you are coming with me tomorrow,” ordered Meera.

“That’s not fair. You both are going together and leaving me alone,” pouted Vivek.

“No, we will leave you with Liv,” joked Meera.

“Hey!” Oliver shouted and everyone giggled and laughed.

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Meera’s heart leapt out of her chest on the mere thought of what would happen to Neha and Vivek after they find out about her kidnapping. They always took care of her comfort and necessity, and she was obliged. The same comfort and luxury were now provided to her but all she felt was sadness and anger. She tried and tried to think of a way to get out of the room but there wasn’t any. All she could do at this point was to find solace in her memories.