✨Episode 18: Ask him casually, Manav!

As the afternoon sun cast long shadows, Manav, Shourya, and Ritu walked home, their laughter echoing off the deserted streets. Manav, still shaken by the bio-class incident, decided to confide in his friends.

“Guys,” he began hesitantly, “I had this weird dream last night.”

Shourya, ever the curious one, nudged him playfully. “Weird? Spill the beans, Manav. Did you finally fly like Superman?”

Manav chuckled. “No, not exactly. It was about Ayush and Priyanshi.”

Ritu Raj, usually the quiet observer, perked up. “Oh? Do tell.”

Manav hesitated, then blurted out, “I dreamt I saw them... together. At Ayush’s house. And Priyanshi... she was in a swimsuit... unfurling her clothes.”

The boys stopped walking, staring at him with wide eyes. A beat of stunned silence passed, then Shourya burst into laughter.

“Manav, buddy,” he wheezed, wiping tears from his eyes, “dreams are just your brain playing tricks. You’ve been spending too much time in bio, your subconscious is conjuring up Freud’s wildest fantasies.”

Ritu Raj, ever the voice of reason, added, “Yeah, Manav. Remember, you were just talking about their trip together. Maybe your mind is just processing that.”

Manav felt a wave of relief wash over him. His friends were right. It was just a dream. But a part of him, the part that harboured a secret crush on Priyanshi, couldn’t help but wonder. Was it really just his imagination, or was there something more to it?

He looked at Shourya, his eyes searching for a deeper understanding. “But what if it wasn’t just a dream? What if... they actually like each other?”

Shourya’s laughter died down, a thoughtful expression replacing his grin. “Manav, you’re their friend. You know Priyanshi better than anyone. Trust your gut. If you feel something’s off, talk to her. But don’t jump to conclusions based on a dream.”

Ritu Raj nodded in agreement. “Yeah, dude. And remember, Ayush is a loyal friend. He wouldn’t do anything to hurt you or Priyanshi.”

Manav breathed deeply, weighing his friends’ words. He knew they were right. Jumping to conclusions would only make things messier. But the dream, with its vivid imagery, wouldn’t leave him alone.

“Maybe you should talk to Ayush casually,” Shourya suggested. “Just ask him about the trip, how things were with Priyanshi. See if your dream picks up any weird vibes.”

Manav liked that idea. It felt less confrontational, more like gathering information before making any judgments. He felt a spark of determination ignite within him. He wouldn’t let a dream control his emotions. He would be smart, he would be a friend, and he would find out the truth.

As they continued walking, the setting sun painting the sky in hues of orange and pink, Manav knew this was just the beginning. The dream had stirred something within him, a curiosity, a need for clarity. And he, with the support of his friends, was ready to face whatever lay ahead, even if it meant confronting his own feelings for Priyanshi and the possibility of a love triangle that could make even Pratya’s wildest theories seem tame.

The path stretched before them, filled with the promise of laughter, friendship, and maybe, just maybe, a touch of forbidden romance. And Manav, with his heart pounding a rhythm only he could hear, walked towards it, ready for whatever adventure awaited him around the next bend.

Manav’s fingers trembled slightly as he scrolled through his contacts, a mix of excitement and apprehension churning in his stomach. He needed to talk to Ayush, not just about the dream, but about everything. About Priyanshi, about their friendship, about the unspoken tension that hung between them like an unplayed chord in a melody.

He pressed the call button, his heart hammering against his ribs. It rang once, twice... then Ayush’s familiar voice filled his ear. “Manav! What’s up, buddy? Need help with those bio notes again?”

Manav chuckled, the tension easing a bit. “Not this time, Ayush. Actually, I was wondering... Would you be interested in studying together tonight? Ritu and Advik are coming over too.”

A beat of silence. Then, Ayush’s voice, softer now, tinged with a hint of surprise. “Me? At your place? You sure, Manav? I don’t want to intrude.”

Manav’s resolve hardened. “No way you’d be intruding. It’s been a while since we’ve had a proper guys’ night, you know? Catch up, share some laughs, maybe even dissect a few metaphorical frogs.”

Another pause, then Ayush’s voice, a little hesitant yet intrigued. “Okay, I’m in. What time should I come?”

Manav’s chest swelled with a surge of relief. Ayush had accepted. Now, he just had to figure out how to navigate the minefield of unspoken emotions that would likely accompany their study session.

He glanced at his phone. Advik, the ever-efficient one, had already texted, confirming his presence with a mischievous “See you there, buddy. Maybe I’ll even bring some truth serum for Pratya’s next scientific meltdown.”

Manav chuckled, typing back, “Just make sure it’s flavored like cheese puffs. He’ll probably gobble it up like a black hole.”

As he sent the message, a new thought struck him. Maybe tonight wouldn’t be just about studying. Maybe, under the guise of textbooks and shared snacks, he could finally find the courage to talk to Ayush, not just about the dream, but about everything. About the way his heart skipped a beat whenever Priyanshi’s name was mentioned, about the sliver of doubt that gnawed at him, about the confusing tangle of emotions that made his stomach churn whenever he saw Ayush with her.

Yes, tonight would be a study session. But it would also be a test of sorts, a test of friendship, a test of his own heart. And Manav, with a deep breath and a silent prayer, was ready to face whatever answers the night might hold.

✨Episode 19: Absolutely, Ms. Chaya!

Textbooks forgotten, attention solely focused on the unspoken elephant in the room.

“Ayush,” Manav began, his voice a hesitant whisper, “about the trip... about Priyanshi... I had this dream...”

He recounted the vivid nightmare, his palms sweating as he confessed his insecurities, his fears. He spoke of the jealousy that had gnawed at him, the suspicion that festered like a hidden wound.

Ayush listened intently, his face a canvas of shifting emotions. There was surprise, confusion, a tinge of hurt, and finally, a gentle understanding.

“Manav,” he said, his voice soft yet firm, “that was just a dream. A crazy, hormone-fueled dream. Priyanshi and I, we’re just friends. Really good friends, but just friends.”

He paused, searching Manav’s eyes. “I wouldn’t do anything to jeopardize that, Manav. You know that, right?”

Manav felt a wave of relief wash over him, erasing the tension that had coiled around his heart. “I believe you, Ayush,” he said, his voice thick with emotion. “I just... needed to hear it from you.”

Ayush smiled, a genuine, reassuring smile. “Anytime, buddy. Now, about that dream... you said Priyanshi was in a swimsuit. Did she at least look good?”

Manav laughed, the ice finally broken. “You’re incorrigible, Ayush. But yes, she looked stunning, even in my weird dream logic.”

They spent the rest of the night engrossed in whispered jokes and philosophical debates, the tension replaced by a familiar warmth, the kind that only true friendship could foster. Ayush even managed to inject some impromptu biology lessons, dissecting Manav’s dream with the precision of a seasoned surgeon.

Just as they were about to call it a night, Manav’s phone buzzed, a call from Ms. Chaya Singh. Her voice, usually calm and collected, held a hint of urgency.

“Manav,” she said, “we need your help. The school assembly in two days is missing a drama performance. Would you be willing to take charge and put together a team?”

Manav glanced at Ayush, a spark of excitement igniting in his eyes. This was unexpected, a chance to prove himself, to channel his nervous energy into something creative.

“Absolutely, Ms. Chaya,” he said, his voice brimming with newfound confidence. “I’ll get a team together right away.”

He hung up, the weight of responsibility settling on his shoulders, but it wasn’t a burden this time. It was a challenge, an opportunity to rise above his insecurities and create something meaningful, something that would resonate with his classmates.

Ayush grinned, clapping him on the back. “Looks like your dream of being a hero is about to come true, Manav. But hey, remember, no swimsuit dramas this time.”

Manav chuckled. “No promises, Ayush. But I’ll try to keep it PG-13.”

And so, with a newfound clarity and a heart full of possibilities, Manav embarked on his next adventure. He would form a team, write a script, and maybe, just maybe, even overcome his stage fright to deliver a performance that would leave his classmates speechless. The school assembly, once a distant event, now loomed large, a stage not just for drama, but for Manav himself to step into the spotlight and show everyone what he was truly capable of.

The journey ahead was uncertain, filled with potential pitfalls and unexpected twists. But one thing was clear: Manav, with his friends by his side and a newfound courage in his heart, was no longer just a shy boy with a secret crush. He was a leader, a storyteller, and above all, a boy ready to face his fears and write his own ending.