

## Cricket 137

### Chapter 137

Aarav's POV

A loud buzzing sound echoed through the silent hotel room, but Aarav remained dead to the world, tangled in his sheets, snoring softly. The phone screen lit up again and again—calls from his teammates, the coaching staff, and even Virat Bhaiya himself. But Aarav, exhausted from the previous night, remained oblivious.

It wasn't until sunlight pierced through the curtains and warmed his face that he stirred, groaning. Squinting at his phone, his eyes widened in horror. 11:30 AM.

"Shit!" Aarav bolted upright, heart racing. He scrolled through his notifications. 13 missed calls. And a single message that made his stomach drop:

"We left for training."

"Damn it, damn it, damn it!" Aarav muttered, jumping out of bed. He grabbed his phone and immediately called Virat Bhaiya. No answer. He tried again. Still nothing.

"Please pick up, please pick up," he murmured, dialing the coach next. No response there either.

Frustrated, he called Rishabh Pant. After two rings, Pant picked up, his voice laced with amusement but also mild irritation.

Pant: "Aarav, where the hell were you? We called you so many times! Coach was about to send someone to drag you out of bed!"

Aarav: "Bhai, I—uh, I slept super late last night. Around 4 AM. Just couldn't wake up in time. I swear it wasn't intentional."

Pant: "Three in the morning?! What the hell were you doing? Staring at girl's pictures all night?"

Aarav's face burned. "Shut up, Pant! Not everything is about girls!"

Pant: "Uh-huh. Sure. Anyway, I'll tell the team you overslept. But there's no point rushing to training now. We'll be wrapping up in an hour or two."

Aarav: "So... what do I do? Should I still come? I can be there in 30 minutes."

Pant: "Nah, leave it. No need to get grilled for being late. Besides, we're planning something way more fun tonight."

Aarav: "Oh? What's the plan?"

Pant: "We're going out in the evening, around 6. Exploring New Zealand. And you have to come, no excuses. Let's go 'gedi marne'—full speed, thrill, and no stress!"

Aarav grinned. "Now that... sounds tempting. I'm in!"

Pant chuckled. "Good. Now go freshen up. And bro, next time, set an alarm."

The call ended, and Aarav exhaled. That was close. But now, he had the whole day free until the evening.

After a long, relaxing shower, Aarav threw on a pair of comfortable shorts and a simple polo t-shirt. His fingers unconsciously reached for his phone. He swiped through his gallery, stopping at the pictures from yesterday.

There she was. Shradha. Laughing, blushing, caught mid-tease.

Aarav leaned against the headboard, staring at the screen.

"What the hell are you doing to me, Shradha?" he murmured to himself.

He zoomed in on one particular photo—one where she was looking away, her face bathed in the golden glow of the temple lights. His chest tightened.

He shook his head violently. "No. Nope. Not happening. I am not falling for her."

Yet, his stupid heart refused to listen.

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The aroma of freshly cooked food filled the air as I made my way downstairs for lunch. My stomach grumbled in protest—I had skipped breakfast in my rush of panic this morning. The hotel's restaurant was lively, with soft music playing in the background, the occasional clinking of cutlery against plates, and the hum of conversations weaving through the space. The sunlight streaming in through the large windows bathed the room in a warm glow, making the entire setting feel almost too perfect, too serene for the storm of thoughts inside me.

As I reached the dining area, I spotted Anushka Bhabhi sitting by the window, enjoying some simple snacks. Dressed in a casual dress with her hair neatly tied back, she looked elegant yet approachable. She was scrolling through her phone, lost in whatever was on the screen, but as soon as she noticed me approaching, she greeted me with a warm smile.

"Ah, the sleeping prince finally wakes up!" she teased, setting her phone down.

I forced a smile, still feeling guilty about missing training. "Good afternoon, Bhabhi."

"You left training today. Virat was wondering if you had some secret mission." Her eyes twinkled with mischief.

I knew where this was going, and I couldn't afford for her—or anyone—to find out about Shradha. I had to deflect. "Nothing like that, Bhabhi. Just overslept. Yesterday was hectic."

She wasn't buying it. "Hmm... are you sure? Or were you out on a secret date with your mystery girlfriend?" she added, raising an eyebrow.

I nearly choked on my words. "No, Bhabhi! Why do you always assume I have a girlfriend?"

Anushka laughed, enjoying my flustered state. "Because you act like someone who does. The way you dodge the topic, the way your expressions change when you're questioned—it's suspicious."

I shook my head. "I swear, I was just visiting a temple, had dinner, and then watched a movie alone. That's all."

She smirked. "Alone, huh?"

"Yes! Alone!" I insisted.

She held up her hands in surrender, still grinning. "Okay, okay. No need to get defensive. You look so cute when you're flustered."

I groaned. "This is unfair."

She simply chuckled and resumed munching on her snacks, her eyes still filled with amusement.

I took a seat across from her and called the waiter to order my lunch. "Bhabhi, do you want anything?"

She shook her head. "Nah, I'm good. Just enjoying my snacks and scrolling through reels."

I asked. "Reels!"

She turned her phone towards me, showing me a short clip of a cat doing something ridiculously funny. "Yep! There's so much hilarious content here. You don't watch reels?"

I smirked. "I do, but Not cat videos. (He He 🤪, this is my app!)"

She rolled her eyes. "You need variety in life, Aarav. Not everything is about cricket."

"Maybe," I admitted, taking a sip of my water.

We continued chatting while I ate, the conversation drifting from reels to Virat's habits, to how she manages to deal with his intense training schedule. It felt nice—casual, lighthearted, and refreshing. The teasing continued, but it never felt overwhelming. If anything, it felt oddly comforting, like a sibling bond I hadn't even realized I'd missed having in my life.

Midway through our conversation, her phone rang. She checked the caller ID and smiled. "Speak of the man." She answered. "Yes, Virat?"

Even though I couldn't hear his voice clearly, I could make out Virat bhaiya's pookie tone.

"I'm ready," she said, nodding. "Send the car to pick me up."

There was a short pause before she added, "I've just been waiting for your call and having a chat with Aarav."

I could hear Virat Bhaiya's voice on the other end, a teasing edge to his tone. "So this boy finally wakes up, huh?"

Anushka laughed. "Yeah! Here, talk to him."

She extended the phone towards me, and I gulped. "Bhaiya?"

"Why didn't you wake up on time?" His voice held authority but also familiarity. "You always preach about discipline and fitness. What happened?"

I rubbed the back of my neck. "Sorry, Bhaiya. I just couldn't wake up. This was the first and last time. I promise."

He sighed. "Look, you're young. It's fine to enjoy your achievements, but don't let it get to your head. You're not dreaming of your double century in your sleep, are you?"

I laughed nervously. "No, Bhaiya. Just got tired after yesterday's travel and then ended up watching movies till late."

"Movies?" He chuckled. "Well, don't repeat this next time. You know how important discipline is."

"I won't. I promise."

"Good. Now enjoy your lunch, and tell Anushka to hurry up."

I handed the phone back to her, relieved that the conversation was over. She grinned. "See? That wasn't so bad."

I shook my head, smiling. "I guess not."

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I turned to Anushka Bhabhi, who was still scrolling through her phone.

"Bhabhi, are you going to the camp?" I asked casually.

She looked up. "Yeah! Virat and I plan to enjoy New Zealand while we're here. Such a beautiful place."

A grin spread across my face. "Hey, I'm also going there. I'll drop you off! No need for a car to come here and then take you. It's a waste of time! I'm heading there anyway."

She gave me an amused look, then nodded. "That's actually a good idea. Let me tell Virat."

She quickly called Bhaiya and, after a brief conversation, she turned back to me with a thumbs-up. "Virat says it's fine."

"Great! Give me a minute," I said, standing up. "I need to grab something."

She raised an eyebrow. "What now?"

I smirked. "keys for the car."

I rushed to my room, grabbed the sleek, black McLaren keys, and hurried back downstairs. The car was parked right outside the hotel entrance, gleaming under the afternoon sun. I unlocked it with a single click, the doors lifting up dramatically. Anushka Bhabhi slid into the passenger seat, clearly enjoying the luxury.

"Nice ride," she commented as I revved the engine.

"Only the best," I replied with a smirk.

We sped through the streets of New Zealand, enjoying the smooth drive, passing by breathtaking landscapes. The rolling green hills, the distant mountains capped with snow, and the serene lakes made the drive feel almost surreal. The roads were beautifully maintained, and the fresh, crisp air only added to the experience.

After about 30 minutes, we arrived at the training camp. Virat Bhaiya was already there, waiting. He waved us over as I parked the car near the entrance.

"Thanks for the ride, Aarav," Anushka Bhabhi said, stepping out gracefully.

"Anytime, Bhabhi," I replied.

She walked over to Virat Bhaiya, and they exchanged a quick conversation before heading inside. I, on the other hand, had other plans.

I pulled out my phone and called the rental company. "Hey, I'm leaving the car at the practice ground. The keys will be with the guard. Pick it up from there."

After confirming the details, I pocketed my phone and turned around—only to be greeted by my squad.

Standing in front of me were some of my favorite people—Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant, Prithvi Shaw, Shreyas Iyer, and KL Rahul.

"Look who finally decided to show up!" Rishabh called out, smirking.

"Had to drop off Bhabhi first," I replied with a shrug.

Gill chuckled. "And you did it in a McLaren, huh? Showoff."

I laughed. "Come on, it's New Zealand. You gotta go all out."

KL Rahul clapped his hands together. "Alright, boys, we have the whole evening free. What's the plan?"

Prithvi grinned mischievously. "How about we explore the city on electric scooters?"

Rishabh's eyes lit up. "That actually sounds fun. Let's do it."

Within minutes, we rented six electric scooters and took off through the city streets. The cool breeze rushed past as we zipped around, weaving through traffic and laughing like kids. The roads were lined with small cafés, bustling bars, and neon-lit signs that made the place feel alive.

After a while, we made our way to a coastal road, the ocean stretching endlessly beside us. The waves crashed against the shore, the salty air filling our lungs. It was the kind of place that made you want to stop and just soak it all in.

"Damn," Shreyas said, pulling over. "This place is unreal."

I nodded. "This is why I love New Zealand. It's like a painting."

We all took a few moments to just enjoy the view, snapping some pictures and messing around with our scooters. Gill tried doing a wheelie and almost fell, making all of us burst into laughter.

"Not your thing, bro," KL teased, patting him on the back.

We continued riding until we reached a beautiful beach, where we decided to stop for a while. The golden sand was warm beneath our feet as we ran toward the waves, the water ice-cold yet refreshing.

Rishabh, of course, was the first to start a water fight. "Come on, boys, let's see who can stay dry the longest!"

Within seconds, we were all soaked, chasing each other around like kids. Prithvi tackled me into the water, while Gill and Shreyas ganged up on KL, dragging him under the waves.

Pant, the loudest of us all, stood with his arms wide open. "This is the life, boys! Cricket, beaches, and zero worries!"

We all cheered, agreeing wholeheartedly.

After hours at the beach, we were starving. We found a cozy seaside restaurant and took a table with a stunning ocean view. The sun was setting, casting shades of orange and pink across the sky.

"Alright, who's paying?" KL asked, smirking.

"Not me," Prithvi declared immediately.

"Rock-paper-scissors?" Shreyas suggested.

We all agreed, and after a few rounds, Rishabh lost. "Damn it! Why do I always lose at this?!"

We laughed as the food arrived—fresh seafood, juicy steaks, and local delicacies that smelled heavenly. We dug in, sharing stories, pulling each other's legs, and enjoying every moment.

Gill raised his glass like a comical old man. "To cricket, friendship, and unforgettable nights like this."

We clinked our glasses together. "Cheers!"

As the night stretched on, we continued laughing, joking, and making the most of our time in this beautiful country. This was what life was about—good friends, amazing places, and memories that would last forever.

To be continued...