

Cricket 140

Chapter 140

As the golden rays of the morning sun streamed through the windows, Aarav stretched lazily, shaking off the remnants of sleep. Today was going to be special. He had received an invitation to the Naman Awards, an event that celebrated the best performances in Indian cricket. The excitement from last night's group chat with his friends still lingered in his mind, making it impossible to go back to sleep. He had replayed the moment he received the invitation over and over again, and now the day had finally arrived.

Determined to start the day on a high note, Aarav got out of bed and headed straight to the gym. His morning workout routine was sacred—an hour of weight training, cardio, and stretching, ensuring his body remained in top shape. As he lifted weights, he thought about the significance of the event. It wasn't just about cricket; it was a celebration of determination, passion, and the relentless pursuit of excellence. After an intense session, he took a refreshing shower and changed into comfortable casual wear—black joggers and a white hoodie. The anticipation built with every passing minute.

Just as he was about to check his phone, it started buzzing. The caller ID flashed: Shradha.

Shradha: "Hey!"

Aarav (smiling): "Hi! Where are you?"

Shradha: "Well, I'm back in India! Landed yesterday."

Aarav (shocked): "Really?! And you didn't even tell me?"

Shradha (laughing): "It was a spur-of-the-moment thing! Dad decided to bring my siblings and mom to the Naman Awards to meet everyone."

Aarav: "Ohh! You're attending too?"

Shradha: "Yup! So, see you there?"

Aarav: "Yeah! I'll call you in the evening."

After hanging up, Aarav leaned back, grinning. The day was getting even more interesting. Seeing Shradha again after so long added another layer of excitement. He had missed their long conversations and playful banter.

The afternoon was spent handling some business assignments, and he made sure to clear up his schedule before the big event. Between responding to emails and watching lectures, he found his mind drifting back to the awards.

By 4:30 PM, it was time to get ready. Aarav stood in front of his mirror, adjusting his black suit, the fabric fitting him perfectly. His sharp features, complemented by neatly styled hair and a crisp white shirt, made him look every bit the dashing young man he was. As he buttoned his cuffs, he took a deep breath, mentally preparing for the evening ahead. It wasn't just about looking good; it was about making an impression.

As he walked downstairs, he saw his mother waiting near the staircase.

Mom (smiling proudly): "Beta, you look dashing!"

Aarav (grinning): "Thanks, Mom."

Mom (teasingly): "Now, when are you going to find me a daughter-in-law?"

Aarav (groaning): "Momm!"

His father, who was reading a newspaper, chuckled. "Let the boy enjoy his evening first."

Aarav sighed as both his parents laughed, shaking his head but smiling nonetheless.

POV Change: Aarav's Friends

Meanwhile, a group of four young men sat inside a taxi, heading toward Aarav's house.

Shubman Gill (grumbling): "Why are we going to his place again?"

Abhishek Sharma: "Because he invited us, and his house is on the way to the venue."

Jaiswal (curious): "Abhishek, he's really rich, right? Is his house as big as those mansions in the movies?"

At this, Prithvi Shaw and Gill perked up, suddenly more interested.

Abhishek (smirking): "Oh, you guys have no idea. His house is massive—private training ground, huge yard, a swimming pool, underground parking, and a fully equipped gym."

As they approached, the taxi driver pulled up to towering wrought iron gates that stretched across the entrance. The sheer size of the property left Gill and Jaiswal gaping.

Jaiswal (amazed): "Bro... this is insane! This is straight out of a Bollywood film!"

The gates opened smoothly as security guards, dressed in crisp uniforms, saluted upon recognizing Abhishek.

Guard: "Good evening, Abhi Sahab!"

Abhishek (grinning): "Good evening, guard Bhaiya."

The guards gestured for them to board a small electric cart that would take them to the main house.

Jaiswal (still in shock): "Wait... his house is so big we need a rickshaw to reach the entrance?!"

Gill (laughing as he knocked Jaiswal's head): "It's not a rickshaw, idiot. It's a cart."

Jaiswal: "Whatever, it looks the same!"

The group shared a laugh as they sat inside the cart. The ride took them through lush green landscapes, carefully maintained gardens, and a long driveway lined with exotic plants and trees. The mansion itself loomed ahead—an architectural masterpiece with white marble pillars, floor-to-ceiling glass windows, and a grand entrance that could rival a five-star hotel.

Prithvi (whispering): "This is unreal..."

As the cart stopped at the entrance, the main doors swung open, revealing a beautifully decorated foyer with high ceilings, chandeliers, and elegant decor. A maid greeted them with a warm smile.

Maid (bowing slightly): "Welcome, Abhishek Sahab. Please, come in."

As they stepped inside, they heard laughter echoing from the living room.

Mom (laughing): "So, when will I meet my daughter-in-law?"

The boys paused, exchanging amused glances before bursting into laughter themselves. Their sudden chuckles caught Aarav's parents' attention, and his mom turned around, smiling warmly at the newcomers.

Aarav's Dad (standing up): "Ah, Abhi and you must be Aarav's friends!"

The boys straightened up, instantly showing respect.

Gill, Prithvi, Jaiswal, Abhishek (in unison, folding hands): "Namaste, Uncle, Aunty."

Mom (beaming): "Namaste, beta! It's so lovely to finally meet Aarav's other friend then Abhi friends."

As they all moved toward the door, Aarav's dad patted him on the back. "Enjoy your evening, beta. Make sure to represent yourself well."

Aarav nodded, feeling a wave of gratitude. He was going with his closest friends, and now, even Shradha would be there. The night was only just beginning.

The rumble of the Range Rover's engine echoed through the roads as we made our way to the grand venue of the Naman Awards. Seated in the luxurious back seat, I glanced out the window, watching the glittering city lights rush past. My friends, still buzzing with excitement, were engaged in a lively discussion about the event, but my mind was preoccupied with the significance of the night ahead.

As we approached the venue, the grandeur of the location struck me. The massive entrance, adorned with dazzling lights and golden banners, bore the name of the Naman Awards 2020 in bold letters. A red carpet stretched from the drop-off point to the grand arched doors, where photographers and media personnel eagerly awaited the arrival of cricketing legends.

Stepping out of the car, I adjusted my tailored black suit, the crisp white shirt underneath accentuating my sharp look. My friends followed closely behind, each of us in perfectly styled attire. As we walked towards the entrance, the murmurs of reporters and flashing camera lights created an exhilarating atmosphere. Security guided us through the path, ensuring a smooth entry.

Inside, the hall was a spectacle—glittering chandeliers, velvet drapes, and grand stage arrangements. The ambience exuded elegance, with tables adorned in white and gold, each designated with a nameplate for the assigned guests.

The first familiar figure we saw was Sachin Tendulkar Sir, standing gracefully with his wife, Anjali Ma'am, and their children, Sara, Arjun, and Shradha. A sense of deep respect washed over us as we approached them. As tradition dictated, we all bowed to touch Sachin Sir's and Anjali Ma'am's feet.

Sachin Sir (smiling warmly): "Aarav, it's wonderful to see you here. Congratulations on your achievements!"

Me (grinning, humbled): "Thank you, Sir. It's an honor to be here."

Sara and Arjun exchanged casual greetings, while my gaze naturally drifted to Shradha, who stood beside her family, looking effortlessly stunning in an elegant navy-blue gown. However, we kept our conversation minimal in front of everyone, only exchanging polite nods and smiles.

Moving further inside, we meet all the players Rohit Sharma Bhaiya, Jasprit Bumrah Bhaiya, and Virat Kohli Bhaiya were engaged in a lively discussion when they spotted us.

Virat Bhaiya (grinning): "Look who's here! Aarav, come on in!"

I greeted them respectfully, exchanging firm handshakes. Anushka Bhabhi stood beside Kohli Bhaiya, radiating elegance in a maroon saree.

Anushka Bhabhi (smiling): "Aarav, congratulations on your nomination tonight! You've had a fantastic debut year."

Me: "Thank you, Bhabhi! It means a lot coming from you."

Among the attendees were the country's finest female cricketers. Smriti Mandhana and Deepti Sharma were engaged in a lighthearted chat when we approached them.

Smriti (teasingly): "Aarav! Finally, someone who can match our cover drives in style."

Me (laughing): "I can only hope to match your class on the field!"

Deepti joined in the conversation, and we spent a few minutes discussing the upcoming cricket season, sharing friendly banter and mutual admiration.

The venue was arranged with circular tables, each designated for specific groups. Just as I was about to sit with my friends, I heard Virat Bhaiya call my name.

Virat Bhaiya: "Aarav, come sit with us."

I turned to my friends, who gave me smiles, and bid them farewell before heading toward Virat Bhaiya and Anushka Bhabhi's table.

The table was filled with elite company—seasoned cricketers, respected officials, and former players. Sitting beside Virat Bhaiya, I felt a sense of privilege yet responsibility.

The stage lights dimmed, and the host walked in, dressed in a sleek tuxedo, announcing the commencement of the grand ceremony. The night unfolded with captivating performances, speeches, and moments of nostalgia as past cricketing glories were revisited.

Several awards were presented, including:

Cricketer of the Year – Md. Shami

Umpire of the Year – Nitin Menon

Best U19 Player – Yashasvi Jaiswal

Best U16 Player – *A rising young talent*

The anticipation grew as the next category was announced.

The presenter walked to the stage, pausing for dramatic effect.

Host: "And the winner for Best International Debut - Men is... Aarav Pathak!"

A wave of cheers and applause erupted. Stunned, I took a deep breath and stood up. Kohli Bhaiya gave me a proud pat on the back as I made my way to the stage.

Receiving the trophy, I took a moment to absorb the weight of the achievement before speaking into the microphone.

Me: "This award isn't just mine—it belongs to every coach, mentor, and supporter who believed in me. Thank you for your faith and encouragement. Here's to many more years of great cricket!"

The applause echoed as I stepped down, feeling a deep sense of gratitude and determination.

During the break, I found myself near the refreshment section when Shradha approached.

Me (grinning): "You look absolutely stunning tonight."

Shradha (blushing slightly): "You look quite handsome yourself."

We exchanged a few more lighthearted words before being called back for the final segment.

After the awards concluded, an elaborate dinner banquet awaited the guests. Seated with some of the greatest names in cricket, I savored the experience, indulging in exquisite dishes while reminiscing about the night's highlights.

As the event came to an end, I bid farewell to my mentors, teammates, and friends before stepping back into the Range Rover. The night had been unforgettable, marking the beginning of a new chapter in my journey.

As I gazed out the window on the ride home, I knew one thing for certain—this was only the beginning.

Ding System Update in Progress!

Flibberwobble shimmerfuzz quizzlefrap blorptastic....

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To Be Continued...