

Cricket 32

Chapter 32

"Aarav, are you ready for tomorrow?" his father asked as Aarav descended the stairs.

"Yes, Dad," Aarav replied with a smile. "Everything's packed and ready."

His father nodded approvingly before continuing, "Good. I'll be accompanying you to Bengaluru tomorrow, along with Abhishek's father. It's a big step for both of you, and we want to make sure everything is in place."

Aarav glanced at his mother, noticing her slightly teary eyes. She managed a soft smile but couldn't hide the sadness in her voice as she said, "I wish I could come with you, beta, but there's some critical business I need to handle. You'll be fine, though, and I'll be cheering you on from here."

Moved by her emotions, Aarav walked up to his mother and hugged her tightly. "Don't worry, Mom. I'll call you every day, and you'll be the first person I share all my achievements with."

Her smile widened as she wiped away a tear. "And I'll be the loudest voice in the stadium when you play," she said, laughing softly as she patted his back.

The next morning came quickly. Aarav's departure was met with an emotional goodbye. His mother stood near the doorway, her hands fidgeting as she struggled to find the right words.

"You're going far, beta," she said, her voice cracking slightly. "Don't forget to call me every day."

"I won't, Mom," Aarav promised, nodding earnestly.

"And eat properly, okay? No skipping meals!" she added, her motherly concern shining through.

"I'll eat on time, I promise," Aarav replied with a reassuring smile.

"And... don't talk to strangers on the roads," she said, tears welling up in her eyes.

Aarav, unable to bear her sadness, pulled her into a tight hug. "I'll miss you, Mom," he whispered. "But I'll make you proud. I promise."

She nodded, brushing away her tears as she kissed his forehead. "Go, beta. Show them what you're made of."

At the Mumbai airport, Aarav and his father met Abhishek and his father. The two friends exchanged excited smiles as they greeted each other.

"Ready for this new adventure?" Aarav asked, his enthusiasm palpable.

"More than ready," Abhishek replied, adjusting the straps of his bag. "But I think my mom's more nervous than I am."

The fathers chuckled at their conversation as the group checked in and made their way through security. On the flight, Aarav and Abhishek couldn't stop discussing their future at the NCA.

"What do you think the training's going to be like?" Abhishek asked, leaning closer to Aarav.

"Intense," Aarav replied. "But I'm looking forward to it. It's not every day you get to train under the best coaches in the country."

Abhishek grinned. "True. And just imagine—we'll be playing on the same grounds where legends have played."

Their fathers chimed in occasionally, sharing anecdotes about their own childhoods and offering advice for the journey ahead. The flight was smooth, and the excitement in the air was infectious.

After a few hours, they landed in Bengaluru. Aarav's father had arranged for a car to take them directly to the NCA premises, thanks to his frequent visits to the city for business. As they drove through Bengaluru's bustling streets, Aarav took in the vibrant atmosphere, and seeing how different it is from Mumbai, his excitement growing with every passing moment.

When they arrived at the iconic M. Chinnaswamy Stadium, Aarav felt a sense of awe. The stadium's grandeur, combined with the history it represented, was inspiring. From the car, he could see the stadium and the sprawling facilities of the NCA which was around 300 meters apart from the stadium

As they stepped out of the car, they were greeted by an official of NCA officials who guided them through the registration process. Aarav and Abhishek handed over the required documents, including photocopies of their identification and passports, which were verified with care.

One of the officials smiled warmly at them. "Welcome to the NCA, boys. This is where dreams turn into reality. Work hard, and you'll go far."

Both Aarav and Abhishek nodded, their determination evident.

After the formalities, they were given then tour of the NCA Facilities where they saw the dorms, dining areas, and training grounds—all meticulously maintained.

Later, the boys were shown to their dorm room. It was a modest yet comfortable space with two beds, a shared wardrobe, and an attached washroom. The simplicity of the room reminded them that their focus here would be entirely on cricket.

As they settled in, Aarav's father patted his shoulder. "This is it, Aarav. Your first step toward a great future."

Abhishek's father added, "Remember, the road won't always be easy, but you have the talent and determination to succeed."

Both boys thanked their fathers before saying their goodbyes. Aarav hugged his dad tightly, feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness. After their parents left, Aarav and Abhishek called their mothers to let them know they had settled in.

"Are you okay, beta?" Aarav's mother asked, her voice filled with concern.

"I'm fine, Mom," Aarav replied, smiling. "The facilities here are amazing, and Abhishek and I are in the same room."

"Good," she said. "Just remember what I told you—call me every day, okay?" Her voice threatening me, and if I didn't, I don't know what would happen to me.

"I will, Mom. Don't worry.", I replied hurriedly.

Abhishek, on his phone, was having a similar conversation with his mother. The two friends exchanged smiles as they hung up and prepared to rest for the night.

The next morning, the alarm buzzed at 5:30 a.m., pulling Aarav out of his dreams. He stretched, feeling a surge of energy as he remembered the official's instructions to meet at the central training ground by 7:00 a.m. After freshening up, Aarav and Abhishek dressed in their training gear which was given to them after all the paper works and made their way to the designated area.

The central ground was a smaller practice area within the NCA facilities, complete with nets and other training setups. This is the place where practice is held if there is Match in the Stadium.

As they arrived, they saw other young cricketers warming up under the watchful eyes of experienced coaches.