

Cricket 93

Chapter 93

I woke up early the next morning, feeling a mix of excitement and anticipation. Today was going to be different. I had booked a flight to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, and I was eager to explore what the city had to offer. After a quick shower and packing up my essentials, I grabbed my suitcase and headed downstairs to check out of the hotel.

The hotel staff greeted me with their usual polite smiles. "Hope you had a pleasant stay, Mr. Aarav," the receptionist said as she handed me my bill. I nodded with a smile, slipping my sunglasses on.

"Yes, it was great. Thank you," I replied, signing the paperwork.

Arriving at the airport, I smoothly checked in and made my way to the departure lounge. The flight to Wellington was short but scenic, with the airplane soaring over breathtaking coastlines, lush green hills, and the sparkling Tasman Sea below. The moment we landed, I could feel the difference in the air—Wellington had a certain charm, a blend of urban sophistication and natural beauty.

As I exited the airport, I saw my rental waiting for me—a sleek, red Ferrari 488 Spider. My lips curled into a smile. "Now this," I muttered under my breath, "is going to be fun."

The roar of the engine was music to my ears as I sped onto the open road. Wellington's streets were a blend of modern skyscrapers and historic buildings, but what really caught my eye was the stunning waterfront. The wind whipped through my hair as I cruised along the coast, the sun glinting off the car's glossy paint.

I stopped at a scenic lookout point, stepping out of the car and taking a deep breath. The view was incredible—rolling hills meeting the endless blue of the ocean, with the city skyline in the distance. I snapped a few pictures, wanting to capture the moment. Just then, a voice behind me said, "Nice ride."

I turned around to see a guy, probably in his late twenties, admiring my Ferrari. He had that typical Kiwi charm—relaxed but confident.

"Thanks," I replied with a grin.

"Let me guess... tourist?" he asked, his accent thick.

"Yeah!" I said, laughing. "Came to see what all the hype is about."

"You're in the right place, mate," he said, patting the hood of the car gently. "This city has everything—beaches, hills, cafes... and if you're lucky, maybe a little adventure too."

I smirked. "Adventure, huh? I think I'll be the judge of that."

We exchanged a few more words before I hopped back into the Ferrari and continued my drive. I decided to take a detour up to Mount Victoria, a famous viewpoint overlooking the entire city. The winding roads were perfect for the car, and with each turn, the excitement grew. Once at the top, I parked and stood there, taking it all in—the city stretched out before me, the harbor shimmering under the afternoon sun.

I couldn't resist pulling out my phone and sending a picture to the family group chat.

After a while, hunger kicked in, and I decided to head back to the city. Wellington had a reputation for its food scene, and I was eager to try something local. I found a cozy little café near the waterfront, where I ordered fish and chips—a New Zealand classic. Sitting by the window, watching people stroll by, I finally felt the sense of calm I had been craving.

As I sipped on my drink, I overheard a conversation from the table next to me.

"I'm telling you, the All Blacks' next match is going to be insane," one guy said excitedly.

"Yeah, but did you hear about the cricket team? The upcoming T20I with India is heating up," his friend replied.

I smirked, shaking my head. No matter where I went, cricket followed me like a shadow.

Once I finished eating, I decided to explore a bit more. I drove through the bustling streets, visiting landmarks like the Te Papa Museum and the iconic Beehive parliament building. The city had a unique vibe—artsy, energetic, but also peaceful in its own way.

By evening, exhaustion started creeping in. I made my way to my booked hotel, a luxurious five-star establishment overlooking the harbor. The moment I checked in and entered my room, I felt the weight of the day settle in. Dropping my bags by the door, I kicked off my shoes and collapsed onto the plush bed.

I glanced at my phone—messages from friends and family flooded in, but I ignored them for now. Instead, I let out a deep sigh, staring at the ceiling. Sometimes, amidst all the luxury and speed, all I really wanted was a moment of peace.

The sound of the waves outside my window was soothing, lulling me into a deep, dreamless sleep. Tomorrow was another day, and I had no plans but to enjoy every bit of it.

As the plane touched down at Indira Gandhi International Airport, I took a deep breath, feeling the familiar warmth of home seeping in, even through the cabin's filtered air. I stretched my legs after the long-haul flight from Hong Kong, a brief layover that had given me enough time to explore the airport and grab a quick bite.

Walking towards the baggage claim, I adjusted my sunglasses, scanning the area for the domestic terminal sign. The familiar bustle of Delhi was already in full swing—businessmen rushing to catch their flights, families reuniting, and tourists looking around in awe.

My phone buzzed. It was a message from dad:

"Flight to Mumbai is on time. Defender will be waiting. Mom's excited, be ready for a long emotional talk."

I chuckled. Mom never changes.

A few hours later, I found myself landing at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport. The air here was different—thick with humidity and the unmistakable scent of the ocean mixed with the vibrant energy of the city. The moment I stepped outside the terminal, the black Land Rover Defender was waiting for me, gleaming under the airport lights.

The driver nodded politely as he took my luggage and placed it in the trunk. I sank into the plush leather seats, feeling the smooth hum of the engine as we drove through the familiar streets of Mumbai.

(If you ask me why no one is recognizing Aaraav, well this is because Aarav is in getup, like wearing additional accessories to prevent from being recognize and for system just wait it would be there.)

The city was alive—street vendors shouting out their deals, cars honking in chaotic harmony, and people moving with purpose. Marine Drive glittered in the distance, a beautiful reminder of why I always loved coming back.

As the Defender pulled up to our villa in Juhu, I spotted the familiar golden lights illuminating the grand entrance. My heart swelled as I saw my mom and dad waiting at the door, their faces beaming with anticipation.

The moment I stepped out of the car, my mom rushed forward, her eyes already brimming with tears.

"Aarav, you're finally home!" she exclaimed, pulling me into a tight embrace.

I laughed softly, hugging her back. "Mom, it's only been a few weeks. You make it sound like I was gone for years."

She pulled away, wiping a tear and cupping my face. "For a mother, even a day without her son feels like an eternity!"

Dad stood beside her, a proud smile on his face. "Welcome back, son," he said, extending his hand.

I shook it firmly, but he pulled me in for a brief hug, his usual reserved nature softening in the moment.

As we stepped inside, the comforting aroma of homemade food filled the air—freshly baked naan, butter chicken, and mom's signature paneer tikka.

"Sit down, beta," mom said, leading me to the dining table, "you must be starving."

I smiled, "Mom, I had food on the plane, but you know I can never say no to your cooking."

She beamed with pride as she served me a plate full of my favorite dishes. Dad sat across from me, watching with his usual keen eyes.

"So," he finally spoke, "how was New Zealand?"

"It was amazing, Dad. The landscapes, the people... I even got to see a rugby match."

He raised an eyebrow. "Rugby? Not cricket?"

I chuckled. "Well, I wanted to experience their culture, and rugby is huge there. But don't worry, I met a few cricket legends too."

Mom chimed in, "And what about your work? Did you manage everything while traveling?"

"Of course, Mom. I worked remotely whenever I could. Everything's on track."

Dad nodded approvingly, "That's good to hear. You need to balance both—enjoyment and responsibility."

Later that night, after catching up with the family, I sat in my room, staring out at the Mumbai skyline. The gentle sound of waves crashing in the distance brought a sense of calm.

Despite all the luxury and travel, home always had its own charm.

I pulled out my phone and scrolled through the pictures from my trip—Sky Tower, Auckland Art Gallery, the breathtaking coastal drives... Each moment captured a story.

As I lay on my bed, staring at the ceiling, a million thoughts raced through my mind. The rhythmic sound of the ceiling fan and the distant hum of the city outside were the only things keeping me grounded in reality. One step closer, I thought, my heart pounding with excitement. One step closer to becoming the best cricketer in the world.

The journey so far had been nothing short of extraordinary, but tonight, it felt different. It felt like the beginning of something far greater. Taking a deep breath, I closed my eyes and whispered under my breath, "System, show me my debut match reward."

A familiar chime echoed in my head as the system responded with its mechanical yet strangely reassuring voice:

"Congratulations, host, for your debut in international cricket. Your match rewards have been accumulated and distributed together."

I sat up in excitement, eagerly waiting for the next words.

Reward 1: Pull shot to a short ball, Ricky Ponting.

A wide grin spread across my face. Ricky Ponting's pull shot? That was legendary! I could picture it vividly—the sheer power, the precision, the absolute dominance Ponting exuded every time he sent a short ball racing to the boundary. With this skill now in my arsenal, I could already imagine sending the best pacers in the world to the cleaners. New Batsman with string in his bat is coming and this time from India.

But the next reward... it sent chills down my spine.

Reward 2: 2022, India vs Pakistan T20 World Cup – Virat Kohli Clutch Knock Experience Card.

My mouth went dry. My mind instantly transported back to that electrifying night in my previous life—the iconic match that had the entire world watching, holding their breath as Kohli single-handedly pulled off the impossible.

I clenched my fists, feeling an overwhelming sense of gratitude and excitement. "System, what does the experience card mean?" I asked, my voice trembling slightly.

"The experience card allows the host to replicate the exact mindset, technique, and execution of the original event in any match of your choice. However, it can only be used once."

I nodded slowly, absorbing the information. So, it's a trump card... a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. A tool that could change the course of any match when I needed it the most.

I leaned back against the headboard, my mind replaying Kohli's knock in exquisite detail—the stunning straight six off Haris Rauf, the calculated chase, the raw emotion as he fell to his knees after sealing the win. It wasn't just cricket; it was poetry in motion. And now, I had the chance to experience that same magic firsthand.

But when should I use it? That was the question gnawing at me. The temptation to use it early was strong, but deep down, I knew it had to be saved for the perfect moment—when the stakes were highest, and the pressure was crushing.

Later that night, as the city slept, I sat by my window, staring out at the twinkling skyline. The weight of expectations—my own, my family's, my country's—pressed down on my shoulders. But instead of feeling burdened, I felt energized.

I opened my laptop and started watching clips of Ponting's pull shots, analyzing every movement, every shift of weight, the angle of his bat. The way he read the bowler's mind was something I had to incorporate into my game.

"Someday," I whispered to myself, "I'll have my moment too."

The next morning, I was up early, heading to the nets at my private training facility. As I padded up and walked onto the turf, I could hear the faint chirping of birds and the rhythmic sound of leather hitting willow.

My coach, Mr. Verma, greeted me with a nod. "You're early today, Aarav."

"Big day's coming," I replied with a grin.

He tossed me a new red ball. "Let's see how your pull shot's coming along."

I took my stance, replaying Ponting's movements in my head, and as the short ball came rushing towards me, I pivoted perfectly, sending the ball flying to the mid-wicket boundary with a crisp crack.

Coach whistled in appreciation. "Looks like someone's been doing their homework."

I grinned. If only he knew.