

Chapter 16: Shattered Walls, Shared Wounds

Hospital Scene – ICU Corridor

The sterile scent of antiseptic hung heavy in the air. Monitors beeped faintly in the background, each beat amplifying Jharna's dread. She stood frozen outside the ICU, her fingers trembling as she dialed yet another number.

"Ivaan, please... pick up," she whispered. No answer.

She called Adhik.

Vihaan.

Abhimaan. Ringing.. but no response.

Her heart sank further with each failed call.

Just then, the ICU door swung open. A doctor stepped out, removing his mask, his expression unreadable.

"Are you her attendant?" he asked.

Jharna nodded quickly, "Yes, I'm her daughter-in-law."

He sighed, "What medicines did she take?"

Jharna stammered, her voice fragile, "The usual... the ones she takes for her migraines... I didn't check, I just..."

The doctor cut her off gently, but firmly, "No. These weren't her usual medications. The drugs she consumed had a strong sedative compound that reacted dangerously with her existing prescription. We've detected signs of severe internal damage — it appears to be a toxic reaction."

He paused, then delivered the blow.

"Her condition is critical. We've moved her to emergency observation... but we can't promise anything yet."

And with that, he walked away.

Jharna's knees buckled as the words echoed in her head. She leaned against the cold hospital wall, her breath ragged. A dam inside her broke loose.

Her voice cracked as she whispered,

"Not again... Not again...!!!"

Tears streamed uncontrollably down her cheeks.

“I’ve already lost too much. I can’t watch another person slip away... I can’t... Maa, please...”

Her phone slipped from her hand and clattered onto the floor, just like her strength. The world around her spun — but the ICU doors remained closed.

And this time, she was truly alone.

Maurya Enterprises – Fire Site

Smoke still lingered in the air, mingling with the acrid scent of burnt wires and ash. The fire was finally under control. Sirens faded in the distance as the last of the injured were transferred to nearby hospitals.

Adhik and Vihaan approached Ivaan, who stood silently amidst the chaos, his eyes scanning the damage with furrowed brows.

Adhik: "Everything’s under control now. But... I’m still wondering—how the hell did this even happen?"

Vihaan: "Exactly. No sign of a short circuit, no gas leak. All safety measures were in place. It doesn’t make sense."

Ivaan’s jaw clenched, his mind racing.

Ivaan: "This wasn’t an accident..."

His eyes flicked toward a broken wall-mounted camera nearby.

"It was planned. Someone knew exactly what they were doing. Even the security footage—"

He trailed off.

Just then, Sagarika rushed in, her eyes wide with worry. Without a word, she threw her arms around Vihaan. Everyone turned sharply.

Vihaan startled, "Sagarika? What are you doing here? What happened?"

She struggled to speak, breathless, "Sh... Shikha Aunty...!!"

Ivaan’s gaze sharpened immediately.

Adhik, "Mom? What happened to her? Why are you crying?"

Sagarika turning to Vihaan, voice shaking, "I saw the fire news and kept calling you... but no one answered. So I called Jharna bhabhi. She’s at the

hospital—Shikha aunty's in the ICU... she's critical."

A heavy silence dropped.

Ivaan's eyes widened in horror. He pulled out his phone—screen filled with multiple missed calls from Jharna.

He immediately dialed her back.

Jharna picked up almost instantly, her voice breaking, "Ivaan... where were you? I called so many times—please come fast... Maa's not okay... she... she's—"

She broke down mid-sentence, sobbing uncontrollably.

Ivaan, "Don't cry. I'm coming. I'm on my way!"

He hung up and took off without another word.

Just then, Abhimaan arrived. He had already overheard everything. His steps slowed, and for a second, he stood frozen, eyes glazed in disbelief.

Hospital – ICU Wing

Ivaan stormed into the corridor, his breath heavy, eyes darting until they landed on Jharna, standing alone outside the ICU. Her face was pale, streaked with tears. She looked up—eyes meeting his.

They both froze.

In that moment, words failed them. Fear and guilt clashed in their eyes.

Neither moved. Neither blinked.

A few seconds later, Adhik, Vihaan, Sagarika, and Abhimaan arrived.

Adhik walked over and placed a hand on Jharna's shoulder.

Adhik, "Bhabhi... what happened to mom?"

Jharna swallowed hard, tears brimming again, "She took the wrong medicines. They reacted badly... and now... she's critical."

A sharp gasp escaped Vihaan. Sagarika covered her mouth. Even Abhimaan's stoic face crumbled.

Silence wrapped around them — a silence that screamed more than any words could.

Later

They were all there, waiting. Worry etched into every line on their faces. The silence was suffocating.

Sagarika kept stealing glances at Abhimaan, her lips pressing together, eyes flickering with uncertainty. Vihaan noticed.

Vihaan softly, “What’s wrong?”

She hesitated. Then gathered courage.

“Vihaan... actually... it was Abhimaan uncle who gave Shikha aunty the medicine.”

Vihaan frowned. “What?”

Sagarika nervously, “When I visited her earlier, she had a headache... and uncle was giving her medicine. But he seemed rushed. Maybe... maybe he gave the wrong one...”

Shhh — Vihaan cutting her off sharply. “Don’t say that. Mamaji isn’t that careless. And don’t mention this to anyone — especially Ivaan bhai.

Otherwise—”

“Otherwise... what?”

A low voice thundered behind them.

They turned, stunned, to find Ivaan standing there, red-eyed, fists clenched.

Sagarika froze. Vihaan’s mouth opened, but no words came.

Adhik, who had been standing near the ICU doors, turned sharply, alert.

Hospital Garden

Abhimaan sat on a bench in the garden area, staring at an old, creased photograph in his wallet — Shikha, little Ivaan, and Adhik smiling under the sun. His eyes were misty.

A gentle hand touched his shoulder.

He turned to find Jharna.

She sat beside him, gave a faint smile.

Jharna, “I knew it. You love them... you just never say it out loud.”

Abhimaan’s voice cracked as he stared at the photo.

Abhimaan, “I lost, Jharna. I failed... as a husband, as a father. I couldn’t even protect my wife. Ivaan’s right. I chased money... and lost everything that mattered.”

He broke down.

Abhimaan choking, “But... I never did it for me. I wanted to give them comfort. A good life. They deserved it. But life... life dragged us here. And now... I have nothing.”

Jharna gently placed a hand on his back.

Jharna, “No... you still have a chance. Remember, today Ivaan and Adhik hugged you. That means there’s still love. They’re your sons. They may not show it, but it’s there. Maa will be fine... you just need to hold on.” She handed him a bottle of water. He gave a small, broken smile and reached to take it—

Crash!

The bottle flew from his hand, landing with a thud on the ground.

They both looked up.

Ivaan stood there — burning in rage, eyes blazing.

Ivaan sarcastically clapping, “What a performance! Truly Oscar-worthy. You should’ve tried acting, Mr. Maurya. Would’ve been a top star.”

At that moment, Vihaan, Sagarika, and Adhik rushed in.

Jharna sternly, “Ivaan! What is this behavior? Papa is already worried—”

Ivaan cutting her coldly, “Worried? Him? No. He’s the reason we’re all worried.”

Vihaan, “Bhai, please calm down—”

Sagarika panicked, “I didn’t mean it like that. Maybe... maybe I misunderstood...”

Jharna sharply, “Misunderstood what, Sagarika?”

Adhik snapping, “He gave the medicine to Mom! In a rush. He didn’t even check. That’s why she’s in the ICU right now!”

All eyes turned to Abhimaan.

He looked shattered, trying to recollect.

Flashback

Shikha was pressing her head, wincing from the migraine.

Sagarika entering cheerfully, “Aunty!”

Shikha looked up weakly.

Sagarika, “You okay?”

Shikha, “It’s just this migraine, beta...”

Just then, Abhimaan stormed in.

Abhimaan in a rush, “Shikha, I gave you that file. Where is it?”

Shikha (trying to get up), “It’s... somewhere, I’ll—”

Sagarika, “Wait, aunty. Tell me where it is, I’ll get it.”

Shikha pointed. Sagarika fetched the file and handed it over to Abhimaan.

Abhimaan, “You’re so stubborn. You’re in pain. Why haven’t you taken medicine?”

Shikha softly, “I’ll manage...”

Abhimaan gruffly, reading file, “Enough. Take it.”

He pulled out a strip and handed her a pill.

Shikha hesitating, “But—”

Abhimaan cutting her off, “Just take it!”

She sighed and swallowed it. His phone rang. He picked it up, distracted.

Abhimaan, “Rest now. I’ll be back late.”

He walked out.

Flashback Ends

Abhimaan stood pale, almost trembling. He nodded, “I gave her the medicine...”

Ivaan furious, “Did you check it before giving?”

Abhimaan’s silence was the only answer.

Tears spilled from his eyes. He shook his head — no.

Ivaan exploding, “That’s your problem, Mr. Maurya! You always put work

first! Not your family. Not even your wife—she always defended you, always stood by you! And you—”

He couldn't finish. With a loud yell, he kicked a nearby bench, sending it sliding.

Jharna, “Ivaan, please—calm down!”

He showed her his palm, stopping her in her tracks.

Ivaan through gritted teeth, “Not this time. You were taking his side too, right? Your so-called father-in-law standing here like he's innocent...”

He punched a nearby tree.

Crack!

Blood oozed from his knuckles.

Jharna shouting, “Ivaan!”

She rushed toward him, but he pushed her away.

Ivaan shaking, “Just... leave me alone!”

He stormed off, his rage echoing behind him.

Adhik shot a withering glare at Abhimaan, then turned and silently walked back to the ICU.

Abhimaan collapsed to his knees.

Abhimaan whispering, “What have I done...”

Sagarika burst into tears.

Sagarika crying, “This... this is all because of me. I shouldn't have said anything... I—”

Vihaan hugging her, “Shhh... no. You didn't anything intentionally.”

Jharna determined, “Vihaan, take care of everyone here. I'm going after Ivaan. God knows what he'll do in this state.”

Vihaan nodded, gently supporting Sagarika, while Jharna ran in the direction Ivaan had gone, her heart pounding louder than her steps.

Jharna gripped the steering wheel tightly, her knuckles pale. Where could he have gone? Her mind raced. His villa... maybe he went there.

Without wasting another second, she turned the car toward Ivaan's villa. As soon as she reached, she parked hurriedly and rushed inside. Her heart pounded louder with each step, her mind clouded with dread. She pushed open the door to Ivaan's room—and froze. The place was in ruins. Furniture overturned, glass shattered, books strewn across the floor. And amidst the chaos stood Ivaan—sweating, breath ragged, rage pouring out of him as he hurled whatever came into his grasp.

“Ivaan!” Jharna shouted, stepping in. “Stop it! What are you doing?!” But before she could get closer, he stormed toward her and grabbed her by the arms, pulling her roughly toward him. His grip was iron-tight—painful.

“Ivaan, let go!” she winced. “You’re hurting me.” His jaw clenched, voice laced with fury and anguish. “Why the hell did you come here?”

Jharna struggled, trying to break free. “Please, Ivaan, calm down...”

“Your father-in-law tried to kill my mom!” he spat, eyes blazing. “And you... you said he loved us. You made me believe in him! Because of you, I went to Maurya Enterprises, I handled the fire, the chaos—everything! And what did he do in return? He killed my mother!”

Her breath caught in her throat. “No... no, Ivaan. Maa will be alright. Please believe me. Nothing will happen to her.”

But he was spiraling—consumed by pain. He shoved her away. Jharna stumbled and fell, scraping her hand against the broken glass on the floor. A thin trail of blood marked her palm. Ivaan saw it. His rage faltered.

This is all my fault. Everything is happening because of me. I couldn't protect my mom. I hurt her... and now I've hurt you too. I wasn't there when Maa needed me the most, I wasn't answering your calls when you needed... and now, my mom fighting for her life.

He began to panic. His chest heaved with ragged breaths. Then—suddenly—he turned and punched the wall. Hard.

“Stop!” Jharna cried, rushing toward him as he lifted his fist again.

But he was far gone. Detached from reality. Lost in guilt and despair.

Before he could land another blow, she stepped in between—closing her eyes instinctively, trembling.

Tears streamed down her cheeks.

But the next hit never came.

Silence.

She slowly opened her eyes. His fist had stopped mid-air. Their eyes met.

And in that one look—anger gave way to heartbreak.

He collapsed to his knees, hands covering his face, as sobs wracked his body. All the strength, all the walls he built around himself—crashed in a single moment.

Jharna knelt beside him without hesitation. Gently, she placed her hand on his head, her voice soft, comforting.

“Ivaan... your mom will be okay. I promise. She has to be. Don’t lose hope.”

And that was all it took.

He didn’t wait for words.

He leaned into her—wrapped his arms around her like a drowning man clinging to shore—and wept. Deep, aching sobs that came from the very soul.

Jharna held him tightly, arms around his back, patting it gently, letting her own tears fall freely. The room, though wrecked, was now filled with the rawest truth—grief, guilt, love, and the fragile hope that maybe... just maybe... they'd survive this together.

Sitara's Note

Sometimes, pain doesn't scream—it breaks things. Sometimes, love doesn't speak—it stands quietly in the middle of the storm, refusing to leave.

Writing this chapter was emotionally exhausting... but necessary. Ivaan's grief isn't just about his mother—it's about everything he thought he could control, falling apart in front of his eyes. And Jharna? She didn't come to fight. She came to hold. To remind him that even when the world burns, someone will stay.

This moment wasn't romantic. It was raw. Violent. Human. But in that collapse—in that one hug—Ivaan finally allowed himself to feel. And Jharna chose to be his calm, even while bleeding herself.

They both broke here... but not apart. They broke together.

– Sitara Chandria