

Ch 34: Silent Scars

Three Years Later — Maurya Mansion

The clock on the wall ticked steadily, its hands frozen at 1:17 a.m. The world outside was asleep, but inside, a woman sat by the window, pen in hand, pouring her heart into the pages of a diary.

Three years have passed... and so much has changed in this time. Today is your Ansh's ninth birthday. Every year, I bake him a cake, and every year, he glares at me and walks away. His anger... it has only grown with time. But now, I've learned to live with it.

Your Ivaan came home today—for Ansh's birthday. He only returns once a year now. In these three years, he has grown so silent... withdrawn. He speaks only to Miransh. Right now, the two of them are asleep, side by side. Somehow, they have become each other's only remedy for their wounds.

But if there's one thing that hasn't changed in all these years—it's their love for you. Still as strong. Still as endless. Ivaan searches for you in every street, every city. And Miransh... even today, he believes you are his only mother.

I wish you would return soon... so that I can finally leave. Don't worry—you haven't missed a single moment of these years. I've written everything down for you in these diaries. All of it—every memory, every tear, every smile.

Just come back soon, Jharna. Please...

—Your Meera di.

Meera closed the diary gently, pressing her hand over it as if holding back the weight of her emotions. Tears slipped down her cheeks, and she quickly wiped them away—yet her heart still ached with the same emptiness.

Morning — Kitchen

The warm aroma of freshly cooked food filled the air. Meera stood at the stove, carefully stirring a dish, when Adhik walked in, following the fragrance.

“Wow... what an aroma,” he said with a grin. “What’s cooking?”

Something special?”

Meera’s lips curved into a soft smile.

“Yes. It’s my son’s birthday—it has to be special.”

Adhik leaned forward, lifting the lid off a pot. The steam rose, carrying the rich scent of spices.

“Smells delicious,” he said, impressed.

“Thank you,” Meera replied gently. “You’ll make sure Miransh eats all this, won’t you?”

Adhik nodded, reassuringly.

“Of course. And don’t worry—I’ll tell him it’s from the restaurant, like always. I remember everything.”

Relief softened her expression. “Thank you,” she whispered, before quietly leaving the kitchen.

Adhik’s eyes lingered on her retreating figure. A sigh escaped him—heavy, unspoken.

Just then, Vihaan walked in, catching the look on Adhik's face. His lips twisted into a teasing smirk.

“Unbelievable. Love really does wonders... it turned a carefree playboy into a heartbroken Devdas.”

Adhik rolled his eyes.

“Easy for you to say. You’ll never understand what it feels like. You married the girl you’ve always loved.”

Vihaan’s smile softened with pride.

“Of course. Why wouldn’t I? I’ve only ever loved one girl in my life... and now she’s my wife.”

Adhik scoffed, shaking his head.

“Yeah, yeah. Fine. Now move aside. I need to take this to Miransh and then rush to the office. I’ve a lot of work waiting.”

Carrying the tray, Adhik walked out.

Vihaan watched him go, still smiling faintly at his brother’s change.

Later – Vihaan’s Room

Vihaan entered, lost in thought. Sagarika looked up from her book and noticed his expression.

“What’s on your mind?” she asked softly.

Vihaan sighed.

“So much has changed, hasn’t it? Adhik has become so responsible. I never imagined he’d join Maurya Enterprises.”

A gentle smile touched his lips.

Sagarika nodded, still surprised herself.

“Yes... even Shikha Aunty and Abhimaan Uncle were shocked when he announced it. But what made him change so suddenly?”

Vihaan slipped behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist. His voice was low, certain.

“Love changes even the strongest of men.”

The words hit Sagarika like a spark. Her smile faltered—vanishing quietly.

The morning sun glowed softly, its golden light filtering through the trees. Birds chirped, the grass still glistening with dew. The park was alive with joggers and children. A boy pedaled furiously through the park, sweat dripping down his temples, his headphones blasting music. His breath came heavy, but his eyes burned with determination.

Suddenly, his smartwatch buzzed. The screen lit up with a name—Adhik Chachu.

He braked sharply and answered.

“Champ,” Adhik’s familiar voice came through, warm yet firm, “enough exercise for today. Time to come home.”

Before the boy could reply, another cycle screeched to a halt beside him.

A boy around his age, looked at him curiously.

“What happened, Miransh?”

Miransh pulled out his earbuds, his tone clipped.

“Gotta go, Kiaan. Adhik Chachu’s calling.”

Kiaan grinned, unfazed.

“Alright, see you tomorrow.”

They shared a quick fist bump, brotherhood in the gesture.

As Miransh started pedaling again, a small voice called out.

“Hey, Miransh!”

A little girl, his new classmate, ran up to him. She smiled shyly, stretched out her hand.

“Happy Birthday!”

Miransh barely slowed. His eyes flicked to her hand, then away. He rolled his eyes, ignored the handshake, and pushed harder on the pedals—riding off without a word.

The girl froze, hurt flashing across her face. Her lips pressed into a pout as she watched him leave.

Kiaan walked up, shrugging.

“Don’t take it personally. He hate girls.”

The girl blinked innocently.

“But... I only wished him Happy Birthday.”

“Doesn’t matter,” Kiaan said bluntly. “He isn’t like the heroes in your fairytales.” With that, he mounted his cycle and rode away.

The little girl stood there, her eyes narrowing with quiet anger.

Maurya Mansion – Miransh’s Room

The door swung open, and Miransh stepped inside, still damp with sweat. He stopped short—Adhik was already waiting for him, leaning casually against the desk with a smile.

“Hey champ,” Adhik greeted warmly. “Happy Birthday.”

Miransh’s lips pressed into a hard line.

“Just Birthday. Not Happy. My Momma isn’t here.”

Adhik’s smile faltered. He lowered his voice.

“But your Dadda is.” Then he glanced around. “By the way, where is he?”

Ivaan bhai?”

Miransh sat heavily on the bed, his expression unreadable.

“He got a call. Someone said they might’ve seen Momma... in Pune. He rushed there. He promised he’ll come back soon.”

His voice stayed flat, emotionless—but his eyes betrayed the storm inside. Adhik’s shoulders sank with a sigh. He didn’t know what hurt more—the absence of Jharna, or the little boy’s growing silence.

Pune – A Remote Village

A team of police officers stood in a cluster, their boots pressing into the dusty ground. Amaan stood firm with his bodyguards flanking him, their eyes sharp.

In the middle of them all, stood a man—silent, motionless, yet radiating a storm inside him. It was Ivaan. His gaze was fixed ahead, but his eyes were hollow, carrying years of torment.

A villager stood nervously before them, spinning his story with exaggerated confidence.

“Sir, I saw her—the woman in the picture you showed me—”

Before he could finish, Amaan’s voice cut in, sharp as a blade.

“Address her properly. She’s Jharna Ma’am.”

The villager bobbed his head quickly.

“Y-yes, Jharna Madam. I saw her. She even came to my house... she was so restless, searching for her husband. Poor thing, I gave her food. But after that... I don’t know where she went.”

Amaan’s eyes narrowed.

“Oh? So you’re saying she came to your house?”

The villager puffed his chest, overconfident.

“Yes, yes, she came.”

“And you claim she was looking for her son?” Amaan pressed.

The villager nodded eagerly.

“Yes, yes, her son. She was searching for him.”

But Amaan's tone turned cold, calculated.

“Strange. Just a moment ago, you said she was looking for her husband.”

The villager froze, stumbling over his words.

“Uh... yes, her husband... not her son. She didn't say anything about a son. She doesn't... she doesn't have one.”

Amaan's brow arched, his voice razor sharp.

“So she told you herself that she doesn't have a son?”

The villager faltered, sweat glistening on his temple.

“I... I think she said something like that. Maybe I'm confused. It's hard to remember exactly what she said. Was it husband... or son... I...”

He didn't finish.

Amaan's fist connected with his face in a swift, merciless punch. The villager collapsed onto the dirt, trembling as blood dripped from his lip.

“Is your confusion clear now?” Amaan's voice thundered.

The man fell to his knees, pleading desperately.

“Forgive me! Please forgive me! I lied. I've never even met Jharna Madam. I only did it for money!”

Ivaan's jaw tightened. His eyes closed for a moment as though forcing back the rage burning inside him. He exhaled heavily, then turned on his heel and walked away, his shoulders heavy with silence.

The group began to move out of the village when one of the policemen muttered under his breath, “Sir... I think we're wasting our time. It's been years. There's no trace. Most likely... some wild animal must have dragged her body awa—”

His words ended with a violent crack.

Ivaan's fist smashed into his mouth.

Amaan tried to stop him but he didn't stop there. Fury blinded him as he struck again, his hands trembling with rage.

“She's not a body. She's my Jharna! My wife! Nothing has happened to her. I know it. She's alive. I just have to find her. I WILL find her!”

His voice broke on the last word, but his eyes burned with unwavering fire.

Shaking off Amaan's grip, Ivaan stormed ahead, his steps uneven yet fueled by unyielding determination.

Maurya Mansion

Ivaan entered the mansion, his left hand pressed tightly against his side to dull the pain. The injury from his fall during the helicopter rescue still hadn't healed; every movement was a reminder of that day.

From across the hall, Miransh spotted him. Hope instantly flickered in the boy's eyes—like it always did. He wanted to ask the same question he had asked countless times before: “Did you find my Momma?”

But he didn't. He just stood there, silently searching Ivaan's face for the answer.

Ivaan gave the slightest shake of his head. The hope in Miransh's eyes dimmed, but neither of them spoke. Without a word, Ivaan walked past him, clutching his injured hand, and entered his room.

And then—he froze.

There she was.

Jharna.

Standing there, as if time had folded back.

A smile broke across his tired face, and in that instant, all his pain seemed to melt away. He stepped forward slowly, like a man afraid that the vision before him would vanish if he moved too fast. His arms wrapped around her in a desperate embrace, holding her tightly—as if letting go meant losing her forever.

For the first time in years, his heart felt alive.

Just then—Miransh arrived. There was no expression on his face.

“Dadda?” He said.

Ivaan turned, still smiling through the tears stinging his eyes. “See, Miransh... your mom—”

But the words choked in his throat.

He turned back—

And the illusion shattered.

There was no Jharna. Only a cardboard cut-out of her, placed in the corner of the room.

His smile faded. His chest tightened painfully, as though someone was crushing his heart with an iron grip. The room felt heavier, colder.

His throat worked, but the only words that escaped were a broken whisper —

“Where are you, Jharna?”

Cape Town – A Modest Apartment

The waves of Cape Town crashed distantly against the shore, and the flat crown of Table Mountain stood tall under the pale sky. But inside a quiet apartment, time felt painfully still.

A woman stood in the small kitchen, her hair tied back, apron dusted with flour. The oven’s soft hum filled the silence as she carefully lifted out a cake, its golden-brown surface steaming gently. She set it on the counter and, with trembling fingers, picked up a piping bag filled with chocolate icing.

Slowly, she wrote a single word across the cake:

“Ansh.”

The letters wavered slightly, as if her hand carried the weight of three years’ worth of pain.

Her eyes lingered on the name, her lips quivering. She placed the piping bag down, her chest tightening with unshed tears.

“Happy Birthday, Ansh,” she whispered softly, her voice breaking, a fragile smile flickering across her face before fading just as quickly.

For a moment, silence swallowed her whole—except for the distant sound of waves crashing against the Cape Town shore.

Sitara's Note

Some wounds do not bleed on the skin; they bleed silently in the spaces of time.

Three years may have passed for the world, but for them—

for Ivaan,

for Miransh,

for Meera,

and for Jharna—time has not moved forward. It has only lingered like an unhealed scar.

Ivaan still breathes with Jharna's name on his lips. Miransh still waits for his mother's embrace. Meera still writes in the hope that her sister will one day return and read the life she missed. And far away, Jharna still whispers her love into the silence of Cape Town, to a son she cannot hold.

This chapter is not about reunion—it is about love's endurance in absence. Love that hurts. Love that waits. Love that refuses to die, even when everything else crumbles.

Sometimes, the greatest proof of love is not in meeting again—it is in surviving the distance until that day comes.

—Sitara Chandria