

Ch 37: Wound That Never Heals

Ivaan's voice cracked, heavy with anguish.

"Why didn't you come back? Why?"

And then—Jharna broke.

Almost shouting, she cried, "Because I didn't want to live with you!"

The words cut like glass.

Ivaan froze. His grip loosened, his body rigid, his mind refusing to believe.

He stared at her as if the ground beneath him had given way.

"No..." his voice came out as a whisper, trembling. "Say it again. I heard something wrong."

But her reply was ice-cold.

"For the first time, you heard me right... Mr. Ivaan Maurya."

The way she said his name—so distant, so formal—stabbed deeper than any blade.

Ivaan stood stunned, his chest hollow.

Jharna's eyes burned as she continued, her voice trembling but sharp.

"You asked why I didn't return? Why would I ever come back to you? To a man like you? A criminal who forced me into marriage. Who blackmailed me emotionally. The day I finally got the chance to escape—why on earth would I return? Why would I ever choose you again?"

Each word struck him like a hammer. His heart twisted in agony.

Jharna's voice rose, cracking under the weight of her pain.

"What happened? You wanted the truth, didn't you? But now you can't handle it. That's your problem, Ivaan—you never let anyone live in peace. I had finally started to breathe again, to live again... and then you show up, dragging me back into hell. Why can't you just let me go? What have I ever done to deserve this torment? Since the day you came into my life, you've only brought pain. I wish... I wish I had never met you!"

Her chest heaved violently. She clutched her head, trembling.

Seeing her condition, Ivaan instinctively stepped forward to hold her—but she shoved him away, screaming:

"Stay away!"

At that very moment, Manav and little Palki arrived, halting a few steps away as the storm unfolded.

Ivaan's desperation clawed at his voice as he stepped closer again.

"Jharna, what are you saying? Why are you saying this? You're angry with me? Because I couldn't save you that day? Because it took me so long to find you? Trust me, Jharna—I searched everywhere. Every corner of India where there was even a 1% chance you could be, I went there. I didn't know you were here. Only yesterday, when that little girl spoke to me, I realize... And you—you called me, didn't you? It was you who dialed my number. Right? Tell me you missed me... tell me that's why you called!"

His eyes burned with hope as he held her trembling hands in his.

But she wrenched herself free. Her voice sliced through him like fire.

"That call... wasn't for you. I dialed only to hear Ansh's voice. Not yours. Do you understand? Every time I've remembered you, it's with hatred, not love. You don't deserve love. You deserve nothing."

Her eyes flashed with fury as she spat the words that broke him completely.

"Now I finally understand why Chhaya left you for someone else. Because that's all you are, Ivaan—someone never worthy of being chosen."

The color drained from Ivaan's face. His world collapsed with those words.

Jharna's face was wet with sweat and tears. Her breaths came ragged, her body trembling. She clutched her head, on the verge of collapse.

Manav rushed to her side, gently taking her hand.

"Jharna... calm down. Please."

Ivaan's eyes fell to that hand—Manav's hand holding hers. Jharna didn't resist. She didn't even push him away.

Something shattered inside him.

"Jharna, let's go home," Manav whispered, steadying her. He signaled

Palki, who quickly clung to Jharna's other side. Together, they began to walk away.

Ivaan stood frozen, his vision blurred with tears, watching the three of them leave. The image stabbed his heart like a cruel painful echo of the past—just as when he had once seen Chhaya with another man.

The wound reopened. He collapsed to his knees on the pavement, broken, his sobs tearing the air.

Back at the house, Jharna rushed straight into her room and slammed the door shut. Her hands trembled violently as she began tearing through the room—throwing pillows, knocking things over, trying to silence the chaos inside her head.

Her skull throbbed, the pain unbearable. She clutched her temples and screamed, the sound raw and haunting.

Outside, Manav banged on the door.

"Jharna! Please, open the door. Are you alright? Talk to me!"

But inside, Jharna slid down to the floor, clutching her head. Her vision blurred, the world spinning out of focus—until finally, everything went black. She collapsed, unconscious.

Ivaan was on his knees, Jharna's cruel words echoing in his ears. His chest tightened, his vision blurred. He shut his eyes and screamed from the pit of his soul, the sound ripping through the silence.

Flashbacks struck him like lightning—

The first time he met Jharna.

The day he smeared haldi across her cheeks.

Their wedding vows, the nights they shared a bed.

The endless fights, the countless tears.

Her soft arms around him when he broke down.

Her voice when she soothed his pain.

Her whispered confession of love.

Yes—three years ago, on that cursed day of the accident—she had said it.

She had kissed him. She had walked into a field of landmines for him.

His eyes snapped open, breath ragged.

"She said it," he muttered, almost delirious. "She told me that she loves me. She kissed me. She risked her life for me. Her eyes today—they had tears. They were for me. She loves me. She still loves me."

But then, another thought struck him like venom. About Manav.

That man.

Ivaan's jaw tightened, suspicion clawing at his mind.

"That guy... what if he's blackmailing her?"

Wiping his tears, Ivaan pushed himself to his feet, fists clenched, rage burning in his chest. He stormed forward.

Inside the house, Manav was pounding on the locked door.

"Jharna! Please open up!"

Little Palki tugged his arm, her eyes wide.

"Best friend... did something happen to her?"

Manav knelt, trying to mask his worry.

"No, sweetheart. She's fine."

"But why won't she open the door?" Palki asked innocently. "Is it because I ate ice cream even when she told me not to? Is she angry at me?"

Manav forced a small smile.

"No, no. Your best friend could never be angry with you."

"Then why is the door closed?"

"Maybe it got stuck," he reassured. "She doesn't know how to open it.

Don't worry. I'll get her out."

Palki's face brightened. "Okay, okay!"

Manav braced himself and slammed against the door. On the second try, it burst open. He rushed inside—only to find Jharna collapsed unconscious on the floor.

"Jharna!" He dropped to his knees, shaking her gently. "Wake up, please. Jharna!"

Panic flashing in his eyes, he searched frantically through drawers and cupboards until at last, he found what he was looking for—a small case. Inside, an injection.

He tore the wrapping open, kneeling back beside her, when—
A fist smashed into his jaw.

Manav fell sideways, blood streaking the corner of his lips. He looked up to see Ivaan, eyes blazing like fire.

"I was right," Ivaan growled. "You're the reason she's like this."

Manav staggered to his feet, wiping the blood. He ignored Ivaan and reached for Jharna again, trying to inject her.

But Ivaan shoved him back, fury erupting.

"You think I'll let you hurt her in front of me?"

Manav's voice was steady. "She needs this injection."

"I don't need you to tell me what she needs!" Ivaan snarled. He scooped Jharna into his arms and laid her carefully on the bed, then turned with a death glare.

Manav stepped closer, his voice calm but firm.

"I understand. If someone touched my wife, I'd react the same way."

He placed the injection in Ivaan's hand.

"You've misunderstood me. We can talk about that later. For now—give her this, or she won't wake up."

Ivaan's rage boiled over. He threw the syringe aside, grabbed a paper cutter from the table, and pressed it hard against Manav's throat.

His voice was low, dangerous.

"You have no idea what I can do if it's about my family."

But Manav didn't flinch. He met Ivaan's burning eyes head-on.

"If killing me will save her, then do it. But remember this—if you don't give her that injection right now, and something happens to her... it will be your fault."

Ivaan froze, confusion swirling. "What do you mean?"

Manav calmly pried himself free of Ivaan's grip, picked up the injection, and retrieved a file from the drawer. He thrust it into Ivaan's hands.

"Read," he said.

As Ivaan flipped open the file, his eyes widened in shock.

Meanwhile, Manav calmly injected the medicine into Jharna's arm.

After half an hour...

Jharna slowly opened her eyes. The first thing she saw was little Palki, gently pressing her head with her tiny hands.

Jharna weakly took those little hands into her own and whispered, "What are you doing, baby?"

Palki looked at her with innocent concern.

"You had a headache, Best Friend. So I was helping you feel better."

Emotion welled up in Jharna's eyes. She pulled the girl into her arms, hugging her tightly.

Palki spoke again, her voice soft but firm, "Best Friend, I'll never eat ice cream again if you don't want me to. But please... don't ever lock yourself in the room like that."

Jharna cupped her face tenderly and kissed her forehead. A faint smile appeared on Palki's lips.

"Wait—I'll go to tell Mr. Teddy you're all better!" she chirped, and ran out of the room in a hurry.

As the room grew quiet, Jharna's eyes shifted. Her gaze fell on Manav, standing at a distance with his arms crossed. He finally walked over, dragged a chair closer, and sat down, studying her face.

"How are you feeling now?" he asked calmly.

Jharna's first words were not about herself. "Did... did Ivaan leave?"

Manav let out a small sigh, shaking his head. "If you keep acting stronger than you are, what can I even say?"

Jharna turned her face away, her sadness impossible to hide.

Manav's tone was half amused, half weary.

"Strange, isn't it? People marry so they can stay together forever. But the two of you... your story runs in the opposite direction."

Her voice cracked as she answered, "It's better this way. He'll stop searching for me... stop waiting for me. He'll hate me, and then—if I die tomorrow—it won't hurt him anymore."

"Really?"

The voice froze her blood. A voice so familiar it made her heart jolt.

Jharna's eyes shot wide as she turned. There stood Ivaan, stepping in through the balcony, the very file in his hands.

Confused, she looked at Manav, but he only rose quietly from his seat and walked out of the room without a word.

Ivaan came closer, his eyes fixed on her. He sat down on the edge of the bed, his presence overwhelming, his silence louder than thunder. Jharna refused to meet his gaze.

Wordlessly, he held out the file. Her eyes flickered to it—and widened in shock.

His voice was sharp, almost breaking, "If hiding secrets was a competition, you'd always win first place. First Miransh... and now this."

Jharna had no words. She sat frozen, her lips trembling.

"I don't even know," Ivaan continued, his voice raw, "if I should be angry at you... or—"

He stopped mid-sentence, swallowing the rest.

Finally, Jharna whispered, her voice breaking apart:

"I'm dying, Ivaan."

Hearing her, a tear slipped from his eyes.

"There's nothing anyone can do. I have a clot in my brain," she continued, her voice shaking with resignation.

Flashback — Three years ago

Jharna lay in a hospital bed, pale and weak. Manav stood silently in the corner, watching over her. The door opened and the doctor walked in, holding a file in his hands.

"Good. You're conscious now," the doctor said with a professional smile.

"Please call your family members—I need to discuss your medical condition with them."

"Medical condition?" Jharna's brows furrowed. "What do you mean? I'm fine... right?"

The doctor hesitated. "Not really. It would be better if your family were here."

Her voice rose, anxious. "No. Please tell me. What happened to me? What medical condition?"

The doctor sighed, lowering his voice. "You have a clot in your brain."

Jharna's eyes widened. A sharp gasp escaped her lips.

"It's small," the doctor continued quickly, "but still dangerous. I strongly recommend surgery. Otherwise... anything could happen at any time."

Her voice trembled. "If I go through the surgery... will I be fine?"

The doctor paused. "...Maybe yes. Or maybe no."

Her heart sank. "What do you mean, maybe?" she demanded, her eyes filling with tears.

The doctor tried to calm her. "Listen carefully. The surgery itself carries great risks. You might recover completely... but there's also the possibility of paralysis, coma, memory loss—or even death. But if you don't undergo the surgery... you will die. It's only a matter of time."

Tears spilled freely down her face as her world collapsed around her.

Flashback Ends

Back in the present, Jharna broke down completely. Her body shook as sobs wracked her chest.

"That doctor said I would die, Ivaan. And now... it's happening. I am dying."

She buried her face in her palms.

"How could I have come back to you, knowing this? Tell me, how?" her voice cracked. "The day I fell from that helicopter, everyone must have thought I died. If I had returned later, everyone would have been happy at first... but then, after learning about my illness, they would have only suffered again. You would have suffered, Ivaan. So I thought—why should I give the people I love the same grief, again and again? That's why... that's why I disappeared. That's why I stayed here."

Her sobs grew heavier, breaking the silence of the room.

Ivaan sat frozen, tears brimming in his eyes, staring at her as if the ground beneath him had collapsed.

Sitara's Note

Sometimes the truth doesn't set us free—it chains us tighter than lies ever could.

Love becomes a wound that refuses to heal, and silence becomes the only shield against breaking hearts.

Jharna carried her secret not out of betrayal, but out of love twisted with fear. And Ivaan... he carried his love like fire, burning even when left alone in the dark.

This chapter isn't about who's right or wrong.

It's about two souls, torn apart by fate, yet bound by the very love they cannot deny.

— Yours,

Sitara Chandria