### **From the First Hug to Forever**

The old clock in the living room chimed midnight, but the house wasn’t quiet. Inside the nursery, Neha stood by the crib, her hands trembling slightly as she reached out to pick up her newborn son, Aarav. His cries filled the room, a mix of hunger and discomfort. She held him close, his tiny body fitting perfectly against her chest.

As she rocked him gently, a sudden wave of emotions surged through her—love, fear, joy, and the overwhelming sense of responsibility. “Shh, my little one,” she whispered, her voice soft. “I’ve got you. I always will.”

The journey hadn’t been easy. Aarav was born two weeks early, after a long and complicated labor. Neha still remembered the sterile hospital room, the beeping machines, and the worried look on her husband Rahul’s face as they waited for the first cry.

When that tiny wail finally echoed through the room, it was like a promise—a promise that no matter how difficult the road ahead, it would all be worth it.

The first few months were a whirlwind. Sleepless nights blurred into drowsy days as Neha and Rahul navigated the challenges of parenthood. Aarav’s colic meant hours of crying, but they learned to take turns soothing him. Rahul would hum old lullabies from his childhood while pacing the room, and Neha would sit by the window, cradling Aarav and pointing out the stars.

“One day,” she whispered to him one night, “you’ll look at the stars and dream big dreams. And I’ll be here to help you reach them.”

Time passed, and Aarav grew into a curious toddler with wide, sparkling eyes. His first steps came one rainy afternoon when he toddled across the living room to reach Neha, his chubby hands outstretched. She swept him up into her arms, laughing and crying at the same time.

Rahul, watching from the couch, grabbed the camera to capture the moment. “First steps,” he said, grinning. “You’ll have to write this in his baby book.”

“It’s more than steps,” Neha replied, holding Aarav close. “It’s his first step into the world.”

Years turned into milestones. Aarav’s first day of school came with nervous goodbyes, and his first soccer game brought cheers from the sidelines. Rahul and Neha were always there, clapping the loudest, offering hugs after every success and reassurance after every fall.

One evening, as they sat together looking at Aarav’s art project—a messy but heartfelt painting of their family—Rahul remarked, “He’s growing so fast.”

Neha smiled, brushing her fingers over the painting. “But some things never change. The love we gave him from his first hug will carry him through forever.”

When Aarav turned 18, they celebrated with a small family dinner. After cutting the cake, Aarav stood and looked at his parents, his voice steady but filled with emotion.

“You’ve always been my constant,” he said. “Every hug, every word, every moment… it’s because of you that I’m ready for what’s next.”

Neha and Rahul exchanged a glance, their hearts full. As they hugged him tightly, they realized that the years, while fleeting, had given them something eternal—a bond that began with a tiny newborn cry and would last forever.

Late that night, as Neha and Rahul sat together on the couch, they looked through an old photo album. One picture caught their eye: Aarav as a baby, nestled in Neha’s arms, with Rahul leaning close, his hand on her shoulder.

“From the first hug to forever,” Rahul said softly, closing the album.

Neha nodded, her eyes glistening. “Forever, indeed.”