

Chapter 5: The Broken Promise

The night felt heavier than before.

Aariz stood at the top of the staircase, his breath shallow, listening to the silence that followed the footsteps. Nothing moved. Nothing spoke. Yet he knew—some promises, once broken, never truly disappeared. They lingered like ghosts.

He stepped forward.

The upstairs corridor was narrow, its walls scarred with cracks that time had carved deeply. A single door stood at the end, slightly open. Aariz recognized it instantly. It was his father's room—sealed shut the night everything fell apart.

His hand trembled as he pushed the door open.

Inside, the room was untouched. The bed was neatly made, sheets folded with unnatural care. Dust coated the furniture, but the air carried a faint scent of sandalwood—his father's scent. Aariz swallowed hard, memories rushing in uninvited.

He remembered the promise.

"I'll come back," his father had said that night.

"No matter what happens."

He never did.

Aariz moved toward the desk by the window. A small wooden box rested there, its surface scratched, its lock broken. Inside lay an old wristwatch, its glass cracked, frozen at the exact moment the fire had started. Beneath it was a photograph—three smiling faces, whole and unbroken.

A family that no longer existed.

Suddenly, the floorboard behind him creaked.

Aariz spun around, heart racing, but the room was empty. Still, the sense of being watched grew stronger. The shadows along the walls seemed to stretch, reaching for him like hands desperate to be noticed.

Then he heard it.

A whisper.

Not loud. Not clear. But unmistakable.

"You were never meant to know."

The voice wasn't unfamiliar.

It was regret.

Aariz backed away, gripping the photograph tightly. The truth was unraveling faster now. His mother's silence, his father's disappearance, the fire—it was all connected by a promise that had been broken long before the flames.

As he turned to leave, his foot struck something on the floor. A folded paper slid out from beneath the bed. He knelt and picked it up, unfolding it carefully.

It was a confession.

The ink had faded, but the words burned with clarity. The fire had not been an accident. It was a choice. A desperate one. Made to protect a secret that should never have survived.

Aariz closed his eyes.

The broken promise was not his father's alone.

And now that he knew the truth, there was no turning back. The past had claimed him, and it would not let go until every lie was exposed.

Some promises, once broken, demand a price.

And Aariz was about to pay it.