

Chapter 13: Possessive Hearts

Maurya Mansion

Jharna and Ivaan descended to the hall, their fingers intertwined, an unspoken bond evident in their grip. Everyone was already gathered—except Abhimaan. Shikha stepped forward, concern softening her voice. "How are you feeling now, beta?"

Jharna smiled gently, her eyes shining with quiet strength. "I'm fine, Maa." Vihaan and Adhik sat side by side. As Adhik sipped his protein shake, he discreetly nudged Vihaan, nodding toward one side. Vihaan glanced in that direction and smiled knowingly. Deepa, catching their silent exchange, leaned forward. "What's going on between you two?"

Adhik chuckled, eyes sparkling with mischief. "Nothing, bua ji. Just watching someone's impatience in action."

Deepa frowned, puzzled. "What do you mean?"

Adhik's grin widened. "Ivaan bhai—let go of bhabhi's hand. She's not going anywhere. She's staying right here."

Heads turned toward Jharna and Ivaan. Their hands remained clasped, a silent tether neither had noticed. Ivaan caught the realization himself and quickly released her hand, prompting laughter around the room.

Changing gears, Ivaan asked, "Where's Miransh?"

Deepa replied, "He left for school hours ago."

"Good," Ivaan nodded. "I have some work too—I need to head out."

Jharna chimed in, "I have to visit the bakery today as well."

Ivaan frowned with concern. "Are you sure? Your leg still hurts. How will you manage? You should rest."

Adhik and Vihaan echoed in unison, "You should rest...!!!"

Shikha and Deepa chuckled quietly at their worry. Jharna stood firm. "No, I'm okay. There's a lot to do at the bakery. Malini aunty has been handling everything alone for too long. I need to go."

Before Ivaan could respond, Vihaan stepped in smoothly. "I'll drop you,

then. I was heading to my art gallery anyway; I can take you on the way." Ivaan's glare was swift. Jharna. "No, Vihaan, you're troubling yourself for no reason. I can manage."

Vihaan smiled warmly. "It's no trouble at all. You're family now. How can helping family be a trouble? Come on, let me help." He gently supported Jharna as she began to walk.

Adhik muttered, half amused, "This Vihaan bhai of mine—going to get himself into trouble trying to help." He laughed softly.

Vihaan guided Jharna to his car—only to find a flat tire. He stared, bewildered. "How did this happen? The tires were fine when I loaded the car!"

Ivaan appeared then, smirking. "This is what happens when you try doing a job that's not yours."

Vihaan frowned. "What do you mean?"

Without a word, Ivaan stepped forward, scooped Jharna into his arms, and said, "Jharna's husband is alive. I'll take her wherever she needs to go. You don't need to worry."

Jharna blinked, surprised by the possessiveness in Ivaan's tone. Vihaan frowned but smiled awkwardly. "I was just helping, bhai. And you had urgent work. Jharna's like a sister to me."

Ivaan's eyes darkened. "She's not your sister—she's your sister-in-law. So call her that."

Vihaan hesitated. "But she's younger than me..."

"I'm older than you," Ivaan cut in firmly, "and she's my wife. So call her sister-in-law." His glare silenced Vihaan as he carefully placed Jharna in the car and drove off.

Poor Vihaan stood there, a swirl of confusion clouding his mind. Ivaan had never claimed anything so possessively before, not even when he was with Chhaya. How could someone be so fiercely protective?

In the Car

Jharna scolded softly, frustration coloring her voice. "Why did you speak to Vihaan like that? He was just trying to help. You didn't need to scold him so harshly. I thought you were only harsh with me, but you act the same with your brothers too."

Ivaan pressed his fingers to his temples, irritation flickering across his face. He turned up the music volume, trying to drown out her words.

Jharna, undeterred, reached over and shut it off. "I'm talking to you, and you're ignoring me!"

Ivaan hit play again.

Jharna turned it off.

He switched it on.

Back and forth they went, stubborn wills locked in playful battle, until finally the music player gave out entirely—no button responded.

Ivaan sighed deeply, while Jharna pounded the console. "What happened? Is it broken?"

Ivaan smirked. "No, it's just tired... taking a nap."

Jharna shot him a sharp look. "It's all your fault."

"Yes, yes," he mocked, "everything is my fault. The music player broke because of me. You got hurt because of me. Pollution's rising because of me. Traffic jams? Me too. Everything in this world is my fault. Happy now? So please, just shut up before we crash."

Jharna's eyes flashed, voice fierce. "The accident already happened—you broke my leg. What else do you plan to break?" She turned away, lips pressed tight. Ivaan shook his head, a softer look flickering behind his usual stern facade.

Art Studio

Vihaan was deeply absorbed in painting, brush strokes flowing smoothly across the canvas. Suddenly, a warm embrace wrapped around him from behind. He knew immediately who it was.

"You know," he said, smiling without turning, "I couldn't get this part right before you came. But as soon as you showed up, everything fell into place."

He turned to see Sagarika pouting playfully.

"No way," she teased.

He pulled her close. "You're my lucky charm. Since you came into my life, it's been filled with happiness."

She shook her head, eyes soft. "No, I'm the lucky one. You gave me love and family—that's all anyone ever needs."

He lifted her chin, eyes locking onto hers. "It's your words that steal my heart." Leaning in, he moved closer to her lips. Sagarika closed her eyes, ready—

The phone rang, cutting through the moment. Vihaan sighed and stepped back to answer. It was Jharna.

"Sorry!" came her voice, slightly embarrassed.

Vihaan raised an eyebrow. "Sorry? For what?"

Jharna explained from the bakery, "Ivaan shouldn't have said those things to you. I'm sorry on his behalf."

Vihaan laughed softly. "Don't worry. That's just how we brothers are. Ivaan bhai loves us—he just shows it by scolding. No offense taken. Chill."

"But then why did you call me Bhabhi?" she asked.

He chuckled. "Because you're bhai's only wife, and it's his rule that I call you that. So, from now on, Bhabhi it is."

Sagarika, admiring Vihaan's paintings, suddenly exclaimed, "Wow!"

Jharna heard and smiled. "Sagarika's there, right? Sorry for calling at the wrong time. Enjoy!" She hung up quickly.

Vihaan smiled and gave Sagarika a warm hug from behind.

Later, Ivaan sat on the sofa, eyes cold as they fixed on the man tied before him—the kidnapper of Jharna. The man's body was bruised and battered,

groaning pitifully.

"Le... let me go," he begged weakly.

Ivaan's lips curved into a crooked smile. "You really have a interest in kidnapping my wife and grabbing her saree pallu, don't you?"

He signaled Amaan, standing nearby. Amaan nodded, motioning two boys forward. They returned moments later, carrying burning coals.

Ivaan's glare never wavered as the boys pressed the hot coals against the man's skin. The man's screams filled the room, raw and desperate.

Suddenly, Ivaan's phone buzzed with a message:

Superhero, I want to eat something tasty. Will you make it?

The corner of Ivaan's mouth twitched into a smile. Standing, he commanded coldly, "Continue for an hour, then finish him." Without looking back, he walked away. The screams lingered in the silence.

Bakery

Jharna sat in her cabin, sipping tea as Malini placed a fresh cup before her.

"Thank you, Aunty," Jharna sighed. "I really needed this."

Malini smiled. "If you work this hard, you'll need it."

Jharna nodded. "If I don't work for two days, everything piles up."

Her phone rang—it was Ivaan.

"Why is this black beast calling now?" she muttered.

Malini scolded, "Jharna! He's your husband. How can you talk like that?"

Jharna chuckled. "Other people's husbands might be gods, but mine is definitely a beast, a black beast." She answered.

Ivaan said, "Sending the car. Be home in half an hour or this black beast will come get you himself." He hung up, leaving Jharna blinking at the phone.

Malini asked, "What's wrong? Everything okay?"

"Y-yes, fine," Jharna replied hurriedly, grabbing her things. "I have to go."

Malini shook her head, smiling, "Oh God, this girl!"

On the Road

Jharna walked, eyes glued to her phone, muttering, "So much work at the bakery, but he keeps calling. If I don't go, he'll come here. Stupid."

Her pace slowed as a sudden movement caught her eye. She glanced a way—and froze.

There, standing quietly a few steps away, was a girl she hadn't seen in years. The woman's face was familiar, a fragile smile trembling on her lips. Her heart skipped a beat. A tear escaped her eye before she could stop it. Her feet began moving on their own, as if pulled by years of silent longing. But just then, her phone rang, yanking her back to the present.

She fumbled, breath hitching as she answered.

"Ma'am, I'm outside the bakery," the driver's voice crackled through the line.

Jharna glanced back at the woman, her eyes swimming with a storm of unspoken emotions—longing, regret, hesitation.

But it was already too late. The girl had just gotten into a cab. The door closed. The engine started.

She stood there, frozen, watching the car drive away and vanish into the traffic. Her heart was heavy, her mind screaming memories—of giggles in the rain, pinky promises, shared secrets, and the day, that changed everything.

She wiped her tears with a sharp breath, forcing calm into her voice.

"I've come too far in life now... there's no road back anymore."

And she turned, walking back toward the bakery, her steps heavier than before.

Her steps took her back toward the bakery, but the weight of that moment clung to her, heavy and undeniable.

Maurya Mansion

Ivaan and Miransh were in the kitchen. Ivaan stood at the counter, focused on chopping vegetables, while Miransh sat cross-legged on the kitchen slab, watching him like a curious little hawk.

“Superhero, make it spicy! Momma loves spicy food,” Miransh chirped with excitement.

Without missing a beat, Ivaan replied, “Of course. It’ll be spicy and packed with flavors — just how your momma likes it.”

In his mind, he added, “It’ll have that Shimla touch, Champ. She’s going to love it.” A soft smile spread across his face.

“Why are you smiling like that, Superhero?” Miransh asked, tilting his head in confusion.

Ivaan blinked, realizing he was smiling for no reason—or at least, not one he was ready to admit. Why am I smiling just thinking about Jharna? he wondered, suddenly caught up in thoughts of her again.

Before he could unravel his feelings further, Miransh’s voice brought him back, just as he noticed someone walking into the kitchen. It was Jharna. She looked distracted, her brows slightly furrowed, as if lost in another world.

“What is she doing here? Did she know something about me? No.. no.. It’s not possible!!” Jharna’s thoughts swirled in confusion as she slowly walked in.

Ivaan’s eyes followed her silently. He could tell something was off. There was a weight in her steps, a question in her eyes.

Miransh noticed too. Following Ivaan’s gaze, he spotted Jharna and immediately lit up.

“Momma!” he shouted joyfully.

His voice broke both Jharna and Ivaan out of their thoughts. Jharna looked at her little boy and smiled, walking straight to him. She pressed a kiss on his forehead.

Grinning, Miransh wrapped his arms around her. “Momma, we were waiting for you. Superhero needs your help!”

Jharna glanced at Ivaan, then her eyes moved across the kitchen counter. She picked up a packet and raised an eyebrow. “So... making noodles?”

Ivaan gave her a dramatic look. “That’s not noodles. It’s called pasta. Spaghetti pasta.”

Jharna inspected the packet again. “Oh.”

Ivaan assumed she’d understood, but the next moment she said with a playful grin, “Still looks like noodles to me — and I’m going to call it that.”

He let out a deep sigh and rolled his eyes, choosing to ignore her sass as he got back to cooking.

The three of them fell into a comfortable rhythm — cooking, chatting, laughing. The kitchen echoed with warmth. For a fleeting moment, they looked like a perfect little family.

Soon, the dish was ready. As Ivaan sprinkled fresh coriander leaves over it, he announced, “It’s done.”

Impatient as ever, Miransh took the first bite. “Mmm! This is delicious!” he exclaimed with a mouthful.

Jharna looked at his glowing face, then turned to Ivaan, whose eyes were full of quiet pride. He gave her a subtle nod, encouraging her to taste it.

She took a bite.

And stopped.

The taste hit her heart before it reached her tongue. A memory unlocked — warm, familiar, and painfully tender. Her eyes welled up without warning.

Ivaan noticed. “What happened? You didn’t like it?” he asked, a bit worried.

Before Jharna could respond, Miransh spoke up with confidence, “No, Superhero. Momma loves it. These are happy tears.” He reached up and gently wiped her cheek.

Jharna smiled through her tears and looked at Ivaan. “It’s really good,” she said softly, taking another bite.

“Just like Mumma... She used to make noodles just like this,” she

thought, savoring each bite peacefully.

Watching her eat, Ivaan thought to himself, “I did it. I really did it.” And then he finally tasted it too.

Sitara's Note

Some bonds don't need validation — they announce themselves in the smallest gestures: a held hand, a protective glare, or a bowl of homemade noodles...

Ivaan, "Noodles!! Sitara atleast you can pronounce it correctly..!!!"

Okay, okay! Mr. Black Beast.

A bowl of homemade spaghetti pasta that tastes like memory.

This chapter isn't just about love — it's about claiming it, sometimes fiercely, sometimes softly.

From Vihaan's respectful warmth to Ivaan's stormy possessiveness...

From Jharna's fierce independence to her silent longing...

Every heartbeat echoed with unspoken truths and hidden aches.

And somewhere in between a smile, a tear, and a plate of pasta that tasted like home — They found a moment that felt like forever.

Because sometimes...

Love doesn't need words — just the right flavor.

— Sitara Chandria