

Chapter 7: Bound By Fate

A Few Days Later

Today was the day—Jharna and Ivaan were getting married. Before the wedding, the Haldi ceremony was in full swing. The rituals were being held at separate locations; Ivaan had already been smeared with turmeric, and now it was Jharna's turn.

As Shikha stepped forward to apply the turmeric, Jharna looked at her intently and said, "Say it."

Shikha blinked, momentarily taken aback. "Say what?" she asked.

Jharna gave her a knowing smile. "There's something on your mind, isn't there? Go ahead and say it."

Gently rubbing turmeric on Jharna's skin, Shikha spoke, her tone sincere.

"You are a mother, Jharna. I understand that your child is your world.

That's true for every mother. But from today, you will also be my Ivaan's wife. You have to nurture this relationship just as you have nurtured the bond with your son. My Ivaan has already had his heart broken once—it hardened him. If it shatters again, he won't just turn to stone; he will become unrecognizable."

Jharna listened attentively as Shikha continued, "Will you be able to give my Ivaan the love he deserves?"

A lump formed in Jharna's throat. She wasn't sure how to respond. Placing her hand gently over Shikha's, she said, "Aunty, I will devote my entire life to this relationship."

A relieved smile spread across Shikha's face. One by one, the women took turns applying turmeric to Jharna, their laughter filling the air.

Later, Jharna retreated to her room and sat on the bed, lost in thought.

Shikha's words replayed in her mind when, suddenly, the door creaked open. Miransh entered, holding a small bowl filled with turmeric.

Jharna frowned in confusion. "Ansh, why do you have that?"

With a bright grin, Miransh announced, "Because I need to apply Haldi to both of you!"

Jharna's brows furrowed. "Both?"

Before she could process his words, Ivaan strode into the room. Jharna's eyes widened in surprise. "What is he doing here?" she asked, startled.

Miransh ignored her reaction, grabbing Ivaan's hand and pulling him forward. "I have to apply Haldi to both of you!" he repeated, his excitement bubbling over.

Ivaan chuckled and knelt slightly to Miransh's level. "Then go ahead, champ." He turned his face toward the boy, making Jharna smile unconsciously.

With a giggle, Miransh smeared turmeric onto Ivaan's cheek before turning to Jharna and doing the same.

Jharna brushed her hands over his little arms. "Happy now, sweetheart?" she asked fondly.

Miransh pouted. "No! You two need to apply turmeric to each other, too. It's your function, and you haven't done it yet!"

Jharna stiffened, her eyes darting to Ivaan, who was watching her with an unreadable expression. She cleared her throat and tried to explain, "Ansh, the bride and groom don't do this to each other. Besides, look—there's no turmeric left."

Miransh's shoulders slumped in disappointment. Seeing this, Ivaan placed a reassuring hand on his little shoulder. "Don't worry, champ. We'll do it."

Jharna's head snapped toward him, startled. "But the turmeric—"

Ivaan smirked. "Who needs a bowl when we have better options?" His gaze locked onto hers, mischievous and intense.

Before she could protest, he reached out, his fingers wrapping around her waist. In one swift motion, he pulled her closer. Their faces were inches apart.

Jharna's breath hitched. The proximity, the warmth of his touch—it was overwhelming.

Then, before she could retreat, Ivaan leaned in, tilting his head slightly,

and brushed his cheek against hers. The warmth of his skin, the lingering traces of turmeric—it sent a jolt of awareness through her. Her heart pounded furiously against her ribcage.

For a woman who had spent her life devoted to her child, she had never been this close to any man before. And now, with Ivaan so near, a fluttering sensation erupted in her stomach. Her mind went blank.

A faint smirk played on Ivaan's lips as he repeated the motion on her other cheek, his voice dropping to a whisper. "If your heart keeps racing like this, it's going to burst out of your chest."

Then, just as swiftly, he pulled away, stepping back with an amused expression.

Jharna remained frozen in place, her hands curling into fists at her sides. Her entire body felt flushed. She couldn't even meet his gaze.

Ivaan turned to Miransh, as if nothing had happened. "Happy now?"

Miransh beamed. "Yes!"

With that, Ivaan scooped the boy into his arms and headed for the door.

"Alright then, let's go. Your mom needs some time to recover." His teasing tone made Jharna's face grow even warmer.

As they disappeared, she pressed a trembling hand over her wildly beating heart, trying in vain to steady it.

In the Temple

Jharna stood motionless in her bridal attire, facing Lord Krishna's statue in the temple. Her gaze was fixed on the divine figure, lost in the whirlwind of her thoughts, tears were flowing down from her eyes.

Suddenly, a voice broke the silence.

"Don't worry, boss. There won't be any trouble at the wedding. I've personally ensured tight security. There's no threat from the underworld either."

Jharna instantly recognized the voice. Startled, she wiped her tears and cautiously stepped forward to observe the speaker. The moment she saw him, her eyes widened in shock.

"Amaan! He's Ivaan's assistant!" she murmured in disbelief.

On the call, Amaan continued, "Yes, boss, our ship has safely reached the destination. The payment for those diamonds has also been received."

Jharna's breath hitched. "Is he talking about the same diamonds I saw with that masked thief?" she wondered, her heart pounding.

Amaan's next words shattered the last shred of doubt.

"Yes, boss. I've also collected the vermillion from the temple. There's nothing to worry about now. Just focus on your wedding. After all, it's Ivaan Maurya's wedding—it has to be grand."

The ground beneath Jharna's feet felt like it was slipping away. Her body tensed, her mind reeling.

"That means... Ivaan was the masked thief. He is a criminal!"

Police Station

Jharna sat in the police station, facing an officer who was calmly flipping through a file. She had already recounted everything about Ivaan, her voice firm and unwavering.

After a moment of silence, she leaned forward, frustration evident in her voice. "Sir, what are you doing? I am asking you to file a complaint against that man, yet you sit here so calmly. Do you not realize that a criminal is roaming free?"

The officer looked at her with a composed expression. "Madam, why are you involving yourself in all this? Today is your wedding day. Go, get married. A bride has so many dreams for her special day—live them. We will handle the rest."

Jharna shot up from her seat, her anger seething. "First of all, you do not

need to tell me how to spend my wedding day. And secondly, either you arrest Ivaan Maurya right now, or I will escalate this to your senior officer."

"Arrested," came a voice from the side.

Jharna's head snapped toward the direction of the voice, her breath hitching. There stood Ivaan, dressed in his groom's attire, a smirk playing on his lips.

Ivaan stepped closer, his gaze locked onto hers. "If you had a complaint against me, you should have spoken to me directly. What was the need to come here—especially before our wedding? Time is slipping away, wifey."

Jharna clenched her fists. "I am not your wife. Our marriage has not taken place yet, and now, it never will. I was only going through with it for the sake of my child because you emotionally blackmailed me. But now, after uncovering the truth, I will never let someone like you cast even a shadow over my child. People like you belong in prison."

Ivaan turned to the officer. "Go ahead. Arrest me. If my wife wants me behind bars, I must fulfill her wish." His gaze remained fixed on Jharna, unreadable yet unwavering.

The officer stepped forward and clicked the handcuffs around Ivaan's wrists. Ivaan held them up toward Jharna, his smirk widening. "Happy now? Off to the lockup I go." He strode toward the holding cell, the officer pulling the door open for him. Ivaan stepped inside, and with a resounding clang, the cell door locked behind him.

Jharna stood frozen, staring at him in disbelief. Something about the entire scene felt off. Why were the police listening to a criminal? And why was Ivaan so unbothered by his arrest? Her mind drifted to her father—a man who had always risked his life for justice. This was not how the law was supposed to work.

Ivaan's voice pulled her from her thoughts. He tilted his head, amusement dancing in his eyes. "You accused me of emotional blackmail," he mused. .

His smirk vanished, his voice dropping into something far more sinister, "I had not done it—until now."

A shiver ran down Jharna's spine. Just then, Amaan approached her and held out a tablet. Confused, she took it and glanced at the screen.

Her breath caught.

Her eyes widened in horror. Tears welled up, spilling onto her cheeks.

She rushed toward Ivaan's cell, her voice trembling. "How could you do this? Is there no trace of humanity left in you?"

Ivaan leaned casually against the bars, his smirk returning. "You said it yourself—I am a criminal. And criminals have no humanity. So, let's get married now. Because now, you understand the consequences of defying me."

Jharna's world crumbled around her. A suffocating sense of helplessness engulfed her as she collapsed onto the floor, tears streaming down her face.

On the Way to the Wedding Venue

Jharna sat in the passenger seat, her expression blank, her soul drowning in silent despair.

The car rolled to a stop outside the wedding venue. Ivaan turned to her, his voice laced with warning. "Do not try anything foolish. One wrong move from you, and your entire world will crumble."

He stepped out of the car and walked around to her side, opening the door. Extending his hand, he said, "You have no choice but to take this hand."

Jharna hesitated, her gaze locked on his outstretched palm. With no other option, she placed her trembling hand in his.

Ivaan smiled. "Smile, wifey. It's our wedding day."

Jharna forced a smile, a fragile mask concealing the agony within. Only she knew the depth of suffering hidden behind that expression.

As they walked forward, they looked like the perfect couple. A child

spotted them and called out in excitement, "The bride and groom have arrived!"

All eyes turned toward them.

Shikha rushed to them, her face beaming. "You both look wonderful together. Just like a match made in heaven."

Maurya Corporation

Abhimaan sat in his office, his eyes fixed on his laptop screen.

The door burst open, and Chhaya stormed in. "Uncle, Ivaan is getting married—and to a woman who already has a child!"

Abhimaan's lips curled into a sardonic smile. "Oh wow, thank you for informing me. Otherwise, I would have never known."

Chhaya's frustration flared. "Please, uncle, this is not a joke! How could Ivaan do this to me? He loved me, didn't he? What changed?"

Abhimaan's eyes darkened. "You gave him the reason to do this. Because of your foolishness, he is with that girl instead of you."

Desperation laced Chhaya's voice. "Please, uncle, do something! Stop this wedding! You are his father—you can stop him!"

Abhimaan's expression turned bitter. "I am the kind of father who was not even invited to his own son's wedding."

Chhaya's breath hitched. She knew Ivaan and his father had a strained relationship, but she had never imagined it was this severe.

Abhimaan leaned back in his chair. "You have come to the wrong place. I have no interest in you—or in your presence here. Leave."

With a crushed heart, Chhaya turned and walked away. As she exited, Abhimaan's gaze drifted back to his laptop screen, where live footage of Ivaan and Jharna's wedding played.

Wedding Pavilion

Ivaan and Jharna sat in the mandap, the priest chanting mantras.

Suddenly, Adhik looked around and asked, "Where is Miransh?"

Jharna's breath caught in her throat. She clenched her lehenga tightly, fear

gripping her heart.

Vihaan spoke up. "I last saw him with Ivaan bhai."

Jharna's pulse raced.

Shikha turned to Ivaan. "Where is Miransh?"

Ivaan's voice was casual, unbothered. "He's resting, Mom. He wasn't feeling well, so I asked him to stay at our villa."

Shikha frowned. "If he was unwell, you should have brought him here. We would have taken care of him."

Ivaan shrugged. "I was bringing him, Mom, but Jharna refused."

Jharna's head snapped toward him in shock. He met her gaze, unflinching.

Shikha turned to Jharna, disappointment in her eyes. "Why, Jharna?"

Jharna hesitated before forcing an explanation. "I... I thought it might be inconvenient for everyone. He would be more comfortable there."

Shikha's voice was firm. "Miransh is family now. It is never an inconvenience to care for our own. I will overlook this mistake today, but next time, you will leave him with me. Understood?"

Jharna nodded, masking her turmoil with a strained smile.

The wedding proceeded. Ivaan filled Jharna's hair parting with sindoor and clasped the mangalsutra around her neck. The pheras were completed, sealing their fate.

Maurya Villa – Ivaan's Room

As soon as Ivaan entered, Jharna rushed to him, her hands grabbing his collar in desperation. "Where is my Ansh? Where have you hidden him?"

Her eyes burned with hatred.

Ivaan merely smirked.

Sitara's Note

Some weddings begin with love.

Others with force, silence, and secrets.

This chapter wasn't easy to write. Not because the emotions were complicated—but because they were too real.

Jharna's heartbreak, her helplessness, the weight of her silence... it all screamed louder than any vow.

And Ivaan—he was never meant to be a hero in this moment. He was meant to be a storm. A warning. A man who fell too deep, too fast, and now clings to love in the only way he knows—by control.

But between all this, there's one question echoing louder than the rest:

Where is Miransh?

If your heart raced, if your breath caught, if you felt Jharna's pain even for a second—then this chapter did what it was meant to do.

Let me know in the comments... do you believe love can still bloom in this chaos? Or has Ivaan crossed a line no love can return from?

Forever writing the storm,

– Sitara Chandria