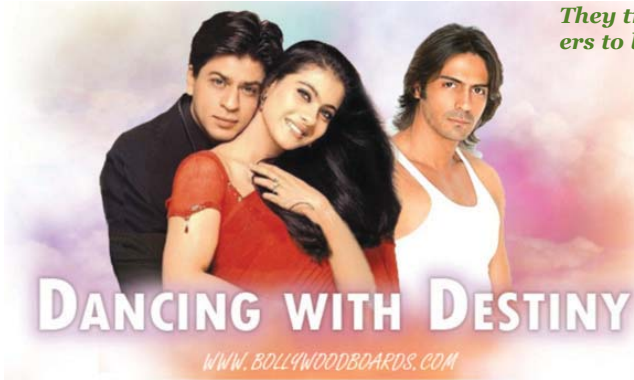


They travelled great distances to be together, broke through barriers to love one another but will destiny force them apart?



DANCING WITH DESTINY

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Chapter 7

"Happy birthday Anna" He said smiling – his dimples made her heart falter. He gave her the envelope and hugged her. She didn't want to let go and held onto him for as long as she could.

"Raj! You're late! That's not like you" Jai piped in, disturbing the hug.

"I know, the car wouldn't start" Raj said. He looked tired, as usual.

"So can we have cake now?" Anna asked feeling like a little girl. "Oh wait! Where's Mama? And Papa?"

"They've gone out to get you a gift" Raj said smiling.

"Were you guys all in on this surprise?"

"Yup!" Jai said. "By the way the Ball in next month, so get everything ready soon okay? I know what you're like with dresses and things" he said smirking.

She aimed a punch at him and he dodged. "Shut up!"

"Let's cut the cake – you're parents will be here later with food" Raj said smiling at the two of his friends fighting. They were always like this! They sang for her and she cut the cake eagerly. She fed both of them and they both fed her, it was like old times and she loved it!

Her parents came closer to lunch time and they sat together at the table to eat lunch. They had brought nice hot food from the nearby restaurant, the one Anna used to love to eat from. Their present to Anna was a long red ball gown.

"Wear it to the ball darling" her mother said as she opened the gown box. It was beautiful and Anna was even more excited to attend the ball.

She lay in bed that night thinking about the lovely day. Raj had left in the afternoon saying he had to an appointment and Jai left even later than that. She thought about Jai's present and each time butterflies sprang up in her stomach, making her nervous yet excited for the ball. He had given her such a thoughtful present and she was smiled to herself and vowed to make the night special. But she didn't know how to dance! All of a sudden she remembered Raj. He had brought her something too and she hadn't looked at it! She ran downstairs and found Raj's envelope on the counter where she had placed it before cutting the cake. She took it back up to her room and jumped onto her bed, getting comfortable on her stomach.

What could it be, she thought to herself. She opened the card and a small slip of paper fell out. She left it and read the card

To my dear Anna

I couldn't think of anything to get for you, nothing was worthy enough. She smiled at this line.

These are IOU's – 3 of them to be precise. If you ever want anything from me or want me to do something for you, you can use these and I will do anything you request. Only three times though!

I only wish the best for you and want to see a smile on your beautiful face everyday.

Always loving you as a dear friend – Raj

She felt her heart becoming heavier at his final words. As a friend. Only a friend. His gift was so personal! She held onto his



IOU's – three pieces of paper and fell asleep. He came to her In her dreams that night – They were dancing in the rain. He moved his hand up her back and they glided around and around, both soaked. She was against his chest and he pulled her closer, cramming their bodies together. She felt the warmth of his skin under his shirt as the water had soaked it thin. He looked into her eyes and leaned in to kiss her. The water dripped from his face to her lips and she wanted him to hurry up. He smiled charmingly and kissed her cheek, slowly moving toward her lips.

The alarm rang loudly and Anna fell out of her bed in shock. DAM!!

She got back into bed rubbing her head. She snoozed on the alarm and went back to sleep. A few moments later someone jumped on her bed which shook her awake once again.

"arghhhh let me sleep mama!" she whined.

The person shook the bed somemore.

"C'mooonnn Im sleepy!"

"It's me" His voice rang in her ears and she shot up.

It was Jai. She had heard Raj. She dismissed it as her imagination and got out of bed.

"Jai! What are you doing in my room?"

"I came to wake you up" He said smiling

"Shoo! Get out of my room" She pushed him all the way out the door and sat on her bed. Wondering why Jai was here she got up and walked out of the room to have a shower and get ready for the day. He was not in the hallway so she assumed he had gone downstairs. When she reached the bathroom she found a large velvet box with a note dangling off it. It read:

Anna, this is to make you look like a real princess at the ball – please wear it with the earrings I gave – Jai

She smiled to herself and opened the box. It was a beautiful diamond necklace. She felt awkward. She didn't want to keep this gift, it was way too much.

"Jai JAIII" she screamed as she ran downstairs. But he wasn't there. But she found another box waiting for her at the bottom most stair.

"What the hell?" she spoke to herself

Slowly she positioned herself to sit on the stair, grabbing the box. She tore it open feeling excited. Four Gold bangles neatly lay inside shining up at her.

"Oh God!" She said taking the bangles out. They looked to be real gold and she worried. Why was he doing all this? She felt bad, he was trying to hard. She silently thought she will give him a chance. He was not downstairs so she proceeded back up to her room.

"how can I make

I'll blow him away on the dance floor" She thought being optimistic. This made her laugh as she imagined her uncoordinated self shaking with all her efforts on the dance floor next to a traumatised Jai. She composed herself and started dialling Raj's number.

"Hello?"

"Raj!! I need a favour"

"Anna, what is it?" He replied smiling at no one in particular. It was good to hear her voice.

"You know how the ball is next month...." She started

"I'm not going, you know that" he replied feeling hopeless. She would be a lone with

A novel

By
**Shanali
Edirisinghe**



Jai and he would not be there. Suppress it Raj! He thought to himself. It can never happen!

She was silent for a little while. She wanted him to come with them so badly, but there were only two tickets.

"I know raj" She replied feeling a bout of sadness.

"So what do you need?" He asked sensing the change in her tone. He didn't want her to be sad about anything.

"I need dance lessons"

"Sure! That's exciting! Go ahead Anna – I'm rooting for you"

"No, Raj – I need you to give me dance lessons" She asked and waited holding her breath.

"No" he responded immediately. With her near him he wouldn't be able to control himself at all. It couldn't happen.

"Raj! Why?" She whined.

"Anna, I can't teach – I'm not that good" He lied. He had taught at a local studio in the US in his spare time.

"Raj!!! Try please? I know your good!" She felt disappointed. Then she had an idea!
"Okay wait! The birthday present for me, is that legit?"

"Yes" He knew what was coming and regretted giving her that gift.

"Okay I'm using one now, and I want you to teach me" She replied feeling proud.

He sighed and thought for a moment. She had him and he couldn't go back on a promise. He was true to his word.

"Okay" He replied giving up.

this ball a good experience for him?" she thought. Without realising she found herself thinking about the dream last night - they were dancing so well together. And then it hit her! She sucked at dancing and Raj was brilliant at it!

"I can surprise Jai!!! I can ask Raj to give me dance lessons before the ball and then

