

CHRISTINA OW



DUKKHA FATE SERIES

THE
BEGINNING



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Dukkha Fate Series

Christina OW

Mainstream Romance

Sweet Cravings Publishing
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Mainstream Romance

The Beginning

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Dedication

This was the very first book I've ever written, not published but written and it has taken five years to publish.

So I dedicate this book to the writers who still haven't had their first book published. Don't give up.

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Chapter One

The sun was at its highest again. It was picturesque as it stood on its lonesome in the cloudless beautiful blue sky. It rested above the water, shining hard its rays of light bouncing off the water.

If it had an ego, one would say it was showing off its power, its beauty, and its capability to make the world look so beautiful.

If Angakut, the spiritualist, heard anyone say that, he would have a fit!

Angakut was old and frail, but very powerful and everyone was afraid of him. He had connections with the ‘big guys’. It would be dangerous to mess with him, and his appearance was also very intimidating.

He had long white hair that was held up with a long stick and red, white and black markings on his shriveled brown skin that symbolized his power and the favor the spirits had on him. His eyes were sunken and black, his ears pulled down with tiny black chunks of wood stuck in them.

“The sun is a heavenly being, the guardian of the day. It gives its best to its children when they deserve it. Do not mock his powers!” His harsh coarse voice filled Ashat’s head.

Then we must have done something right today, Ashat thought to himself.

Ashat stood still to take in the beauty of the earth, its sight and its scent. The summer had come with a lot of blessings; beautiful tall trees, green grass and cloudless blue skies. The lake seemed to sparkle as the sunrays touched its surface.

He dug his toes into the ground and rubbed the cool soft soil in between his toes.

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The beauty mother earth had created was unspeakable, no creature, man or animal could disagree as they all benefit from her kindness.

But there was far more beauty than anything the world had ever seen calling out for him-Rosa. Ashat couldn't help but smile, every part of him was more awake now than it was ten seconds ago.

“Ashat, will you stop daydreaming and hurry up! Your little brother's blessing ceremony is about to begin!”

Rosa's voice carried him to heights that could arouse the dead. Ashat became more aware of her body, as she stood there impatiently waiting for him to catch up. Her long black hair, still wet, complimented her light brown skin tone, hanging loosely around her face perfectly. Unlike most women in the tribe, she was slender and stood five feet eight inches tall. Her short brown deerskin was more like a second skin, as it clung to her, amplifying every curve and bump of her curvaceous body. Her slit hazel eyes were hypnotizing and seemed more like gem stones that made her face even more alluring. Her soft rosy lips that curved to shape a perfect smile had always been ammunition no man could resist and every woman envied. That, and the fact that she was the chief's only child.

“Okay, okay, hold your horses, I'm coming!” Ashat shouted back, as he followed her through the scattered trees and back to the village.

Ashat was in no hurry to go back home, he wanted to spend more time with Rosa. They had gone swimming in the far end of the Willow Lake, where it was covered with mass vegetation. It wasn't too far from the village but far enough. They wanted some time alone, and they also didn't want to be seen by anyone who may report them to the chief, if so, her movements would be restricted. She was not married yet and had to stay untouched until so, if her husband was to rule and live long. It was the ways and beliefs of their people and they had to obey it.

Chief Roa was the fiercest leader the Lakota tribe has ever had. The fact that by birthright he still would have been chief, played little part in the respect and fear people had for him. His act of courage and humility has been a bedtime story for all children for the past forty decades. Many men had and still are trying to match up, some succeed, some die trying, and others face the embarrassment and dishonor of failing miserably.

Wrestling a five hundred pound, seven foot bear, and praying for its spirit's safe journey to its ancestors was harder than it sounded in the heroic stories. Ashat had the scares to prove it, and to think Chief Roa wrestled two.

Ashat, being the son of the great hunter, Kiyō, left little to no chance of failure. His father always prided himself in his sons' courage, strength and oddly their looks too, seeing that they all took after him. Towering over six feet three, muscled body, with broad shoulders, chiseled chin, paralyzing smile- so his mother Tepeu always told them- and a stance that made men shake in fear. Dishonoring him would be like stabbing him in the back, a coward's way of combat.

Come back without the beast's skin riding on your shoulders with pride and you'll fight me to the death!

Ashat's mother always shivered at that phrase. One would expect it would get easier after hearing it with five of her sons already. Her wealth and respect came from the six strong sons she bore for Kiyō. If one of them were to fail they would be putting Tepeu in greater shame than their father.

So all she did all day, apart from cook, clean and tend to her sons was to pray that the Great Spirit would guide her sons and also spare her from the shame of failure and dishonor. Today she was at ease and full of pride, now that her sixth and last son, Akin, only nineteen, had evaded her husband's clutches and done the family proud. He came back victorious and now a respected man, the blessing ceremony was in his honor.

The whole village had already assembled around the spiritual fire, in the middle of the compound. The teepees were spread out all facing the chief's tall and bigger teepee that stood a few meters away from the spiritual fire.

Some of the teepees stood close to the trees opposite the forest. Those were the hunters' homes. Some were situated close to the lakeshore, which belonged to the fishermen, and the rest were spread in the middle and around the village, those huts belonged to the warriors. But all the teepees were strategically positioned to form a small circle, leaving a huge space in the middle where all the festivities were carried out.

Ashat chose to build his teepee close to the lake. He loved the water; he spent every free hour he had in it. He has always been attached to it, that's why his mother named him after it,

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Wakpa. She said he was as soothing as it was when it was calm and as ferocious as it was during a storm.

Customarily every male child was named after an animal that symbolized their inner animal spirit but Tepeu had insisted on also naming her sons after nature. It was her way of honoring the great mother earth.

Akin stood between Angakut and their father. He stood at par with Kiyō, his chest pushed out, his head held high, and his face tight and somber. It seemed Ash was the only one who could see the pain he was trying to hide; Akin's brown teary eyes told it all. Kiyō seemed too proud to notice Tepeu's pale, pain stricken face mirrored his pain on his behalf. She was standing a foot behind on Kiyō's right and had a perfect view of his wounds; she could clearly see the bear's claws on Akin's back and thigh.

They had treated his wounds the best they could, but left them open for everyone to see. They were proof that he had waged battle and won, his marks of honor, along with the bearskin that was now draped on Kiyō's shoulders.

Ashat was happy his brother was back alive. He moved to stand next to his other brothers—in his position as fourth son—behind their father. They had all assumed the stance Kiyō had, serious, intimidating and yet full of pride. They had all made it. A small chuckle escaped Ash's lips. Like all of his brothers who went before him, Akin must be happy he didn't have to fight Kiyō.

Better the bear than the beast.

Ashat looked around at the crowd that had gathered. Everyone was paying attention to what the spiritual leader was saying. Rosa stood behind Chief Roa, next to her mother.

She had taken after her mother, Saura, who still looked very attractive at her age. Rosa was so striking, even with the sickening look on her face. Ashat shut his mouth tight to stifle a laugh. He was astounded at how a woman could look so beautiful and disgusted at the same time.

Ashat wasn't the only one ogling at Rosa. Anger rose inside him and he could taste the bile in his mouth. His body tightened and his knuckles turned white as his hands were now in tight fists. The amusement disappeared immediately when he saw Baku look at her possessively. Then

Baku turned and looked at Ashat, his mouth curved into a wicked smile, with the look of a winner pasted on his face.

“You haven’t won yet, asshole!” Ashat mumbled to himself, apparently too loud as his brother, Zoha, gave him a questioning look before he turned back to the ceremony.

Rosa was the key player when it came to who held the power to rule the tribe once her father died. Her husband would be the next chief therefore her suitors were carefully selected. Angakut had to make sure that her husband would be better if not at equivalent to Chief Roa.

Ancestry, wealth, strength-spiritual and physical- and courage were all taken into account. After months of deliberation and analysis of a third of the eligible men in the village, Baku and Ashat were now the final two in the race. Ashat wanted her because he loved her, Baku on the other hand wanted power, marrying the most beautiful woman in the village would just be an added bonus. Ashat’s body tightened even more at the thought of Rosa in that brute’s arms.

Ashat was relieved he was next in line to marry. If the vetting was done two months prior, Zoha would have been considered and not Ashat. But since his love for Rosa was well known amongst his brothers, Zoha quickly took a wife to open the position for him.

Baku was the first-born son of the chief’s adviser, Wangwe. He was six feet two inches tall, had a wide body and a beautiful face. He had put himself on a pedestal higher than the rest of the men in the tribe. He hadn’t done anything that would permit him to carry an air of importance that the rest of the men hadn’t done. His family name, prestige and his father’s position were the only things that made him stand out. He treated many like dirt, not worthy of his attention. His own siblings’ feared him. They avoided him as much as they could just like most of the villagers. Some out of hate for what he’d done to his own brother, others didn’t want to be his source of amusement for the day, nor his next victim. He had hurt a lot of people, but the worst was when he disowned his own brother.

Eri could not defeat the bear, so he opted to save his life and run. Baku descended ferociously on his brother enraged at his weakness. He wanted Eri ostracized for the shame he had brought on his family. But the village elders wouldn’t allow it. They gave him another chance to redeem himself, which did not sit well with Baku and only enraged him further. But

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the damage had been done. That same night, Eri left the village. He could not stand his brother's resentment and constant taunts towards him.

It has been four years since he left and no one knew of his whereabouts.

Any man that would treat his brother with such contempt, and betray the bond of blood and birth says a lot of what he would do to the rest of the tribe if he were given the power to do so. Chieftainship is such power that he did not deserve. Some supported him, but most didn't pay much attention to him.

Baku had proven himself to be cold, disloyal, egotistic and self-centered. No one should be force to endure his personality, and Ashat, as sure as hell didn't want Rosa anywhere near him.

"Ashat, what's wrong?" Rosa stood next to him concern written all over her face. Ashat smiled as he turned to face her.

Ashat had drifted away from the village and was standing at the riverbank, watching the guardian of the day go to sleep. He had drowned out all the noise that seemed to come alive now that Rosa had broken his line of thought.

The celebration was still going on. A huge feast had been laid out. Akin was enjoying the limelight, which he deservedly should. He was seated amongst the elders. The women folk laid down platter after platter of delicious dishes in front of him. He ate and drank as he watched the singing and dancing around the bon fire. It seemed he wasn't in pain any more, or he could have been too drunk to notice.

Ashat didn't want to admit it, but Baku's attitude had unsettled him. Ashat thought marrying Rosa was a sure thing, but now he wasn't so confident. All he could do was question the whole situation. What if the chief and Angakut thought Baku was a better match for Rosa? Will her father at least let her have some input in whom she marries? Does love count so little in this decision?

Ashat leaned his head back and let out a cry of frustration. Startled, Rosa moved closer to him, with concern and panic written all over her face, "You didn't answer me. What's wrong?"

"Sorry I didn't mean to frighten you, I was just thinking about us."

"What about us?"

He didn't want to tell her the turmoil he was in, but there was no one else he could confide in. "The harvest day is almost here, the day our fate will be decided—"

Alarm rose inside Ashat as he choked on his words. He would gladly face any danger, but he couldn't face the fact that in a few days he might lose the love of his life.

Rosa walked up to him and placed her hand on his cheek. Ashat pressed his cheek into her palm taking in its soft warmth.

"Silly, who else do you think I would marry?" Ashat looked down at Rosa, clinging with hope to her every word. "Father will allow me my say, and I'll pick...Baku!" Then she ran off laughing.

"That wasn't in the least bit funny!" Ashat called out to her gnashing his teeth. The thought was tormenting enough, having her say it out loud made it worse.

"No, but the look on your face is!" She placed her hand over her belly and laughed louder.

Ashat stared at her, his temper eased away as quickly as it had come. The sound of her laughter was infectious, making all his worries disappeared. Laughing, Ashat ran after her.

But that little joy was cut short. They met Baku on the path. He was carrying something wrapped in banana leaves. He walked up to Rosa with an annoying smile on his face that Ashat really wanted to wipe off with his fist.

"Hallo Rosa, you are looking ever so exceptionally beautiful today. Here I got this for you." He handed her the wrapped parcel.

"Thanks." She said quickly taking the parcel from him. She stared up at Ashat and he knew she was trying to assess exactly how mad he had gotten over the last few seconds Baku was with them.

Well, he was mad.

Ashat was very uncomfortable, shifting from one leg to the other trying hard to keep his anger at bay. He just wanted Baku gone, but the guy didn't seem to be in any hurry to move on.

"I'm so lucky." Baku added with a dreamy look.

"Why is that?" Ashat asked with a raised eyebrow. He was getting impatient and very irritated by Baku's cool collected manner.

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“Well, I’m going to be basking in her beauty from sun rise to sun set. I can only imagine how you look naked...” He paused as he undressed Rosa with his eyes. “I won’t have to wait long to find out.”

That statement sent Ashat over the edge. He launched himself at Baku with all the fury that was boiling inside him. They were rolling on the ground both trying to get on top of the other, punching scratching and slapping. Inflicting as much pain as they possibly could.

Rosa was screaming for them to stop but her efforts fell on deaf ears. She began calling the men around her to help stop the two men from killing each other. Most of the men just stood there watching amused by the fight and others were too scared to get involved.

Finally Ashat was on top. Before Baku could see it coming he was busy blinking the dirt out of his eyes. Ashat put all his weight into it and punched him in the face, sending his head digging into the ground. Ashat lifted his fist to deliver another one but someone caught his hand and pulled him off.

Baku’s face was bleeding and it looked like it had been smashed in. The back of his head was also bleeding. He tried to stand up but he sunk back to the ground. He was dizzy and looked more like a drunken man.

Ashat was struggling to get out of the arm lock Nalu, his brother, had him in. Hewasn’t done with Baku, all the blood on his face and on the ground from the injuries he had already caused didn’t seem to deter his thirst to kill Baku. Two village men helped Baku up and took him to the healer.

Ashat was still seeing red. His fist was bleeding but he didn’t notice until a drop landed on his foot.

Nalu let him go and as he walked away, “Brother, pace your anger for mother’s sake. It would kill her if you were branded a murderer!”

Ashat nodded, taking in large deep breathes to calm himself.

Rosa quietly took his arm and led him to the lake. Ashat knew she had never seen him so angry and violent and it must have scared her.

“Would you please calm down? Why did you lose it like that?” Rosa scolded him.

Ashat pulled his hand out of hers and looked at her in disbelief. “Are you kidding me? Did you not hear what he said or do you consider that flattery!”

Rosa stood at akimbo not amused by his snippy remark. She walked up to Ashat, pulled his bleeding hand, deliberately pressing the cuts on his fists and led him to the lakeshore.

“Ouch! You don’t have to be rough!” Ashat complained as the pain in his hand stung.

Rosa said nothing. She pulled him down close to the water and kept her attention on nursing his knuckles.

Feeling embarrassed and guilty, Ashat put his free hand under her chin and gently turned her head to face him, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine, just don’t do that again.”

“Do what?”

“Lose your temper like that. I...I’ve never seen that side of you before...and I never want to see it again. I watched what you did to Baku— Just don’t okay?”

She looked at Ashat differently now, he couldn’t tell if it was fear or shock or something else, he just didn’t like it. He dropped his hand from her chin and lowered his head.

Ashat felt crushed and even more embarrassed, “I promise.”

“Thanks. And anyway, something good came out of it.”

Ashat looked up to meet her smiling face, and the look he loved so much was back, a gentle loving dreamy look.

“What would that be?”

“I have a feeling Baku’s learned how to be respectful to women, the hard way. The dent in his face will be a constant reminder!” They laughed. Rosa always found a silver lining in the worst of situations.

Chapter Two

“The Mohawk tribe has decided they want to take our land by force. They no longer want to live with us peacefully as neighbors. We have fought alongside them against many enemies for many years. They were once our brothers, now they are our enemies, so we shall treat them as such!” A war cry pierced the cool air in response to the chief’s words.

This new occurrence had unsettled the planning and organization for the Harvest day celebrations, and also the blessing ceremony of the chief’s daughter and her future husband. No one knew if everything would be postponed or if it would happen sooner than scheduled. What they knew for sure was in a week’s time they would battle their former allies until one of them submitted. The wait wouldn’t be long, everything would be revealed that night at the ceremony.

The warriors’ gathering was dismissed. Most of the men went to spend time with their families others preferred to prepare their weapons. All spending as much time preparing for the unknown outcome of the battle, making the most of the time they had before that fateful day.

Ashat preferred to spend it with Rosa, but there was no chance of that. The women had taken her. They were preparing her for the blessing ceremony. Ashat’s belly did cartwheels. He was so nervous, anxious and going out of his mind. He needed to relax, so he opted to go swimming. The water was his second love and had always soothed him, no matter what was happening in his life, it had always been there for him. Ashat dove in and swam fast and hard, he would go as far as his body would allow it.

It had been three hours, and almost dusk when Ashat made his way out of the water. He walked into the village towards his teepee; he needed to prepare. Ashat couldn’t help but be amused by the stares and girly giggles that followed him as he walked. The girls had stopped what they were doing and watched him as he made his way down the path dripping wet. Ashat examined himself to see what had warranted the lustful looks and whispers.

Ashat’s long hair had gathered behind and was pasted on his back. The loincloth was very wet and clung to his thick hard thighs. The water on his body had formed tinny streams on his

abs, biceps and legs and more ran down his chest and belly. He was well built and six feet and four inches tall.

A smile ran across Ashat's face exposing his teeth. He could swear he heard someone shriek in delight, which only made him laugh. Ashat wasn't obsessed with himself, but today the attention boosted his ego.

"Brother, it's not good to tease the young girls. I don't think their mothers' will appreciate it." Ashat's eldest brother, Cano called out as he got nearer to his teepee. He was standing outside his hut holding his son in one arm and his wife in the other.

"Well they'll have to take it up with our parents, they bore us this way. And anyway, isn't that how you nabbed my sister-in-law?" Ashat teased back.

The question had made her cheeks flush crimson with embarrassment. She took their son and left Ashat and Cano to talk.

Cano's face suddenly turned somber, the amusement had faded away fast. Ashat assumed the new mood was about the looming battle.

"Don't worry brother, you will be back with your family once the battle is over, I'll make sure of it."

"It's not that," he answered coolly.

"Then what is it?"

"You are the fourth son of Kiyō the great hunter, next to marry. The thing is, will you marry the love of your life and be the next chief, or will you have to settle for one mother will choose for you?"

That thought made Ashat's body shiver. All the anxiety slammed back into his chest. He could feel his legs give way beneath him. Before Ashat could sag any lower, Cano pulled him up and supported him, bewildered by his reaction.

"If I knew this would unnerve you so, I wouldn't have tormented you with the thought."

"I'll die if I don't have her." The words slipped out of Ashat's lips.

He wasn't thinking about it, but he knew he wouldn't be able to handle it if things didn't go his way. The words seemed to shock Cano more than him.

Cano leaned his head towards Ashat and whispered, “I don’t see you lasting till tonight. You would have gone crazy by then, so I’ll put you out of your misery. Don’t say anything to anyone yet, not until tonight so act clueless.”

Ashat didn’t understand what he was saying; he was clueless and wasn’t even paying much attention to Cano anymore. Ashat waited for Cano to finish as he contemplated drowning himself in liquor to try and calm himself.

“I will always love you, protect you and respect you. I want you to know that I will always have your back, through thick and thin. You are my brother...and my future chief...” He let the last three words hang as he held his breath, waiting for it to sink in.

His words hit Ashat like a ton of bricks. Ashat stared at him, wondering what he meant by that. Then it slowly sank in. He wasn’t sure what expression he had on his face but he knew it was a good one because his brother had a large smile pasted on his. Ashat wondered if he was playing one of his tricks on him again. But Cano wouldn’t dare, he knew how important this was to him.

Before Ashat could break out in a victory dance, Cano held his shoulders down and faced him.

“Father told me, he made me promise not to say a word to you. But the words you uttered frightened me. As your eldest brother, I’m ordering you not to say a word, or act in any way that would suggest you know the councils’ decision before it is formally announced. Do you understand me or have you sunk too deep in bliss to understand what I’m saying?”

Ashat nodded his head in agreement. He couldn’t speak. The excitement was caught in his throat. Whether or not he knew this, Cano had made him the happiest man on earth and had also saved his life.

He couldn’t wait for night to come, when it would be official. Relief was flowing through him but he needed to be sure, unequivocally without a shadow of a doubt sure.

* * * *

Ashat stood outside his teepee dressed and prepared. He and Baku had been painted with the symbols of the spirits and those of their animal brothers; the bear and the wolf. It was tradition

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