

Chapter One

Celine's POV

I was born on the same day my father lost everything, or rather, the day before.

My father was once the Beta of the Black Mountain, and from the stories I'd heard, he had been the best friend of the reigning Alpha. That was until they found out he'd been stealing, pocketing funds meant for the pack. He claimed to be framed but it was a lie. There was too much proof against him, and he was demoted. A new Beta was appointed and my father was left as a Gamma, a third in command because of how much the Alpha loved him.

It wasn't enough. He hated it. Watching another person take his place, he blamed me. All of his frustration and anger, along with my mother's.

My mother had terrible nightmares the night she found out she was pregnant with me. She said I was a bad omen from the get-go and she tried several methods to get rid of me before it was too late.

But nothing worked. I was born.

Before me, my parents already had three children. My brothers were warriors, stationed at the borders of the continent. We barely knew each other since I was left to deal with my father's tantrums and my mother's childish blames.

I imagined hell would be better than the life fate had planned for me. Not that it mattered. Their hatred was never enough to break me.

I had my own plans. I would nd my mate and leave. I wouldn't depend on them for anything after that because I would have someone who would truly love me.

I had so much hope until I married my husband. The current Alpha of the Black Mountain pack, Kane Black.

My father had offered me up as a mistress, one for the alpha to use to pass the time until he found his true mate. But Kane was...not what I expected him to be. They said he was cold and strict, but he was not like that with me, and the second we met, we hit it off.

He claimed I was too smart to be just a mistress, I was far too beautiful to remain in the shadows. He wanted me, and I, in turn, fell helplessly and hopelessly in love with him. I saw him as a beacon of hope, the one who would save me from the clutches of my parents.

And he was willing to do that and more.

He chose me as his wife, his Luna. Granting me the honor to serve by his side. At rst, it was a marriage of convenience for both of us. He wanted the elders off his back and I was given to him at the right time.

After three years of our marriage, it became something more than just convenience.

I loved him so much that I could overlook everything...he was a great man and a powerful Alpha, no one is perfect, I'd always tell myself.

Until the day my eyes opened and I nally accepted that I'd traded in one devil for another.

That morning was like every other morning in the pack house.

The mansion was bustling with activities; the maids cleaned, and the chefs worked on breakfast while I oversaw everything, making sure it was all in place for the ball that was being hosted by us that evening.

Every Alpha in the continent was invited, including those outside, with large and even small territories.

Kane wanted it to be the largest gathering of the year; he wanted all those powerful men in one place, an opportunity to form more bonds and have more allies. After all, something was brewing in the North that we all knew would come for us one way or another.

The Alpha of the North...there were whispers he intended to topple the East, our continent, and make it his.

So this ball was vital for Kane, and I knew I couldn't let him down.

As usual, I woke up alone in bed but that didn't slow me down. Kane always got up early to make rounds with his Beta, Gammas and warriors, by the time he'd be back, the table would be set for breakfast.

After that, we would plunge into another round of preparations.

I tread the halls of the pack house with rm, determined steps as I kept track of everything that was being done. The large ballroom was already set up, each table and chair in its position. The golden chandeliers glinted and beautied the entire Hall, making it a rather ethereal sight.

I returned the workers' greetings and continued my rounds. The pack members have always been wary of me, and my presence due to my father's reputation. But I've worked my ass off enough for them to have respect in their eyes whenever I showed up.

Though their constant avoidance stung, it was much better than what I had to experience in my father's house. At least I knew I was welcome here...treated like a person.

Somewhat.

Kane never made it for breakfast or lunch; he only showed up two hours before the event when the guests had begun rolling in one after another.

I was in the bedroom, pulling on my dark blue dress that owed down to cover my feet and hugged every inch of my upper body. Emphasizing my rather large chest.

My lips twisted into a frown as I silently wondered if Kane would approve of it. He never let me wear anything that wasn't loose. He said he didn't want any other wolf leering at his wife and that clothes like these were only meant for his eyes.

"Will he let me wear this tonight?" I muttered to myself.

"Only if you put a scarf over your shoulders." I felt his hot breath against my ear, startling me. I gasped in surprise; I turned around to nd myself face-to-face with my husband, Kane.

He reached for the black glittering scarf that was behind me and placed it over my shoulders, a look of satisfaction covering his features. His dark hair was a mess, seemingly tousled by the wild winter winds, but it did nothing to lessen how good looking he was. His brown eyes held mind and his lips stretched into a slow smile. One that had my heart racing and leaving me out of breath. But only for a moment.

His masculine scent engulfed me and my wolf roused, sensing the proximity of our mate.

"Look at you..." He rasped, his voice thick with desire as he reached up and caressed my bare shoulders beneath the scarf. I leaned into his touch, inhaling deeply as a shiver ran down my spine.

"You truly are the most beautiful woman...in the Black Mountain, Celine,"He gave me that smile along with that look, one I knew all too well.

I inhaled sharply and shook my head.

"Not tonight, Kane," I stated rmly, noting how his erection was already poking against my belly.

"Most of our guests are already here, you need to get ready,"

I knew better than to ask him where he's been all day. He might make an issue out of it. He was probably with his Beta, Marcus. Maybe something had prolonged their rounds today. Because everything else was handled by me, including the work he was supposed to attend to today.

Kane's eyes darkened when he heard my words, he shook his head, his ngers going into my red hair.

I closed my eyes because I knew what would come next. I felt his st close as he held my hair in a grip so tight that I could feel a few strands leaving my scalp.

A low whimper left my lips as pain shot through me, making my eyes water.

"K...Kane..." My lips quivered, and I opened my eyes to meet his; those warm brown eyes were now lled with familiar rage.

"You're here to be f****d, Celine!" He snarled, pressing his hardness further into me, rocking against my body. "How dare you say no to me?!" He growled in anger and I bit back every reply that raced through my mind.

I knew being silent was the better option whenever he was like this.

"I..." I managed to keep my voice steady, holding his gaze with my fearful one."I just don't want our guests to think us disrespectful, Kane," I huffed, willing back the tears that threatened to fall.

"I'm sorry," I forced out, hating myself even more as the words left my lips. I shouldn't have said no to him, this was entirely my fault.

Kane's stormy eyes narrowed, he stared down at me for a few more seconds...heavy with silence, before letting go of my hair and taking a step back.

"Of course..." He purred in a softer tone now. Gone was the anger I'd heard a second ago."You're right, as always...My Luna," He smiled at me. Then he proceeded to unbutton his shirt.

I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding and righted my hair, xing my dress. I was used to this. His sudden outbursts. That doesn't mean it won't hurt every time it happens.

I inhaled sharply, biting down hard on my bottom lip and holding back tears."Don't take too long," I said to him as I made my way to the bedroom door.

"I won't," He replied softly, "And Celine?"

My feet halted and I turned slightly to look at him.

"By the end of tonight, I want you on this bed, naked, legs wide, wet and waiting,"

It wasn't a request.

I swallowed thickly, pushing down the urry of emotions that threatened to bubble up.

"Yes."I said instead.

Because he was my husband, and I loved him, no matter what.

But after that night, everything changed.