

# Alpha's Rue: His Shunned Luna

chapter 1

AELIANA

Hell is empty, and all the devils are here.

I've learned to run from mine, the ones that unleashed demons to torment me for the rest of my life, but as I stare at the warning in my hand, I reckon I didn't run far enough. Not too fast either.

[To Aeliana Hartley,

With the blessing of their families, Seraphine Paul Hartley & Diego Rollins request the honour of your presence to bear witness to the start of their union.

Save the date: February 28th.

Venue: Valour Hall] it reads. My name in cursive

I don't understand why I have to go, I'm pretty sure the bride—my stepsister doesn't want me there. Sera and I don't get along, I'd hate to ruin her special day with my presence and besides, going back would mean soaking up waters that once drowned me.

That was why I tried to decline, made up every possible excuse to not attend but my father wouldn't hear it. He wouldn't want to appear as though he didn't have a perfect family, but he does. Without me that is. I'm the one who ruins things, the one who should have died in the delivery room, but mom died instead.

My heart races when the pack gates open, I

"Identification please," the pack patrol officer says. "And state your purpose."

"Aeliana Hartley, here for my sister's wedding. I will be residing in Oaks, house number twenty-six, Hartley Street." I say, handing him my passport.

The officer looks at me, then my ID. "Are you sure this is you?" He raises an eyebrow.

No, surely this is some kind of joke. The picture is a few years old, but I look the same, and I just had a sixteen-hour flight, not to mention the nine-hour flight before that one.

Thankfully, he doesn't press further. "And do you plan on staying long?"

"Sir, I was born here. I have every legal right and document to stay as long as I prefer, but I will only be here until tomorrow."

He nods, giving me back my ID card. "New pack laws state absence for more than five years warrants renewal of membership by the legal office."

“Good thing I’m just visiting,” I smirk.

“Have a good one,” he smiles, slapping the top of the car.

I give him one last smile before I drive away in my rental car. A service I'm grateful for because I don't want to bother anyone tomorrow when it's time to leave. I have several missed calls from dad, along with a few messages saying I'm late from my other siblings. In my opinion, I'm on time but in reality, I missed the church ceremony, and I'm going to get scolded for that but I'm here.

When I step out of the car, I'm met with many faces, some familiar, others not at all. The pack smells familiar, it smells like memories, both good and bad. So many memories that the air is almost suffocating, I want to get back into the car and get on the next flight out of here, but I can't.

I swallow down the lump creeping in my throat and remind myself it's just one day. One ceremony, a few fake smiles for the camera, and then I can leave again. People seem to be having a ball, a few others are drunk outside the hall, others are getting drunk, others are only just now arriving....like me.

My father stands near the entrance, his posture rigid, a cigar between his fingers while he speaks to a man I don't recognise. I'm thinking of a way to enter without him seeing me, but his eyes find me first, fast and cold. He's mad.

I take a deep breath and walk towards him. “You're late,” he says.

“Flight issues,” I calmly retort. If anything I wished for an emergency landing so I couldn't come.

Father nods, his jaw ticking. “Follow me,” he says. Not bothering to introduce me to his colleague like he always does with my siblings.

He doesn't say a single word, he walks in front of him, and I follow, my heart syncing up with the fast pace of my heels clicking on the floor. People are staring at me, whispering, laughing, I'm getting every dirty look in the book and I know why. But it's one of those things I've decided to live with, the kind that doesn't matter where I'm at in life now.

Father leads me to a crowd of women, I can smell his wife before he turns to look at me. “Be seen.” He orders, walking past them, leaving me with them.

“Honey—” Pandora, my stepmother calls out, her smile wide and bright. She must be so proud of her little girl Sera. This venue is expensive, and the wedding package they offer is just as expensive. “Oh, she came.”

I lift my hand to wave, but she pulls me into a tight hug. “Hello, Liana baby.” she kisses my cheek. “Lovely of you to join us.”

“Liana?” Mrs Thorne gasps, “As in Aeliana? Freya's little girl?”

Mom Pandora nods, “Yes that's her.”

“Oh my, you look so different, dear.” Mrs Cole smiles, eyeing me up and down. “How beautiful.”

I swallow, “Thank you.” It’s hardly a compliment, she’s called me ugly a few times, and while Pandora stood up for me, she also laughed.

“You’re so blessed Pandora, you have such gorgeous children.” Another remarks, one I don’t recognise. “Wow.”

Mom laughs, the sound forced and fake. “Oh stop it. This one isn’t even mine, I can’t take credit for her.”

Translation: she’s a screw-up but not mine. I’m only the Hartley family’s daughter when it’s convenient and unfortunately for me, that’s once in a never-blue-moon.

“Where have you been, little Freya?” Mrs Thorne asks with a smile. My mother’s name is sweet on her tongue, from what I know they used to be good friends.

Before I can answer, Mrs Cole chimes in. “Are you mated dear?” She asks, not giving me a chance to speak—just like her daughter. “When is your wedding? Seraphine is merely two years older than you.”

“I’m unmated”

“If you’d stayed in the pack rather than running off to do lord knows what, you’d have found him by now,” Mom says.

Mrs Thorne snickers, “Oh, Pandora. Mates will always find each other, and there’s nothing wrong with the girl, she’s a looker she’s bound to find someone to fall for her.”

Mrs Cole rolls her eyes, unbothered by any attempt to hide her hostility towards me. “Beauty is one thing, character is another.”

And there it is, the reason I left.

Half the pack has seen me naked, seen my shame, seen the pictures but no one asked for my side of the story. To them, there’s nothing words could say any louder than pictures did and that’s okay, I had no words then, I have no words now.

Mom nervously laughs, “Aeliana, why don’t you say hi to your sister? It’s her that you’re here for isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” I nod, swallowing down my shame. “Excuse me.”

“Wait—” Mom calls out, trying to come with me or rather escape the awkwardness and embarrassment my presence just cost our family, again.

I give her a small smile and shake my head. She stares for a moment before nodding for me to go ahead. The Valour Hall is large, but finding the bride isn’t exactly hard. Seraphine and her friends are standing at the open bar, giggling and pointing at the guests, as usual.

She doesn't see me, her friend Dalton is the first to see me. Her smile vanishes as she taps my sister's shoulder. "Sera."

"What?" Sera asks, her eyes shifting when Dalton doesn't speak. Unlike Dalton, her smile widens. "Oh, would you look who it is, Aeliana."

"Hi sis," I force the words out. "Congratulations, you look lovely."

Seraphine pouts. "Oh, thank you."

"I must say, I thought you wouldn't show." Her friend says, "But here you are, and without a gift."

I frown, she's gotten bold. Usually, it's Seraphine's best friend who speaks to me like that, but I don't see her anywhere. Audrey and Seraphine are a package deal, could they have had a fall-out?

"Rita, it's fine." Seraphine stops her, "There's no need for two gifts I didn't ask for, her presence is enough."

"I'll just—"

"Wait, come here." Seraphine blurts out, her lips twitching with a smile. I know that smile, I hate it. It always means something is about to happen, something only her sadistic self finds funny. "You should meet my husband." She says, snapping her fingers, and walking away.

I roll my eyes, walking closely beside her while flashing my best smile for anyone watching, and trust me, everyone is watching the Gamma's daughter who was caught in one of the very few high school sex scandals. "He's been dying to see you."

"So, when I meet him, do I say condolences, or would you want me to lie and congratulate him on marrying you?"

Sera scoffs, "An invite doesn't mean show up. You know better than to be here." She tsks, pausing a few steps away from men in suits surrounding a table. "Bae," she sweetly calls out. "My sister is here."

A few men turn, none of them the groom but when he finally turns to meet us, my whole world spirals.

"Aeliana," he says. "Long time no see."

No.

That voice.

He smiles at me, and my stomach coils with disgust, disdain, and discomfort. Everyone is talking but I can't hear anything, my eyes start to ring. It's him.

The air in my lungs is deflating. I stumble backwards, and everyone's eyes fall on me.

My wolf mumbles something but I don't hear it, I'm too focused on trying to breathe, to run. Even the hem of my dress feels heavy. My vision is starting to double, I need out.

I need—

I stumble into something hard, no, someone?

Nobody catches me, I fall to the floor, the ringing in my ears is dulled by the embarrassment, and when I try to stand, the worst thing that could have happened tonight spawns on me.

“Mate.” My wolf says, “Mine.”

My gaze lifts, immediately locking with cold eyes. And for the second time tonight? My whole world comes crumbling down.

No. Not him.