

Chapter 9

AELIANA

There hasn't been a single second that I didn't wish I had gone no contact, not one moment since I came back have I found a silver lining to my return. I've been nothing but miserable, it's funny how I'm no longer that frail little girl and yet I'm treated just like her.

I'm being forced into this marriage and my father doesn't care, Mom doesn't either, she hasn't stopped gushing about the engagement ring I received this morning, no doubt from Alpha Dante or Luna Estelle because Kingston doesn't want anything to do with me.

"Liana baby, why didn't you do your hair?" Mom asks again, for the fifth time since I got in the car. "You should have fixed yourself up."

I did.

I have on enough clothes and makeup to hide the bruises Father gave me after he learned I was going to escape, and I can thank none other than my groom for that.

"How will you charm Kingston looking like this?" She scoffs. "You should have chosen something from Seraphine's closet. She still has clothes at the house."

"And risk having my hair pulled out? No thanks." I swallow. I'd never touch anything belonging to Sera. "I have no desire to go near any of Seraphine's clothes."

Mom sighs, "What happened to you two, you girls were close?"

Close?



Just how blind has she been? Her daughter tried to kill me within the first year she entered my life. She pushed me out of my treehouse, and claimed I fell trying to push her, and from there everything went downhill.

Every time I told on her I was called out for lying, and I got punished because the princess couldn't do any wrong. I was the stain, the one who got into fights, broke glass, and didn't comb my hair despite my not being old enough to do it myself.

I shake off the thoughts, staring out the window. "Let's just get this over with."

Father growls in disapproval, "Watch your tone, Aeliana."

"Sorry, Father."

"You should keep your smart mouth in check," he snaps. "Do not speak unless spoken to, don't answer rudely, behave yourself because if you embarrass me, I'm not going to take it well."

I simply nod. Trying to run got me beaten up and if Mom didn't step in, I would have had to pretend I was sick and contagious until the bruises faded and my ribs weren't bruised anymore.

Mom nods out the window and I quickly step out of the car. She follows, immediately trying to smooth my hair again. "Maybe tie it up?" She asks, trying to gather it in her hand but the second she sees bruises on my neck she lets my hair back down. "Smile, baby."

And I do.

Father follows behind us and Mom leads us into the restaurant. The Vale family is sitting at a centre table, Luna Estelle sees us before anyone else



and she immediately gets to her feet.

"Pandora," she greets cheerfully, her arms wide open as she approaches me but my attention has long shifted. There's someone I don't quite know. "And my lovely daughter-in-law."

"Hello," I smile, hugging her back.

"You look radiant," she says, pulling away. My eyes stay fixed on the lady who helped me when I passed out the night of Seraphine's wedding. "So stunning, doesn't she King?"

He doesn't answer, if anything he pretends I don't exist. It spikes a familiar sting in my heart. Father and Alpha Dante are talking to each other in whispers a foot away from the table, nodding and smiling. Mom settles down and I pull out a chair next to her, then Luna Estelle screams bloody murder, "No! No, come and sit here." She says, gesturing to the empty seat beside King.

My gaze shifts, meeting his cold warning stare. I don't understand how someone could change so much, the only eyes that ever stared at me with love and understanding see me as the enemy now. "Umm, I'd like to sit here if that's okay." I swallow, "I miss my mom and won't have much time with her since I'm getting married."

