

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 12

Maeve POV

“Your Highness!” Bella gasped, hastily pulling away from me.

In her surprise, she dropped the crystal wine glass she’d been holding and it shattered into hundreds of little pieces upon impact. The room froze, falling so quiet that one might be able to hear a pin drop. No one knew what to expect from Prince **Xaden** as he suddenly encroached on such a scene in his mansion.

Looking determined, he stepped into the **room**.

The family quickly tried to compose themselves. “Greetings, Prince-”

But he swept **past** them as if they hadn’t existed... and landed right in front of me.

“Are you alright?” he fretted, his eyes wide and wild with worry as he carefully inspected me, caressing my face, my hands, my arms—anywhere he thought to look for injuries. “You’re not hurt, are you?”

Again, I was rendered speechless by him.

Having only just arrived, he **was** oblivious to the context of what caused that brawl in his mansion. Had he chosen to, he could **have** had us all thrown out for disrupting the peace and damaging his property, But, he didn’t—his first instinct was to come to **me**, to make sure I was okay.

Warmth spread throughout my chest, despite what had just happened.

“I’m fine.” I whispered.

“Did you drink any of it?”

“No.” I shook my head. “I didn’t.”

Relief swept over Xaden’s face before wrath quickly took over, casting its dark shadow as he snapped toward Bella, who watched him with simultaneous shock, awe, and fright. “What were you thinking?” he growled. “Explain yourself—now.”

“But she’s just a—”

“I dare you to try my patience,” he warned, low and dangerous. “Let us see what that gets you **and your** family.”

Bella stiffened, **glancing** in disbelief between Xaden and me, possibly realizing there was more she was not yet aware of. “I—I promise, Your Highness, it was all in good humor!” she tried to explain. “I’ve known Maeve and her sister since we were children. The three of us used to play **around** like this all the time.

“Play?” he retorted. “Is **that** what you called that assault?”

“I—It was just **a game**, I swear...

A thick vein throbbed in his neck. “You almost killed my unborn child and you dismiss it as a game?” he bellowed.

The dumbstruck expressions on their faces would have been almost comical, if not for the recent danger **to** my baby’s life. I could see Bella’s expression transform before my eyes—all awe and reverence for **Xaden** had vanished, instead replaced by pure fear. She did not anticipate the sudden turn of events.

“Burton’s daughter is pregnant?” Charles’s Luna gasped.

Maggie was in awe, as **well**. “Prince Xaden—a baby?” she bombarded.

Bella’s father abruptly stood up at the table, pushing the chair back with a loud screech against the floor. “How could you have acted so stupidly, Bella?” he scolded, feigning innocence. “The housekeeper warned you that this would not go well with His Highness!”

She wore a look of utter betrayal on her face. “Papa-

“Listen to your father.” Bella’s mother hissed from beside her, though awash with fright.

Alpha Charles ignored them both, focusing only **on** the prince in front of him. “I want to humbly apologize for the **rash** actions committed by my daughter,” he continued with a deep, solemn bow. “If I could have stopped her, I would have.”

“Thank you for the support, Alpha. It’s good to know I can rely on you.”

Her father seemed pleased with the prince’s praise. “Of course, sire.”

“If I may, I’d like to ask something.”

**Wariness** crept onto the Alpha’s face but he maintained his **smile**. “Yes, sire?”

“You were in the room as it happened,” he drawled, **his** glare slowly swinging towards Bella’s father. “What I want to know is why didn’t you do a damn thing to stop your daughter if you heard Maeve blatantly refuse the drink.”

The Alpha’s sudden silence was deafening.

**And** the resemblance between him and my father at that moment was striking.

For a man whose foreboding shadow pierced my heart with immediate dread, Father **was** very quick to submit to a prince he knew only in rumors. Bella's father was no different. As soon **as he** found himself in the path of Xaden's wrath, he no longer embodied the strength and renown that a **great** Alpha Minister should possess.

Not for the first time, I wondered how such pitiful, shameless, corrupt men were able to hold such power in the kingdom.

Xaden raised an inquisitive, mocking eyebrow. "Nothing more to say?"

More silence, frightful and awkward

"Very well," he growled, low and through clenched teeth. "So be it."

Xaden lowered his hand and I—fully expecting a mere lift to my feet—took it. Instead, he swept me up into his arms, cradling me against his broad, warm chest as if I were the most precious thing.

A small gasp slipped past my lips. "Xaden," I whispered, blushing, "I can walk—"

"I apologize, Alpha Charles, but I'm afraid the meeting with your family is going to have to be postponed indefinitely," he said, his voice dripping with false kindness, and I instantly got a bad feeling. "Allow me to offer you a parting gift as **consolation**. You there—" he called out to an omega servant, "bring out one of our finest wines."

"Of course, Your Highness. Shall I bring **it** in glasses or bottles?"

"Barrels"

The servant balked. "I—I'm sorry, sir?"

“Bring one of the wine barrels from the cellar and put it by the table” Once the servant set off to accomplish his Herculean task, Xaden turned back to the family, simmering with hostility. “Alpha, I forbid you and your family from leaving the grounds until you drink every last drop of that wine.”

Bella and her parents paled with terror.

She gulped. It dawned on her how dire the consequences of her immature actions were. “Every last...?”

“B–But, Prince Xaden...” her mother weakly intervened, “we couldn’t possibly–”

Xaden’s mouth lifted in one corner. “Don’t worry. If you find yourself unable to finish for whatever reason, someone will help **you** drink it all.” There were soft sighs of relief at the notion of help until he added: “By force, if necessary”

With impeccable timing, the exhausted omega returned with the barrel... aided by several other muscularly–endowed servants and **guards**.

“Your Highness,” Bella pleaded, “please show mercy!”

Charles fell to his knees. “My daughter has learned her lesson! This will never happen **again!**”

“I’m certain it will not,” Xaden muttered, cold and uncaring and unabashedly ignoring their desperate cries for leniency. “But that barrel will not finish itself. If you want to go home, I would recommend starting right away.”

Shocked sounds of protest echoed in the background, but I was oblivious to anything but the **man** in front of me.

The Alpha Prince was a power to be reckoned with... to be feared. That was one of the first things I’d ever heard about him.

Then why was it that every time I saw him, **my** affection for him grew more and more!

“Maggie,” he said, booming with authority, “inform me the very instant it is done. Not a moment sooner.”

“Loud and clear, sire.”

And with that, he carried me out of the room, leading us further into the mansion.