

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 16

Maeve POV

“Maeve is already skinny enough as it is,” Xaden remarked, full of disbelief. “There is no need to restrict her diet any further and I will not hear another word about it. How can we be sure that the machine you’re using is even accurate?”

“I assure you, sire, this device is one of medicine’s newest models. Everything should be in tip-top shape.”

Xaden scoffed, clearly displeased.

“However, initial tests can sometimes be mistaken, Doctor Pearce quickly conceded, preparing the device once more. “If you’d like, I can conduct the test a second time.”

Xaden sighed. “Do what you need to do.”

And with that, the doctor cleaned up the jelly from my abdomen, spread a new, cold layer on top of my reddened skin, **and** let the wand roam across my belly. There were a few moments needed for the device to recalibrate and re-assess our baby’s vitals, but a high-pitched beep indicated when the test was once again complete.

“I-I’m sorry, Your Highness, but I’m seeing the same results as before.”

“Maybe I should look into getting another doctor,” Xaden snapped, impatient. “Surely they would be competent enough to give us straight answers.”

Doctor Pearce gulped. “I will bring another machine next time. But please, rest assured that your baby is happy and healthy.” Xaden might not **have** been happy with the doctor’s results, but I was satisfied.

Our baby boy was healthy. **That** was more than enough for me.

Maggie came back into the room and brought up our shopping **plan** again. She even recommended a shopping square nearby.

My interest was piqued. The only shopping center I’d known of was the one I went to with Sarah. I had been wary of going back to that place, but then as we waited for the car to pull up, Maggie had suddenly informed me of a street—**Mona Road**—within a ten-minute drive of Xaden’s mansion, abundant with all the shops we could ever need.

How wonderfully convenient.

Xaden nodded with a hum. “It’s very popular among the capital,” he answered, adjusting the sleeves of his blazer. “Both residents and visitors alike frequent the area, so it rakes in a decent portion of our kingdom’s revenue.”

“**It’s** a lovely area, Miss Maeve,” Maggie chimed in. “I think you’ll quite like it.”

I found **myself** excited to explore the capital with them. It was a chance to familiarize myself with my new surroundings, and a chance to spend time with Xaden, like how I imagined normal couples would.

All of a sudden, Prime Beta Burke entered the mansion in a rush, looking wildly for the prince. “Your Highness,” he called out, sounding slightly out of breath as he ran over to the three of us.

Xaden spun with shock. “Good god, Burke. What’s the problem?”

“I need to see you in your office, sire. Please.”

The urgency in his voice worried me a bit. And judging by the look on Xaden's face, he was a little on edge by the frazzled appearance, as well. I couldn't help but wonder what was going on inside their **heads**.

"Can't this wait?" Xaden asked tentatively. "We were about to head out."

It didn't come as a surprise when Burke shook his **head** fervently. "I'm sorry, sire," he said. "This needs your immediate attention"

There was a brief moment of hesitation as Xaden glanced between him and me, but he settled on me with disappointed resignation. "**Go** on and take a look around. Maggie got my money," he **said**, pulling my hand into his **and** squeezing it. "I'll join you when I can."

"Are you sure?" I asked, uncertain. I would have waited for him if he'd asked.

Xaden nodded, smiling **at me**. "Enjoy yourself. I'll see you soon."

"I've never seen this part of the capital before, I murmured in awe, taking in every bit of the shopping square that I could see. After a short, easy drive to Mona Road, as promised by Xaden, both Maggie and I strolled down the lively, green street.

"There's **so** much to see here." Maggie boasted. "Just let me know if you find a store you want to visit."

As we passed building after building, business after business, something in a storefront window caught my eye. Immediately, I stopped in my tracks to peer inside....and I saw the most beautiful dress I had ever seen. It looks like the dress I fell in love with the moment I saw it in the magazine as a kid. But after realizing that I wanted this dress, Sarah got the dress and burnt it in front of me.

She just wants to let me know that what I don't deserve can be easily bought and ruined by her.

“You should try it on, Miss Maeve,” Maggie’s voice suddenly appeared from behind me, startling me away from the window.

I glanced at the dress, feeling a surge of longing I’d never had for clothes before.

It was beautiful, like nothing I’d ever seen or worn before. I wanted to try it on, but...it looked much too elegant for the likes of me. If Sarah were here, she would **have** berated me for thinking such a thing.

“I-I shouldn’t...”

Affronted, Maggie gasped. “What nonsense!” she scolded lightly. “And why shouldn’t you? You deserve to wear nice things just as anyone else shopping here.”

I let her lead me into the boutique and we went up to look more closely at the dress.

“Ladies” A middle-aged woman wearing a simple, all-black dress approached us with a wary look in her eyes. “Is there something I can do for you?”

Maggie looked her up and down. “Who might you be?”

“I work here.”

“Oh, perfect! We would like to pull out that gray dress for this young woman to try on,” Maggie requested, pointing at the one I’d noticed through the window.

The clerk followed the direction of Maggie’s finger. “**That** dress?” she stressed, **an eyebrow** raised in disbelief. I’m **afraid** that might be a bit outside of your budget,” she quickly continued, not bothering to even glance at the price tag. “If you’d like, I can direct you to our clearance section, where you can find something better suited to your...needs.”

My stomach churned. I knew what she was trying to say.

To her, we did not look like the upper crust of the capital. Dressed in plain, practical clothes, we looked like ordinary help, and storefronts such as this **high**-end place typically only catered to people like my sister. We were looked down upon as outsiders.

My excitement was quickly replaced with apprehension.

“Clearance?” Maggie gaped. “No, we want to see this one

“I have to advise against that,” the clerk said, this time more harshly. “You can’t afford that dress.”

I tugged at Maggie’s sleeve. “It’s okay, I muttered, lowering my eyes. “Let’s go.”

But she would not budge, vehemently standing her ground against the woman “What impertinence—I cannot believe the attitude this store permits! You cannot discriminate against your customers in such a fashion. She has the right to try on any **and** all of these clothes if that’s what she wants!”

This temper almost reminded me of Xaden **in a way**.

The stern Gamma housekeeper had quickly warmed up to me once she learned I was going to be Xaden’s Luna. And it seemed that I now had two exceedingly protective and doting eyes watching over me at all times, which was a very new sensation.

I waited, nervous, as the two strong-willed women held their standoff.

“Now,” Maggie muttered, “please fetch that dress for us or I will have to **speak** to **your** supervisor.”

After a brief pause, the clerk gave us a tight-lipped smile **and** a begrudging nod.... I’ll be back shortly with the merchandise.

It took some time for her to bring the dress out and put it in a changing room for me, but the moment I saw myself in the mirror, wearing the dress. I fell in love.

It was a deep gray like the color of skies during a stormy day, neutral in tone and yet with a dark blue hue that made it appear more vibrant than it actually was. The chiffon lace neckline hung just below my collarbone, sweeping off my thin shoulders with sleeves tapered above my wrists. Its long skirts flowed romantically around my ankles, while at the same time fitting nicely around my waist.

It felt like my childhood dream coming true.

For the first time, I felt like I was worthy of being by Xaden's side.

Maggie's eyes lit up as she saw me and she burst into applause. "You look magnificent in that, Miss Maeve!" she praised.

"L..I love it," I admitted, grinning. "I really love it."

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the store clerk watch us carefully, seeped with utter disinterest.

I gulped, feeling bold. "I want to buy it."

Maggie agreed ardently. "**You** can't leave without buying this dress," she insisted, and then something glittered in her eyes. "We are more than willing to **pay** for it," she said loudly, catching the clerk's attention, whose eyes widened in surprise.

The woman cleared her throat. "If you're ready to pay, meet me at the counter."

Without wasting another second, I changed back into my original outfit, neatly hanging the dress back on its hanger, before we proceeded towards the counter to pay. "The dress comes down to two thousand dollars, the

clerk drawled, tapping her fingers against the counter, eying us carefully for our reactions to the high price “Will that be cash or credit?”

I paled. Two thousand dollars?!

That was an insane amount of money **to** spend on one dress! Suddenly, I **wasn't** sure it was worth it anymore.

I snapped towards Maggie, but she did not seem as fazed as I was. She had pulled out her purse and began to dig through it determined to make her point. “I will pay with...”

Silence.

Then I heard frantic shuffling through the purse. “I will...pay...” she muttered, growing more and more anxious.

I Maggie, becoming just as nervous as she was. “What’s wrong?”

The clerk **scoffed** impatiently. “See, the way this works, ma’am,” she said with false and ridiculing politeness, “is that you need to take out the money from your wallet to be able to pay for the dress you. asked for.”

“I—I seem to have forgotten my wallet at the house.” Maggie stammered.

My eyes widened, my stomach sinking with dread. “What?”

With a blatant scoff and roll of her eyes, the store clerk opened her mouth to jeer at us—I imagined she assumed we were trying to be sly about paying—but quickly froze in place as a familiar, muscular arm reached around me, card in hand.

“Credit, please.”