

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 17

### Maeve POV

The moment the store clerk caught sight of Prince Xaden, it was like she transformed into another person before my eyes. All distaste and scrutiny completely vanished from her powdered features, instead replaced by a bright smile ready to charm like her life depended on it. After all, it didn't seem very often royalty walked through her doors.

The amount of two-faced people I'd ever met was truly astonishing... and sad,

"Welcome to our humble boutique, Your Highness," she beamed.

I tried to hide my displeasure. The stark difference in treatment was almost comical.

Xaden nodded politely. "Thank you, but please don't pay me any mind—I am only here to accompany this stunning woman right here." He turned to gaze at me. "Once we finish here, shall we move on to another shop!"

"Oh, but sire!" she interjected fervently. "We **have** so much more where **that** came from. If you loved that dress, I can bring out more that are just as lovely!"

"Really?"

I had no interest in watching her try to suck up to royalty. I sighed. "That's-

“Sounds marvelous. Let’s get started.”

The clerk grinned. “Great! I’ll pull out some of our best clothes.”

As she disappeared into the back, I leaned in close to Xaden, fidgeting with my hands. “I don’t feel comfortable shopping here, Xaden,” I admitted softly. “She’s only being generous now because you’re here. Let’s just go somewhere else.”

He seemed to pick up on my nerves, however, and gently grabbed my hand

“Don’t you worry,” he said with a smile, kissing my knuckles. “Just focus on enjoying yourself, and I’ll take care of the rest.”

My brow creased, unsure what he meant by that. If I’d learned anything in the last few **days**, it was that Xaden had a side of him **that** was frighteningly capable of being quite cruel, and if provoked, he would not hesitate to **unleash** hell on those he deemed worthy of receiving such treatment.

The question was... what was he going to do?

When the clerk returned with armfuls of hangers with clothes, I was ushered into a large, nearby changing room. After a few minutes, I emerged from the room wearing one of the dresses she **had** brought out for me.

It was fairly modest, but the quality was on par with the dresses I would always see Sarah wear. The fabric clung closely to my skin—tight around my bust and arms, but it flared out in a mess of tulle around my waist, falling just above my knees. The delicate shade of purple didn’t look as nice as the gray dress from earlier, I thought, but it enhanced my pale skin and dark **hair** rather well enough,

Maggie eagerly **expressed** her adoration for the dress

I glanced over at Xaden for **his** thoughts and saw him making conversation with an older, white-haired woman, looking serious.

As soon as I caught **his** attention, his eyes lit up. “That color looks exquisite on you,” he remarked, full of admiration, enticing the other woman to look me over. “However,” he said **slowly**, pondering over something, “I’d like to see that dress with a nice pair of shoes.”

The clerk was quick to bring out a pair of champagne-colored heels. “Will these do?”

“Perfect,” Xaden said, appeased. “Let’s try those on.”

She stooped down to her knees and readily helped me secure the shoes on my feet, even going so far **as** to make sure they did not cut my feet and that my **toes** fit comfortably. The shoes, I thought, were a lovely compliment to the shade of purple.

“That’s exactly what it needed,” he **said**. “Could you also bring out some jewelry to match? I want to see the outfit in its completion.”

With an excited chirp, she dashed back to the stockroom and returned with some similar champagne-toned earrings and helped me put them on.

Xaden sighed with a loud clap. “Now that’s more like it!” he exclaimed, but he was **not** yet satisfied. “I want to see more.”

This went on for perhaps an hour...possibly more. To be honest, I lost track.

He would ask to see another expensive, glamorous dress on me, paired with shoes and jewelry. Even if he expressed **sound** approval for the outfits the saleswoman put together, he would have her fetch something new to try on me, whether it was shoes of different colors and sizes, or different earring or necklace designs

He relentlessly ordered her around the store, while I stood there... almost like a **doll**.

It was only when I started stumbling over my feet, tired from standing for so long, that he decided to stop.

“Everything truly was beautiful. Xaden sang his praises to the store clerk once it all was done, seeming surprisingly enthusiastic about the impromptu fashion show. “Those dresses were like the stuff of dreams—works of art come to life on this beautiful, deserving woman. You must be proud to work in a place with such high esteem.”

The clerk came to life with his kind words. “You’re too kind, Your Highness! We only mean to serve the best—clothes and otherwise!”

“You know what?” Xaden said with a smile. “We’ll take it.”

“Which ones?”

Something glinted in his eyes. “The gray dress I **was** going to pay for earlier.”

The moment he said those words, her face went white. I could see the humiliation and disgruntlement written as plain as day across her face in angry little creases, but still, she maintained as bright a smile as possible for Xaden. “E—Excellent choice, Your Highness,” she stammered, shaking with restrained emotion. “Will that still be-?”

“Credit? Yes,” he said, handing her his card once more.

She struggled a bit with sliding the card through the machine—undoubtedly due to the nerves after that whole interaction with Xaden—but the purchase was rung up and she packed the dress carefully and neatly in a bag.

Xaden nodded, looking down at her. “**Thank** you for your time.”

In response, she bowed her head, low and deep, muttering her thanks.

And just like that, we left the store with only the gray dress in hand.

“**What a** shame,” Maggie muttered, frowning deeply, lamenting not buying the other items I’d tried on “Miss Maeve looked beautiful in those clothes. Every bit the Luna Princess she is destined to be.”

I blushed. “Such high praise.... I’m not sure about some of that.”

“What nonsense! Prince Xaden can certainly attest to it, as well, if you don’t believe me,” she huffed before turning to him with an excited sparkle in her eyes. “You must agree, don’t you, Your Highness?”

“Absolutely.” Xaden was quick to answer, and the warmth in his voice struck me. “I couldn’t take my eyes off you today.”

I glanced at him, feeling suddenly shy.

There was something about receiving such ardent compliments from **him**, how genuine he always sounded even without saying much, and how he looked at me **with** utter reverence. He made me feel like I really was worthy of the word beautiful.

“**Which** is why I ordered everything directly from the shop owner herself,” he revealed, as a matter of fact. “I was not about to allow that ill-mannered saleswoman to earn **even a** cent of commissions after the way she treated you.”