

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 2

Maeve POV

None of these words could adequately describe what I felt at that moment. Had I heard him correctly

I could go to Sarah's party?

"Why **is** she allowed to come?" Sarah whined. "It's my birthday **party!**"

Father approached the open car door and affectionately patted her decorated head. "I know, dearest, but the Royal family knows I have two daughters. They expect Prince Xaden to meet you both at the party."

I could feel Victoria's sharp gaze pierce me like daggers. Swallowing, I purposefully avoided eye contact with her.

I **should've** known. He didn't really want me there.

"Then... why **does** she need **a** new **dress?**"

"Imagine if word began to spread that I mistreat my daughter. The reputation our family worked so hard to build would fall apart. You don't want the Alpha Prince to get angry with me, do you?"

Sarah sulked. "Well... no, but..."

"Tell you what," Father cooed. "How about you get five new dresses this time? Any five dresses you want."

“I want ten!”

Father smiled, and the sight made my chest pang. “Anything for my princess.” I’d never seen this side of him unless it concerned my sister. He would do anything to see her **happy**, to make her dreams come true.

And he couldn’t even spare me a passing glance **as** I walked to the car.

Our driver shut the door behind me, and we left Moonstone for the capital. The drive itself was simple enough, despite being an hour long, and Sarah managed the whole trip by sitting as far away from me as the car allowed, without so much **as** a word. I didn’t mind—I rarely got to visit the capital, let alone leave the packhouse, so I used the opportunity to take in as much of my surroundings **as** possible.

The scenery, the buildings, the people..

I wanted to experience everything like it was the last time.

Something about the capital always took my breath away, and as we exited the car, the reason struck me once more. With its modern skyscrapers and clean streets filled with happy people, it was **a** far cry from the cold, conservative pack my father ran where I always walked on eggshells.

Breathing **the** fresh capital air, I felt weightless.

But this **was** Sarah’s territory, not mine. She knew this **place** like the back of her hand, whether to meet friends or shop on her own.

As we explored the capital’s grandest shopping mall, stopping at every high-end boutique Sarah could find, it was obvious she had no intention of shopping for me. Every dress she picked out and tried on was catered to her tastes alone. And she made sure to preoccupy me by making me follow her around and carry all of her boxes and bags.

It didn’t seem to matter that it meant disobeying Father’s orders. She was perfectly keen on keeping me out of the picture as much as possible.

This day was for her.

“I love **this** store!” Sarah exclaimed **as** a store clerk rang up her items. “I can always find such beautiful dresses here!”

“They’re only as beautiful as the woman wearing them.” The clerk smiled at Sarah’s delighted face before turning to me, his smile swiftly disappearing, as he handed over a bag. Of course, he was one of many who assumed I was a mere omega servant. “Don’t soil these.”

I sighed, taking the bag. This **is** going to be a long day.

Hours had **passed** since we began shopping and the **sun** started to set. I was overwhelmed with bundles of Sarah’s purchases, but she still wasn’t satisfied. So, we wandered through the last boutique on her list.

Suddenly, one dress in particular **caught** my **eye**, not because of its extravagance, nor did it have a trendy **designer** name on the label. It was a simple, white chiffon dress with delicate lacework on the bodice and sleeves that could be mistaken for one of Sarah’s nightgowns, but there was beauty in its simplicity. None of the other girls who vied for the Alpha Prince’s attentions would wear such **a dress**.

And that, I thought, made it special.

“Um, what about this one?” I offered. “It’s not as luxurious but it’s still quite lovely-

“Do you even hear yourself?” she said with a sneer, not bothering to spare a glance in my direction. “If it’s not exquisite enough to catch the attention of Prince Xaden, then I want nothing to do with it. Now, be a good mutt and shut your mouth.”

My jaw clenched. “I was only trying to—”

“If you like it so much, why don’t you put it on?” she muttered, distracted by a gaudy line of rose-pink dresses. “A boring dress. **for** a boring servant.”

Her rude comments made me fume, but I stayed **silent**.

I did need an outfit for her birthday, after all. And, looking at the dress, I knew I could do way worse as far as options went, **and** I certainly wouldn't feel comfortable wearing something of Sarah's style.

Maybe I should try it on....

After a few minutes in the boutique dressing room, I emerged wearing the simple dress.

And for a moment, Sarah actually looked rather stunned. **"It's..."**

"Beautiful!" A passing group of girls stopped to gawk at me in the dress, thus attracting the attention of other nearby customers, **and** I couldn't help but blush at the sudden attention. "That looks like it was **made** for you!"

What!

I looked into a nearby mirror, awkwardly fidgeting with the sleeves. Sure, the dress was more to my taste than anything else I'd seen in the mall and it felt nice to the touch, but to be called beautiful?

I wasn't worthy of the name.

"It's the ugliest thing I've ever seen," Sarah growled with a hateful glare, starting me. "Take it off immediately and get it out of my sight!" With a push towards the dressing room, I solemnly changed back into my normal attire and we left the boutique... without the dress in hand.

Resentment rolled off her body in waves as we walked to the car.

As I carefully loaded Sarah's **dresses** into the trunk, I heard her address our driver: "Wait here. We'll be back shortly." And once I closed the hatch, she grabbed my wrist and lured me away from the car.

Her sudden resolution gave me a bad feeling. "Where are we going?"

“I **have a** gift for you.”

And with that, she led me further into the maze of the capital.

Soon, we stood outside an alley in a part of the capital I was unfamiliar with—one I had no interest in ever visiting again. **Large** buildings loomed over us, their presence foreboding in the setting dusk. Men who stunk of alcohol and scantily-clad omega women littered the street, radiating sin and trouble.

“Why are we here?” I asked, nervously looking around. “We should go.”

Girls like us didn’t belong here.

Even **Sarah’s** eyes swam with fright but she remained determined. “No, we’re not leaving yet.”

She approached a nearby liquor vendor and soon returned with a suspicious-looking yellow drink. This is for you,” Sarah said with a grin that only increased my unease. “Consider it my present for you.”

I didn’t have much experience with alcohol. The few times I recalled **having a** sip or two were only ever at the social events I **was** allowed to attend as a daughter of Moonstone. With memories of being surrounded by distinguished, critical **strangers** and a family that loathed my very **existence**, along with its strong and unpleasant aroma—1 had no burning desire to taste the stuff.

Especially not in this place that reeked of bad news.

“I don’t want that,” I grimaced, slowly backing away. “Please, **Sarah**, let’s leave. It isn’t safe-

Suddenly, her hand shot out and jerked me into the darkness of the alley. With little time to process what was happening, let alone defend myself, she managed to tackle me to the ground and force the drink down my throat. Instantly, a sharp, bitter taste and a peculiar plant scent overwhelmed my senses, nauseating me.

I struggled to stand. Even a breeze could've toppled me over. "What-" I coughed, "what was that?"

"Just a shot of alcohol.. infused with Ylang essence."

Ylang...

"It's not poison. It's meant to loosen you up.." she said with a leer, "maybe get a man or fifty to screw you over **to** their heart's content. With the capital's famous brothel right here, they won't be able to tell the difference between you and one of those street walkers... so you might as well lay back and take it like the wretched mutt you are."

I was horrified. This was a new low, even for her.

A deafening thump, thump, thump began to echo throughout my body, though whether it was because of fear, outrage, the aphrodisiac, or some potent mix of the three, I couldn't tell. Something hot and feral and completely unfamiliar stirred within me. Panting and trembling, it felt like a terrible fever slowly took hold of me

Is this?

Sarah observed me. "You're already in heat," she remarked, sounding surprised "What a powerful cocktail"

"Sarah, please."

"Enjoy your night with the wolves," she snickered. And just like that, she was gone.

Time moved differently under the influence of the drug, and my head reeled with confusion. But one thing was certain...

A group of men swaggered their way toward me. I smelled the alcohol radiating off their bodies and I knew what they were here for. **Sarah** might

not have intended to kill me with that drink, but she sentenced me to **death**, nonetheless.

One of the men **ogled** at me. “You look like you could use some company, little lady.”

I froze, pressing myself into the alley wall with all the strength I could muster. Drugged or not, this was my first heat and I was powerless against its influence. All my body **wanted** to do was yield to the will of these terrifying men, and I..

I couldn't let that happen!

“G–Get away from m–me,” I tried to growl. “I don't w–**want** you!”

Another man laughed. “Looks like we got ourselves a feisty one, lads.”

Tears started to well. “I–I'm warning you!”

“Come on, **baby**,” a third slurred, reaching his large, grotesque hands towards me. “Let us show you a good time...”

My heart lurched in my **throat** and I gasped, shutting my wet eyes. I couldn't resist my heat any longer–these urges were suffocating **and** it felt like I couldn't breathe unless I gave in. Any moment now, my weakened resolve would break and I'd be stuck with these ruffians **all** night long–

“LEAVE HER ALONE!”

–or so I thought.