

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 28

Maeve POV

“Miss Maeve, you have been summoned to the Royal Palace.”

In my surprise, I almost dropped the pregnancy book I had been reading. I cleared my throat, abrupt and awkward. “The palace!” I repeated, trying to sound as casual and unbothered as possible. “Whatever for?”

Immediately, I was swarmed with all the possible

Case scenarios. Had I done something wrong...? Or **had** my father or Victoria said something to get me in trouble out of revenge for Sarah’s imprisonment?

Maggie, however, stared at me as if I had muttered complete and utter nonsense. “Oh, come now, what sort of question is that?” she scolded lightly. “You’re going to be Prince Xaden’s Luna! They mean to officially meet you!

My heart began to pound. They **want** to meet me?

I wanted to believe that was a good thing. Maybe Xaden had decided that we were ready to reveal our relationship to his father and the rest of his family, or perhaps his father brought up the prospect of marriage and Xaden told him that he was already involved with someone. If he weren’t a prince, I probably would not be as nervous as I was at that moment.

After all, I was not just meeting his father.

I was meeting Alpha King Arlan, leader of the entire Werewolf Kingdom.

Without wasting another second, she shuffled me into the master bedroom and began sorting through the wardrobe for clothing befitting the sudden, very important visit. “There’s no time to lose,” she said, hasty and distracted as she brushed past dress after dress, not seeming to find something she **was** satisfied with. “You need to be flawless today!”

She didn’t need to tell me twice. I could not mess this up, not when Xaden’s reputation was on the **line**. Thanks to my limited knowledge and experience with nobility, however, I **was** not enthusiastic about my chances of success.

“Um...Maggie,” I began to ask. “What does one say when they meet the king?”

Maggie’s sudden gawk in my direction was not reassuring. “You... you **have** been to the palace before, haven’t **you**, Miss Maeve?” she questioned.

Blushing, I shook my head.

“Oh... dear,” she stammered, losing all color from her face as she began to scurry around the room in a haze. “In that case, we have a lot of work to do.”

“R–Really?”

“Miss Maeve,” she said seriously, rushing over to me and grabbing firmly onto my arms to look me in the eyes. “It is more than just looking your best when you appear in front of the **king**. It is **also** about decorum.”

Decorum? I mused anxiously. “What do I need to know?”

Thus began Maggie’s impromptu lesson of basic etiquette.

As she spoke, she pulled out a dress she finally approved of—a lovely **white**, silk dress with an empire waistline that honestly reminded me of something from a fairytale—and helped style my hair **into** loose, pretty curls. Throughout the short car ride to the palace, she continued to give me whatever other tips **and** advice she could think of. Even if she only knew basic etiquette, it was more than I had ever been taught, so I was appreciative of anything she **had** to offer.

Upon exiting the car, we began to approach the large, daunting palace gates but were quickly stopped by two towering guards

“What business do you **have** at the Royal Palace?” one asked loudly.

“I—ah...” I faltered. I suddenly felt like such a fraud.

Shaking with nerves, I gazed back at Maggie for **reassurance**. Once she gestured for me to continue, I forced myself to stand straight and proud as I addressed the guards. “M—**My** name is Maeve.” I said. “I’m here to answer Alpha King Arlan’s summons.”

After taking some time to verify that I was telling the truth, the guards held aside their weapons and opened the grand gates for me. Gulping, I proceeded to enter and Maggie began to follow, until the guards suddenly blocked her entrance.

Preventing Maggie from joining me.

“Only the girl,” the guard said sternly to her. “**You must** wait here.”

I swung my gaze over to Maggie, who looked incredibly insulted. “What is the meaning of this?” she loudly **demanded**. “I am part of His Royal Highness, Prince Xaden’s staff! I am here to accompany his Luna!”

The guard did not appear swayed by her impassioned rant. “Yes, however, **as** a member of Prince Xaden’s private staff, you are no longer

permitted to enter the palace grounds without **the** proper current identification.”

“Proper identification?” she gaped. “I used to work here. Can’t you search your records?”

“I’m sorry, ma’am. Orders are orders.”

Maggie glanced hopelessly between the unwavering guards and myself, clearly wanting to follow me but, at the same time, she could not disobey royal decrees. My stomach twisted nervously at the thought of entering the palace on my own, but I had no choice.

“I–It’s alright, Maggie,” I tried to reassure her with a small smile. “I can find my way. I’ll come find you once this is all over.” She held her **hands** over her heart. “Good luck, Miss Maeve”

Another guard led me through the **main** hall of the Royal Palace, **and** as we walked, I was awestruck by how grand everything was. It was something out of a dream...or maybe a glimpse of what lay beyond the gates of heaven. Everything was gold or marble–touched, more expensive and expansive than anything I could even begin to fathom.

I was truly in the Royal Palace.

My heart began to pound... I grew dizzy

Oh my God–I’m in the Royal Palace.

Suddenly, I felt the urge to vomit, Frantically, I asked the guard to direct me to the nearest bathroom and he did so with haste.

As the guard waited outside the bathroom, I sat down **and** took a moment to catch my breath. Slowly but surely, my impending nausea went away and I felt somewhat human again. I just needed to remind myself of one simple thing: I was only meeting his family.

His family was just like any other...except with much more wealth and power.

I sighed. There was no point in putting this off any longer—I was only delaying the inevitable. I heaved myself back up onto my feet and went to **wash** my hands.

“You there. Turn around.”

Startled, I spun around and came face to face with a young, pretty woman, no older than her early twenties and wearing a **royal** blue, pleated dress.

“Wow...” she murmured, “I couldn’t **have** been sure with all the vague rumors, but I was right. It really is you, Maeve

My skin crawled with unease. I remembered this girl. For as long as I could remember, her Alpha father, Kenneth, had been **an** acquaintance of my father and would occasionally visit Moonstone. She had only ever accompanied him once or twice in all the years I’d seen him, but she always carried herself with reserve, as if she felt she deserved better than anyone... at least around me.

I also remembered the day her father visited with the news that she was set to marry the firstborn of the Alpha King, Prince Henry.

Considering she got everything she wanted, she did not seem pleased to see me... so why was she here?

I forced myself to smile politely. “H—Hello, Isabelle.”

“I didn’t think you ever left Moonstone,” she said, straightforward and to the point. “Not to mention, your own house. So, tell me, how on earth did you ever **manage** to catch the eye of our roguish Prince Xaden?”

I gnawed **at** the inside of my cheek, squirming uncomfortably where I stood. That was all people seemed to care about

nowadays. But I did not feel that I owed her any sort of explanation, even if she was married to his brother.

“I’m still not sure, myself, if I’m being honest,” I said.

“Well, it certainly was not thanks to your looks,” she sneered, looking me up and down. “I don’t recall you ever wearing something other **than** servant attire. You did **not** steal that **dress**, did **you?**”

My face flushed, offended by her accusation “N–No, I didn’t”

She looked unconvinced. “What do you want with him?” she asked, point blank, like an interrogation, as if I had ulterior motives that she had a responsibility to uncover. “Do you hope to gain something from him?”

I straightened myself up. “No. He wants me to be his Luna.”

Her eyes widened, illuminated with rage. And, without warning, she stomped her dainty, gold–embellished, high–heeled shoe onto the skirt of my white dress, smearing dust and dirt all over the skirt. I gasped, startled by the sudden assault, and tried to pull away in a feeble attempt to prevent any damage.

But it was too late.

The dust and dirt left a very obvious **mark** against the white fabric. Even if I tried to clean it off using hand soap and water, some semblance of a stain would remain.

The dress was ruined.

“Good luck impressing His Majesty looking like that, you fraud,” Isabelle spat as the fire in her eyes morphed into loathsome disdain. “I’m telling you once–leave now and don’t ever come back. I will not share the palace with the likes of you.”

And with that, she spun on her heel **and** stormed out of the bathroom.

I **was** left alone with the dress she deliberately ruined. Panicking, I soaked and scrubbed at the dirtied section of the dress with as much soap and water as I could, hoping that, by some miracle, I might be able to salvage it. But while I managed to get the worst of it off, it still stuck out like an eyesore.

I was almost out of time! How was I supposed to meet the royal family like this?!

All of a sudden, the bathroom door flew open, startling me with a jolt. I quickly snapped my gaze towards the door to face whoever this intruder was.

“Maeve?” a soft, out-of-breath voice questioned.