

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 32

Maeve POV

This was Xaden's mother.

I couldn't take my eyes off her. She was every bit I imagined a Luna Queen to be. Where the **brash** and terrifying Alpha King Arlan radiated unrestrained power and dominance with a mere glance, she glowed like a heavenly maiden that had fallen far beyond the Moon Goddess's boundless skies, where even just breathing could settle the most chaotic of rooms—a perfect counterpart to her husband.

Whoever her successor was would have much to live up to.

It wasn't until she spoke again that I realized with embarrassment that I'd been staring.

"I cherish your visits, my darling." Luna Queen Leonora murmured, beaming at her son with otherworldly grace and brilliance that I never thought possible from a living being "It seems I **hardly** get to see you anymore."

Although it hadn't been directed at me, **the** guilt flowed unbidden.

Again, I couldn't help but feel like I was taking away whatever spare time that was usually reserved for his family.

Xaden dipped his head, a loving show of respect for the woman before him—far from the way he exhibited himself to his father. "Forgive me, Mother. I don't mean to neglect you. I've been preoccupied with other matters."

“So, I **hear.**” Suddenly, she focused her attention on me, and out of instinct, I hovered closer to Xaden, much like **a** child would hide behind their parent from a stranger. “And who is this little gem on your arm? Is this..?”

Judging by the expectant look on her face, she had either already heard whatever capital rumors were circulating or had heard from Xaden personally about our involvement. But I had no idea to what extent she was aware.

I swallowed hard before curtsying “I-I’m Maeve, Your Majesty,” I said, hoping that was enough of an introduction.

“I can finally meet the one who turned my boy’s head? Oh, look at you-“ she cooed, reaching out for me. I prepared to flinch away, thinking she would grab or smack me like Father or Victoria had done many times before, but instead, she gently stroked my **hair** as she gazed at me while I stood frozen, unsure what to do or if I could move. “I can see so much in those big, expressive **eyes** of yours.”

No one had ever touched me like this before...was it a good thing?

Upon realizing how stiff I had become under her touch, she removed her **hand**. “You needn’t be afraid of me, darling,” she added softly.

“I should hope not,” Xaden commented, sounding bitter. “Father already **did** a number on her just now.”

The smile on her lips fell. “What did he do?” she asked.

With growing agitation, Xaden recounted what **had** happened in the hours leading up to and during the meeting with his father. As he **spoke, an** array of different emotions flashed across the queen’s **face**, from shock to outrage to sadness **as** she flickered between him and me, making me feel a bit awkward.

The Luna Queen turned to me with pity. “I’m sorry, my dear. The king can be quite blunt and rude at times.”

I smiled in an attempt to reassure her. “It’s fine...”

However **kind** and **understanding** she might have seemed, I didn’t want to speak poorly of her husband to her face. It was not my place and I didn’t want to seem like an ungrateful guest in her home.

“No, it’s not,” Xaden insisted with a frown.

“**My** son is right. And unfortunately, nothing I could say or do would be enough to undo **what** he said,” she continued solemnly, “but I hope what I am about to offer you would suffice **for** the time being.”

The way she said that, **as** if she **had** something planned for me, made my stomach twist with nerves. What **did** she have in mind?

But then Luna Queen Leonora smiled at me, bright and hopeful and kind. “I would love the chance to take you under my wing,” she said, seemingly in earnest. Her face showed no signs of deception and she had spoken without wavering.

She... meant it?

My mouth parted open in surprise. “Your Highness...?”

“Please, come visit me in my parlor tomorrow morning,” she insisted, leaning closer with eagerness and excitement. “I would be delighted to do whatever I can to help you feel more at home and confident. For starters, we can hold some etiquette lessons, since that was such a big concern.”

Was the **Luna** Queen **really** offering such a thing? It sounded like the deal of a lifetime, to learn what I needed and to have an opportunity to bond one-on-one with Xaden’s mother. But surely, she had better things to do than get involved with someone like me.

“I... I don’t want to impose,” I said, feeling uncertain.

“Nonsense, it would be my pleasure, she entreated. “I want to do this for **you**, not just as my son’s Luna, but woman-to-woman. This world has always been unkind to us, so it is our responsibility to find strength anywhere we can and persevere, even when it seems impossible. I want to help you—show everyone who’s ever dared to put you down just how foolish they were to doubt you.”

The thought was daunting, but oh so tempting. I knew all too well how severely I was lacking in many areas. All my life, I was only ever capable of embarrassing those around me or messing things up.

Could I really stand up to the **task**?

The intense fire that burned in the queen’s **eyes** was all-consuming, so much so that it threatened to swallow me whole, but at the same **time**, I’d never felt more alive. So, few people had ever believed in me or my abilities so fervently. And, looking at Xaden, I saw nothing but bright encouragement

Maybe it was possible if they believed **it so**.

After all, this could be my chance to transform myself—to shed my old, submissive skin and be reborn into something beautiful and worthy of respect.

Setting my jaw, I **nodded**. “Okay”

Her face instantly lit up, as **if I** had done her a big favor. “You can count on me, my dear,” she declared, spirited. “I will not let **you** down.”

She **was** so passionate about this. I felt like I could trust her. So, we set our first **lesson** for tomorrow morning and parted ways.

The moment Maggie saw me in a dress different than the one she picked out for me, she **paled**, knowing something had gone wrong. Reluctantly, I

explained what had happened, with Isabelle's sabotage and how Princess Charlotte saved the day and she did not take the news well.

She practically threw herself at Xaden's feet, apologizing profusely for not being able to follow me inside due to the rude palace guards.

That revelation **came as a** shock to him. Instantly, I recalled her mentioning working for the palace many years ago, but the guest protocol must have changed in recent years. I couldn't help but wonder if security **had** tightened because of relations with other kingdoms.

Had things really gotten so bad? **What** could have triggered it?

Surprise aside, Xaden was quick with a solution, offering to secure **a** new identity card for Maggie as soon as possible so she could accompany me in the future. And this seemed to appease her for the time being, while also comforting me that I'd have another familiar face to keep me company.

The drive home was, thankfully, quiet and **peaceful**. And as we ate dinner—a delicious dish of steamed potatoes **and** garlic beef, provided by the meat purchased at Mona **Road**—I felt myself calm down even more.

Whatever the future had in store would happen. But what I had right now, dining with Xaden in our home, was all I needed.

After we retreated to our bedroom and I changed into my nightwear. I neatly folded up the lovely dress that Princess Charlotte lent to me and put **it** aside to wash tomorrow. I had no idea when the next time I saw her would be, but I wanted to ensure it stayed in pristine condition, at the very least.

Meanwhile, Xaden took his time getting comfortable and washing up, but I felt his eyes on me the entire time. Heat crawled up my neck, spreading to my ears. I still wasn't used to a man looking at me the way he would.

Did it mean he wanted to... be intimate again...?

He approached me from behind. "You were breathtaking today."

“Th–Thank you. Your sister was too kind to lend me one of her beautiful dresses. I. I couldn’t–“

“The dress was lovely, yes,” he purred, sliding his hands around my waist, making me face him. “But I was talking about you.”

“Me?” I whispered.

His head cocked at my reaction. “It seems to baffle you every time I say so.”

My face heated up. “W–Well...you’re the only person ever to call me that.. I stuttered. His mere presence was muddling my mind

I caught the quick motion of his eyes flickering to my mouth, and it made something inside me flutter. “I’ll say it as many times **as** you’d like me to. Whether you’re wearing the most exquisite gown or nothing at all...” he murmured, leaning in closer and closer, “you’re the most beautiful **thing** I’ll ever behold.”

I swallowed **hard**. How did he always know just what to say!

My eyes fluttered shut, I was ready for whatever he wanted to do.

Xaden pressed his lips delicately against mine, slow and tentative at first but growing more and more passionate once he felt my ready response to the kiss. I could taste the red wine he drank during dinner, sweet and intoxicating and tickling my senses, and I wanted more. I parted my mouth—an invitation for him to deepen the kiss as he pleased—which he graciously accepted.

The moment I felt his tongue touch my own, my mind clouded. I moaned softly into his mouth, melting against his muscular body.

I wanted to feel him again...

Oh, how I wanted to become reacquainted with his body the way we had only just begun to discover together. He had two nights’ worth of memories savoring my own, learning how to make my toes curl in ecstasy and what

made me blush, but I only truly **had** one of him. I had so much to learn about him... and I wanted to **know** it all.

My wandering hands found his belt. Slowly, I started to unbuckle-

“Stop-“ Xaden gasped with a harsh intake of breath, abruptly breaking off the kiss and pulling away from me, holding me at arm’s length.

My heart dropped with a thud.

He **just** pushed me away.