

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 34

Marve POV

This was it.

Today was my first–official–day with Xaden’s mother, Luna Queen Leonora. To say I was nervous was the understatement of the century. Not only did I hope this first impression would go significantly smoother than that of **the** meeting with the Alpha King for the sake of my relationship with Xaden, but I needed this for myself, **too**

I never knew my birth mother.

And the only mother figure I had in my life loathed my very existence

If it was within the realm of possibility, I wanted more than anything for her to like me. Xaden seemed fairly confident that things would go well between us, but I could not be certain. Past experiences had taught me that anything could happen.

That was why I found myself standing just beyond the door of the Luna Queen’s parlor, stalling for time and shaking at the knees. My hand hovered nervously, poised to knock on the door to be let inside.

Please... I begged internally, please let her be kind, at the very **least...**

Sighing heavily, I took the **giant** leap forward and knocked on the door until I heard that soft, gentle voice grant me entry.

Slowly, I pushed **open** the door and stepped inside. Sitting patiently at a round **glass** table by the far window, underneath a golden chandelier and amid beautiful hanging vines of ivy, Luna Queen Leonora waited for me to approach with a smile.

I straightened myself up. This was really happening.

There was no turning back now.

“Good morning. Maeve,” she greeted kindly, getting to her feet **and** holding her hand out to me expectantly, maintaining strong **eye** contact. Like a true Luna, commanding respect from the room. “I trust you had no issues on the way here?”

My gaze darted nervously around the room as I shook her **hand**. “N–No, it was–“

“Hold on for **a** moment, dear.”

I blinked. “I’m... sorry?”

She planted both hands on top of my own. “Whenever someone comes up to greet you,” she murmured seriously, and I found myself listening to every word, “always look them in the eye. No matter what they hear or are told, this moment will always be their first impression of you. Don’t ever show them how vulnerable **you are**...because they will think you are someone to take advantage of.”

My mouth parted in shock. “I never thought of it like that...” I admitted.

The corners of her lips upturned. “That is why we are doing this. I promised you I would help you find confidence, and that is what we’ll do.”

And thus began the next three hours of my life. Luna Queen Leonora was remarkably patient the whole time, explaining to me the intricacies of first impressions and how to greet someone, whether they are acquaintances or

someone I was only just meeting. And I clung to every word, every breath as if my very future depended on it.

By the time the clock struck noon, which came by surprisingly fast, we spent the last few minutes just chatting. And somehow, we ventured towards the topic of yesterday's meeting with the king.

The queen **took a** sip of her tea. "When is the mating ceremony, my dear?"

Oh. She didn't know about the details. "We decided to wait **with** it."

"Wait?" she repeated with a creased brow, She must have assumed it would be held **as soon** as possible. "Was that my husband's idea?"

"Y-Yes...but Xaden and I agreed that it was probably for the best."

"That's not because of your pregnancy, is it?"

My body jolted with shock. "H-How did-?"

"My **dear,**" she murmured, her hazel eyes creasing with warmth, "I have carried many children. I know the maternal body better than most. I could tell from the moment I saw you that you carried yourself the way only an expecting mother would."

I gulped, knowing I had no choice but to tell her the truth. After all the kindness she'd shown me that morning, I couldn't lie. to her. Cautiously, I rested a hand on my growing bump. "Yes, that's why." I confessed, "s-so we decided to **wait** until after the baby was born to hold the ceremony."

She regarded me long and carefully. "As long as that's what you want. Then I completely understand."

We didn't speak more about the mating ceremony after that. With the lesson over, we thought it best to call it a day and began to clear away our used tea ware.

Unconsciously, I allowed a small yawn to slip past my lips. I probably should have gotten more sleep last night, but Xaden's renewed vigor was impossible to deny and was completely and utterly contagious, I couldn't say no and, honestly, I did not want to.

The abrupt yawn, unfortunately, did not escape the queen's **laser**-focused attention. "Did you not sleep well last night?"

My face heated up with a mortified blush. Perhaps sleeping with her son, the night before our first-ever bonding session **as** mother and daughter-in-law had not been one of my brightest ideas. "I-I'm sorry, Your Majesty..." I stammered. "It's nothing to worry about"

I... really needed to learn how to be more discrete.

She eyed me curiously, clearly **not** believing a single word I said. "There is no need to be shy, my dear," she said, organizing the teacups neatly together. "I understand well enough what happens between a **man** and a woman behind closed doors."

Suddenly, I wanted nothing more than to be swallowed whole by the earth. "I-I don't-"

"It's only natural," she tried to assure me "You have feelings for him."

My heart pounded frantically against my ribcage. This would be the first time I'd ever say such things out loud. "I do."

"That's **a** relief to hear," **Luna** Queen Leonora said, teasing me lightly. "And certainly, it will help your marriage in more ways than one."

Her response was unexpected. "You aren't bothered with this. I questioned.

"How do you mean, dear?"

"Are you... really alright with me mating with **your** son?"

She smiled at me with what appeared to be her whole heart. “I’ve seen how he looks at you, **and** how you look at him. Those emotions are impossible to fake. How could I possibly hold anything against the woman who makes my son happy?”

I **was** at a loss for words.

The queen did not have any reason to be this kind to me, regardless if I was marrying her son or carrying her grandchild. I stumbled into this family because of a drug, not that she was necessarily aware of that yet, and my pregnancy. Nothing about my first meeting with Xaden had been planned or done with the royal family’s approval.

My own family even wanted to **throw** me to the curb like trash when they found out I’d slept with a stranger.

But she... didn’t seem to care about **any** of that. She was ready and willing to accept me as her own, flaws and all because of her unconditional love for her **child**. I could never envision Victoria behaving in such a way if Sarah ever tried to befriend me despite the circumstances of my birth.

More than likely, Victoria would **have** done everything in her power to change **Sarah’s** mind. Or, in any other case, she would have treated me even worse behind **the** scenes for stealing and brainwashing her daughter.

Was this what a mother was supposed to be like?

The queen’s eyes widened. “Dear, why are you crying?”

I blinked, wiping my eyes, where I indeed felt tears. “It’s alright..” I said dismissively. “I just **wasn’t** expect-“

All of a sudden, she pulled me in for a warm embrace. I froze, unsure what to do. “You will always be welcome here,” she swore fervently, catching me by surprise and eliciting more tears to fall. “No matter what happens, you are family. Do you understand?”

I'd never gotten a hug like this before. It felt like home and smelled like love.

With a slow **nod**, I melted into the queen's arms, letting myself be surrounded by the love of a **mother** for the first time in my life.

After that wonderful morning came to an end, I got the approval to go home. Admittedly, part of me wished to stay a bit longer and speak more with her, but I understood she had other duties to attend to. I didn't **doubt** she had many things to push aside in order to make this time for me.

I was grateful, regardless. Besides, I still **had** tomorrow,

Maggie's new identity card had yet to **arrive**, so I had no choice but to navigate the palace alone to make my way home. That begged the question: which way was the-

"Hello there!"

The sudden voice calling out to me was unexpected. Startled, I spun around to see who it was when I finally caught sight of the Fourth Alpha Prince—Lucas—jogging his way over to me. Yesterday's meeting with the Alpha King was the first and only time I'd met him thus far, but my instincts told me he was a good, reliable person.

After the way he was quick to help Princess Charlotte defend me, I felt like I could lower my **guard** a bit with him.

"Good afternoon, Your High-"

He held up a hand to stop me. "There's no need to use formalities with me. After all, we are going to be in-laws soon, are not?" he **said**, his smile bright and encouraging, and I could see so much of Xaden's kindness in **him**. "That makes you, my sister."

I supposed that was true.

The moment I'd decided to lower my guard with him, he was quick to throw me off and take me by pleasant surprise. I'd never had a brother before... and the thought that I might be able to gain one through my future mate filled me with tentative excitement. It brought an unconscious smile to my lips unbidden.

My morning with the queen **had** indeed done a great deal to soften me up.

"Y-Yes, I suppose it does," I said shyly.

"What brings **you** to the palace?"

"I was-

"What do we have here?" A masculine voice abruptly spoke up, startling me with a jolt. Prince Lucas's face fell a bit as he seemed to register who the voice belonged to. "A meeting in the hallway?"

Quickly, I whirled around and came face to face with Alpha Prince Henry, the eldest child of Alpha King Arlan and Luna Queen Leonora.