

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 35

### Maeve POV

The moment First Alpha Prince Henry and I locked eyes in the Great Hall of the palace, my body went still, struck by both awe and intimidation.

As the esteemed firstborn of the royal alpha bloodline, he was one of the most impressive and influential men in the entire Werewolf Kingdom, and he looked very much the part. Dressed in lavish clothes befitting a prince and radiating magnificent confidence almost rivaling that of Xaden, it was clear all he lived and breathed was wealth and power.

Part of me worried that if I breathed out of turn or moved the slightest inch to the side, he would somehow find fault with it.

I feared him almost as much as I did the Alpha King himself.

“Henry,” Lucas murmured, bowing his head curtly but courteously in the presence of his eldest brother. The wariness that crept into his voice, however, did not slip past me. “What gives us the **pleasure** of your company?”

“Oh, come now, little brother,” Henry scoffed, playfully swatting Lucas on his broad shoulder. “Can’t a man walk around his own home without being questioned?” he teased with a smile.

Lucas responded stiffly. “Of course he can.”

All of a **sudden**, Henry's gaze flitted over to me, and I froze. "I recognize this little face," he said, raking me over as if to inspect me. "How nice to see you again."

Nervous, I stepped back and curtsied as best I could. "Y-Your Highness..."

"Where's Xaden?" he asked, glancing around. "I'm surprised he's not here threatening to feed me to the wolves for even trying to speak to you."

That comment struck me as odd. Why would Xaden do that to his own brother? He was protective, yes... but always within reason. Was Henry someone I had to watch my back **around** or **was** it merely said in jest?

"I... came here without him. The Luna Queen invited me."

"Really?" **he** asked, raising an eyebrow. "Well, you surely seem to be making yourself at home quite well."

The remark seemed innocent enough at face value, but I could sense some bite hidden within. It was a warning to me, **as a** newcomer, to be careful with respecting boundaries. I did not need him to tell me that...I was already well aware this was not my territory.

I smiled awkwardly, unsure how to respond.

Lucas stepped in. "She's going to be part of the family now, Henry," he said sternly. "She can come and go if she pleases."

"Honestly!" Henry exclaimed, as if offended that his words had been taken **as** anything but welcoming. "I wouldn't even think of suggesting otherwise. It's just not very often someone new joins the royal family. And what a welcome addition she is." I dipped my head. "Thank you, sire."

"I'd love to get to know my new sister better if time allows it."

"Of course," I began to say out of courtesy. "When would-"

“How long have you known my brother?” he questioned, startling me.

I blushed, feeling uncomfortable. The truth, although accepted by Xaden and I, was a bit embarrassing to admit to outsiders who wouldn’t understand the circumstances of our peculiar involvement. “I–ah..”

“Sorry to badger,” Henry said with a sly, unapologetic grin. “I’m just a hopeless romantic at heart, if you can believe that or not .”

“I thought you had business with Eric,” Lucas cut him off, loud and intentional, a firm reminder to the both of us that we were

not alone, which made me so grateful for his presence. I felt like I could breathe again. “What happened with that?”

Henry’s face suddenly twisted with distaste, something **that** instantly deepened Lucas’s frown. “Indeed, I did... but one can only handle so much of him at once,” he said before peering at me. “Let us hope you are spared from ever having to meet him.”

I couldn’t help but feel uneasy over that bizarre exchange. Eric’s was a name I’d only heard of in passing conversation, but regardless, a name I knew. He was the ever-elusive Second Alpha Prince of the Werewolf Kingdom, born some years after Henry and only shortly before Xaden.

But that was all I knew. Hardly anyone spoke a thing about him.

What did Henry mean when he said that? **Was Eric** somebody else I should avoid?

“Besides,” he continued, the corners of his lips turning up ever so slightly, “I’d much rather chat with you two.”

I wished I could say the same, but I felt incredibly conflicted.

There was something about the way he looked down at me that rubbed me the wrong way. Like he thought he had something to gain if I slipped up. I

recalled what Xaden had told me the first time he brought me to his mansion... about having family who cared only about ascending the throne, and then, of course, there was Henry's own words from yesterday's meeting. where he mentioned needing whatever leverage was necessary to win.

However cordial he seemed to be, I could not shake that feeling. I trusted Xaden's prior warnings about certain family members and their ambitions, and I refused to give his brother anything that might hurt Xaden in some **way**.

It didn't matter if he **turned** on his wife yesterday because of her actions.

I couldn't trust him.

However, **Henry** didn't seem to be finished. "If I may. I'd like to learn more about you, Maeve. Is that alright?"

Uncertainly, I opened my mouth in an attempt to answer, but I **was not** sure how to say no without offending him.

"Unfortunately, Henry, she was just on her way **out**," Lucas interjected, pushing himself between his elder brother and me, shielding me from view. "Let's be sure to try this some other time, yes?"

"**Yes**, of course." His disappointment was plain as day. "Some other time, then."

And with that, the so-called "hallway meeting came to an **end**, with Henry heading off deeper into the palace.

Lucas, however, was kind enough to escort me to **the** car, ensuring that I wouldn't get any more surprise encounters along the way. My initial instinct had been to decline, but at the same time, I knew my track record for finding trouble was... remarkable.

“I apologize about Henry,” he **said**, looking embarrassed. “He and Xaden have practically been at war ever since we began our campaigns. It’s nothing personal against you, I can promise you that.”

I slowly nodded. I already gathered as much, but it was sweet of him to try to make me feel better. “Things have been pretty bad, then... haven’t they?” I asked with a wince...

“I can’t deny that. But Xaden is a tough boy,” he reassured me with a small smile, “and he’s more than capable of taking on our obnoxious brother. I’ll do my best to help him whenever he needs it, don’t **you** worry.”

I couldn’t find it in me to dump all of my concerns on him, not after all he was doing to alleviate them. So, we just strolled alongside each other and made light small talk. His eyes lit up every time Xaden was brought up, which warmed my **heart**.

It was clear how much he **admired** his older brother.

Maybe it would be nice to try to spend some time with the two of them, so I could see how they interacted. And then I was suddenly reminded of one other person I would love to have joined **that** gathering. After how **readily** she had helped me, I would **have** loved the chance to spend more time with Princess Charlotte.

If I could gain a brother through Lucas, then maybe it was possible to find a sister in her.

It wasn’t long before we finally reached the car and I said goodbye to Prince Lucas, who promised to see me again soon.

The moment I walked **through** the front door of the mansion, I instantly caught sight of Xaden in the **great** hall, who had not yet noticed me. Just looking at him **made** my heart skip a beat.

As I got closer, however, I realized that he was, in fact, not alone.

Funnily enough, the person standing beside him, deep in conversation, was none other than Princess Charlotte, and it was she who **saw** me first.

“Maeve,” she greeted, bright and polite, “there you are! I’ve been waiting for you for a while.”

There **was** something **unusual** about the way she carried herself today. Her expression, although friendly, seemed a bit stiff, and she was unable to stand still, either adjusting her stance or playing with her skirt. I was immediately put on edge, thinking something was wrong.

**What** could she have wanted that made her so uncomfortable?