

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 36

### Maeve POV

As if she read my mind, Princess Charlotte approached me, twiddling with her fingers. “I was hoping **we** could sit together for a while...I had something I wanted to talk to you about,” she revealed. “Is that alright?”

I blinked, admittedly feeling a bit dumbfounded. The last time I saw her, we seemed to leave things on a **good** note. What could she possibly have to say to me?

Xaden glanced between **us**, seeming to take my befuddled silence instead for **exhaustion**. “Ah, Charlotte,” he interjected with a polite smile, “Maeve **has** spent much of the morning at the palace training and bonding with Mother. I’m concerned she might be too fatigued for additional company this afternoon.”

Internally, I began to panic. Although I appreciated his intervention on my behalf, I didn’t want her to think me rude for dismissing her after coming all this way to visit! After going out of her way to **lend** me that beautiful dress and help me with Isabelle yesterday, the least I could do was see what she needed today.

Her eyes widened slightly. “Oh,” she exclaimed, looking a bit embarrassed. “I’m sorry. If you’re too tired, I can come back another time—”

“N-No!” I hurriedly cut her off. “I’d be happy to sit with you.”

Instantly, the light in her face returned and she happily swayed in place, her skirt flowing around her with grace. I couldn't help but think her adorable at that moment, as a sweet rush of affection overcame me.

After realizing I was serious about this, Xaden was courteous enough to lead us to the reading room, which had a lovely view of the garden out back and was private enough for us to be able to speak without reserve.

Although... I supposed that depended on what Charlotte wanted from me.

Once Xaden left us alone, I waited patiently for her to **say** what she needed to **say**.

Instead of **initiating** conversation, however, she simply sat in her chair with her hands folded neatly in her lap. Whenever I met her gaze, a **small** smile spread across her face, as if she either was not sure what to do next, or she was content to just sit together in silence. I pressed my **lips** together, unsure what to do.

**Was** she waiting for me to say **something**?

And then, I remembered that I'd just had my first etiquette lesson that morning! I wanted to smack myself. I was supposed to be a gracious and courteous hostess.. she **was** a guest in my home, after all.

My mind ran through what Luna Queen Leonora taught me that morning. "**May** I ask the servants to fetch you something to drink or eat?"

Charlotte shook her head. "That won't be necessary."

"O-Oh, I still have your dress," I splurged out, breaking the awkward silence, preparing to jump out of my seat to fetch it for her if she so demanded. "It's been carefully and thoroughly washed and dried, so there's **no-**"

"Thank you, Maeve, but I'm not here for the dress," she interjected kindly, making me settle back down into my chair. "You may keep it if you wish. Think of it as my gift to welcome you into the family."

She wanted me to keep that beautiful thing? “I couldn’t possibly-

“I insist.”

I pressed my lips together, but I couldn’t deny the euphoria that fluttered inside me at receiving such a nice gift. “Thank you...”

“Do you like the color?” Charlotte asked, her eyes glimmering brightly.

I actually hadn’t put much thought into it. Color was still a very foreign concept to me and I had yet to see and try on everything that was available. “I think it’s lovely,” I ultimately answered. “Subtle, but impactful.”

“I quite agree! Though, I must admit purple is probably my favorite color. What do you think about the texture of the fabrics?”

Somehow, we fell down a deep rabbit hole of different topics that Charlotte was eager to explore together. She wanted to get my opinions on anything and everything, but the wide array of questions she was asking me made my head spin. People had **never** asked me for my opinions **on** anything before, so I admittedly had very little to offer as far as conversation.

However, I found the conversation surprisingly refreshing. I got to think for myself for once and ponder about things I once considered luxuries.

But... hadn’t she come to me to talk about something important?

“Is something wrong, Maeve?” she asked, having noticed my mind was elsewhere.

“It’s just... you came all this **way and** I distracted you with talk of colors,” I said, feeling like I wasted her time because I brought up her dress.

Charlotte averted her eyes, fiddling with her fingers. “Well...to be honest, I didn’t just come here to chat.”

I figured as much. “Okay...” I said slowly, prompting her to continue.

“I came here to ask you for a favor, she admitted cautiously with a shy smile, only serving to increase the unease in the pit of my stomach. “Something that would mean the world to me if you would agree to do so.”

I regarded her warily. Suddenly, the thought crossed my mind that perhaps she really did only help me yesterday for some personal benefit. “What is it...?”

Charlotte took a deep breath. “I would love it if we could become friends.”

Admittedly, her words threw me for a loop. “W–With **me**?” I repeated in disbelief. “But, don’t you have...?”

As soon as the question began to leave my mouth, I realized how rude it sounded to ask if she had other friends to choose from. I did **not want** to seem ungrateful for her companionship or her company. It was the absolute last thing I wanted to happen, and it most certainly was not true on any level.

It warmed my **heart** that she thought to ask that of me. But, at the same time, I couldn’t help but wonder why she wanted friendship from me, of all people. I **had** nothing noteworthy to offer, nor was I particularly exciting.

I was just... **Maeve, a half**–bred mutt.

Getting involved with me would **only lead** to trouble.

Sarah used to always berate me for even thinking of trying to befriend anyone who came to **visit** her. According to her, I was undeserving of having such esteemed friends because my mere presence would sully their good name.

And, as a young wolf who didn't know any better, all I knew was I didn't want to hurt anyone...so, I never tried **again**.

Seeming to realize what I was about to **ask**, Charlotte **shook** her head with a rueful smile. "Most girls my age are only really interested in getting two **things** from me. Status..." she counted on one finger, before lifting another, "or access to my brothers."

My heart ached for her. I didn't realize she had been feeling so alone.

"You have been nothing but honest with me," she said without wavering. "And that's not something I get a lot of from my so-called friends. I would consider **it** a great honor if you would be not only my sister, but my friend. Is that okay?"

She was the first girl to **ever** ask this of me... not only that, but she actually meant it. This was not part of some cruel, practical joke. Who would take such prolonged time out of their day with someone they didn't care about, to talk about the most insignificant of things?

The poor girl looked so nervous. How much courage had it taken to ask for something so simple?

My chest swelled with joy. I nodded with a smile. "Yes, I'd like that."

Xaden POV

I couldn't help it.

As Maeve and my little sister chatted in the **reading** room, I observed them from afar, but from just out of sight. I had admittedly been a little worried...not about what my sister might **have** said or done behind my back, but about Maeve's condition.

There were so many changes happening seemingly at once for her, and I wanted to make sure that she wasn't overexerting herself after all the excitement of the day. I did **not** know the complexities of her everyday life from before, nor did I pretend to, but I knew that she was not used to any of this.

The protocol, the new people, the lifestyle... I worried it might be too much.

I had no intention of taking any risks, especially when it considered her pregnancy and all the scares we'd already faced.

If anyone called me overprotective or whatever else I didn't care. I wanted Maeve to **be** alright and comfortable, above all else.

But as I listened to them chat... and bond, it dawned on **me** that perhaps my presence was not needed. I'd never heard Maeve so loose and free with anyone else. The thought tore at my heart—I realized how pathetic it was that even I, as her future mate, still needed to learn **so** many beautiful things about Maeve that I should **have** already known.

I wanted her to smile.

I wanted her to laugh.

I wanted her to share everything she liked and everything she didn't.

Perhaps it wasn't evident yet to her, but I could see the changes, however small they might have been. Maeve was slowly coming out of her shell, taking everything in stride with her heart and soul and coming to life as **she** met more and more good, kind-hearted people, unlike those wretches she grew up with.

And I couldn't wait to see where it would take her.

Maeve had, many times, confided in me that she felt undeserving of basic kindness or even to be mated to someone like me because of her self-proclaimed worthlessness. Because she felt too ordinary compared to an **alpha prince**.

I **had** a feeling it **wouldn't** be long before she could see just how **wrong** she was.