

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 45

Maeve POV

I was not **ready**.

Although I knew on some level that becoming involved with Xaden meant that my life would practically unroot itself and I would be thrust into a world **and** lifestyle completely foreign to me, I had not fully realized what that would entail. All of the curious stares, the groundless gossip, the need to **please** authority at the cost of others—I could not do it.

I'd thought I wanted a life where I did not need to hide anymore... where I could just live and be my true self, unafraid of what others **thought** or **did**.

But I couldn't do it.

I was not ready to throw myself into that unforgiving sea. Not while I was still adjusting to this new life, and not with my first baby on the way.

I needed to hide. Someway—somehow!

Without thinking, I grabbed Xaden by his collar and quickly pulled him close, only partially registering **the** surprise that ran across his face. But before he could utter a single word, I planted my mouth on his. As I sat there, having ambushed the prince with **a** kiss, I felt the guilty weight of my actions fall upon my shoulders.

Despite being on a date, I hadn't asked him if this **was** alright. I had taken advantage of his presence and used him for my own benefit.

This felt dirty.

Before long, the passersby continued on their merry, oblivious way and I'd begun to pull away, fully prepared to spew **out** apology. But I hadn't expected Xaden to hold me firmly in place, deepening the kiss with tender nips and pulls like he had been waiting for such a moment **all** day.

The passion in his touch was addictive... contagious... everything I could have dreamed of, and I couldn't help but respond in kind.

How was it that he always managed to disarm me?

When he eventually broke the kiss, the cold that greeted me following the absence of his soft, warm mouth was an unwelcome sensation.

Unconsciously, I began to chase after him for more but I stopped myself.

We are not in our bedroom, I forced myself to remember. People can interrupt at any given moment.

"I admire your spontaneity," Xaden purred, licking my strawberry gloss from his lips as he gazed at me with bright, unadulterated hunger, making me blush. In the golden sun of the afternoon, he looked glorious. "But however much I'd love to take this further...I can't help but wonder what brought this on."

I pressed my lips together uncertainly. I had no doubt he would understand better than anyone just how afraid I was of what awaited us—well, of what awaited me, but this was hardly the time nor the place to talk **about** such things.

He put so much **time** and effort into making this day work for us...

Any worries I had could be put on hold for now.

I fiddled with the top button of his shirt. “I...I just **wanted** to,” I whispered. “Was that, okay?”

Xaden was quiet **for** a short time, and for a moment, I thought he didn’t believe me, but then he gave me another **kiss**, sweet and chaste and full of everything that endeared him to me. “That’s more **than** alright,” he replied gently. “You don’t ever have to **ask** permission to **do** that, you know?”

Blushing, I nodded. That **was**... **good** to know.

He let out **a** shuddering breath, his eyes flickering back down to my **mouth**, before he quickly cleared his throat. “Well—we still have plenty of food to dig through. Did you want more... salt and pepper on your apples....?” he asked with a funny look on his **face**.

I struggled to fight back a smile. It was one of my pregnancy cravings that I’d revealed to him in the store, having discovered it while I looked for something to **snack** on at home one day. “It’s actually not that bad.”

“Yes, well...I’ll let you be the judge of **that**,” Xaden said as he pulled out the necessary ingredients with mild disgust.

After I dropped an apple slice—coated with all the salt and pepper I wanted—into my ready mouth with a moan, the expression on his face only deepened, making me almost spit out my food with laughter.

“You don’t normally crave things like this. do you?” **he** asked worriedly.

I swallowed my apple slice quickly before laughing out loud.

“Just what kind of insane wolf do you take me for?” I grinned, fondly caressing my baby bump, which seemed to grow more with every passing day. “This is what your son seems to want from me.”

Upon my mention of our baby, his demeanor softened and even he was smiling alongside me. “I’ll need to have a chat with him, then,” he scoffed, affectionately planting his hand on top of my own. “If he’s controlling your

appetite, then he could at least have the decency to make you eat something good”

I felt light with humor like never before. The rest of our picnic went on without issue as Xaden and I finished **the** rest of our snacks and sparked more playful banter about anything and everything all at once, albeit with more light jabs at my odd little cravings now and then. But I couldn’t find it in me to care

This was my first date and I loved every second of it, not wanting it to end.

As the sun set over the horizon, signifying the shift from afternoon to evening, so did my joy. It was more than likely time for us to return home.

With a resigned sigh, I moved to gather our things up until Xaden stopped me, pulling me down onto the blanket with him.

“You’re not going anywhere just yet,” he purred, hovering above me.

The way he looked at me, all heated and passionate, dizzied me. Such gazes normally led to one thing. “H–Here?” I squeaked, my throat running dry. “W–We’re doing it out here, where people can see us?”

Something glimmered in his eyes, amber with the setting sun. “Is that what you want?”

My face heated up, realizing I had inadvertently cornered myself. “Ah... I meant–“

All of a **sudden**, Xaden pressed a sweet kiss on my forehead. “If that’s what you want, you’ll have to be patient. I have special plans for **you** later,” he teased, making my flustered heart pound furiously as I was left to ponder over his insinuation. “For now,” he **said**, lowering onto his back beside me, “I just want to lay here with you.”

A simple request that sounded wonderfully tempting

How could I possibly refuse that?

Warmth tickled me as I allowed myself to settle against his open arm, tucking into his broad chest. I could feel his muscles ripple underneath my fingertips with every breath and every movement. He was a far cry from being soft and plump and could not even begin to **compare** to even the most comfortable bed.

**But** in some unexplainable way, his body felt more soothing than our bed ever did.

I wish we could just stay here and forget about the banquet tomorrow...

“Hmm?” Xaden hummed in response. “What did you say?”

My stomach plummeted—I thought I said that in my mind! But there was no point in denying what I’d **said**. “I’m terrified about tomorrow, Xaden,” I admitted, hoping he could alleviate my worries. “I feel like I’m going to embarrass you.”

“You could never do that,” he gently insisted, “and you shouldn’t be so hard on yourself. **Things have** been rocky, yes, but this

is only to welcome you as my mate. The hard part is almost over... and all we’ll need to do next is wait for our mating **ceremony**, and then it’s just **you** and me,” he purred, pulling me close, instantly warming me up inside.

“Just remember—it’s only a dinner,” he said, rubbing my arm. “And I’ll be with you every step of the way.”

That calmed me down for the time being. As long as he **was** at my side, I felt like I could handle anything-

It wasn’t long before everything became shrouded in dusk. Only a few lampposts in the distance and the stars above lit the world. Time seemed to slow down as we lay there in the grass together, and the soft, rhythmic

motions of his chest heaving up and down... up and down were beginning to lull me into a trance.

“Maeve,” he **said** suddenly, squeezing me gently. “Are you still awake?”

“Mm...” I tried to answer out loud, but couldn’t find the strength. Maybe he understood what I was trying to say.

Xaden sighed. “If **you** are,” he started to murmur, but his voice grew more and more faint with every passing second, as did the touch of his body against mine, “I just wanted you.. to know that... L.”

I heard nothing but a calm quiet. I hummed, curling deeper into myself. It was nice of him to let me rest here like this.

“**Maeve**”

My breath hitched. My eyes flew open. “I’m sorry,” I exclaimed with a wince, rubbing my eyes, “I wasn’t falling asleep. I was just...”

The rest of that sentence died in my throat. I had thought Xaden was the one calling my name, but **as** I took in those familiar purple wildflowers and that warm, shining sun that washed over my skin, I quickly realized that wasn’t the case.

He was nowhere to be seen. I **was** back in **that** dream world.

I gulped. There was **only** one way to test if I was correct. “Are you there?” asked tentatively **to** anyone **and** no one.

“**Maeve...**” the unknown voice responded, clear and **present**. “Listen to me, you must move with caution....”

Trepidation **crawled** up my spine as the memory of what I’d experienced last time pushed itself to the forefront. “Does this have anything to do with what I **heard**?” I asked, digging my fingers into the grass beneath me,

almost **fearing** what the **voice had** to **say**. “I–Is something bad going to happen...?”

“There is an alpha in your midst... one you cannot trust at any cost...”

My heart pounded against my ribcage, the sound echoing throughout my body. “An–An alpha?” I repeated uneasily. “Who is he?”

“Protect yourself, little **lamb**...” the voice continued. “He will take what he wants.”

“Please,” I begged, jumping to my feet as I tried to bargain with **the** sky, “You owe me an answer to that question at the very least! All I do is listen to you and your riddles, but I can’t do anything without proper answers! Who can’t I trust?”

All of a sudden, a bone–chilling thought forced its way to the forefront of my mind. One I refused to believe to be true...I couldn’t accept it to be true.

“You... you can’t mean Xaden..” I whispered. “Right?”

What was I supposed to do if it was?

Slowly, I could start to feel the world around me shift. The tall, sweeping grass began to melt away, and the bright, warm sun dimmed second by second, leaving me with nothing but cold and darkness.

I was waking up.

“Be careful, Maeve.”