

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 49

Maeve POV

“Y–Your Majesty.?” Isabelle murmured, apparently taken aback by Alpha King Arlan’s sudden and completely unexpected interruption.

With shallow, heaving breaths as I tried desperately to curb my rising nausea, I watched the interaction, unsure what to **expect**. She did not say anything beyond that, but the confusion that deeply interlaced within her words was made abundantly clear to me. I could practically hear the storm her mind was beginning to conjure up.

This banquet might have been in my honor, but we all knew just how the Alpha King felt about me.

If he wanted to, I believed without a doubt that he **would** have continued to keep quiet while Isabelle did what she wanted.

And if it were up to him, I certainly would not have made it this far. I would have been kicked to the curb within the first minute of meeting him.

Was there a chance that I somehow... misjudged him?

“There will be no more discrimination of any sort against Maeve,” he said, stiff but stern. “The purpose of **this** banquet is to welcome her into the family. Anyone who dares to believe or act otherwise will have no choice but to leave.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the Luna Queen nod. “She is marrying our beloved Xaden,” she criticized sharply. “It is highly inappropriate for a fellow Luna Princess to mistreat her sister-in-duty.” The sight warmed my soul—a blessed comfort to know that she was in my corner, even beyond the privacy of our lessons.

Isabelle stammered, full of disbelief. “I—I don’t-

Alpha King Arlan slammed a powerful hand against the table, but no one flinched except for the target in question and myself. “I have had enough of your antics, Isabelle. Treat her with respect or else I will have you removed immediately,” he warned, taking on a dangerous tone that left absolutely no room for debate.

And however much I knew Isabelle might have wanted to, even she knew better than to disagree with the king. She might have been an opportunist or strong-minded, but she certainly was no fool.

But **not** even a fool would dare to defy the Alpha King.

Not to his face, and especially **not** in his domain.

“I believe I have made myself perfectly clear,” he grunted, taking a sip of his wine when no one said anything else.

Isabelle seemed to take the hint, however, dipping her head, low and courteous before her terrifying father-in-law. “Of course, King Arlan, sire,” she murmured quietly as she sank deep into her chair, reduced to nothing but a mere shadow of the girl she was just moments **ago**. “I meant no disrespect to Your Majesties”

The sight was... unexpected.

I honestly had no clue she was capable of even a shred of humility at all, but I supposed anything was possible. Unlike when Sarah had faced the wrath of a royal, I found it hard to feel any sympathy for Isabelle. Her disdain toward

me defied any sort of logic or reason and I failed to understand why she chose to treat me **so**.

Why was she so eager **to** see me fail?

King Arlan cleared his throat, seemingly placated with her quick submission.

Queen Leonora, on the other hand, looked less convinced but did not say more regarding the matter. Instead, she summoned several omega servants to clear away all of the offending dishes, remarking that they had not even been listed on the original menu, while Xaden and Charlotte continued to **tend** to me until every last one was gone.

Before long, I could breathe again without feeling like spilling my guts.

“How do you feel now, Maeve?” Xaden inquired gently, rubbing my knee, as Charlotte finished patting my head with a cool napkin.

I sighed. “Better,” I admitted. “Thank you..”

It was not long before the frazzled energy of the room began to dissipate and the servants came out to **serve us** our plates of food. After that whole debacle, my appetite had diminished ever so slightly, but in the end, I could not resist trying portions of that porterhouse steak Lucas **had** spoken highly of and even dollops of side dishes that he and Charlotte recommended to me with much gusto.

Lively conversation sprung up once more at the table, and within minutes, it was **almost as if nothing** had ever happened.

And after all that lying fuss Isabelle made about me not wanting to eat food served by the palace chefs, she was the one who **hardly** made a **dent** into a portion **smaller** than **the** size of her delicate fist.

Somehow, I ended up eating considerably more than she did.

As the servants served me a second—smaller—serving of food, my gaze couldn't help but drift between Isabelle and Alpha King Arlan.

While the king's lofty presence **had** somewhat perked up **as** the minutes passed by, Isabelle was in despair, fuming in her chair as she poked at her steak without contributing to the conversation. In full transparency, I was not particularly faring any better. All at once, my mind was racing a mile a minute and lost in a daze, trying to make sense of things.

That could not have really happened... could it..?

The last time we were all in the same room together, it had been made perfectly clear that the **Alpha** King was firmly planted on Isabelle's side when it came to my impending marriage into their esteemed family. From the beginning, they were both against me and sought to find any **reason** to justify keeping me out

It had only been less than a week since that day.

I didn't understand what on earth could have changed in less than a week for him to step in and help me.

All of a sudden, I felt Xaden's hand on my thigh, prompting me to look at him. "How are you **doing**?" he asked quietly, amid the conversation everyone else was immersed in. It felt like we **had** entered our own little bubble, even if only for a moment.

I realized I had been spinning my fork around my plate for longer than was normal. "I... I'm feeling great."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course. The food's delicious... your family seems happy... **I'm** here with you," I whispered. "I couldn't ask for anything else."

Looking unconvinced, Xaden sighed, preparing to say something until his gaze drifted toward the entrance of the banquet hall. And then, any words he

might have wanted to say never left his mouth as he stared in shock at whatever captured his attention.

Or perhaps... whoever.

“Eric?” he questioned

All of a sudden, everyone—including myself—immediately whirled around to meet the face of none other than the Second Prince himself. Wearing a dark suit that clung a little too loosely to his thin frame, he matched the attire of his **siblings** but looked very much out of place with the anxiety-ridden expression that **marred his** skinny face.

Prince Eric shuffled awkwardly with everyone’s attention suddenly on him. “I—I’m sorry for showing up so late.”

I couldn’t believe my eyes. Even after all that talk about being an outsider, he was still standing here, in front of his entire family.

He actually showed up.