

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 64

THIRD PERSON POV

Isabelle squeezed the stone railing of the balcony, steeling herself **as** best she could.

Today was more than likely going to be another loss, but there would be other days. She knew well enough **that**, although a mating ceremony had been discussed, a date still had yet to be set.

Maeve was not yet officially **part** of the family.

She had time to spare.

Still, how frustrating it was **to** see all of her efforts go to waste. It had taken a while to find girls who not only played around with Xaden in the past but who also had been invited to the banquet. The girl's appearance had to make **sense**—it wasn't like Isabelle could sneak in any of his former dalliances who had no business being here. That would only raise suspicions and put him right on her scent.

If her plan truly failed to come to fruition today, she could always hold onto this girl for another time. Maybe if all else failed, she could just send the girl to his mansion on **a** day that she knew Maeve was stuck inside.

Isabelle sighed. Yes, everything would turn out her way in the end... somehow, somehow. It had to.

Once she gathered herself enough to not make a fool of herself in front of the guests, she pulled open the balcony doors **and** slipped back into the room, where she noticed **that** everyone had seated themselves.

“Everyone—let us raise our glasses,” Alpha King Arlan proclaimed while Isabelle quietly settled into her seat. “May we all remember our strength in times of struggle, for nothing can stop a wolf determined to survive.”

Glancing around **the** room as she blended in with the cheers, her heart lurched in her throat upon landing on a very familiar abomination sitting beside Xaden, blissfully unaware of the Luna Princess’s gaze.

Maeve was back. which meant that her plan could still succeed!

Once the toast came to an end and everyone was free to mingle once more, Isabelle seized the opportunity and navigated her way back to that stupid pawn of **hers**, who sat at her table without a care in the world while her husband was busy engrossed with his friends.

“If I remember correctly,” she murmured by the girl’s ear, ignoring the sudden jolt of surprise she made, “you still have a job to do”

The girl—Delaney... or was it Dalia, perhaps? pouted, glancing helplessly at Isabelle. “I tried to talk to her earlier,” she said, trying to excuse her earlier failure, but the alpha that **was** sitting next to her asked me to leave.”

The alpha? Isabelle pondered for a moment. That could only have been...

No. It did not matter in the long run who said what. Even if she only got out one sentence, that would be enough to shake Maeve’s confidence in Xaden. That was all she needed.

Isabelle let out an exasperated huff. “Look,” she hissed, nearing the end of her rope with this useless girl, “it doesn’t matter if he’s with her. **Just** say what you have to say—whisper it if you must—and then you can leave. She can’t do this without **you**.

The girl hesitated. "Are you sure it's alright?"

"Of course, it is. She's going to be shy and awkward about it, but that's because she's saving herself for Xaden," Isabelle lied. "She should be fine once she realizes you're trying to help her out."

It took a few moments, but the girl eventually nodded, resigning herself to her task once more, and again made her way over to Maeve's table.

Now, with all distractions aside, all Isabelle needed to do was sit and watch it all unfold. This would surely be fun.

MAEVE POV

The moment Alpha King Arlan's toast came to an end, the room settled back into the calm, sociable atmosphere from before. Everyone went **back** to mingling and sipping at their rich wines, and it seemed the rest of the evening would commence without a hitch.

That was, until Xaden and Burke were called away to share a word with some soldiers in attendance.

"We'll only be a moment," Xaden reassured as he got to his feet, adjusting **his** cuff links.

"Be sure to save my seat for me," Burke said, loud and clear, albeit a little stiff. The rolling of Xaden's eyes made me bite back a laugh.

"Since I am your future husband and all." It seemed he was trying his best to play the part of my dating fiancé... and was terribly awkward about it.

I blushed, embarrassed, but nodded.

Gently, the two men excused themselves, leaving to speak with the group of soldiers. And for a second, I thought I could just sit back and take a breather, all to process the unusual situation I found myself in when, all of a sudden, I felt a **presence** materialize nearby.

“You know,” a feminine voice said, light and strangely familiar, from beside me. Upon turning around, my gaze locked once more with that of that short-haired girl from earlier—Delaney, if I remembered correctly. “The color of your dress is perfect, but there’s something about it that could use some improvement.”

I was so taken aback by her sudden reappearance that I couldn’t find the words to respond.

“It needs to be more form-fitting,” she said, reaching out to touch my waist, which quickly filled me with panic. “Especially around this area…”

If she touched me, my pregnancy would no longer be a secret-!

“Stop—please,” I urged, keeping her hands away from me while being as polite as possible. My face heated up, mortified. “Why are you telling me any of this?” I questioned.

“Oh, well don’t you need help wooing Prince Xaden?” she **asked**, cocking her delicate head to the side, further baffling me. Where on earth would she have gotten that idea? “I want to help you with that—because he and I used to. you know…”

They used to-?

All of a sudden, something **dark** and twisted gnawed at my stomach, Whatever this girl was trying to say. I just got the worst **feeling** that it was something I did not want to hear, not from her or anyone else, but at the same time, I found myself yearning to hear the words straight from her mouth. “Used to.. what?” I repeated weakly.

I hoped it wasn't what I thought it was.

"We used to **have s...**"

"What on earth are you doing here?"

Startled, both Delaney and I spun around to face Xaden, whose gaze was very decidedly not locked on me, but instead on this strange girl who kept wanting to speak to me for whatever reason. His normally stoic, kind face seemed to pale with dread in the midst of her unrelenting presence, which I knew would not happen if this was the first time he had ever laid eyes on her.

He looked at her as if he knew her. and that made me sick to my stomach. Because it hinted that perhaps she was telling me the truth.

"Prince Xaden!" she exclaimed, apparently blind to the dark expression on his face. "It's been quite a—"

All of a sudden, his lofty, threatening figure flew from my side to tower over her, effectively rendering her silent. I had no idea of the expression that marred his face when he **looked** at her, nor that of hers, but the ensuing silence that came from her was louder than any words could express. "Go away—NOW."

With a small squeak and without saying another word, she left us alone.

And then, he whirled around on me, his wide-eyed gaze boring into me.

"What did she say to you?"

These were not the actions of a man who wanted to protect me from peculiar strangers, I realized with slowly creeping horror. This **was** a man who had something to hide. My heart sank **as** I shakily fell back.

"Maeve—"

“Why?” I dared to counter, facing him despite the quiver in my voice. It took every ounce of my effort not to **fall** apart in the middle of the banquet hall, surrounded on all fronts by strangers of the upper crust, but I forced myself to stay strong. “Are you worried she might’ve said something you didn’t want me to hear—I pushed, ignoring the slight flinch he **made**, “that you thought I should never find out about?”

He set his jaw, staring at me intently. “Please-” he begged, “you cannot believe a word that came out of her mouth,”

“Do you mean to say she was lying?” I felt more frantic with every second.

“I mean to you shouldn’t listen to her.”

“Then you tell me the truth,” I insisted, not wavering. “Did you sleep with her?”

“I’m not with her,” Xaden assured firmly, not answering my questions.

“Did you sleep with her?”

He gulped, his shoulders slumping in defeat, and something in me cracked before he could even get the words out. “Yes,” he admitted, shattering my heart into **a** million pieces as the world beneath me crumbled. “But this was-”

“Then there’s nothing left for me to say to you right now,” I whispered, not trusting the integrity of my voice.

“Maeve,” he begged, looking pitiful, reaching out for me **despite** being in public. “**Please-**”

I recoiled before his beseeching fingers could touch me. “Forgive me, Prince Xaden,” I muttered, trying to ignore the painful pang in my heart as hurt flashed across his face. “I have neglected my ‘fiance for too long now

And with that, I briskly turned away, moving ever so closer to Burke, who had also returned. I felt his gaze wash over me, and I desperately hoped that he would not reject me. Thankfully, he did not utter a word or protest, though I saw him make a small gesture to Xaden out of the corner of my eye, likely to appease or reassure him or something

I didn't care. I was just relieved he let me sit beside him while I fermented in my bitter emotions.

Of course, Xaden had been with other women. That much was obvious, even to me. Perhaps not during the time I'd been with him, but this was my first exposure to his past.

And oh, how beautiful she was. She was every bit the woman **that** a dashing alpha prince like him deserved to have. No matter how many times he would try to say otherwise, I knew I was by no means attractive, not compared to women like her.

Part of me dared to hope that maybe I was special. That it truly was fate that we had found each other that night.

But maybe I was only the latest in a long line of women.