

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 69

XADEN POV

Before my mind could comprehend what was happening, my body hurled itself out of Lucas's path of attack on its own accord.

It took a couple of seconds to catch my breath from the sudden motion, eyes wide as I gazed at my brother, who was now, by all accounts, adequately peeved. His clenched fist still hovered where my head had been mere seconds ago. Without my many years of honing my training and battle instincts, I'd be an unconscious heap on the gym floor. Lucas might've been the gentler of us alpha princes, but he still packed quite an impressive punch when the situation called for it.

The power of a true alpha wasn't something to underestimate under any circumstance.

"That was just a warning," Lucas growled, pulling his arm back as he fell into a sturdy offensive position. "Don't think you'll get **away** with talking to me like that again."

That's what I'm talking about. I mused with a sly grin, brimming with **adrenaline**.

"We'll see about that," I countered, settling into defense. "If you're so keen to show me who's boss, now's your chance." I taunted him with a sneer. "Let's see how many minutes it takes this time before I pin your ass to the ground."

With a snarling growl, Lucas lunged at me, throwing blow after blow, which I was quick to block. His punches packed power behind them, but they were all thrown haphazardly. No precision or strategy

His mind was not at all in this match.

He was going to be easy to take down.

When he threw his next blind punch. I ducked, swerving around his body with ease and throwing myself into his side, tackling him to the ground **and** knocking the **wind out** of his lungs.

Before long. I had him pinned on his stomach, his hands locked at the wrists behind his back. My jaw clenched **as** I steeled myself, intensifying the force in my **grasp as** he thrashed against me with all of his might. “Thirty seconds—that’s a new record. Do you yield?”

Instead of answering, Lucas pulled strength from some hidden reserve in his body, swinging his legs around and catching me off guard. It was enough to loosen my hold on him and free himself from my grasp, allowing him to throw more blows.

He was putting up quite a fight. I had to give him that. Whatever it **was** that occupied his mind, he was determined to keep me in the dark.

I was not going to have that.

I had to go full-offense. Blocking punches quickly turned into tossing my own without reserve. When I found my opening, I took it, landing a blow square in the middle of his abdomen, knocking him down to the ground. Before he could **regain** himself, I pinned him down once more

“One of the rules when sparring with someone stronger than you, I growled, “is **to** know when you’re outmatched. So-yield”

After a few more moments **of** struggle, Lucas eventually went still. letting out a resigned sigh. He was done. I removed and got to my feet, holding out a hand for him, which he chose to accept.

“Now,” I said, once we were on equal ground. “I believe you owe me some answers. Tell me what’s on your mind.”

Lucas grabbed onto a dry towel. “You’re so damn relentless, **you** know that?”

After a few moments of hesitation, he finally offloaded his mind.

“The arranged marriage with Princess Mia of the Vixen-Shifters is still set to happen,” Lucas muttered, wiping away the buckets of sweat that dripped down his forehead and neck with the towel “Less than two months, Father said.”

At that moment, I thought I felt the world crumble beneath my feet. How was it possible for that to still be on the table? Not a word of it had been spoken for quite some time. And Father had promised he would give Maeve a fair chance-unless

What if this was his punishment for Mutburst?

“Father will regret this,” I vowed darkly, tossing my water bottle to the ground and **preparing** to march down to his office that instant. I didn’t care if his precious ego was shattered after being scolded by my future mate-I would not let him take her away from me. “I already told him I will not marry anyone other than-“

“It’s not for you,” Lucas cut me off. Confused, I turned back to **face** him, and that was when I was able to clearly see the wariness that **weighed** heavily on his normally gentle features. “It it’s for me-I’m going to marry her”

Stunned, I settled back next to my brother, who looked sunken with burden. “Did Father put you up to this?”

Wordlessly, he shook his **head**, but I did not need words to guess what had happened. Knowing Lucas, he more than likely jumped at the chance to help our kingdom without truly considering the consequences beforehand.

It was an endearing yet dangerous quality of his.

Still, I couldn't help but feel for my impulsive little brother. All he wanted to do **was** help in whatever ways he could, even if it **meant** potentially sacrificing his own happiness. He was only twenty-one- he still had so much to offer besides an arranged marriage

"Lucas, if this **isn't** something you want, then don't do it," I firmly insisted, straightening myself as I turned to face him dead-on. "There are ways for us to make it through this impending war without relying on the vixens. **Let** Father figure it out-

"No," he said, cutting me off. "This is by far greater than anything I could want, I cannot afford to be selfish, not when our kingdom is at stake."

Now that sounded an awful lot like our father talking

However, Lucas was an alpha in his own right. He had always been firm about his beliefs for **as** long as I could remember, and I was certain that this was another one of those times. If he was dead set on doing this, then there would be very little I could do to stop him.

"If you say so." I muttered, leaning back.

"I appreciate your concern, Xaden," he said, softening for the first time that morning. "But this is something I need to do. I'll be alright."

Sighing. I pat him on the shoulder, finishing with a firm squeeze. A silent promise that, no matter what he chose, I would stand by him. I just hoped it was truly his will that was in control.

MAEVE POV

“It’s no use “I mumbled with an embarrassed grimace. These clothes are getting a little too tight for me.”

It was one of those rare days when I had no prior commitments. No lessons or visits with the Luna Queen, no **banquets to prepare** for or to attend. And with **Kaden** off at the palace. I had the freedom to enjoy myself at my leisure.

I had wanted to take a walk, get some much-needed fresh air, but to my dismay, the dress I had hoped to wear—a lovely pale-blue **wrap** dress which had fit me so well over a week prior—was now too snug. I could see my growing belly, clear as day, peeking through the fabric.

“It would seem so,” Maggie quipped, helping me shrug off the dress. “The little one in your belly must be quite determined to make himself big and strong for you and His Highness.”

Despite the situation I found myself in, I couldn’t help but smile a little bit at the sentiment. This pregnancy was progressing **faster** than I could comprehend, but the joy I felt upon hearing that was impossible to deny. I wanted my baby to be strong and healthy.

That meant I had no choice but to keep up with him. If I was already beginning to outgrow even just one outfit, I needed to prepare for the future.

“Maggie,” I said, glancing at her through the stand-up mirror, “would it be at all possible for us to take a trip to Mona Road today? So, I **can** find some more clothes that will fit me better?”

The housekeeper gave me a pointed stare. “As if you need to ask!” she reprimanded me softly, making me blush. “You will soon be **a** Luna, miss. If that is what you want, then we shall make it happen.”

I forced myself to nod in agreement. However much the Luna Queen's lessons were helping me, it **was** still a challenge to accept that mindset. A lifetime of servitude and corporal punishment had twisted its claws so deeply in me... but I was trying my best to free myself from its clutches.

Meanwhile, I slipped into a dress that thankfully still fit-a **black**, high-waisted A-line dress-and afterward, Maggie set off to call for the car for a **last**-minute trip to Mona Road.

While I waited in the foyer for Maggie to return, there was a dainty knock at the front door.

I cocked my head, baffled. To **my** knowledge, neither Xaden nor I were expecting any sort of visitors-not to mention that he was not even here, he had left for **the** palace shortly before I got out of bed that morning. Cautiously, I peered through the peephole **and** quickly moved to open the door once I realized who stood outside.

"Charlotte!" I greeted, stepping aside to allow the princess entry. "What brings you by?"

"I just wanted to see how you were doing after yesterday's banquet." Charlotte said, trailing off once she was able to take in my attire, "but it looks like I might've caught you at a bad time. Are you heading out?"

I nodded. "I was going to visit Mona Road. I need some new clothes."

Her eyes unexpectedly lit up, shining with bright excitement and trepid uncertainty. The warring expressions on her face were strange to see. Suddenly, a thought occurred to me.

"Would you..." I began to ask as a small, hopeful smile slowly started to **spread** across my face, "by chance want to join me? I could use all the help I can get."

“Miss Maeve, we’re all ready to-oh!” Maggie exclaimed, upon catching sight of the princess. Quickly, she dipped into a curtsy. “Your Highness! We were not expecting you today. Is there something we can do for you?”

Charlotte nodded. There was a glint in her eyes. “Could you find me a wig or a hat, Maggie?”

Maggie looked terribly confused, and rightfully so. What an odd request for the crown princess to make.

“I shall do my best,” she stammered out throwing **a** subtle glance **in** my direction **as** if I somehow could supply some **much**-needed answers. “Who is this for?”

Charlotte grinned. “It’s for me, of course!” she said, as if it were completely **obvious**. I’m going to join you and Maeve in the capital today.”