

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 74

MAEVE POV

“Ooh-“ Charlotte, still under the guise of Cora, gazed thoughtfully yet excitedly at the building we currently found ourselves in front of. “I’ve never been able to try this place. Can we stop here?”

After another hour or so of exploring the various shops along Mona Road, the three of us agreed unanimously that we could all use a break to catch a bite to eat. Food, I thought, was not a bad idea **and** was something I was quickly becoming spoiled with. After a life of surviving off little more than scraps and leftovers in Moonstone, I found myself surrounded by more food than I ever thought possible

Ordinarily, I would have been a little taken aback by that sudden change, but right now, it was one I gladly welcomed, thanks to my sudden increased appetite.

It turned out that growing a baby required more energy than I’d realized.

So, here we were, in front of a quaint, little brick-house cafe that appeared to offer both indoor and outside seating.

“It’s adorable,” I commented with a grin. “I’m okay with it, **as long as** you two are.”

Maggie nodded emphatically. “Then it’s settled. Let’s get you ladies fed”

Much to my hungry delight, once we were seated at an outdoor table with a lovely view of both the bustling street and a nearby park, one **quick** glance

over the menu showed me that this place offered a little bit of everything. I **was** not the type of girl who had any particular preferences when it came to food—with the exception, of course, of raw meat and fish—so I was more than alright to try anything at least once.

Ultimately, I decided on a grilled cheese sandwich with a side of creamy tomato soup, while Charlotte ordered a garden salad, and Maggie settled for a small slice of banana bread and a cup of coffee.

Our conversation flowed with ease as we ate our food in peaceful contentment.

After we gushed about all the lovely outfits purchased from today's shopping venture, Charlotte proceeded to fill in Maggie about the happenings of our last banquet. This included the sudden involvement of a certain blonde alpha and the subsequent cover story she assigned to me, which she spoke rather highly of—ever the humble princess.

Once Maggie recovered from her shock and expressed her understanding of the ruse, we then shifted gears toward what had happened immediately afterward.

Reliving those moments left me feeling sick to my stomach. I still wasn't sure which felt worse in hindsight—hearing that woman admit to being a former flame of Naden's, or the cold shoulder treatment I had forced upon him afterward.

For a moment after I finished, Charlotte looked reluctant about something before deciding **to** address me. "Can I be frank with you?"

The serious look in her eyes made me feel a little nervous, but I felt comfortable enough with her to want to hear what she had to **say**. I knew she would not be hurtful. At least, not with cruel intent

"Of course," I ultimately said.

“Before I **say** anything,” she continued, pulling my hand into hers and gently squeezing in an attempt to reassure me, gazing at me earnestly. “I don’t want you to **think** I’m invalidating your feelings because that’s the furthest thing from the truth. I just want to understand your thoughts better.”

The soft tone of her voice resonated deep within me, shaking me to my core. It was a reasonable request, I thought. Pressing my lips together, I nodded

“I can’t imagine that anyone would want to hear about their mate’s... colorful past, let alone meet them, and I’m sorry that his reaction was so... brash” Her forehead wrinkled with chagrin, the mere idea seeming to **cause** immense discomfort for her. “But I **can’t** help but wonder why did it bother you so much?”

I blinked. Why?

Wasn’t it normal to feel jealous about such thing? Suddenly, I weighed with guilt, like I was the one in the wrong, especially since it was Charlotte who was questioning me.

Had I been wrong in feeling that way!

Maggie leaned **forward**. “May I speak freely?”

The question took me by surprise. I still had to **get** used to being treated like an up-and-coming **Luna**. “Yes, please,” I implored, gesturing for her to speak. “You don’t need to **ask**.”

She gave me a small smile before proceeding to speak. “What I think.. “Cora’ means to point out,” she helpfully chimed in, “is that it is glaringly obvious to us all how devoted and dedicated Hi–your fiancé is to you. He may have his history, but **that’s** all it is, miss.”

“Exactly. Thank you, Maggie, Charlotte grinned before turning back to me.

“You **know** he cares deeply about you, right?”

I nodded, glancing downwards. I knew he cared. He always made sure to show me and tell me just how much he cared.

And that was what made this newfound jealousy so difficult to navigate.

I supposed I hadn't really delved into those feelings yet.

Just thinking about Xaden interacting with that woman—or any other woman who could've been in the running to become his Lama in the past—twisted my heart so painfully and **nauseated** me so intensely that I had to force myself to stop. It felt deeper than mere jealousy.

This felt all-consuming.

There had been some dark, uncharted side of me **that** I'd never known existed that wanted to **mark** him when it happened, which brought a flustered heat to my face. Never in my life had I ever felt such a powerful urge to claim something—or someone—like I did then. I'd never **even** sought Father's love **and** attention so fervently as a child

Where had this fire come from?

Was it because we're fated **mates**? Or, was it because he was the first ever to show me what it felt like to be loved?

I was not sure what to believe anymore. It seemed nearly every part of **my** life was shrouded in some bizarre mystery somehow.

"It... it just hurt," I ultimately answered, trying to explain it in a way that didn't totally make me sound out of my mind. "I've never been with anyone like I have with him." Embarrassed, I tried to distract myself with the **condensation** that **had** begun to gather on my cup, smearing the drops of water with my thumbs. "I guess I hoped that maybe he would've waited."

My blush deepened, mortified that I was actually saying any of this out loud.

“It’s stupid,” I said, letting out a short laugh. “Please just forget I said anything”

Charlotte shook her head. “It’s not stupid at all. It’s good that you’re letting these feelings out.”

“Miss,” Maggie addressed me once more, sounding more like a mother than I’d ever heard from her before, “I’ve seen you two, and I’ve seen how he treats you, but I understand the heart is not something that can easily be persuaded. This is something you’ll have to discover on your own. But if you feel this strongly about him, **miss**, you should not overthink things,” she said, and the plea in her voice **struck me**. “Enjoy what **you** two have now. If you don’t, then you will only come to regret it.”

I was enthralled by her message, stuck on every word she **said**.

Although Kaden and I had moved **past** the situation, I hadn’t quite found it in me to forgive him just yet. I wasn’t sure if it was my jealousy holding me back or some petty side of me that was slowly unearthing itself, but it was **raw** and real and brought out a version of me that I didn’t like.

I wasn’t a fan of holding grudges. Not when such energy could be put toward something better. To hold a grudge against Xaden, of all people, for something he did before I even entered the picture.

I felt horrible about it.

“I understand...” I murmured, forcing myself to smile. “I’ll do my best.”

Before anyone could say anything else, a young waiter wearing a black **apron** approached our table. “Hello, ladies,” he politely interjected, clasping his hands together in front of him “Was everything to your liking?”

Charlotte immediately began gushing over the delicious **food and** lovely atmosphere, during which Maggie brought it upon herself to begin gathering our dirty dishes and silverware to make it easier for the staff to clean up.

While they were **busy**, I rubbed my hands over my skirts, both to wipe away any crumbs from my food and to straighten out the fabric.

And that was when I felt it again

That burning sensation in the back of my head, like someone was close. Like someone was watching me.

With bated breath, I warily **glanced** around the dining area of the bistro, only to see other customers enjoying their food, and then switched my gaze to the busy street just beyond **our** table. **Again**, my eyes landed on nothing **Just** a street full of happy passersby minding their own business.

Stop it. Maeve—I scolded myself. There’s obviously no one there.

At the same time, I couldn’t help but feel like I needed to leave. I enjoyed the company I found myself in, but I wasn’t able to relax anymore.

Not amid all these strangers.

“Marvel of Maggie’. The waiter seemed startled, I whirled back around to see the very concerned face of Charlotte staring at me, as well as that of Maggie. By this point, the sensation all but vanished, leaving a void in the pit of my stomach where paranoia used to be, prompting me **to** wonder if I’d been distracted for long leaving me feeling like a fool.

“That’s the second time I’ve seen you do that today,” she commented. “Is something wrong?”

“You do look rather **pale**, miss, Maggie added, visibly readying herself to get up from her seat. “Are you not feeling well?”

I smiled sheepishly at them. “I—I’m sorry.” I said, rubbing at my temples. “All of our shopping is starting to catch up with me. I think I just need to get home and rest.

Although Maggie was quick to gather our bags and went off to pay the bill, Charlotte did **not** seem so easily **convinced**. Worry prickled at my chest that she did not buy my little white lie. I wasn't sure how yet to explain these strange feelings I experienced, nor if it was something I could ever **actually** share without sounding insane.

"Alright," she ultimately murmured with a reassuring smile. "Let's get back home. I'm sure 'Burke must be waiting for you."

I tried my best to hide my relief.

Yes.. home sounded **like a** good idea. Regardless if I was going crazy or not, I needed to get out of here. I couldn't bear that ominous feeling anymore. And, as we left Mona Road, the question burned in my mind.

Was all of this just a figment of my imagination?