

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 76

MAEVE POV

It wasn't long before we returned to the mansion **and**, with our shopping trip officially **at** an end, it was time for the princess to return to her duties at the palace.

"Thank you for letting me tag along." **Charlotte** murmured, beaming at me as she emerged from the bathroom, once again dressed in the lovely attire she had arrived in. Maggie, **waiting** off to the side, took possession of the borrowed sundress and hat and stepped away to put them aside. "And for dealing with my excitement. L... **realize I might've** been a bit much today."

"Not at **all**," I reassured her. "It was a lovely change of **pace**. I'd love to see more of "**Cora**, if time ever permits another visit."

Her eyes lit up, even as Maggie returned with some wipes to clean away the layers of makeup she wore. "Yes! Hopefully sooner rather **than** later." And as she busied herself at the mirror, wiping away at her foundation, a presence made itself known.

Or rather, himself.....

"Making plans, are we?"

Xaden's voice floated into the room, drawing everyone's attention. As he descended the **grand staircase**, I was struck by his appearance. His lovely dark hair was soaked, dripping down the sides of his face and his neck. And

his attire, strongly resembling his nightwear, clung to his wet body in all the right places.

Goddess, how could a man look so good after a shower?

The moment Xaden caught sight of his sister, still dressed in her disguise and in the middle of wiping her hundred layers of makeup off. however, he fell **silent**, Speechless, rather, as if he had never seen such a bizarre sight before. And for what felt like forever, all he did was gawk at her, his eyebrows raising in comic disbelief.

I hit my lip and **quickly** threw my hand over my mouth in **an** attempt to stifle my laughter.

“...Now, I can’t be certain,” he drawled, strolling further into the room towards Charlotte, “but you look an awful lot like my little sister. Do you know her, by **chance**! Apparently, she’s taken to looking like a raccoon as of late.”

Charlotte rolled her eyes. “Ha, ha, very funny,” she deadpanned. “Is the makeup really that bad?”

“It’s... striking, to say the least. Is it a new fashion trend among **you** teenagers?”

Charlotte huffed out a laugh. “I hope you realize how old you sounded just now,” she teased, laughing even harder when Xaden playfully shoved her by the shoulder. Once she steadied herself, she continued to wipe her face. “But if you must know, I went undercover today. with Maeve’s help.”

His amused gaze flickered over to me, making me blush. “Is **that** so?”

“We went shopping for new clothes,” I said with a smile. “It was her idea to wear a disguise, but I supplied the dress and the makeup.”

Xaden shook his head with a playful tut. “Your bad influence is rubbing off on my Luna,” he scolded, lacking **any** bite in his tone, to which Charlotte

scrunched her nose in defiance, glancing at him through the mirror. “You both need a stern talking to.”

“And you, old man, can kiss my-“

“That is not how ladies speak,” Maggie firmly reprimanded, looking quite appalled at the two bickering royals, who **wore** varying expressions of amusement and protest. It was like watching a mother scold their children for misbehaving in front of house guests.

It wasn't long before Charlotte's normal visage was completely restored and she said goodbye, though not without lightly smacking Xaden in the arm—her parting revenge for earlier, making both Xaden and I laugh. But before Maggie could even think to scold her again for unladylike behavior, Charlotte ran off and escaped in the car that awaited.

Maggie shook her head disapprovingly and shut the front doors before turning to me.

“If that is everything,” she said, clasping her hands together, “I will go ahead and put away your new clothes.” After dismissing herself, she gathered the bags of clothes and retreated in the direction of the bedroom.

Perhaps I should go and help her. I thought, watching her disappear down the hall. It's my clothes, after all.

I **made** a move to follow Maggie, but the sensation of a strong **hand** closing around mine stopped me **in** my tracks. Startled, I **looked** back at the alpha responsible, but he said nothing as he gazed at me. All humor was long vanished.

Behind the warmth in his eyes, there was an unexplainable heaviness that swirled around in the green of his irises. Instantly, my stomach churned with worry.

“Xaden...?” I questioned

Wordlessly, he led me to a nearby armchair, entwining our fingers in the process, and I had no choice but to watch, confused, as **he sat** down. My mouth opened in an attempt to ask him once more what was going on until he gently continued to pull me closer... and closer.

The space between us diminished with every passing second, but I still couldn't understand what it was that he wanted from me.

“What do you-?”

All of a sudden, he looped an arm around my waist, tugging me downwards until I landed flat on his sturdy lap. With a startled **gasp**, I snapped my mouth shut, blushing furiously as I stared into **his** eyes.

He sighed, his hot breath grazing over my skin as he burrowed his face into my neck. His thick arms wrapped around me in a tight, warm embrace, pulling me deep into his freshly showered body,

He... he just wanted to hold me...?

It was an unexpected move, but not unwanted in the slightest. I couldn't get enough of the wonderful sensation of his body so close mine

This **close**, I was overwhelmed with the crisp, cool scent of his body wash. Like pine and clean lakesides and everything beautiful about nature. His dark, luscious hair, still dripping with water, clung to his skin most attractively, making my throat run dry.

It shouldn't be possible for an alpha as handsome and wonderful **as** he to seem so smitten by me, but here he was, giving me everything I felt like I didn't deserve. He was nothing but genuine with **me**, though. I could admit that maybe he wasn't lying about his feelings for me, but no matter how much I tried to suppress it, part of me clung to the notion that he would one day tire of me.

That it would only be a matter of time before he decided he had enough and would find someone better... someone more worthwhile.

Someone who was not broken beyond repair.

"I can't believe how lucky I am," Xaden suddenly whispered against my neck. I felt him press kiss after kiss, dotting my skin with his lips. at his leisure. There was a tenderness to his touch that took my breath away.

"Where's this coming from...?" I asked quietly, not daring to break the delicate intimacy of the moment

"It's just... not everyone has the choice of mating for lo-"he'd begun to say before he suddenly stopped himself. I saw an uncharacteristic blush speckle on his face, faint but unmistakable. "Well... you know. For something as special **as** what we have. I'm just grateful, is all."

I'd never seen him look so shy before. The sight made my heart swell

I let my **arms** settle around him, savoring the warmth of his body. It was far from our first hug or cuddle together, but every time we touched, something inside me burst with wholehearted contentment.

It was dangerous to bond so **quickly** with someone who had been a stranger a mere month ago. And with someone as feared and revered **as** Kaden, at that. Not for the first time, I found myself in awe of the living juxtaposition he was. Fearsome and harsh, the alpha prince **was**... but the man I lived with was kind and thoughtful

And I was falling for both sides of him, hopelessly and unapologetically. Everything he had to offer, I wanted it all and more.

Before long, his watch beeped, breaking the lovely silence that settled around us. He let out an exasperated groan

"I wish I could stay here a little longer..." he murmured, tightening his hold around me, "but I have some work I need to get done."

My heart lurched. I wasn't ready to leave his side yet...

"Are **you** going back to the palace?" I asked, unable to help myself.

He shook his head, pulling away a little to be able to look at me. "Everything I need to do can be done from my study today. I have no plans to leave the grounds again for the rest of the day," he **said**, brushing his fingers delicately across my back to the sides of my ribcage, tickling me with his gentle touch.

"Can I come with you?" The question left my mouth before I **could** process what had happened, leaving him a little startled. My face grew hot, thinking I was **perhaps** overstepping some sort of boundary.

I'd never seen him at **work**, after all. Maybe there were things he did as part of his royal duties that I wasn't allowed to listen in on.

"It's okay," I quickly tried to amend myself. "I-I don't have to-"

"That would be lovely."

The words died in my mouth as I took in the smile that lifted his face, making the butterflies in my stomach flutter. "Really?" I asked, feeling light with growing giddiness, "I can come?"

"Of course. I'd love nothing more than to have you with me. I just don't want you to get bored, is all. Between all the paperwork and phone calls I have to do, I won't **have a** lot of time to spend with you," he said, looking a little guilty.

He's so adorable, I couldn't help but think.

I shook my head as I nuzzled my head against his shoulder. "Don't worry about me." I insisted. "I can find **a way to pass the time.**" I felt my **blush** deepen, saying this out loud. "L. I just want to be with you."

This close, I could feel his heart pound against his chest.

“If **you** keep saying things like that, I won’t be able to get any work done,” Xaden muttered, pressing a lingering kiss to the top of my head before gently ushering me off his lap. “Why don’t you find something to keep you occupied and then meet me back in my office! I’ll set everything up for us to sit on the couch together.”

I agreed, already having a plan in mind. And with that we dispersed.

Feeling excited, I ran off in the direction of the bedroom. This would be a good opportunity to catch up on reading that pregnancy book I started some time ago. This was my first baby, and I was eager for answers.

Everything seemed to be progressing **quickly**. Even the doctors I’d seen made notes of it.

I needed to know **if any of** it was normal **at** all.