

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 97

Xaden POV

"Well..." Henry slumped back in his chair with a huff. "I'm certainly glad that's over with. Holding a meeting after a long night is always rough."

It just so happened that, the morning immediately following the banquet, the two of us were scheduled to hold a brief, private conference regarding our men stationed near the border. With tensions increasing every passing day between us and the Bear Shifters, it didn't hurt to err on the edge of caution, which we both agreed was the best course of action.

The timing, however, was indeed rather... inconvenient.

"Tell me about it," I drawled, crossing my arms. "Last night, Maeve was-"

Henry released a loud sigh as he rubbed a hand over his tired face, drawing my keen attention. And, for the first time that morning, the prominent circles under his eyes became very apparent, making me wonder what on earth happened in the hours following the banquet. "No offense, little brother," he said, "but I could use a break from hearing that name for the rest of the day."

I arched an eyebrow. "What's your problem with my mate's name?"

"After that disastrous spat with your intended, Isabelle was practically inconsolable last night," Henry muttered pensively. "I spent what felt like hours trying to get her to calm down."

Based on his words alone, I was prepared to show even the smallest ounce of pity for him, had it not been for the smug smile that slowly spread across his face. That was not the look of a man fatigued from hours of fighting with his wife. As a man who partook in the joys of the flesh, I knew exactly what that smile meant.

What a child, I couldn't help but think.

"Yes," I deadpanned. "I cannot imagine how tiresome that must have been for you."

Henry shrugged. "It was not an easy task, but you do what you can for your mate. She took what happened very personally, you know..."

I suppressed a groan. I was sick of that woman always playing the victim. All she seemed to want to do was make Maeve out to be the bad guy, no matter what she did.

"Well, can you blame Maeve for standing up for herself?" I sharply retorted, not caring in the slightest that he winced upon hearing her name. "Your wife threw cheap shots at her expense, and all for what? Was she supposed to just sit there and take it like a champ-or let herself empty her stomach in front of everyone because of the stunts Isabelle pulled?"

"Look, I'm not condoning what she did by any means. But it wouldn't hurt you to show her a little kindness, too."

I scoffed. As if that would ever happen. After what she tried to do, she didn't deserve even a pinch of my sympathy.

"However brash Isabelle might have acted last night, she is still my wife, so don't you dare judge me for defending her, Xaden," he warned, looking as serious and adamant as I'd ever seen him. "You, of all people, should know how it feels to see your mate helpless and in need of comfort."

As much as I wanted to rebuke him, I couldn't deny the effect his words had on me. "I do understand," I admitted, softening up by a bit at the thought of Maeve, "but that doesn't mean I'll just let her do whatever she pleases."

Henry set his jaw. "Maybe you should worry less about my wife and pay a little more attention to yours."

"Excuse me?" I growled, daring him to continue.

"You heard me," he retorted, leveling his gaze with me boldly. "Just as clear as everyone heard that demure woman of yours scold Father in the hallways last night. What on earth got into her?"

I opened my mouth, ready to defend Maeve, but any words I had conjured in my mind stalled. Now that I thought about it, I had never really gotten a clear answer from her. She even seemed to be just as stunned by her vengeful reaction, if not more.

It was pure speculation on my part, but I got the sense that she had been holding all of that in for quite some time-the passion that was tinged within her wrath was not something that just showed up out of thin air.

It festered like a wound until it could no longer contain the pain.

What sort of hell had she been through for her to bottle up all those suppressed feelings?

MAEVE POV

Wracked with dread, I paced the grand front doors of the palace as I tried to gather what courage I had. I was not ready to confront Luna Queen Leonora after my embarrassing display last night.

I had gone completely against all her training, and thrown all of my unresolved anger onto her husband, of all people.

Her blatant disappointment was all but palpable to me from out here.