

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 98

No matter how much I tried to delay the inevitable, however, I needed to get this done. If she was going to scold me, I would rather get it over with than simmer in the mess that was my mind. Taking a long, deep breath, I entered the palace and followed the usual route to get to the queen's parlor.

I need to apologize. The resolution grounded me. She has to know-!

I whirled around, entering full-on defense mode and taking in my surroundings as quickly as possible. For some particular reason,

I had felt the strangest sensation of someone boring into my soul with malicious intent, like someone was about to pounce on me. But there was no one there.

Just an empty palace corridor.

Heat rose on my cheeks. I needed to calm down. More than likely, my stress was making me paranoid.

All of a sudden, Isabelle emerged from around the corner, glancing around for something. As soon as her gaze landed on me, she stopped and composed herself with as much regality as one could muster. "Good, you've finally arrived."

What?

Immediately, my stomach filled with unease. There should have been no reason for her to search for me, especially considering how our last

encounter went down. "You were looking for me, Isabelle...?" I asked, tentative.

She sighed, crossing her arms. "I understand your reluctance around me,"

That, I could scarcely believe.

but this is hardly the time or place for it," she said with a note of impatience. "I'm only here because the Alpha King sent me to find you."

My eyes widened in surprise, quickly followed by dread. "What for?" I asked, but as soon as the words left my lips, I realized just how ridiculous the question was. Only one thing had happened that could possibly justify an audience with him.

And it was something I'd desperately hoped we could move past.

"As if you needed to ask," Isabelle scoffed with a blatant roll of her eyes, inadvertently answering the question I had posed in my head. "We all saw how you yelled at King Arlan in the hallway after the banquet," she said, making me wince with the reminder. "He wants to speak to you-without Xaden around this time."

Anxiety gnawed at my insides. A private audience with the king could mean many things, if one thought about it. In my case, it could only lead to something bad.

I steeled myself, preparing to follow her lead.

But then a thought suddenly occurred to me, one I couldn't ignore. If the Alpha King really did wish to speak with me... then why would he send Isabelle, of all people, to look for me?

He must have known well enough by that point how much she loathed me. Surely, the palace was not lacking in omega servants to send at his disposal, or perhaps even his own Royal Beta to pass on the message, just as Xaden would send Burke.

But no. Isabelle.

For a brief moment, I even tried to consider that this was all possibly some sort of test. Maybe she was sent by him to reaffirm that I truly was incapable of keeping my emotions in check and, thus, was unfit to become Xaden's Luna.

Then again, why do it under the premise that I needed to see him post haste?

The more I thought about this, the more nothing seemed to make sense.

"Well?" she prodded, pulling me back to reality as she stood in the same spot, waiting for me to follow with an expectant stare." Are you going to come or not?

In a move typically unlike me, I decided to take a risk. "I... can't."

She blinked, as if she hadn't expected me to refuse. "What?"

"I-I have a meeting with the Luna Queen that I need to get to," I quickly threw out the first excuse that came to mind, hoping that would be a good enough reason to deter her. And in my defense, not one part of that sentence had been a lie. "If I don't show up soon, she'll wonder where I am."

"The queen can wait. But the king cannot," Isabelle muttered, taking a step closer to me, while I took a step back.

"The queen is every bit as important as the king," I retorted, balling my hands at my fists, needing something to hold my composure together. "I can't turn her time aside just because her husband says so."

She balked at me. "Are you really going to ignore the Alpha King's summons just so you can have a tea party with Her Majesty?" she demanded.

I was frozen in place. I-I didn't know what to do. My inner conflict was tearing at me. What if she was telling the truth?

What if she wasn't?

And then a familiar figure materialized down the hall an unexpected hero in my time of need.