

The Hidden Luna Queen

Chapter 77

MAEVE POV

I didn't get it.

I spent the last hour—maybe more—reading chapter after chapter in this pregnancy book, while Xaden busied himself with a pile of paperwork and a few phone calls to several dignitaries, but nothing I read bore any similarities to what I was experiencing.

Fetal weight gain was not unheard of. Sizing nearly twice as much **as** he should have within the first month, however, was apparently an alien concept. Such weight gain didn't normally happen until much later in the pregnancy.

If I were to base my findings off this book, my pregnancy appeared to be an anomaly.

What did that mean for my baby?

“Is something wrong?”

The sudden sound of his voice addressing me for the first time in what felt like hours caught me by surprise. “What?” I asked, lowering my book to my lap

“You've been frowning at that book for the last ten minutes, he commented, gazing at me thoughtfully. “What could be written on those pages to cause such a **face?**”

I bit the inside of my cheek. I hadn't realized he was paying such close attention to me. "It's... it's just that I got this book hoping that it would help give some answers about my pregnancy. But nothing's adding up. It's like one big mystery."

"What does it matter if you can't find answers in some book?"

My frown deepened ever so slightly. "It matters a lot to me, at least," I admitted. "It's one of my only chance to get any sort of answers."

He pressed his lips together, looking contemplative, before moving to adjust himself in his seat. "If there's anything I've learned from my mother's experience carrying my younger siblings, it's that not every pregnancy is going to be the same. You shouldn't compare what you're going through to what you read, nor to what you hear from other."

I agreed silently, yet begrudgingly. I supposed that was fair.

"Of course," he added, sounding smug. "that's not to mention that we are quite an exceptional pair of expecting parents, after all"

I glanced up at him, and all I saw was the sincerity that I had come to associate with him. Xaden, without a doubt, fit that bill, but me What could I possibly offer that was so special?

"**We** are?" I couldn't help but ask.

Ever the confident alpha, he nodded. "Of course," he answered **as a** matter of fact and, not for the first time, I wished I had even a sliver of **his faith**. "How many **parents** in the world can say they belong to alpha royalty," he **said**, sounding rather self-assured before gazing at me with warmth, and that they are as exquisitely courageous and charming as you?"

Heat arose over my cheeks. His perception of me always seemed to be higher than that of my own. I still couldn't quite understand how.

Vaguely, I wondered if it was possible that our being ‘fated mates’ had any impact whatsoever on the powerful growth of our baby. However outlandish the idea was, it made sense to me, in a strange, helpless sort of way. Nothing else I’d read or heard could definitively explain what was going on.

That being **said**... the entire notion of ‘fated mates’ was really just that. A fantasy. At this point, all I could do was speculate, which did not help me.

I sank into the couch. “This baby certainly liked to make things interesting-“

“Perhaps,” he began to say, **looking** deep in thought, “we should consider arranging regular **visits** with a doctor.”

Against my better judgment, the suggestion made my stomach twist with anxiety. “Do you think there’s a chance something’s wrong?”

“Not at all I just think it could be beneficial to us both to chart the pregnancy and ensure that everything is progressing as it should. You’re already almost one month along by this point,” he said, which inspired the corners of my lips to twitch upwards.

It was so simple, and was really the most basic of information that he should know as the father of my child, but still... it warmed my heart to know that he cared enough to keep track. Asking for so little from my own father would have been practically unspeakable.

In all of my twenty years, he never cared enough to remember my birthday or how old I was. **Meanwhile**, my baby was less than a month along, and Xaden **was** already a better father than mine ever was.

“Not to mention,” he continued, “it would be interesting to know what to expect from the coming months.”

That was not a bad idea, I had to admit.

As a very young and inexperienced mother-to-be, I **had** no idea what I was doing, nor what I should be doing. It **wasn’t** like there was anyone to educate

me when I was younger about the birds and the bees, **least** of all how to successfully navigate motherhood. Victoria certainly never gave me the time of day to have such talks with me, despite being the only mother figure I

Everything I had ever learned, I learned from either eavesdropping on Sarah's private lessons, or from.

And then it hit me. I wasn't really as ignorant as I thought!

The proof came in the weight of a small pink book that rested atop my lap. After all, what had I just been doing mere minutes ago, immersing myself inside a book designed for that very purpose? Although it didn't supply me with all the answers I'd hoped for, it was able to tell me what to expect in the coming months.

"You know." I prompted, adjusting myself in my seat so that I faced Xaden more directly, suddenly feeling ticklish with waves of cautious optimism. "I'm not far along enough yet, but I read that the baby should be able **to** hear **in** a few weeks."

He cocked his **head**, his eyes alight with bright curiosity. "Really?"

I nodded. "**At** first they'll only be able to hear sounds," I said, excitedly scanning through the book in rapid motion, hoping to show him **the** passages as proof, "but eventually, they'll learn to recognize and respond to different voices, even in the womb. I found it utterly fascinating—**how** the baby will be able to tell us apart by our voices even before he's born..."

I trailed off once I realized that Xaden fell quiet, gazing at me with the softest smile. I reddened with embarrassment, suddenly feeling shy. I didn't want to ramble when he had more important things to do

"Don't stop on my **account**," he implored, caressing my thigh. "Tell me more."

His enthusiasm to learn more reinvigorated my own

So, I proceeded to tell him about everything else I'd read that pertained to the subject at hand. Not only did it help hone the **baby's** hearing, but it also served to deepen the bond between parent and **child**, something that was supposed to help immensely once the baby was born. It was a comfort to the baby, to be able to hear voices and sounds that were familiar to them.

"Do you want to try talking to the baby?" I asked once I finished

Xaden blinked, apparently **having** not expected such a question. "Me? Now?"

"Of course, you," I emphasized, unable to stop the corners of my lips from twitching upwards. "And there's nothing wrong with trying early. If anything we'd be getting him used to our voices weeks in advance."

"What should I **say**?"

I let my hand roam over my belly. "Anything that you want."

He looked uncertain but nevertheless, his handsome features weighed with determination. It seemed he decided on what he wanted to say. Slowly—and very awkwardly—Xaden lowered his head closer to my gently protruding belly, stopping about a foot **away**.

I leaned back a bit to allow him more space, ready to watch the scene unfold.

"He—ah... hello in there, little one," Xaden said, his hot breath grazing over the skin of my belly. I would have quivered from the sensation if it weren't for the fact that I wanted to witness every **second** of this. "I don't know if you can hear me or not... well, most likely not yet, bu—but I'm **your** father."

Hearing him say that out loud—to our unborn baby, nonetheless—made my heart skip a beat. It was far from the first time he acknowledged the **baby**, but it was the first time I'd heard him call himself father. The **word** carried

negative memories for me, but maybe with Xaden, it could be the start of something new and wonderful

He, however, frowned instantly. “No—I don’t like the sound of that.”

I jolted with a start, filling with dread to ask what he meant until he followed up with this: “I’m your dad-“

Behind the quiet sigh of relief I emitted, I couldn’t help but smile upon hearing that,

“Dad“.. what an adorable term of endearment. A perfect amendment to our new, growing family.

“-and I have something important to say to you,” he said, taking an unusually serious tone for what was meant to be a lighthearted moment. I waited, curious to hear what he had to say until I caught the faint shadow of a smirk form on his face. “Stop twisting your mama’s appetite. She deserves to eat only the most delicious of foods—so please stop making her eat those blasted seasoned apples.”

A burst of startled laughter broke past my lips,

When did he become so good at that? It seemed to be second nature to him—to be able to make me smile and laugh like he could now, I had never laughed so much as I have lately when I **was** around him.

All of a sudden, I felt my stomach flutter. Quick, ticklish motions that felt familiar.

But it’s never happened like this before.

“What is it?” Xaden questioned. I lifted my startled gaze to meet his wide-eyed one.

“I—I just felt the baby move.”

His mouth gently parted. For a moment, it looked as if he had something he wanted to say but he struggled to come out with the words. "Is it are you..." he mumbled incoherently. "Sh-Should I fetch the doctor?"

Quickly, I shook my head. "No, no, it's nothing like that. I think he might've been responding to your voice."

"Really?"

Another flutter. Soft and delicate, but unmistakable.

I was overwhelmed with the sensation of butterflies. **This** never happened without it being connected to those dreams somehow. **And** it was almost always in the middle of the night, at a time when the entire world was asleep.. all except for me. No one to listen to me. No one to **feel** what I felt.

But today was a different story. Xaden was wide awake this time, and he was right here.

He **had** to feel this.

Without wasting another moment, I grabbed onto Xaden's hand, taking him by surprise. "Put your **hand** here-" I urged, planting it onto the expanse of my belly. "Tell me if you can feel the baby move."