

# The Hidden Luna Queen

## Chapter 8

### Maeve **POV**

Prince Xaden's hand tightened over mine. The expression he wore **on** his face as he stared at me was indiscernible and it frightened me to not be able to know what he was thinking. Father **had** always been susceptible to Sarah's lies, swayed by her innocent facade—even when we were children, she had him wrapped **around** her little finger and I would face the brunt of his wrath for the most ridiculous of reasons.

I wanted to believe that Prince Xaden was different

From **what** I'd seen, he was tender, fair, yet ruthless when the situation called for it.

He held our baby's future **and** mine in his hands. If he chose to take her words at face value.. I didn't **know** what I'd do.

After what seemed like a long, agonizing silence, he spoke.

"Lady Sarah," he finally said, his tone signifying **an** air of resolution, and I waited with bated breath. "Out of respect for **Alpha** Burton and his many years of loyal service to the kingdom, I'll give you one chance to recant that preposterous little story of yours. Of **course**, since lying to the crown is a crime, I strongly suggest you **to** apologize to Maeve. NOW."

My jaw dropped, shocked that the Alpha Prince took my side so easily.

He raised an eyebrow expectantly. "Well?"

“No,” **she** said, appearing equally as stunned, with **a** short disbelieving chuckle. “No. I refuse to apologize to her.”

The tension in the room was unbearable. Thick enough that it could be cut with a butcher knife. Everyone knew that when it came to testing a **royal** on the verge of **losing** their last thread of patience—especially one who had the power to one day ascend the throne—**you** had to know it was a losing game.

And Sarah was about to learn **that** lesson.

Prince Xaden nodded “As you wish. Guards, lock her up in the dungeon until she’s ready to apologize.”

Several armored soldiers quickly loomed over a frightened Sarah **and** snatched her up by her underarms, pulling her to her delicate feet despite her feeble struggles, and a horrified Father and Victoria—knowing they would not dare to challenge an Alpha Prince or his men—had to watch it all unfold from the sidelines.

I had **a** feeling her luck would one day run out, but I never expected to see something like this happen,

For Prince Xaden to be so bold as to let loose his guards on **Sarah** and dare to detain her on the **day** of her grand birthday celebration in front of all of Moonstone—**it** was a striking reminder to us all. He had earned his formidable title for a reason and we were there to witness his might in action.

But I wasn’t sure how I felt about this terrifying display of power.

**Sure**, Sarah had her faults, but was it worth breaking her **down** like this?

“Mother!” she gasped, kicking and screaming, **not** caring when her expensive high heels flew off and scattered across the room. “Daddy—tell them to stop! Don’t let me go to the dirty, **scary** dungeon!”

Everyone knew she wouldn’t last a night in those cold, dark cells.

Only parents who truly loved their children would stand up and defend them, even in the face of royalty.

“**Please**, Your Royal Highness!” Victoria wailed, throwing herself to her knees in front of a cool and composed Prince Xaden, mere feet away from **where** I stood, and clawed at the legs of his pants with abandon “Forgive my poor, careless daughter! She was merely speaking what she believed to be **the** truth!”

“The truth?” he repeated, shrouded with harsh doubt, and Victoria realized her mistake. “Her so-called truth threatens the integrity of my unborn child’s mother, thus she threatens me. How do you account for that?”

“She’s just a child! She doesn’t know”

“Even a fool would know better than to insult a prince.” He **looked** down at her with utter disdain, very similar to how she’d always look at me. “Since you are so inclined to defend your tactless daughter, perhaps you’d prefer to join her?”

Victoria retreated with a flinch, pulling behind her husband. “Dear, do something,” she panicked. “Our daughter!”

Sweat gathered on Father’s forehead as he hesitated, stuck in an internal battle with himself. Still, he managed to find some shred of courage and knelt before the prince with his head bowed low.

Soft gasps echoed in the banquet **hall**.

“Alpha Burton?”

“We take full responsibility for the poor countenance of our daughter Sarah,” he admitted, and I couldn’t believe those words even existed in his vocabulary. “As her parents, we failed to discipline her properly and allowed

her personal feelings for Maeve to spiral completely out of control. But, we beg you.. show some leniency.”

“Please,” Victoria pleaded, following Father’s lead. “It’s her birthday, Your Highness. Show compassion for my little girl.” Seeing **an** Alpha kneel in front of him, Prince Xaden fell silent.

It had been one thing to force Father to give up control over me, but it was something else entirely to make him beg for mercy. Despite his pathetic nature when it came to authority, he was still an Alpha Minister with some sort of social standing in the Werewolf Kingdom. If other alphas came to fear the prince, it could potentially mean bad news for the crown. Not only could it damage his campaign... but **fear**, if provoked, could run rampant and wreak chaos throughout the kingdom.

I didn’t envy his position whatsoever.

But then, he turned to me, solemn. “What do you want to **do**?” he asked.

I blinked, surprised. “Me?”

“You’re the one she’s been targeting. It’s only fair that you decide what should happen to her.”

I get to choose Sarah’s fate?

It dawned on me the weight of the power I suddenly found myself wielding, entrusted by the prince. If I deemed it so, my sister and the entire rest of my family could be imprisoned indefinitely for their despicable treatment of me.

A tremendous burden fell upon my shoulders. This was not something to be taken **lightly**.

But I kept coming back to my earlier thoughts. Something had tagged at my chest when I watched her get the most brutal scare of her life on a day that was supposed to become one of her most cherished memories. She

was **still** just a girl—as Victoria had **said**—and she had time to reform herself. Antagonizing her **would** accomplish nothing.

Maybe it's best if I let her go...

I opened my mouth **to** speak.

“Oh, thank goodness, Victoria exclaimed with a relieved smile, and whatever words I'd planned to say halted in my throat. “Maeve is the deciding factor. Our little girl will undoubtedly be spared!”

A heaving sigh shook Father's body as he got to his feet, lowering a hand for his wife to help her up as well. “We can move past this once and for all, then.”

They watched me with bated breath, waiting for me to give the word...

“L.” But I stalled.

Their apparent relief left a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. Nothing was ever going to change. To them, I was still—and would always be— their servant to do their bidding.

My hesitation dampened the joyful, hopeful spirits of my parents, however, and Victoria was quick to take charge of the situation. She approached me with a bright, encouraging smile for everyone else to see, yet spoke through clenched teeth: “You know what you have to do and you'd better do it”

This **was** a threat.

Father's brow furrowed. “**Maeve**, you wouldn't really allow your poor little sister to suffer in the dungeon, would you?” he asked, his voice reeking of sadness and disapproval.

He intended to villainize **me** in front of the whole party.