

The Luna Choosing Game by Jane Above Story Chapter 10

Chapter 0010

But Julian would know, because he was there.

In another life, being near Nicholas would have given me enough reason to want to stay

.

But he'd made his feelings about me clear. And I had other priorities.

My gaze slid to Elva, playing with her dolls at the foot of the bed.

"I don't want to play house," I said. "Nor do I want to partake in this game of undercutting nobles and

chasing princes."

I had been away from nobility for a long time, but I hadn't forgotten their cutthroat politics, where an action as small as selecting the wrong utensil at dinner could start a blood feud. Backstabbing, betrayals, pretending to be nice just to make someone vulnerable...

The memories made my already tired body even more exhausted.

Elva coughed and immediately reclaimed my attention. She recovered quickly this time, thank God, and returned to playing.

Softer, so that she wouldn't overhear, I said to Julian, "My daughter is frail and sick often. I have to work hard to care for her. I can't waste time staying here."

Julian **tapped** a finger to his chin. "Piper, **you** realize this is the royal palace, correct?"

"Yes, but-

“So while you are here, wouldn’t you have access to all the royal resources? Including our medical staff and supplies?”

I froze.

I hadn’t thought of that. Would the royal family truly be willing to use their resources to help Elva?

Julian must have seen the disbelief on my face. “While you are here, **you** are under the care of my family. We wouldn’t simply stand by and let you or your daughter suffer.”

I narrowed my eyes at him. **Turning** away a sick child **would** surely be bad **for** public relations.

It would be horrible, he said, smile adding teeth

Why was he being so generous with what were probably

me to know the real reason

When I asked him, Julian laughed. A roguish light danced in his eyes. They were different than

Nicholas’s, more brown than gold, with no flecks of green.

“I’m not so different than I was in the Academy,” he said.

He’d been a trickster then for sure, constantly teasing or performing elaborate pranks. Nicholas, the **more** serious one, had always accused him of never taking anything seriously.

Once, Julian had put a smoke bomb in the teacher’s lounge, and in a panic, the fire department had been called in. Julian had laughed and said it wasn’t a real fire. He couldn’t understand why anyone was upset.

Nicholas had apologized profusely for the act, as if he himself had committed it. At the time, I had thought he felt responsible for the entirety of our class. Now I knew he only felt responsible for his brother.

“I like stirring the pot,” Julian said now. “I want to see what happens.”

“What does that have to do with me?”

“I want to see what you’ll do, Piper.” His grin turned mischievous. “And what Nicholas does, too.”

I wrapped my arms around myself. “Nicholas and I don’t want anything to do with each other.”

“Oh, really? So it doesn’t bother you at all that he will mate with another woman during his contest?”

“No,” I lied. My heart twisted at the mere mention of him with someone else, but I quickly, internally, scolded myself. I was the one who had broken Nicholas’s heart. I had no right to be jealous now.

He certainly didn’t think of me with any fondness. And I had no intention of holding onto a hopeless past, when I had my daughter and our future to contend with.

“Say what you want, but I’m no fool,” Julian said. “You and Nicholas have a special bond.” He laughed. “And I can’t wait to see how far I can bend it.”