

The Luna Choosing Game by Jane Above Story Chapter 131

Chapter 0131

I tried to pull my eyes away just to prove him wrong. Too quickly, I was looking again.

“She’s the King and Queen’s favorite,” Jullan said.

“Your brother’s, too.” I tried to keep the distain from my voice, but I was a poor actor. I was as certain that it

shone on through,

“Maybe.” Julian studied me now, the others apparently forgotten. “I’m not so sure.”

“He wouldn’t let just anyone hand-feed him.” I crossed my arms.

Julian tilted his head. “Why, Piper. If I didn’t know better, I’d say you were jealous.”

His words startled me and my eyes went wide.

Jealous? No, that couldn’t be right. What Nicholas and I had done was done and over with long ago.

Except it wasn’t. At least, not for me. My recent fantasies of Nicholas as my husband and father to Elva

proved it.

But to be jealous here, now, in the midst of this competition? I had not recognized the churn in my

stomach and tightness in my chest for what it truly was.

Yes, I was jealous.

Not that I wanted Julian, or anyone else, to know about it.

I cleared my throat, trying to collect myself.

“Be serious, Prince Julian. I would have to be terribly foolish to feel jealous over a man in a dating

competition. Why, I’d have to fight off every girl here if I wanted to keep him to myself.”

“Mhm,” Julian hummed. “More or less, that’s true. Yes.”

I shot him an annoyed sideways glance. He just smiled at me.

“Are you saying you aren’t up for the challenge?” he asked. Voice lower, for my ears only, he added,

Doesn’t he deserve someone who actually loves him?”

“I don’t love him.” The words burned the entire length of my throat.

Julian shrugged. “Could have fooled me.”

Suddenly, Nathan arrived to reclaim wayward Julian and return him to his family.

You are **supposed** to remain as a unit,” Nathan insisted.

+15 BONUS

Julian agreed to return, though Nathan didn’t move but a couple feet off, waiting for him. Obviously, Nathan didn’t **fully trust** Julian. That was likely a smart move.

“If you’ll excuse me, I have to **go** try Lilliana’s pastries for myself.” Voice low again, he added, “They’re burnt on the bottom, by the way. Too long in the oven.”

Julian Nathan said.

Julian saluted me, then turned and followed Nathan back to his family. Nicholas, I noticed, glared at him

the full length of his return trip.

I felt the weight of two hateful eyes on my own person. I glanced to my left and found Linda attempting

I

to light me on fire with her gaze.

Quickly, I faced forward once more, ignoring her.

The royal family went through two more tables before finally reaching ours. By this time, the sun was

high overhead, and Linda's eggs were looking a bit dry.

The Luna stepped up first to our table, but, upon looking at it, her previously pleasant expression slipped

right off her face.

"What is this?" she demanded.

Linda spoke before I could. "I made deviled eggs and

—

"I don't mean the food," the Queen said. She motioned toward the King, who joined her in frowning. He

waved Nathan forward and whispered in his ear.

Nathan nodded, then addressed us. "Did you not understand the assignment?"

Since Linda had volunteered herself to be the speaker among us, I looked at her, waiting to see what she would say.

"We have created the two appetizers and the drinks." Linda waved at the table.

"This display is split in half," the Queen said. "This event was to be about cooperation amongst

adversaries. How do you ever hope to survive meticulous diplomatic relations if you can not even

cooperate with your fellow candidates in the competition?"

1... Well..." Linda was **sputtering**, losing her usual confidence.

The Luna looked at her with something like pity in her eyes. As her gaze shifted to me, she hardened.

Chapter 0132

Forgive me, Your Majesty, but we had given consideration to the spirit of the event," I said.

It **wasn't** totally a lie. I had given some thought about how our divided display could still indicate some measure **of** cooperation, even if Linda hadn't.

"Explain yourself," the Queen said.

I motioned toward our display. "At first glance, our table is divided, **which** could reflect the deep disagreements between us and our adversaries. Yet if you **look** closer, you will notice that our selections actually complement each other."

The **Luna** and **King** pressed in closer to the display, peering at where I suggested. Behind them, Nicholas and Julian gave me supportive looks – a full smile from Julian, a partial from Nicholas. Joyce continued

to look off into the distance, disinterested.

"Linda's cold selection and my warm one offer an exploration of taste. The drinks in between act as a palate cleanser, when needed. Individually, we could stand alone fine, but when presented together, we

are better."

I lifted one of the stuffed mushrooms and handed it to the King.

"Much like diplomatic relations, we bring two different individualities together **in** a united **front**."

He nodded, thoughtful. Then he bit into the stuffed mushroom. He hummed, then motioned to his sons."

This is very good. Try one.”

I provided each of the princes their own appetizer. Nicholas touched my hand a moment longer than needed as he accepted his. Pride shone bright in his eyes, which warmed me up from the inside out.

When I offered one to the Queen, however, she simply looked at me blankly, and made no motion to

accept it.

I slowly lowered it **back** to the table. “Whenever you are ready.”

“That is outrageous,” Linda said suddenly, claiming everyone’s attention. “Piper’s talking out of her

backside. We didn’t discuss any of this.”

Standing up straighter, I tried to catch her eye, to ask her what she thought she was doing, but she didn’t

once bother glancing my way.

“**Our** foods are divided because I didn’t want her inferior selection to be anywhere near my **own**. I

understand this isn’t in the spirit of the event.” Linda huffed. “But what kind of diplomatic relations would

+15 BONUS

She picked up one of her dried-out deviled eggs and handed it to the Queen, who eagerly accepted it.

“Commoners should stay within their own boundaries and do as they are told,” Linda said. “**That** is why our display is the way it is. Had I been partnered with someone on my own level, I would have been happy to advocate for cooperation.”

The King and Queen nodded critically, as if they agreed with what Linda was saying!

“You don’t often get to select who you must work with,” Nicholas said, face stern. “Often times those we must find common grounds with are not the kind we would normally associate with.”

“Yes,” **Linda** said solemnly. “But they wouldn’t be common. I had to divide the table. Don’t you see? If I allowed her to infiltrate my side, she would only steal the benefits of my station, without providing any good qualities of her own.”

“Piper’s stuffed mushrooms were quite delicious,” Julian said. He pointed at Linda’s eggs. “Have you been keeping those on ice? You know they need to be kept chilled, or they will go bad.”

The Luna shushed him. “Don’t be rude, Julian.”

Julian looked at her. His smile took on an edge. “Rude is how everyone else is acting, m other.”

“To assume the common people want to ‘steal the benefits of your station’ is a dangero us opinion to have,” Nicholas said. The common people, after all, are what keep this kin gdom running.”

Behind him the producers whisper–yelled, “That’s good. The people will love that. Get a close up of the prince.”

Nicholas glowered. Clearly he hadn’t just said that for the cameras, and having been ca ught out made

him uncomfortable.

Chapter 0133

I wished I **could** tell him that I understood he meant his words and that I appreciated th em, but **there** was no real opportunity for me to do so.

“Everyone needs to know their place, nobility and commoner alike,” Linda said.

The King nodded.

The Queen decided to change the subject, “I will try the egg first. I’m sure it is delicious.”

“Mother, perhaps you shouldn’t –”

“Quiet, Julian,” she said.

Julian lowered his head, unusually cowed. “Yes, ma’am.” In his eyes, something sparke d though, as if he

was about to watch his own revenge unfold.

She bit into it. Immediately, her face soured, though she continued to chew. Eventually she s

the bite down. She did not go for a second.

swallowed

The King who had been carefully watching her seemed less inclined to take a bite of his own offered egg. However, after glancing at the cameras, he inhaled a deep breath, and nibbled on the edge.

Linda offered eggs to the princes. They all refused, even Joyce, who I had previously assumed hadn't been paying attention. Perhaps he was more observant than I had thought. I truly knew so little about him.

"This is..." The King struggled for a word.

"Vile? Repulsive?" Julian supplied.

"Spoiled?" Nicholas added, without so much joy as Julian.

The Queen pressed one hand to her stomach and the other to her mouth. She lurched forward, like she

might be sick.

Immediately, the King turned toward the cameramen. "Get those cameras out of here!"

The producers complied at **once**, pulling the camera crews away from the scene.

I had some water stored in a bottle nearby and quickly poured a glass for the Queen. She refused to

accept it from me.

"My Queen?" the King **asked**.

She shook her head. The King waved her handmaidens closer, and they quickly scurried to get her away

1/3

The event is **now** ended."

+15 BONUS

"Your Majesty." Nathan bowed his head. "What of the candidates yet to participate?"

"What of them?" the King scoffed. "The Queen is unwell! Naught else matters but that."

"Of course, sir." Nathan bowed deeper.

The King wasted no more time. He left Nathan and the princes standing there, and hurried into the

palace, chasing his wife.

When he was gone, Nathan announced the end of the event to all the girls. Those that had yet to be

judged were outraged, and a crowd formed around my table.

son this ha

happened.”

“Don’t look at me,” Linda said, scoffing under the sudden pressure. “Piper is the reason

“And **just** how did you reason that out?” Julian said.

He and Nicholas had stayed nearby, listening to the complaints of the girls. It truly did seem unfair, that they wouldn’t have the chance to be judged. Loudest among them was Olivia, who insisted her appetizer

was the best.

Joyce had pulled out a book and began to read, standing further away than the rest.

“Simple. If she had followed basic orders, I wouldn’t have needed to overcompensate with a more

complicated dish!” Linda said.

I wasn’t sure what about deviled eggs made it a complicated dish, but I knew that if I suggested that,

she would take it as an insult and fire more insults at me.

“Each of our foods was fine,” I said. “Yours simply became too hot in the morning sunlight. If we had

thought to put out some ice.”

“I can’t think of everything,” Linda snapped. “If I had a more competent partner, then none of this would

have happened.”

I stood my ground. “I had nothing to do with your half of the table.”

“Am I supposed to believe that? Maybe it wasn’t the ice that we needed, Piper. Maybe this was your plan

from the start.”

“What are you talking about?”

Around us the girls began to whisper.

Chapter **0134**

Sabotage? The girls around us burst into loud chatter.

“**Could** it be possible? How would she do it?”

“Anything’s possible. She could have done it.”

“Someone get the guards! If it’s true, that’s an attempt on the Queen’s life!”

At the sound of that accusation, the guards closed in around my table. One of them scurried off, only to return quickly with Joseph himself in tow.

“This is getting out of hand,” I said. “Linda, tell them this wasn’t sabotage.

“Why would I?” Linda said. “How else would my appetizer make the Queen sick? You didn’t... poison it,

did you, Piper?”

At the mention of poison, the crowd gasped.

“What? No!” I held my hands up, but the guards had taken renewed interest in me.

“What’s this about poison?” Joseph said, bullying his way to my side.

“Nothing,” I said quickly.

“She poisoned the Queen!” Linda said, pointing. In the past five seconds, she had taken that wild idea

and latched onto it, doubling down. Could she not simply see that her eggs had spoiled?

“She didn’t keep her eggs on ice and they went bad,” I said. “That’s all that happened.”

Joseph crossed his arms. Lifting his chin, he peered down the length of his nose at me.

“An accusation of poisoning is a serious matter,” he said.

“Tell that to Linda. I didn’t have anything to do with –”

Joseph ignored me. “We will investigate. But in the meantime, the accused should be placed into the

dungeons for the sake of the Queen.”

My stomach dropped. “What?”

I looked around, searching for Elva in the crowd. Fortunately Mark had pulled her away. They watched from very far back, near the edge of **the** gardens. Hopefully, she was too far away to hear.

A guard grabbed me roughly by the arm.

1/2

+15 BONUS

“Hey!” I struggled, but they were trained soldiers, paid for their strength. Without my wolf, I was an absolute weakling in comparison.

“Now, wait one minute,” Nicholas said. He politely weaved his way through the crowd, approaching me. When he was close enough, he glared at the guard’s hold on my arm until the guard released me.

“Your Royal Highness,” Joseph said, dipping his head. “This is a serious matter. Please allow me permission to handle it as I see fit.”

Nicholas stared at him flatly. “Denied.”

Joseph blinked, apparently not expecting that reaction. Just how much free reign did this Captain of the

Guard usually have?

“In fact, rather than your typical investigation, I have a suggestion of my own,” Nicholas said.

He looked first to me, offering me a reassuring nod, then looked to Linda.

“Perhaps Linda would like to remake her food, with all of us watching. If she is actually as good a cook as she indicates, she should be able to prove it in front of all of **us**. Then we will take this accusation of poisoning under advisement. But not before.”

Linda paled as he spoke, but eventually agreed. “Of course, I would be happy to complete any challenge Your Royal Highness deems necessary.”

Prince Nicholas nodded, as if that decided everything. Maybe it did. This must have been one of the benefits of being a royal. I wasn't about to speak out against it, especially since it was directly helping me.

"Sir," Joseph said, voice terse. "Until such an event can be planned, surely we should lock away the accused – if only on the off chance she has committed the crime. Don't we owe it to our Queen to take

every precaution?"

Nicholas looked to Nathan. "An event like this shouldn't take all that long to prepare for, should it,

Nathan?"

"I will see to it at once, Your Royal Highness. The kitchen is likely being used to prepare lunch, but

afterwards, I don't see any reason why we could not utilize the space."

"Very good, Nathan. Thank you,

Nathan bowed, then turned and hurried to see to the duty.

Chapter 0135

"But in the meantime –" Joseph tried again.

Nicholas interrupted him. "I will accept personal responsibility for her. I will keep her by my side and make certain that she does not find herself in any more trouble."

Relief flooded me so quickly, I felt dizzy. I rested one hand on the table in case I lost balance.

Joseph grunted like he wanted to argue. Of course, he couldn't – not against a prince. Eventually, he

relented, "Yes, sir."

"But what about us, Your Royal Highness?" Olivia said, cutting in. "Why does Linda receive a second

chance while we do not?"

Nicholas shook his head. "The Queen's sudden illness took precedence, but I would not be overly upset.

The royal family will not consider an event that has been judged unfairly. Either you will yet still have your

chance, or this event will be entirely scrapped.”

Olivia exhaled and smiled a little “Thank you, sir. That is a relief to know.”

taking their promise to protect Elva and me seriously.

Then, I could no longer avoid the topic that **had** been pressing against the back of my mind, even though

I knew I should have left it alone.

“I saw Lilliana feeding you,” I said.

He winced. Perhaps I could have worded it more gracefully. Too late now.

“Her pastries were overcooked,” Nicholas said.

“Nicholas...” That wasn’t what I meant to discuss, and he knew it.

“What do you want me to tell you, Piper? Lilliana is my chosen favorite and I must show her the proper

favor.”

He leaned back on the bench, shedding some of his perfect princely façade.

“I have to marry someone eventually. It might as well be her.”

His words struck me like a hot iron, searing a cruel brand on my heart. “What a terrible thing to say!”

He eyed me. “Is it not the truth?”

“You should marry for love, Nicholas!”

He sat up straight again, his façade returning **in** an instant. “That’s not possible.”

I didn’t understand. “Why not?”

His golden eyes pinned me to the spot.

“I’m not capable of love anymore.”

