

The Luna Choosing Game by Jane Above Story Chapter 20

Chapter 0020

+15 **BONUS**

Around us, the girls were speaking with each other and the royal family. Only Nicholas, Susie, and myself

were silent.

The King gave Nicholas a **hard** look, and Nicholas's lips twitched like he wanted to frown but didn't.

I thought he might talk to me, but instead, he leaned forward to see Susie around me.

"It is a pleasant evening, wouldn't you agree, Susie?"

Susie paled. "You... know my name?"

"Of course. I know the name of every candidate."

"... oh..." She audibly swallowed a spoonful of soup. "Of course. Sorry to offend."

"I'm not offended," Nicholas said. "But, to my question. Wouldn't you agree?"

Susie's face shifted from white to **red** so fast, I worried she might be lightheaded. I placed an arm beside her, ready to catch her if she tilted.

"A-Agree?" Susie stuttered

"Yes." Nicholas's brow furrowed slightly. "That the weather is pleasant?"

"Oh! Yes, Yes, very pleasant." Susie pushed her chair back. "If you'll **excuse** me, I... I, uh... I have to use the bathroom!"

She jumped to her feet and started walking away. Halfway to the door she turned around, seemingly having realized she was still clutching her cloth napkin. She dropped it onto her chair, and then scuttled away, pressing her hands to her face.

Nicholas blinked a couple of times. He hadn't moved at all otherwise, like he couldn't quite believe what had just happened.

"She's very shy," I said.

He recovered then, glancing at me. He sat back in his chair and focused on his soup:

The girls across the table were watching the scene curiously. Nicholas had gone back to not **speaking!** www he was furious with me, but if he continued to be so unwelcoming, he would earn **a negative**

putation with the girls, and with the cameras

deemed to be zooming in on him.

I forced a laugh, bringing the attention to myself. "I, personally, find the weather very pleasant"

Nicholas glanced at me again, his frown clear this time.

Subtly, I tilted my head toward the camera.

He noticed the camera and immediately schooled his frown into a passive expression.

"Have you ever studied birds, Piper?" he asked me. He didn't wait for me to answer. "I've been taken to raising some. Beautiful, majestic creatures. But there is one bird that I cannot help but actively dislike."

"Which is?" I asked.

"The cuckoo bird," he said. His gaze sliced into me. "They lay their eggs in other birds' nests. A clever

tactic, but shameless."

The blood pulled away from my face. He was talking about me. I had a child, yet here I was, still

participating in the Luna choosing game. Did he think this was some clever ploy of mine, to seek out an

uneven match? To aim higher than I had any right to?

I dabbed at the corner of my mouth with my napkin, giving myself a moment to recover from the insult.

Then I spoke.

I

“Actually, I love birds,” I said.

“Oh?” he feigned interest. He lifted his soup-filled spoon.

“My favorite bird is the swan. They are so pure, loyal. Monogamous. Among swans, you would never see

multiple females having to fight over one male.”

He choked on his soup.

Some of the other girls immediately noticed. “Are you well, Prince Nicholas?”

“Fine,” he said, clearing his throat. He absolutely refused to look at me again, focusing solely on his soup

bowl, even after he’d finished the contents within.

Yet I barely had any time to feel smug over the reaction, before Susie walked quickly back into the room.

Oddly, she didn’t return to her seat, but leaned over it to speak to me.

“Piper, the maids caught me in the hall. It’s about Elva.”

All good feelings vanished. "What is it?"

Susie brow crinkled. A small line creased above her nose.

Whatever the news, it wasn't good.

I braced myself, but worries over Elva's health punched the air from my lungs like a physical blow, no

matter how prepared I'd thought myself.

Susie spoke. "Elva has a high fever."