

The Luna Choosing Game #Chapter 201 - Read The Luna Choosing Game Chapter 201

Chapter 201

Did I know about Nicholas's past? I thought I did.

A tiny voice whispered in my head, Maybe not as well as you think.

No, I couldn't let Julian sow doubt inside of me. No matter what he thought, there had to be a logical explanation for whatever happened. Nicholas wasn't the type to just steal people's girlfriends.

Perhaps Nicholas dated someone Julian liked, and Julian was just jealous. I wouldn't suggest that to

him, however,

Even now, pain shone in his eyes, even with the smile that returned to his lips. He'd clearly been hurt by

whatever happened, no matter how much he tried to hide it.

Because of this, I didn't want to ask him any more questions, or even bring it up at all. Maybe he was

right. Maybe all I was doing was kicking the hornet's nest. Sometimes the past was meant to stay in the

past.

It hurt that the brothers couldn't move beyond it, but who was I to try to brute force that into happening?

I lifted a hand and placed it on Julian's shoulder. He glanced at it, eyes widening slightly.

"I'm sorry for your heartache," I said. "Whatever the cause."

He continued looking at my hand. His smile wavered again. "Do you mean that?"

“Of course, I do,” I said. “I care about you.”

Suddenly, he pulled me into a hug. His arms wrapped around M
nook between my neck and shoulder.

waist, and his head lowered into the

His hands on me were gentle, placed respectfully on the small of my back.

He was surprisingly tender. Until this moment, I always thought he flirted and teased with me just for entertainment. Maybe that was part of it, sure. Yet when he acted like this, I felt like maybe he did like

aven if just a little

by that thought, I reached my own arms up and wrapped them around his neck
tom Dressing his chest to mine.

“Alright.”

So for a long moment, we held each other in the quiet of the parlor and didn’t say a word.

I wondered how long it had been since Julian received a good and honest hug, one that didn’t have to mean anything or lead to anything. One he could share with someone who truly just wanted him to be

himself.

Julian had his flaws, certainly, but we all did. He’d only ever done his best for me despite his teasing.

How could I not be grateful? How could I not like him for the person he was?

Our moment was interrupted by someone loudly clearing his throat.

I turned my head and saw Nicholas in the entryway. My heart jumped up into my throat and I lowered:

my arms from Julian’s shoulders.

Julian, it seemed, didn't have to look to know who it was. "You always seem to find the worst moments.

to intrude upon, brother."

"I didn't come here to intrude," Nicholas said, though his voice was stiff, unnatural, like he was trying novelbin

hard to stifle his anger.

Julian sighed. Though he finally lifted his head from my shoulder. "What did you come here for, then?"

Nicholas closed the parlor door behind him and walked further into the room. "I wanted to discuss the

next steps we should take to find Piper's sister."

I turned from Julian in a flash and walked toward Nicholas. The line of my thinking had halted and

abruptly shifted. I'd do anything to find my sister, and to discover the truth behind her involvement in the

underground organization.

Do you have an idea?" I asked, as hope filled my heart.

His face fell a little, looking at me. I'm sorry, Piper. Not really. But if we put our heads together

Chapter 202

"If we just ask Julian, is what you mean to say," Julian cut in. He sauntered closer and cast Nicholas a dagger-sharp glare. "Since I'm the only one with an evil-enough brain required for truly investigating the

underground."

"You aren't evil," I said at once.

Julian's gaze softened somewhat looking at me. "Thank you, dear. But what I mean, is that I'm the one who can think like them. Scheme like them. You two are too innocent and pure."

Nicholas straightened. "I'm perfectly capable of strategizing their movements."

"Oh? Then you know where they're hiding and what their plans are?" Julian laughed. "What a relief! I thought this might be much more difficult than all that."

"Jullan," I scolded, but he ignored me now.

"Someone as high and mighty as you, brother, has no idea what it's like to slither around in the dark." Julian's voice chilled, icy. "The people we are dealing with have no concept of right and wrong. They only know selfishness. They'll push anyone aside for their gains."

I worried my bottom lip. I didn't want to tell Nicholas that I agreed with Julian. Nicholas was a beacon of light and good, always abiding by the rules. I couldn't imagine him lowering himself enough to even imagine himself a member of the underground.

Julian, however, loved his schemes. He always seemed to be playing some kind of game, and was

easily ten steps ahead of me at any point.

"You would know more about using people," Nicholas said.

"And you would know about selfishness, but that alone hardly helps us here," Julian replied.

Quickly, I sidestepped, coming directly between them and blocking their sight of one another.

"It's enough, I said. This argument gets us nothing. We need to keep our heads together," I said to To Julian, I added, "We need to place our differences aside. That's the only way we might stand

Binding them and stopping them

Julian, please."

Since he was the one who could strategize the best out of us three, I needed him to keep his head clear and focused. We were depending on that. I tried to convey all of that in those two little words.

He lowered his head, looking properly shamed for a moment. When he lifted it again, his eyes were clearer. He nodded at me, and I knew he finally meant business.

I stepped back so we could all see each other once more.

“Protecting Elva will always be my primary focus,” I said. “But after that, I’m desperate to find out my sister’s level of involvement in the organization. She could be voluntarily Involved. She could be there

against her will. If she needs saving, I want to save her.”

“We will save her,” Nicholas said, and I drew comfort from his reassurance.

“We’ll find out the truth,” Julian said, and that sounded like a promise too.
novelbin

I was grateful for them both.

The problem is, we aren’t even certain where to start,” Nicholas said.

“See? This is what I meant, Nicholas. You have no imagination,” Julian said.
Before I could scold him

again, he quickly moved on. “We have a lead. A miserable oaf who I wish we could avoid, but who has too

many entanglements to this whole thing to be innocent.”

I dreaded the name I knew I was about to hear.

Julian glanced at me and winced, as if in apology. Then he said it.

“Our dear Uncle Terry.”

Chapter 203

“Since our only lead right now is Terry, then I propose this idea,” Julian said.
“We need to snoop around his mansion.” “You want us to walk straight into

the lion's den." Nicholas crossed his arms over his chest. "Not walk," Julian said. "Creep. It's not snooping if they know you are there. So we move silently and undetected until we find whatever information we need." "It's a big mansion," I said. "He has an office," Julian said. "That's where we need to look." "I don't like the thought of Piper in there," Nicholas said. "We know Terry has some kind of attachment to you. You'll be in the most danger if we go." My heart raced for sure. I wasn't looking forward to crawling through Terry's lair, just like I'd rather avoid seeing him altogether for the rest of my life. But we needed this information, and I could help. And if worse came to worse, I would have the chance to prove myself. "Isn't that what your self-defense lessons are for?" I asked him, cocking my brow. novelbin

He glowered at me. "One lesson is not enough." "So teach me more then." "I'll have to." In his eyes, a flash of fire sparked. He remembered as well as I the near kiss we shared. when he'd held me during our first lesson. When I struggled in his arms, and we both felt the heat rising between us. I swallowed thickly, remembering it now. A bit of that fire rekindled inside me now, looking at him, and his wide shoulders, and his kissable lips. If I moved a bit closer "I'm sorry to cut in, but we're doing lessons now?" Julian asked. His smile had taken on a sharp edge. I forced myself to look away from Nicholas, so that I could recover myself. Then I cleared my throat. "Nicholas is teaching me some self-defense maneuvers," I said. "She wanted to learn," Nicholas added. Julian's brow lowered. "Let me guess. Here's how to break a hold, and the like." My cheeks burned a little. He no doubt saw.

"Well, if Nicholas wants to teach you how to protect your body, then someone else should teach you how to protect your mind," Julian said. "Fair's fair. Terry likes his mind games, so to help prepare for them, you should take mental self-defense lessons from me." I remembered Terry's mind games and the off-putting things he liked to say around me. I wouldn't mind having some preparation against that, and Julian seemed earnest, even if Nicholas was glaring at him. "Okay," I said. "That sounds like a good idea." Julian nodded. Nicholas continued glaring. "Maybe we should get back on topic," Nicholas said. "Right," I agreed. Julian shrugged. "I'll nudge the producers to push for a competition event at Terry's mention. At this point, he's inserted himself into everything anyway. We might as well give him the attention he so desperately craves. It would give us reason to be there in case we are caught." (1) "He'll hide all of his information if there's an event there," Nicholas said. "Even if we could get into his office, I wouldn't expect to find something there. It would be a needless risk. We'd be on his home turf. He could set traps for Piper and make her disappear." "You don't know that," I said. Nicholas held my gaze.

The gold in his eyes shimmered. "I'm not risking you." The words warmed me, but they were misguided. "It's not up to you." Nicholas's jaw tightened. Julian glanced between them. "Listen, this might not be the only way. It's just the most obvious one. We don't have to rush into things." "Piper needs time to prepare," Nicholas said. "She needs more lessons." "I get that," Julian said. "We can delay this as long as possible to give her that time. It might take me a while to convince the producers anyway." "I should have a say in this," I said. They both looked at me. Then they looked at each other again, as if I hadn't said anything.

Chapter 204

I rolled my eyes. I wasn't exactly offended. They both had good points, and I would feel more comfortable if I had more lessons. Still, I wanted to have my voice heard. "What were you going to say, Piper?" Nicholas asked, after a moment. I sighed. I wanted to rush things, to find out the truth about my sister. I wanted to save her, sooner rather than later. But what they had said made sense, and when I took a moment to logically think about it, going slow and cautious was the best course. "I'm ready for my lessons," I said. "So hurry up and teach me quickly." In the late afternoon, as Joyce's date with his candidates occurred in the gardens, I played dolls with Elva in our room. Two guards were stationed outside my door. Mark was inside with us, but he was distracted. He'd positioned himself near the window, and was continuously glancing out. After the sixth time I caught his attention wandering, I said, "Susie only thinks of Prince Joyce as a friend. Any kindness she happens to show him will be based in friendship, and not romantic love."

Mark stiffened. "It's not her affections I'm worried about." Odd. Did he think Prince Joyce would choose Susie as his bride, whether she complied or not? Although loveless marriages seemed to be the custom around here, Prince Joyce didn't seem the type to be overly concerned about such things. To be fair, however, I didn't really know him all that well. Mark had known him for far longer than me, and in his position, he probably also knew many of the brothers' secrets. Did he know something about Joyce that would make the prince a danger to Susie? I honestly couldn't fathom it. He seemed to care more for his books than people. If anything, Susie was only in danger of getting a paper cut. Mark glanced out the window again. I doubted anything more I could say would ease him, so I kept my thoughts on Joyce to myself.

novelbin

Elva lifted her doll impatiently. "I'm sorry, honey. Where were we?" We only played a few minutes more, when there was a commotion at the door.

Suddenly Charlotte burst through the door, one of the guards at her side. She looked paler than I'd ever seen her and all but fell into I rushed toward her at once. Mark left the window to join us. "What happened?" he asked, just as I asked, "Are you okay?" "I saw her. I can't believe it. She was right there, plain as day," Charlotte inhaled a shaky breath. Her eyes met mine. "She looked just like you." I glanced behind me to where Elva was playing with her toys. She was curious about the sudden situation, but didn't seem to be paying attention other than a few passing glances. Still, I lowered my voice. "You saw her? You're sure?" Charlotte, following my lead, also lowered her voice. "I went into the kitchens. I knew you were up here, so I was surprised when I saw you snooping through the pantry. You said you were getting snacks for Elva. I might of believed it if it weren't for the password." "She didn't know it," I said. Charlotte shook her head. "She had an entirely blank look on her face. She didn't know what I was talking about." "The password system is effective, then," Mark said. "Good." He already had his phone in hand. I could only imagine who he was texting. Prince Nicholas, for one. The head of the guard maybe. We had an intruder in our midst. One wearing my face. Who knew what she was doing? "Mark," I said. "She's still inside the palace." "I know," he said. His thumbs moved quickly over the face of his phone. He didn't offer any comfort. Maybe there wasn't anything to say. My sister was part of the underground organization. Whether by choice or not, she complied with their bidding. And now she was here, using my face for some nefarious purpose. I felt cold all over. I had to stop her.

Chapter 205

Nicholas

I stood before the King in his chambers. He was angrily pacing the length of the room. Back and forth,

back and forth. Occasionally he would stop to shout at me, but he'd always break himself off, unfinished,

and continue pacing.

"How could you think –?"

"You deliberately disobeyed –!"

"What do I even –?"

A few minutes in, his face was turning red, and my mother, the Luna was forced to intervene. She stood

in his path to keep him from pacing, then whispered into his ear.

I never totally understood their relationship. My mother was a private person. And though the two of

them often gave compliments to each other, any meaningful conversations only went on behind closed

doors.

Truthfully, even after knowing them both my entire life, I had no idea if they even liked each other at all,

or if their marriage was a show they put on for the world. novelbin

My father took a few deep breaths. He nodded at my mother, and then turned to face me.

“You and Julian chose Piper after I specifically told you not to,” he said. Rage crackled under the false

calm of his voice, occasionally leading to a twitch in his eyebrow or a downward curl of his lip. “That girl

does not belong here.”

“She is honest and genuine, with a sick child we are helping to take care of,” I said, my own anger

growing inside of me. “She deserves to be as much – if not more than anyone else.”

—

—

The King threw his hands up.

The Luna stepped forward. “She can be a fine person without being a good Luna, Nicholas.”

“She’s passed nearly every event with flying colors.”

They were being biased because she was common. I wanted to help them see without directly calling them out. To do so would be incredibly dangerous, even for me.

The King’s opinions could never be wrong.

The King huffed in the Queen’s direction. “He’s your son.”

My mother ignored him. “You know, Nicholas, what the weight of the crown can do to good people. It’s not just for the sake of the kingdom that I caution you, but for her sake, too. She cannot bear the weight required. Her goodness? Her kindness? Her spirit? All will be crushed, to say nothing of her little girl.”

As loathe as I was to admit it, in my heart, I knew she spoke true. Piper could be a good and just Luna,

but the burden of a cruel world would press down on her. It would wear at her soul, and I alone would not

be enough to protect her.

She had enough problems, with her sister and her wolf, and poor little Elva’s illness. She didn’t need the added weight of a near war and a disgruntled people.

“Tell me what you want me to do,” I said, burying the ache in my heart.

“Your favoritism of Piper ends today,” the King said. “You need to show more intimacy with Lilliana, to

help raise her popularity. I’ve already discussed this with her. —”

“You what?” I gasped.

The King lowered his brow, and I snapped my mouth closed. I hadn’t meant to speak out of turn, but

he’d surprised me.

And stoked my anger. He’d speak with Lilliana before his own son?

“We’ve arranged a secret rendezvous between you and Lilliana, during which you will be interrupted by a

camera crew. The public will see it all, and know she has your favor.”

“You can’t expect me to actually kiss her,” I said. The disgust in my stomach was brewing into a vile,

sour mixture.

“Nicholas,” my mother said. “You will soon marry this woman. Kissing her is the least of what you will be

expected to do.”

I knew my duty. It still made me sick.

I wanted to argue. I wanted to raise hell, and demand they let me choose Piper.

Chapter 206

But I was my father’s first born son. I had responsibilities to the throne and to the kingdom over myself.

The expectations on me made it impossible to lash out in the rebellious way Julian, as the second son,

was allowed to.

So I gritted my teeth, and I agreed.

When I arrived at the meeting place, on the patio just outside the dining room, Lilliana was already

there, waiting for me. She walked right up to me, no preamble or greeting, and kissed me full on the

mouth.

It was an awkward kiss. Her lips were too firm, not malleable at all. Her body was stiff against mine. Her hands sat on my shoulders with no grip. No pulling, or clawing. No passion at all.

This kiss was miles away from the spark I had shared with Piper, when I had pulled her to me in that hallway and we ravaged each other's mouths. Piper had clung to me like she wanted me inside of her. I

had totally lost control of myself to the flames, ready to burn with her in that moment.

Whatever she wanted. Whatever she needed. I would be the one to deliver it and have her screaming

my name. Not Julian's. Mine.

This kiss with Lilliana in comparison was entirely sterile.

I placed my hands on Lilliana's hips simply because it would be strange to have them dangling at my sides. Maybe this was what she was thinking of too: what we might look like for the cameras.

She didn't try to deepen the kiss. Nor did she try to pull away.

So I did the same. We stood there, two statues, pressed together at the lips. And we'd stay that way until the cameras happened upon us.

I counted the seconds until this nightmare would end. It felt like centuries. Eons.

Then finally, I heard the bustle of the camera crew.

"Look! There they are!" novelbin

Finally.

The crew rushed out onto the patio with us. Lilliana and I broke apart. Lilliana appeared appropriately embarrassed, covering her mouth with her hand and lowering her eyes demurely. But there was no blush in her cheeks. No tremor in her shoulders.

Lilliana was a world-class taker.

I was certain I looked unhappy, because that was how I felt. I wanted for the world to be anywhere but

where I was, with the producer jamming a microphone toward my face.

“A secret lover’s rendezvous!” the producer said with glee. “Does this mean Lilliana is your choice,

Prince Nicholas? Do the other girls even stand a chance?”

When I didn’t answer with more than a sigh, Lilliana stepped in front of me, placing herself at the

microphone.

“He’s so sweet, the things he says to me in private,” Lilliana said. “And the way he kisses...” She pretended to be embarrassed again, lowering her head. “He’s a very good kisser.”

I was going to be sick after this. There was no other way around it.

The producer tried to go around Lilliana to ask me more questions, but Lilliana was an effective blocker,

always inserting herself along his path.

Inside my jacket pocket, my phone began to vibrate. I removed it and saw a message from Mark that

began with 911. An emergency.

Heart tightening, immediately opened it. Had something happened to Piper or Elva?

The message read, Piper’s twin spotted on the grounds. Come to Piper’s room.

I moved at once. To hell with this publicity stunt. Piper could be in actual danger.

I sidestepped Lilliana and the entire camera crew and rushed back inside,

“Prince Nicholas!” Lilliana called after me. I ignored her, not caring how it would look for the watching

cameras. Let them think I was rejecting her. What did any of this ruse matter?

I had to get to Piper and Elva. I had to see with my own two eyes that they were okay.

Then and only then could I deal with the fallout.

Chapter 207

“After I realized who she was, I gave chase,” Charlotte said. By now the nanny had come and taken Elva

out of the room. Both guards went with her to a private nursery, though a third guard quickly arrive to take

their place at the door.

“She went down into the cellars. I followed closely, but then, suddenly, it was like she had totally

vanished.”

Mark’s already heavy frown deepened further. “She must have insider knowledge of all the secret

passages in the palace.”

I didn’t understand how my twin, Jane, could so easily sneak her way into the palace. “Is there a

passageway that could lead inside from outside?”

Mark seemed uncertain. “Even I’m not privilege to all the royal family’s secrets.”

“Then the royal family would know?” I asked.

“Potentially,” Mark said, “But this palace is very old. Some of the passageways could have been lost to

time, and later found. I’m trying at a loss.”

My hands were shaking so I clutched them together. “If she was here, and I’m sure she was,” I quickly

added to comfort Charlotte, who appeared distressed at my words. "But why didn't I feel my wolf? I had

felt it so keenly before, even from a great distance."

"I don't know, miss," Mark said. "Maybe she is concealing it with magic."

"Does such magic exist?"

Mark grimaced, but nodded. "It is of a similar vein which stole your wolf from you."

"Dark magic, then."

"I'm afraid so."

The use of dark magic and abilities were strictly regulated by the crown. They were prohibited except

under extremely specific circumstances. Such magic was incredibly powerful but only at the expense of a

person or persons.

The use of this magic, in part, was what made the underground organization so fiercely hated and

feared

That at least solved the mystery of why I couldn't feel my wolf, but other questions remained. Mainty novelbin

She knew of the secret passages, but another connection could be Terry. A prominent member of the

royal family could come and go as he liked without much provocation. Likely, no one would look twice at

the girl on his arm, even with prior warnings.

Especially if that girl looked exactly like one of the candidates.

The sooner we could sneak into his mansion and look around, the better.

“Piper!”

Suddenly Nicholas burst through the door. His wild eyes searched over the room before landing on me,

then he rushed toward me.

“Are you alright?”

“I’m fine. It’s Charlotte I’m worried about,” I said.

Charlotte gently shook her head. She already had regained her color. “Do not worry for me, Piper.”

I smiled at Nicholas, warmed by his worry... until I saw the lipstick staining the corner of his mouth. Had

he been kissing someone? My smile slipped right off my face.

“What is it? What’s wrong?” Nicholas asked, noticing the change in me.

Mark cleared his throat. When Nicholas looked over, he motioned toward his own mouth.

Nicholas’s eyes widened. He wiped at his lips with his sleeve, but all he succeeded in doing was

smearing the lipstick down his chin.

I glared at it openly, hating that shade of deep red with all of my being. My hate was irrational. Nicholas

wasn’t mine to be jealous over, but I couldn’t help myself.

Despite the danger of Jane being in the palace, despite everything, my mind veered in on the fact that Nicholas had been kissing someone else, and I couldn’t see beyond that.

“Piper...” he began.

“It’s fine.” I didn’t want to hear whatever he was about to say.

This was the nature of the competition. One man with lots of different women. Nicholas was spending time with other girls, and one day he would pick one of them to marry. We both knew that I wasn't in his future.

But knowing that in my head and seeing the evidence of it clearly on his lips were two very different

Chapter 208

Seeing it hurt me in ways I couldn't have imagined before.

#

He'd kissed me in the hallway. He'd almost kissed me in self-defense practice.

I hadn't considered he would be kissing other people too.

"Piper..." he said again, softer.

I couldn't even bear to look at him. I turned my shoulder to him and dropped my gaze to the floor."

Please go clean up. Then we can talk."

He was rarely uncertain, but he shifted awkwardly on his feet now. "Very well. I'll be right back." He

turned toward the door, and I did not look up again until he had walked through it.

Both Mark and Charlotte were looking at me. I felt judged.

Charlotte glanced away but Mark didn't. He didn't say anything, didn't even hold an expression, but I

could feel his disapproval radiating off of him in waves,

And in my heart, I understood it.

Whatever Nicholas had been doing, and whoever he had been doing it with, he had dropped all of it to

rush here and make sure I was okay. In order of his priorities, I ranked high above anyone else.

This was a competition, and Nicholas was only trying to make the best of a bad situation. I knew, maybe better than anyone, the amount of pressure he was under to find a Luna suitable for the kingdom.

I had been unkind to him.

“May I borrow your handkerchief?” I asked Mark.

He reached into his pocket and then produced a soft blue folded bit of fabric. I accepted it with thanks.

“If you’ll excuse me a moment,” I said, and rushed out the door.

Nicholas hadn’t gone far. He was only a few steps down the hallway, aggressively rubbing his lips with

his sleeve, “Damn it all,” he cursed.

“Here,” I said as I approached behind him. “Let me.”

He jumped at the sound of my voice, and quickly turned. His eyes met mine, but he didn’t say anything

lowly, gently, I reached up with the handkerchief and wiped away the remaining smudges of lipstick

lips and chin

He stood very still as I worked. novelbin

When I finished, I slowly lowered my hand. “I’m sorry,” I said. “It’s not my place to keep you from the other girls. But when I thought of you with them.... I’m sorry.”

“You are jealous,” Nicholas said. His voice was monotone. His face, impassive. He gave nothing away.

I half-wanted to deny it out of sheer embarrassment, but I couldn’t.

I know it's unfair to want to keep you for myself, when we both know we can't be together. But

when I think of you with one of them... Kissing them..."

Just like that, the deep boil of jealousy reignited in my stomach.

I wished I could claim Nicholas in body and soul. To keep him as my own, and to become his in turn. I

wanted us to carry each other's scents so thickly that no one would dare make a move on him without

knowing I was there first and forever.

"This..." He gestured to his lips. "Whatever happened before I came to see you today. It didn't actually

mean anything to me."

I wanted to believe that, those sweet words meant to comfort me. But it was a struggle, especially when I was caught in the tumult of my ugly jealous.

"Prove it," I said.

He just looked at me for a long moment. Then his gaze dipped to my mouth.

At once, he grabbed my hand and tugged me toward a closed door along the hallway. He pulled the door open. It was a closet. He yanked me inside with him, then slammed the door closed behind us.

In an instant, my back was against the inside of that door.

Nicholas's mouth was on mine.

And he was kissing me senseless.

Chapter 209

Nicholas's mouth was hot on mine. His body pinned me to the door.

I attacked his lips with my own, eager to burn away any trace of that mystery woman who had been there before me today. Lilliana? Olivia? It didn't matter who. My mind was flooded with angry, scalding

jealousy.

Maybe Nicholas couldn't be mine forever, but here, for the duration of this moment, I was staking my

claim.

I wrapped my arms around his neck and pushed my fingers through his hair.

He coaxed my lips open. It was no great feat.

When his tongue slipped into my mouth, I was ready and waiting for it.

As our tongues tangled, his hands wandered. He'd started at my hips, but in an impatient instant, his fingers slipped under the waist hem of my shirt and teased at the bare skin of my stomach.

I broke the kiss to moan. He gave me exactly one half-second before he plunged back in and stole my

breath away all over again.

Slowly, he slid his hands up my sides. I shivered, even as I burned. His touch was hot like a brand. I was laying my claim on him, but he was just as easily doing the same to me. novelbin

When his fingertips touched the edge of my bra, he deftly worked his way beneath it. His palm laid flat against the side of my ribs. Then, inch by small inch, he moved his hand closer to my front.

His thumb brushed against the bare side of my breast, and I gasped.

"Nick," I said, a moan and a plea both.

He growled. His hand moved another inch, and he cupped more of my breast under my bra.

Nick," I said again, this time as a sigh.

His lips stayed against mine, even when all we did was breathe on each other. I needed that closeness.

wasn't ready to give up my claim yet.

You were jealous," he said, voice low and rough. "You want me all to yourself,"

It was so easy to admit like this, safe in the circle of his arms, with his lips brushing mine

He licked his way back into my mouth, swallowing my moan. At the same moment, his hand shifted, and he fully grabbed my breast. My aching, peaked nipple brushed against his palm.

He fondled me and it felt so good. I couldn't remember the last time I had been touched like this – and wanted it. I was desperate for him. For more. For all he would give me.

I was ready to lose myself.

His hand turned and he caught my nipple between two of his fingers. The friction was delicious, sending shockwaves up and down my spine. With his other hand, he reached behind my back and unlatched my bra. With my breasts now free of that confinement, he more easily cupped me with both hands.

I dropped my head back against the door. Breathing heavy, I knew only the insistent touch of his hands,

and the feel of his hot wet breath as he moved his mouth to the side of my neck and sucked in a mark.

My voice could only say his name. Over and over, like a prayer.

"Nicholas. Nick. Oh, God, Nick."

His hands were masterful, and sent me back to when we had been a couple years ago. He'd always

been attuned to my body. Though we'd never had penetrative sex, he seemed to know the ways to touch

and caress my body to have me lose my mind.

He was a master musician, and I was his instrument then as now.

God, everything he was doing was so perfect. If only I could have had him all the time. Although, we'd likely never leave the bedroom.

I pulled at his hair, lost in my own pleasure. In another life, I'd strip him bare, push him down onto the floor, and climb on top of him. Though, knowing him and the possessive way he left mark after mark along the column of my neck, I doubted he wouldn't be just as eager.

Chapter 210

In that same life, he'd likely rip my clothes away and fuck me against this door.

I'd never had penetrative sex. We'd experimented some, years ago. But now, I wanted his dick inside me

so much, I was dizzy for it.

I clawed at his shoulders and his back. I moaned and whimpered as he rolled my hardened nipples between his fingers and then pinched them ever so slightly, just enough to send a jolt across my skin.

I arched off the door, pressing myself more fully into him.

His hips collided with mine, pushing me straight back against the door and pinning me there. His hard

cock strained against his pants. He ground it against the crux of my thighs.

He was like an animal, bucking wild, desperate. He was as lost as I was.

"Piper," he growled against the juncture of my neck and shoulder. Then he put his teeth there. He didn't

press down. He made no claiming bite. But the thought of him being so near to it lowered me to begging.

"Please, please. Oh, please." novelbin

We couldn't be together. When this moment ended, we'd have to go our separate ways like this had never happened. Nicholas would kiss other girls. He'd marry one. Have his own children. And I'd go my

way too.

But in my heart, I knew I'd always be here in this moment in some form. Nicholas was my first love, and though feelings were messy now, I was still bound to him deep within. It was a bond I didn't want to break, even if it was destined to be one sided.

I'd face any heartbreak, if it meant I could claim Nicholas for however long. Even if that however long only lasted the next few precious minutes.

I clutched him tighter, I squeezed my eyes closed.

No, thoughts. Please stay away.

I wasn't ready to wake up from this dream yet.

must have felt the chill of awareness return to him too. His hands had slowed their

His hips still moved against mine, but it was gentler now, rubbing more than hard bucking

lek was returning to normal.

Then his hips and hands totally stopped moving. He lifted his face away from my skin.

I could have cried. I could have thrashed and pleaded and begged.

But I didn't.

Because I understood.

We weren't in the past. We weren't in some other lifetime.

He was a prince, and I was a commoner. These moments we shared were stolen, not fully ours.

He lowered his hands away from my breasts.

“Piper,” he said again, like he was building up to something.

I knew it was going to be an apology.

“Don’t,” I said. It would break my heart to hear it.

He closed his mouth. A muscle in his jaw ticked.

My heart still broke. He didn’t have to have said it. Knowing he thought it had been enough.

“Don’t be sorry for this,” I whispered. “Don’t regret this.”

He took a breath. I held mine, anticipating his reply.

Suddenly, the door behind me opened, and the world tilted off–balance.

Nicholas fell with me. His hands moved quickly, cushioning the back of my head as we hit the floor. He was on top of me, his body pressing down on me.

My bra was still undone and my breasts against his chest. I blushed.

I blushed harder when another face came into view.

“Well, well, look what I found,” Julian said, smirking.

I immediately wished the earth would open and swallow me whole.