

## The Luna Choosing Game #Chapter 221 - Read The Luna Choosing Game Chapter 221

Chapter 221

Chapter 0221

I tried to get into the moment, imagining Terry saying something like that to me. The softness in Julian's

eyes kept me from falling too far into the fantasy.

I cleared my throat. "Don't you find the trends of modern fashion tiresome? Not to mention wasteful. Why should I throw away a perfectly good dress simply because I have worn it once before."

"A woman's dress adds to her beauty. You wouldn't put a rose inside a paper vase."

"I wouldn't pluck the rose at all."

Julian's mouth twitched upright. "Not even to show off its beauty. You'd keep it hidden away on some

bush in the corner of the garden?"

"Anyone who knows where the rose bush is, would know they could easily go see the beauty for

themselves. There's no need to dress it up."

Julian hummed.

I looked at him, surprised. "What? No good?"

"No, you did fine. The problem is we need to teach you to stop engaging with him at all."

"How?"

He leaned back. "Oh, something like, 'If you'll excuse me, Sir, I must use the bathroom.'"

“I couldn’t say that!” I started to laugh.

“You could!” He smiled wide. “He’d leave you alone for a minute, at least. Long enough for you to get

away and come to me or Nicholas. Or even Susie or Mark, or whoever.” His smile slipped for a moment.

You can never be alone with him, Piper.”

I agreed. I wanted to tease him more, to get him to smile again. “Careful, Julian, or I’ll think you might

actually like me.”

Julian didn’t smile again. Instead, he stared at me deeply, as if he was looking down into my soul.

Unbidden, I thought of his mysterious past love, Bridget. I wondered if he was still in love with her. I

didn’t know how to ask, or if I should. I wasn’t sure why it mattered to me. 2

Slowly, Julian reached up his hand and cupped my cheek. It was a gentle touch, reverent almost, as he

continued to stare at me,

My face burned with embarrassment and confusion, but I didn’t pull away.

Julian was being surprisingly tender. He could be teasing me, or we could be playing still. But I didn’t

know.

I felt like Julian was letting me see behind the curtain of him, for just a moment. He looked almost... sad.

Lost.

I didn’t know what to do or say to show him the path again.

His gaze dropped down to my lips. My breath caught.

He started to lean in, as if to kiss me.

I startled then, flinching back. He couldn't mean this. He was either teasing me or he wanted something

quick, I wasn't that kind of girl.

Julian stopped himself at once. The vulnerability in his eyes sealed away behind a door of indifference.

"If you'll excuse me," he said, standing. He left the room without one more word, leaving me sitting there.

confused about what just happened and why, What had it meant?

As I returned to my room, I was stopped in a hall by a servant.

"Tonight will be a banquet night, Miss," he said. "The royal family will be in attendance for dinner."

"Thank you."

The servant bowed then hurried away.

My nerves began to prickle under my skin. I wasn't ready to face Julian again so soon. What was I event

to say? How should I act? How would he act? novelbin

We would undoubtedly be awkward around each other. At least, I would be.

And what might Nicholas think, if he were to see us behave that way?

Would he know something happened? Had something happened?

I was so confused. If I wanted answers, I would have to be bold and ask Julian the question.

But I wasn't sure I wanted the answers.

I wasn't sure what I wanted at all.

Chapter 222

Chapter 0222

At the banquet that night, I sat beside Julian same as always, but other than the most basic of greetings,

we had not spoken to each other.

“Hello, Piper.”

“Hello, Prince Julian.”

Fortunately, Veronica and Tiffany seemed fine with talking with Julian in my stead, and Julian himself

made no attempts to talk to me either.

my attention

Instead of speaking with him and risking an undoubtedly awkward conversation, I let my

wander down the table some, where Nicholas was speaking with Lilliana and Olivia.

With only 8 candidates left, the servants had shortened the table, removing many of the empty chairs.

This brought us all closer together and made the space feel much more intimate.

Nicholas was giving both of the girls his undivided attention, looking at them as they spoke and

responding when they asked him a question.

I had never minded where I sat before, but with the tension between Julian and me, I wondered why

Nicholas had never asked me to sit beside him. I supposed it had something to do with the optics. After

all, Lilliana was supposed to be Nicholas's favorite, as I was supposed to be Julian's.

I still felt a twinge of jealousy, however, watching him.

"Piper," Tiffany said, reclaiming my attention. "Don't you feel any same? You have spent all night staring

at Nicholas while you are sitting right beside Julian. It's super rude."

"Very rude," Veronica said.

"We all know both princes selected you, but come on. Julian's right here." Tiffany waved at him.

Julian waved back at her, and she blushed.

"While I greatly appreciate your desire to defend me, ladies, Piper is allowed to do whatever she wishes,"

Julian said, smiling. "It is her free spirit that draws me to her."

"Still... Tiffany mumbled unhappily.

"It's no great care to me whether she chooses to scope out the competition," he added.

"No," I said, with a small shake of my head. "I've been rude." Looking at Julian, I gave him a small,

apologetic smile. "I'm sorry, Prince Julian."

Julian blinked at me. He almost seemed... surprised. But the wide-eyed look was gone in a minute.

"I wasn't offended," Julian said. "I'm sure you had your reasons for wanting to look away from me.

Though I'm hoping that, whatever those reasons were, they can be forgotten."

Ah. This wasn't an apology from him exactly, not that he needed to give one. This was more an olive

branch. An offer to forget what happened and move forward like nothing had.

Relief flooded through me at once. I was eager to move forward. “Consider them forgotten.”

His smile softened. “Thank you.”

I should have been the one thanking him, but I didn’t want to correct him in front of the girls, or the Queen, who wasn’t all that far away anymore.

Julian foo

Confusion still lingered with me, when I thought on Julian too long. He was an enigma, who kept his true

feelings deeply hidden. Maybe I would never know what his true intentions were in that sitting room. Had

he meant to kiss me? Or had he just been teasing me?

I supposed it didn’t matter.

The King cleared his throat, and we all turned in our seats to face him at the head of the table.

“A quick announcement. The details of the event have already been given to you, but now we know the

date. The fundraising event will happen in three days’ time, so as to give you girls the chance to prepare

your gowns. Have you more to say, dear?”

At the other end of the table, closer to me, the Luna spoke up. “Fashion plays a major part in helping to

win over benefactors, so prepare well. You must consider modern trends or you will not be taken

seriously. That is all.”

“Beautifully said, my Queen,” the King said.

I kept a dull smile on my face, but inside I began to stress. I knew nothing of modern fashion trends. If it

were up to me, we'd all be wearing jeans and t-shirts. But I highly doubted that would win me any favor

with the benefactors.

For the sake of the children at the orphanage, I had to do well. Hopefully Charlotte knew something of

fashion. She'd always guided me before. Or I could ask Susie. Or both.novelbin

Chapter 223

Chapter 0223

"I can see you worrying." Julian whispered to me. "You shouldn't. You'd be stunning in anything."

A light blush filled my cheeks. I glanced away, embarrassed.

Farther down the table, Nicholas watched us, his mouth pressed into a hard line.

After the banquet, Julian led me to Nicholas's rooms, where Nicholas was waiting to speak with us.

When we came through the door, I was holding Julian's arm. Nicholas's gaze focused in on that at once.

He didn't say anything, but his distain radiated off of him in waves, increasing the tension in the room.

"Did you miss us enough to make you so grumpy, brother?" Julian asked. He kept my hand prisoner for a

moment longer than needed, before releasing me.

I immediately pulled away.

The situation with Julian had certainly made everything more confusing. Even though we had agreed to forget it, I still remembered the fondness in his eyes and his touch. I felt a bit unsteady near him now, like

I wasn't sure what to expect.

I tried not to be obvious about it, but I was never great at hiding things, especially from Nicholas, who

watched me closely.

Swallowing hard, I looked away from both of them, finding the wall very interesting all of the sudden.

"You wanted to talk about the tunnel, Nicholas? Are there updates?" Julian asked.

"I've had my personal guards watch the tunnel around the clock, and so far no one has used it since

we've started our vigil," Nicholas said.

I swallowed. Still afraid to look at them, I spoke to the wall, "Is that a good thing or a bad thing?"

"Both," Nicholas said.

"Of course, we'd rather not have any shady characters sneak into the palace," Julian explained. "But if they don't, then we can't follow them to see what they are up to. In fact, we aren't even totally sure at this point if that tunnel is the main point of entrance."

"Terry mentioned it the other night," I said.

"Yeah, but who knows if he was telling the truth?" Julian said. "That guy likely has plans on top of plans. All he does is sit around and mastermind schemes."

"Like someone else we know," Nicholas said. novelbin

"Hey," Julian said, mock offended. "I don't just sit around when I scheme."



The banter put me at ease some, so I dared to turn around and face the brothers. Julian was smirking at Nicholas, while Nicholas was scowling back at him. A sight so familiar it almost made me smile.

“So what do we do now?” I asked.

“We wait,” Nicholas said. “We can’t make a move until they do.”

Sighing, Julian crossed his arms. “Waiting is troublesome.”

“Scheme something else then,” Nicholas said.

“Don’t think I won’t,” Julian replied.

I shook my head. “If that’s all we can do, then we have to wait.”

“Fair enough. For now.” Julian came toward me. “Shall I escort you back to your room, Piper?”

Normally, I wouldn’t hesitate to accept Julian’s offered hand, but this time, I wasn’t so sure. Were his intentions innocent, or would he think to kiss me? Which of those two options did I want to happen?

The innocent one, surely. Right? 1

“Actually, I think you have isolated enough of Piper’s time this evening.” Nicholas came closer too. Hel glared at Julian. “If anyone should walk her back to her room, it’s me. You probably have some scheming

to do, after all.”

Julian glanced between the two of us. His smile never wavered. I had no idea what he was thinking.

Eventually, he shrugged. “It’s all the same to me.” Then he excused himself and disappeared out the

door.

Nicholas offered me his hand. “Shall we, Piper?”

He stared at me with a stern expression.

I had the distinct feeling I was in for some type of interrogation.

Still, I was never afraid of Nicholas, so I placed my hand in his. "Very well."

Chapter 224

Chapter 0224

We made it five steps out into the hallway before Nicholas started asking questions.

"Did something happen?" he asked.

I didn't want to lie to him, so I shrugged. "Nothing big."

"Nothing big is still something.

With my hand on his arm, Nicholas dictated how fast and slow we walked. He slowed now, making it

clear he would stretch this out if he needed to. He was worried about me, I could see from the look in his

eye. He wasn't going to let me off the hook easily.

Softer, he asked, "Did Julian do something?"

"No," I said. Julian had stopped himself before he could. That was assuming that leaning in for a kiss

had been what he was actually doing, and not just teasing me. "I don't know. It was confusing."

"Tell me."

I wanted to. I needed to talk to someone about what happened, and who knew Julian better than.

Nicholas? But I was unsure. With their rivalry, and Nicholas's jealousy, if he knew that Julian had tried to

kiss me, how would he react?

I'd likely receive no answer that would actually help me.

I decided to keep it vague. "Julian's been acting strange lately. He's... softer around me, sometimes.

Kinder. I'm starting to wonder if he actually feels some kind of fondness for me."

"Julian isn't capable of fondness." Nicholas's voice lowered, Bitterness clipped his words. "He cannot be

trusted with any woman's heart. Especially yours."

"I didn't say he had my heart." Recognizing Nicholas's jealousy, I gently corrected him. While I often

didn't mind Nicholas's envious side, especially when it came to kissing, I didn't want him to think I was so

easily misplacing my heart.

"He doesn't yet." Nicholas sighed. "But please be careful. He'll try to steal it."

I glanced at Nicholas out of the corner of my eye and thought of the mysterious Bridget who had once

come between the two brothers. Did Nicholas truly steal her away from Julian?

I tried to imagine it, a time from before even Nicholas and I were together. Could Nicholas have been so

different that he wouldn't have given any consideration to his brother's feelings? Julian had made it seem

Trying as hard as I could, I still couldn't imagine Nicholas that way. Perhaps there had been a misunderstanding. Julian might have misread the entire thing. It just didn't seem possible.

As we continued to walk, Nicholas's arm moved from my arm to around my waist. He kept it there, gradually tugging me closer and closer to his side all the way to the stairwell leading up to the guest

rooms where the candidates were staying.

The hallways were barren by now, the candidates in their rooms and the servants done for the day.

Nicholas stopped me halfway up the stairwell, before we reached the top and could see the guards at

my door or they could see us.

He wrapped both arms around my waist and turned me toward him. I easily slotted against his chest.

—

There, this was the jealousy I recognized the sexy kind.

I licked my lips, anticipating a kiss. He leaned down far enough for me to feel his breath on my cheek,

but he did not yet close the distance..

“Nick...” I whispered. My thoughts were already drifting until only this moment lingered in the forefront of

mind. He was so close. His body was hard against me.

my

“I should kiss you until you forget all about him,” Nicholas whispered, his voice a low growl. “Only my

name should fall from your lips.

“Nicholas...”

“That’s right.” He dropped his mouth closer, Our lips brushed together but never quite met. novelbin

He leaned back with a satisfied hum. I chased his mouth but he gripped me tight, keeping me from

seeking too far forward.

I whined unhappily.

He smiled. "Sometimes the anticipation of a kiss can mean more than a kiss itself. Is this what he did, Piper? Tease you into thinking of him?"

Chapter 225

Chapter 0225 novelbin

I couldn't remember now. I could only think of Nicholas and his hot mouth and the feel of his fingers

running up and down my spine. He stilled one hand near the back of my neck and cupped the top of my

spine in a traditionally possessive gesture.

A thrill shot through my body. I wanted his mouth where his hand was, sucking in marks.

He leaned in again, his mouth at my ear, and said, "Think of me now."

Was there any doubt that I would so much as consider anyone else?

Nicholas was the one my body yearned for. Ours was an impossible, forbidden romance, but when I thought of surrendering myself to a mate, Nicholas was the only person I could picture beside me. Over

me. Inside of me. He pressed a feather-light kiss to my earlobe and then pulled back. He kept his hands at my waist, as if

he was worried I might not have the strength to stand without his help. He was probably right.

I mourned his distance, even while I opened frowned at him. He'd left me feeling incredibly frustrated,

and it wasn't like I could just go out and release this frustration by kissing other guys.

He was the only one I wanted.

"You're thinking about me now, aren't you?" he said, smile adding edge.

I wanted to playfully whack him and pull him close to kiss him both at once. Either way, I could admit that

yes, I was thinking about him now. The jerk.

He looked downright smug as he walked me the rest of the way to my door. There, he squeezed my

hand.

“Goodnight, Piper. Sweet dreams.”

I glared at him. He just knew those dreams were going to be all about him.

Inside my room, Charlotte had a few swatches of fabric lined out. When I came in, after a quick hug with

Elva, we approached Charlotte to see what she had come up with.

“I’m relieved you’ve already thought of something.” I said. “When the Luna said fashion is so important, I

was sweating.”

Charlotte nodded critically. “After the incident with the gloves, I vowed to never fail you again.”

I lowered my chin. “Thank you.” I was blessed to have earned such loyalty from Charlotte. The other

“I was thinking this fabric.” Charlotte lifted a shimmering purple that seemed to sparkle under the lights.”

If we drape some lace over this.”

“Yes!” Elva said, giggling. She reached for the swatch. Charlotte passed it over, and Elva immediately

began to play. She ran around the table, lifting the fabric high behind her. It shimmered silver and purple

and even pink.

“The princess has made her choice,” I said to Charlotte.

Charlotte smiled. “I’m glad. That one was my favorite too.”

“Then it’s decided,” I said.

I caught Elva as she circled for her next pass, and lifted her up into my arms. She laughed as she draped

the fabric across my shoulders.

“You look pretty, Mommy.”

“Not as pretty as you.” I kissed her cheek.

By then, it was getting late, so we changed into our pajamas and went to bed.

I dreamed of shimmering fabrics and near kisses with Nicholas.

The next morning, Elva sneaked out of bed early in the morning. I pretended not to notice, hoping for just

a minute more in bed before she called for me.

Today, I was only gifted ten seconds.

“Mommy?”

I rubbed my eyes. “Yes, dear?”

“Where’d the pretty fabric go?”

“It’s there, by the sewing machine.”

Elva shuffled a moment. “Where?”

With a yawn, I pulled myself from the bed and went to join her. “It’s right... huh...”

and with it to the night?

Odd, the fabric wasn’t where we had left it last night. Had Elva gotten up and played with it in the night?

No, she was a sound sleeper, and I'm sure I would have noticed.

But what could that mean?

Chapter 226

Chapter 0226

A guard was seated in a chair just inside my bedroom door. He looked nervous, his eyes darting all around. Behind him, Mark was standing tall, arms crossed. His features were stern. In front of him,

Nicholas was pacing like a caged animal.

"Let's go over this again," Nicholas said. "In the middle of the night, you allowed someone who looked

like Piper to enter her rooms."

The guard bounced his leg nervously. "That's right, Sir. I've been told that she sometimes keeps strange hours, and that I shouldn't ask too many questions."

That was true. I had sneaked out a lot to meet with Nicholas and Julian, for our investigation. Or once, to kiss Nicholas in the hallway. Although that hadn't been my intention when I'd left the room.

Nicholas continued on, undeterred. "And when you saw this person last night, you allowed them into this room without asking the identifying question. Is that right?"

The guard swallowed hard. "That's correct, Sir." Above all else, this was the guard's biggest failure. At

the very least, he owned up to it.

"He's new to the rotation, Sir," Mark said.

"I know he didn't mean harm, but the cost could have been..." Nicholas glanced over at me, where I

attempted to distract Elva with her toys.



I knew what he was thinking. Jane could have killed me and Elva, or kidnapped one or both of us. We'd

been totally exposed, vulnerable, lying here asleep all night. Neither of us had been roused by my sister's

silent footsteps.

Fortunately, after careful review of the room, the only thing that seemed to have been disturbed was the missing fabric.

"I deeply apologize, sir," the guard said. "Whatever punishment you deem necessary, I will accept

without question."

"Punishment is not the issue. The issue is what could have been lost if..." Nicholas sighed. "No. Head

back to the barracks while I decide what to do with you."

The guard jumped to his feet and nearly tripped in his eagerness to follow his prince's command. When

he was out the door, Mark slowly closed it again.

Nicholas leaves where he was to come to my side. He sits down beside us.

"Here, Nick-lass." Elva hands him the doll she's holding. "I have another in the closet!" She springs to her

feet and heads off to find it.

Nicholas looks at the doll, then lowers it. Instead, he holds one arm open for me, and I easily move

closer, slotting in at his side. He drops his forehead to my shoulder and for a moment, we just hold each

other.

I exhaled a shaky breath as some of the tension I hadn't realized I'd held escaped my body. In Nicholas's

arms I felt safe in a way that I hadn't all morning.

But I was angry too. My sister and my wolf had been so close, and I just slept straight through it.

"I let her get away," I whispered.

"This isn't on you, Piper. She never should have been allowed to get this close."

"But she did. And I didn't even wake up."

"Piper..." He said it in warning, a warning based in concern. He must have known what I was going to say

even before I did.

"We have to find Jane, even if that means using the tunnels again."

"She didn't come through the tunnels. I asked for confirmation from my men."

"It doesn't matter. That's our only lead. We know she's connected to Terry."

"We should wait," Nicholas said. When I opened my mouth to argue, he quickly continued. "I'm not

saying never, but we should think about this first."

"We have to act. Who knows what she's planning? She was in here with Elva." My voice breaks. "What if she is planning something with her? Nicholas..."

"Okay." He squeezed my shoulder. "We'll go. But not until tonight."

Chapter 227

Chapter 0227

I nodded, just as Elva returned with her third doll.

Nicholas stayed to play until late in the morning, when his duties finally pulled him away. He hugged Elva

extra tightly before he left. He squeezed me too, though I pretended not to notice.

After lunch, Tiffany stopped me just outside in the hallway. She pulled me to the side so that we could

speaking privately for a minute.

“What did you want to talk about?” I asked when we were far enough away from the door that the other

girls couldn’t overhear.

“Listen, Piper, Veronica and I have been noticing some strange behavior from you lately. It’s kind of

freaking everyone out.”

She seemed earnestly concerned, her brow bunched up.

Lilliana had accused me of things too, but this didn’t feel like that. Lilliana was a master manipulator. I’d

only known Tiffany to speak her mind.

“Tiffany, I really don’t know what you are talking about,” I said. I placed my hand on my heart, hoping she could see the sincerity I was trying to convey.

She must of, because her brow scrunched further. “Veronica and some of the other girls too have noticed you walking around alone in odd places of the palace at strange hours. Jessica said she saw your

going in and out of rooms!”

Now, I could be accused of wandering around in the night, though usually I had Nicholas or Julian on my arm. It could even be said that I had been in odd places, since I’d been down into the cellar. But never, ever, had I gone into anyone’s room but my own.

The person Jessica and the other girls had seen must have been my sister Jane. But I couldn’t just tell that to Tiffany without exposing that I had a twin.

“I swear that w

that whoever that is, it isn't me," I said. "Maybe there's someone who looks like me and has been doing all that. But it's not me."

Tiffany frowned at me some. I could tell that she didn't fully believe me. I couldn't exactly blame her since I wasn't telling the full truth of what I knew.

"But if this isn't you, and just someone who looks like you, why haven't we seen her around during the day? Like, surely if you had a twin somewhere around, someone would have noticed her."

I didn't flinch, but only because I was holding every muscle in my body extremely tightly.

"Listen, if that's you, if that isn't you, you better figure it out." Tiffany pointed at me. "Because Lilliana has talked to the guards and they're all starting to keep an eye out for you. You're going to want to clear this.

up before it's too late."

I had every intention of clearing it up, though not necessarily in the way she thought.

No, instead, I was going to track down my sister and find out just what she was up to, and why, and

make her stop before she hurt someone or herself.

That Jane had been able to get so close to Elva still gave me shudders. She could have done anything

while I was fast asleep.

No number of assurances from Nicholas would help me feel safe again. I wasn't sure I would be able to

sleep even if Nicholas himself camped outside my door to protect me.

No. I'd only rest peacefully once more when Jane was caught, and the underground organization

dismantled.

At the very least, when they no longer had Elva in their sights.

“Thank you, Tiffany,” I said. “I’ll get to the bottom of this.”

Tiffany nodded and left me. As I watched her go, I couldn’t wait for nightfall.

Jane had come to see me.

Soon it would be my turn to return the favor.

Chapter 228

Chapter 0228

That night, Julian came to escort me down to the cellars so that we could explore the tunnel again. He

waited to speak until we were clear of the other candidate’s rooms, but once we had descended the

staircase, he cast me a sideways look.

“I heard about what happened,” he said.

My hand tightened on his arm, bunching up the sleeve of his black shirt.

“She was in my room, Julian. She could have been right next to me. Or Elva. If Elva hadn’t wanted to see

that fabric in the morning, we might have never known Jane was there at all. What could she even want to

do with that fabric? It was just a small piece?”

“Some kind of mind game, most likely. Or an attempt to sabotage you.”

I supposed either of those were possible, but I just didn’t know. I hated not knowing.

“But if she’s trying to sabotage me, why would she need to go into the other girls’ rooms?” I asked.

Julian abruptly stopped walking. I did too, since our arms were looped together.

He looked at me, a touch of something like worry in his eyes. “What did you just say?”

I startled a moment, surprised by the shift in him. Then I explained, “Tiffany told me. Some of the other

girls have seen Jane wandering around the castle. She’s even gone into some of the girls’ rooms. They all

think it’s me.”

“Then she is sabotaging you,” Julian said. “Pretending to be you, sneaking around and acting suspicious. She’s trying to pit all the other candidates against you.”

“That can’t be the reason,” I said. Or at least, not the only reason. “If I get removed from the competition,

then she won’t be able to sneak around anymore.”

Julian’s brow lowered, and he frowned. The expression was unusual on Julian’s face. He typically concealed his anger behind a mask of fake cheer or a knife-edged smirk. Like this, he looked outright

murderous.

“They want that,” he said, voice low and dangerous. “When you and Elva are outside the protection of

the palace and the cameras, you’ll be much easier targets.”

My stomach twisted into an uncomfortable knot. I didn’t want to believe that could be the plan, but it

made sense. Without the safety of the palace, I would be more vulnerable. And if Elva’s sickness returned novelbin

Who knew what I would do to save my daughter.

Julian looked at me, and the intense focus in his eyes gave me pause. He looked so much like Nicholas

in this moment.

“Come on.” He tugged me forward. “We should tell my brother right away.”

Julian led me the rest of the way into the cellar, where Nicholas and a guard were already waiting. Nicholas was glaring at the ground when we walked in. He looked no less miserable when he saw us

arrive.

“Tell him,” Julian said. He guided me into the room and then released my arm.

“Tell me what?” Nicholas glanced between us both before settling his gaze on me. He still seemed

unhappy, but his hard glare softened, looking at me.

I told him what I had told Julian, about Jane pretending to be me

Nicholas elicited a colorful string of curses, some words of which I’d only heard before in kitchen

backrooms during the dinner rush.

He turned to Julian. “They are trying to isolate her so she is an easier target.

Julian nodded.

The knot in my stomach twisted up further. But my determination also amplified.

“Then we have to stop them tonight,” I said.

“Piper –

“No, Nicholas,” I said, cutting him off. “I won’t change

mind. If we wait so much as even another

night, who knows what they might do with that time? We have to act now, before it’s too late.”

Julian stepped closer to me and touched my arm. “We’re only going to snoop tonight. We’ll look for the

Information we need to stop them, but nothing else.”

I wanted to burn that whole house to the ground, but I understood the restraint. The underground

organization was bigger than Terry and Jane. Too much action might bring the wrath of the entire

organization in retaliation.

Chapter 229

Chapter 0229

Really, right now, the urgency was only for my sister. She was the one causing me the most danger. She was also the one I wanted to know the most about.

Was she there by her own free will? Or because she was coerced? Tonight, I wouldn't rest until I learned

the truth, and then either saved her or stopped her.

“Promise me,” Julian said. “Only snooping.”

I sighed. “I promise.”

“Good.”

As Julian stepped back, Nicholas came forward.

“Show me how to break a hold once more,” Nicholas said.

“Okay.” I was nervous too. A little bit extra practice wouldn't hurt.

Nicholas locked me in a hold. novelbin

Julian rolled his eyes. “You just want another reason to put your arms around her.”

I blushed a little, but Nicholas didn't let me go. “Show me, Piper,” he whispered into my ear.



So I did.

Ten minutes later, we were sneaking through the tunnel, following the long trek to Terry's mansion.

Julian had brought his flashlight again, but this time he kept it low to the ground, illuminating only the

ground we were walking on and nothing else.

About halfway through the tunnel, I felt something tug at the emptiness inside of me. The thing that used

to be there – my wolf was calling to me. It was dim, buried beneath some kind of fading magic, but it

was there.

"My wolf," I gasped, to give the princes warning, before I started to sidestep Julian to be in the lead.

Julian made a grab for me, but I slipped under his reach before he could connect.

I moved quickly, recklessly. I didn't care about anything but my wolf.

A pair of arms wrapped around my waist. Nicholas's breath was warm on my ear.

"Slow down, Piper. You aren't thinking clearly."

He wasn't holding me tightly enough to hurt me. He wasn't even properly restraining me, since my arms and legs were free. He had taught me many tricks to get out of just this situation with a stranger,

But Nicholas was no stranger, and he didn't mean me any harm.

I tried to control my fast breathing. My heart was beating like a sledgehammer against my ribs.

"Just breathe a moment," he said. He exaggerated his own breath. I felt the steady rise and fall of his

chest against my back. "Come back to yourself."

I tried to focus on his words, his commands, but my wolf was right there. It was calling for me.

My thoughts were scattered.

"I'm okay," I said, but my voice wavered.

"You sure?" he asked.

"She's lying," Julian said.

"I won't run off," I said as a concession. I had been lying. I wasn't okay. But even as desperate as I was, I knew running off now would only make things worse. For Elva's sake, my wolf's sake, Jane's sake, and my

own, I had move slowly and concisely. No matter how difficult that might be.

Nicholas waited a moment more. When neither Julian nor I added anything, he slowly removed his arms

from around my waist.

I immediately missed his warmth and the strength of embrace. When he held me, I felt like a different. person almost – someone who could be vulnerable, knowing they would be protected. Without it, I was just me again, struggling to get by in a cruel, heartless world.

We continued walking. I stayed in the lead but I didn't run ahead. I kept pace with the others, even

though my heart begged me to move faster.

When we neared the end of the tunnel, Julian clicked off the flashlight.

The room of cages didn't look much different from the last time I'd seen it. Still dismal and depressing, with a lone dim lightbulb hanging overhead. But this time, strange noises were coming from beside one of

the cells.

"Mm," Terry hummed. "You taste delicious."

A woman faintly moaned.

”

I leaned out from the end of the tunnel to peer around the corner.

Terry had his arms around my sister.

They were kissing.

Was he attacking her?

My vision burned red.

Chapter 230

Chapter 0230

Terry had his arms around my sister. His lips were against her lips. Her hands were on his shoulders.

Holding him close? Pushing him away?

I didn't know, but I couldn't chance it. If he had been willing to drug and assault me, then who knew what atrocities could be happening here?

My mind went black. My vision burned at the edges. I barreled forward, grabbed Terry around his waist novelbin

and ripped him away from sister.

Jane gasped.

Terry, surprised and off-guard, stumbled. I let him go and he dropped to the ground.

Then I grabbed Jane's wrist and dragged her toward the tunnel. "Now's our chance! We have to go!" I

shouted to her.

But then she started laughing and my whole world stopped.

“Piper, you’ve always been the most gullible idiot,” Jane said. Her lips were twisted in a cruel smile. Her

eyes gleamed with vicious humor. Venom dripped from her words. “Did you really think I needed a

rescue? From Terry?”

She laughed again, hard and loud. Terry chuckled as he rose from the ground behind us.

“Terry is my lover, Piper,” Jane said.

“No. That can’t be true.” I shook my head again and again. “You’re just drugged or, or –

“Or what? Is it so hard to believe I would be here of my own free will?”

It was.

I had always suspected she might enjoy being tangled in the web, but deep down I’d hoped she would

return to me and tell me this was all just a tragic mistake. I watched now as that dream crumbled before

my eyes.

I was afraid to ask more questions. I knew the knife in my heart would only dig deeper.

But if I was going to know some of her treachery, then should know all.

“Why do you have my wolf?”

She shrugged like it was no big deal. Like she hadn’t stolen such a big part of my life away.

“I wanted it,” she said. Simple as that.

No great plan. No big deal. She wanted it, so she got it. Even if that meant she had to rip that power out

of her sister. Me.

Jane wasn't the victim here. Or, if she was, she was totally brainwashed, maybe beyond the point of

being saved.

I had just one more question. "Why would get involved with the underground organization again? After

everything they did? After everything I went through to get you out of it

Jane's laugh turned bitter. "Oh, great hero. Give me a break. You think you did so much to save me? You served your purpose, Piper. You gave up your power, and got that brat out of my hair."

Brat? Surely she couldn't mean Elva!

"And why would I go back?" Jane clucked her tongue. "Dear, sweet sister. I never left."

Suddenly, that was it. My whole perception of her shifted. The person I wanted her to be and the person

she was were irrevocably different. And there was no going back.

When we were kids, we had been attached at the hip. We did everything together. We knew each other

so well, we could finish each other's sentences.

Now when I looked at her, I saw a stranger.

The shadows seemed to move around me. I didn't notice, I'd been so locked on

my sister. But now as I

glanced around, I saw that more members of the underground had entered the room. A half-dozen at

least, for what I could tell.

Terry walked around me, returning to Jane's side.

Nicholas and Julian must have still been in the tunnel, watching and waiting for an opening. I would

never believe they would abandon me here.

But to reveal themselves too soon would eliminate all opportunities for surprise. In training, Nicholas

had taught me how vital that was.

"I wasn't expecting you tonight, Piper," Terry said. "But I will never turn down a gift when it arrives so

prettily on my doorstep. Or in my dungeon, as this case seems to be."