

The Luna Choosing Game by Jane Above Story Chapter 3

Chapter 0003

It had been three days since Boss made his proposition: either I sleep with him or I get fired.

I needed one more day's pay to cover Elva's most recent bill. Once I had that, I could resign and hopefully find something else.

Boss trailed his eyes down the length of my body. Staring openly at my breasts, he licked his lips. "Don't think I won't, Piper. I'll be waiting for you."

In the restaurant, all of the female patrons talked excitedly about the selection. To cater to them, Boss turned all of the televisions on the walls to the royal consort ceremony broadcast.

“Which one do you think is the most handsome?” asked one patron to her friends.

They’d ordered a plate of loaded nachos to share. I carefully placed it in the center of their table.

Another girl spoke quickly. “Are you kidding? The others are cute, sure, but Nicholas is obviously the hottest.”

The other girls quickly agreed.

Startled, I hovered at their table. They were right, of course. Nicholas was the most objectively attractive, but to hear people talk about him so casually still surprised me.

For three days, I'd tried to reconcile in my mind that the Nicholas I had known was also the eldest prince of the kingdom. But I still couldn't quite manage it.

Nicholas had always been proper. But a prince?

"Piper, is it?" one of the girls at the table asked me. I jumped, realizing I was still standing there. Yet before I could apologize, she asked me, "Which one do you think is the most handsome?"

"Nicholas," came my automatic answer. "Excuse me."

Embarrassed at having been caught daydreaming, I forced myself to focus on work. And I succeeded – until I heard Nicholas' voice come from the speakers.

"The kind of woman I'd prefer?" Nicholas said. "Someone loyal. Strong. Even tempered. And she has to like to children."

“Check, check, and check,” came a voice from the table of girls. “He’s describing me! It’s meant to be.”

“Dream on. He’s clearly describing *me*.”

“You don’t even like kids!”

“Yeah, well, we’ll see which of us make it through the preliminary selection. Then you’ll see!”

The screen showed the interviewer. “Children, hm? Does that mean we can expect you to have a big family, Prince Nicholas?”

The camera panned back to Nicholas. He gave a small smile, but his eyes were guarded. "It's my duty as a prince to continue the lineage. But, yes, I'd like to have a large family."

The girls squealed in delight. "He'd make such a good father!"

Nicholas glanced at the camera, and for a moment, it seemed as if he was staring straight through it. I froze in place, like he could see me.

My heart *ached*.

He glanced off to the side again, looking at the interviewer, and immediately, I felt foolish. Of course, he couldn't see me.

He probably hadn't thought of me at all since the breakup.

I pressed my hand over my heart, hoping to soothe away the touch of pain there.

What was wrong with me? We hadn't seen each other in three years. I couldn't still be hung up on him. Sure, I hadn't dated anyone else since, but that didn't mean anything. I'd been too busy to date.

I wasn't lonely. I had Elva, and I had Anna. I didn't need romance to be content.

A bell dinged in the kitchen, signaling a meal was ready. I went back to retrieve it. When I returned to the dining room, Nicholas was still on the screen, but speaking on an entirely different topic.

"The underground market is something that the royal family is investigating with the utmost seriousness. This illegal trade of wolves and their gifts is dangerous for every person in the kingdom."

I dropped the plate of food in my hand.

The restaurant silenced at once, all eyes on me.

Nicholas continued, “The weakening of any one wolf, weakens the whole pack. We cannot let that go unpunished.”

“Piper,” one of the other waitresses hissed at me, waking me from my stupor.

I stood among ceramic shards and ruined food. “I’m sorry.” I quickly set to cleaning it. As I did, I cursed myself so loudly in my thoughts, I couldn’t hear any more of Nicholas’ interview.

By the end of my shift, I was worn down and exhausted. After my accident, I pushed myself as hard as I could, focusing solely on work and forgetting all else.

I did not once lift my eyes to the television again, not even when the table of girls bemoaned their disappointment with the selection results.

I hadn't applied. I wouldn't be on the list. Why even bother looking?

I worked until closing, scrubbing dishes in the sink. After washing away a particularly stubborn clump of food from a plate, I noticed how quiet it was around me.

Usually the cook had to clean the stove, or prep for tomorrow. Almost always, he was the last to leave at night. But he was nowhere to be seen.

Neither were the other waitresses, who had said they would clean the dining room. The lights in the dining room were dimmed.

I was alone.

A puff of hot air brushed the back of my exposed neck. The stench of alcohol permeated the air.

Gripping the plate I'd been cleaning, I immediately swung around, ready to knock Boss over the head with it. Anything to get away.

But I was a moment too late. Boss had been expecting the attack.

He knocked the plate onto the floor, where it smashed to pieces.

One arm circling around my waist, he pressed his hips hard to mine, wedging me against the lip of the sink.

I was trapped.

Boss's free hand ripped open the buttons of my shirt, revealing my lacey white bra. He pressed his palm against my breast.

"Let me go." Panic swelling within me, I struggled against him. He only held tighter, rougher, fingers biting into my hip and my chest.

Without my wolf, I didn't have the strength to break free.

"Don't be shy, wolf-less." Boss pressed his nose to my cheek. I felt him smile against my jaw. "You have a child, after all. I know you aren't a virgin."

When Nicholas had touched me, it had been nothing like this.

Nicholas had been excited and eager, but gentle, too. He'd pressed his lips to my skin and –

Boss bit the side of my neck.

I cried out, and renewed my struggle. But it was too much. Without my wolf, he was just too strong.

“Be good and take what I give you,” Boss said. “Quit the blushing virgin act.”

“I don’t want you!” I shouted.

He laughed. “Who cares what you want?”

Then, suddenly, a sharp thud sounded, and the insistent press of Boss's body fell away.

I opened my eyes.

Boss was unconscious on the ground. A group of soldiers in uniform stood behind where he'd been.

One of them, at the front, held up something near my face. When he lowered it, I saw it was a picture of me.

"Piper?"

Panic still clawed at my throat, silencing me. Even though they'd rescued me, I still didn't feel safe.

Who were these soldiers? What did they want?

“Are you Piper?” the soldier asked again.

I nodded.

“Come with us,” he said. He signaled to his squad. They began to file out of the kitchen.

“...Where?” I managed to ask.

“Didn’t you want the royal consort ceremony?”

“N-no.”

“You were selected, Piper. We’re here to escort you to the palace.”