

## **Chapter 344**

### Chapter 0344

I clawed at Nicholas's shoulders. He was wearing too many clothes. But then, so was I.

His kiss devoured me, entranced me. I felt so fully under his spell that I couldn't think clearly. All I knew

was the trace of Nicholas's hand up my spine, slipping under my shirt. He lifted it up and off my head. It

quickly was tossed onto the floor.

He leaned back a moment and stared at me in appreciation. My bra was doing its best, barely confining

by curves. Nicholas placed his hands over my breasts, caressing me over my bra. I hated it now, for

being in the way.

"Nick..."

"Hm?" Nicholas asked. His gaze was transfixed on the mountains and valleys of my chest.

"Get rid of the bra..." I said, breathless.

He smiled a bit, right at the corners of his mouth. "As my lady commands."

What a ridiculous thing to say. Nicholas was the prince. I was far from a lady. But I liked the role-play. It

made me feel sexy and powerful, like I had some control in my life.

Like this, I wanted to give that control to Nicholas. I trusted him to take care of my needs.

His hands trailed along the band of my bra to the center of my back, where the hook clasped it closed.

He fumbled a little there, and I would have laughed if I wasn't so damned horny.

"Hold on..." He pulled when he should have pushed. "I don't want to rip it."

"Rip it," I said, desperation seeping into my voice.

He growled in reply. In the next instant, the bra was ripped clean off me, exposing my naked breasts to

Nicholas's eager gaze and his hands.

He cupped me and massaged me gently. When my nipples peaked, he rubbed them between his

thumb and forefinger. I dropped my head back and moaned.

He stepped into me until I was fully pinned against the wall. Then he dropped his head and took one of

my nipples into his mouth. Oh, God, his mouth was so hot and wet, his tongue so insistent, lapping and

circling those aching peaks.

I shoved my fingers through his hair and held on for dear life as he lavished his diligent attention over

me. Then, all too soon, he kissed down the valley of my breasts to clasp his mouth over the other

nipple, and eagerly gave it the same attention.

I was a moaning mess, by the time he picked me up, hooking his hands under my thighs, and carried me to the bed. Slowly, he lowered me down so that my head was resting on the soft pillow. My body stretched out down the mattress.

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He was always so gentle. It made my heart race, and a steady warmth burn in the center of my soft chest.

Then he slipped his hands under the waistband of both my pants and panties and pulled them down at once. They joined the pile on the floor. My shoes fell with them.

Suddenly, I was very naked in the middle of Nicholas's plush bed. Nicholas stared at

a hooded gaze. He was fully clothed, but his dick was hard, making a very visible, prominent tent in his pants. As he watched me, he placed his hand on it and groaned.

It was sexy as hell.

Slowly, his gaze traced down the length of my body, pausing at the apex of my thighs. He licked his lips.

“I want to taste you,” he said. He slipped his suit jacket down off his shoulders and dropped it into the

clothes pile on the floor. He started to unbutton his white shirt.

Heat pooled in between my legs. I spread my legs wide in answer.

Nicholas’s eyes widened. He gave up on the buttons and ripped his shirt off instead. The

buttons flew off the shirt, scattering around the room. One pinged off the lamp on the bedside

table.

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I laughed, and he growled.

+15 BONUS

Before the shirt even hit the floor, Nicholas was bent over the bed and burying his face in between my

legs. With careful fingers, he pulled back the hood, and then licked at my clit with a firm tongue.

I grabbed at the pillow behind me, and writhed on the cool sheets beneath me.

With his free arm, Nicholas held me down. I was trapped against the onslaught. I could only endure.

At first, I squeezed my eyes shut, but no, I forced them back open. The image of Nicholas between my

thighs was too delicious to miss. His eyes were closed and his brow was lowered with concentration.

And then, as I watched, he snaked a hand down between his own legs.

I nearly lost my mind.

“N–Nick...”

He opened his eyes and looked up at me.

“Kiss me...”

He dropped his focus back to his duty.

I laughed as I shoved lightly at him. “I meant, kiss my mouth.”

He pulled off of me with an obscene pop. “You don’t like this?” He didn’t sound hurt, just confused...

“I love it,” I emphasized. “But I want to kiss you, and I want to touch you too.”

He crawled up over me until his body entirely covered mine. His mouth fell onto mine and I tasted

myself on his tongue.

Slowly, he lowered himself down onto the mattress beside me, so that he could more easily slip his

hand down between my legs to lavish the attention his tongue had surrendered.

“Oh... Nick..”

He sucked on my neck as he slipped a finger inside of me, then two. I bucked against him.

He smiled against my skin.

Not to be undone, I reached for his aching dick. He still wore his pants, but the zipper was done and his

cock on full, hard display. He was so big, my mouth watered. I wanted to taste

+15 BONUS

From bowed and swollen his dick looked, he was as close to release as I was. Had the sounds of my

pleasure been enough to get him off?

Before long, I rubbed his hard dick in my fist in tempo with him plunging his fingers inside of me

followed his lead, moving faster as he did.

He began thrusting into my hand, grunting with each forward movement. Yet even as he chased his

own pleasure, he never sacrificed mine. His fingers delved deeply into me. And then his thumb started tracing circles over my clit.

It was too much. I couldn't hold on.

But I wanted us to come together so I tried.

"N—Nick so close Almost!"

His voice was just as strained. "I'm there with you... Now, Piper. Now!"

He came and I did. Our hoarse shouts merged together as our bodies trembled, pushing past the edge

of lust and toppling straight into pleasure.

Later, when we were clean, satisfied, and holding each other in bed, Nicholas peppered soft kisses

along my neck and jaw. Likely an apology for all the marks he had put there.

I laughed. "The other girls are going to have questions for me in the morning..."

Nicholas's voice came low and dangerous. "They'll think Julian left them."

They would, if only because that's what we wanted them to believe.

I placed a hand on Nicholas's cheek and drew his attention up to my face.

When he saw my worried expression, he sighed.

"He may get As long as you are mine

o kiss you in public, but he will never have you like this in private, I will survive."

I smiled, and kissed him.

I couldn't be his forever, but for now would have to do.

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+15 BONUS

Charlotte and I flipped through the fabrics on the table near the sewing machines.

“It has to be a bright color, right? Something that says, I’m having fun,” I said. I picked up a bolt of red

fabric. “What about this one?”

Charlotte shook her head. “Red means danger. You’ll give someone an anxiety attack.”

That... was a good point. Red was the color of blood and stop signs and red flags. I lowered the bolt of

fabric.

“Blue is more relaxing.” Charlotte held up a bolt with a pattern of deep blue flowers.

“But does it say fun? I look at that and feel like I need to take a nap.”

Charlotte lowered the fabric back to the table, then touched her finger to her chin. We looked both

looked over the table once more.

Dark purple was out. Green might work, but... Green was the color of money. It would probably remind

the people about their debts? Or was I overthinking this? My head was starting to hurt.

“What about a golden orange–yellow?” Charlotte asked. She picked up three distinct fabrics. A pastel

yellow, a warm creamy orange, and a shimmering gold. “We could do layers. You’d look like literal

sunshine.”

“That could work!” I clapped my hands together.

“Great,” Charlotte said, bright too.

Elva made a show of walking toward us, just to make a loud humph noise, and storm away into the

closet. She slammed the door behind her.

I

gave Charlotte an apologetic look..

Charlotte shrugged. “I’d be disappointed too, if I was the kid. Though I agree with your side of it, of

course.”

“Thanks.”

I'd already told Elva that she couldn't attend this event with me. She usually enjoyed the dances, and I

wished she could have fun at this one too..

But with the plan to catch Jane brewing, likely to culminate at the event, I couldn't risk Elva being there.

Especially if Jane could use the close proximity to amplify Elva's curse. Though, I couldn't say any of

that to Elva. I was trying to shield her from as much of the danger as I could.

BONG

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private, I will survive."

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But first, I had to make her safe.

That evening, I joined Veronica, Nicholas, and Julian in Julian's private rooms, where we continued to

talk about how to trap Jane.

"I've been thinking," Veronica said. "It is possible, if you want, to fight fire with fire,"

"I like fire," Julian said.

I ignored him. "What do you mean, Veronica?"

"We could curse her, as she cursed Elva," she said.

I blinked, startled. "You know how to do that?"

"I've never done it before, but I was trained," Veronica said. There was no infliction in her voice, but she

did lower her gaze as she spoke, looking down at the floor. "I'm confident I could curse her well enough

for our purposes."

Julian looked at me. Beside me, Nicholas crossed his arms. I leaned into him a little,

“It’s something to consider, anyway,” Julian said, “She started it. Why shouldn’t we use her tactics

against her? She lost her right to decency the moment she targeted Elva.”

The words held truth, but something held me back yet. Jane was more monster than person now, but...

did that mean it was okay to stoop to her level?

I looked at Veronica. She stood very still, but that wasn’t unusual.

She saw me watching. “Do not hold back on my account. I have no qualms against doing what is

necessary. In fact, I might enjoy using their training against them.”

I believed that to an extent. But... to cast her curse against Elva, Jane had to sacrifice something dear

to her. Would whatever Veronica sacrificed be worth it to curse Jane?

The rest of us would be sacrificing something too: our humanity. We’d become monsters, just like Jane.

“We can’t do it,” I said.

“Why not?” Julian asked.

Beside me, Nicholas continued to be silent, like he was letting this all unfold. Maybe he was leaving the

choice to me. Maybe he’d go along with whatever I wanted. I felt his silent support

in his closeness.

“We are not the same as her,” I said. “And we will not become like her just to catch her.”

“But if it helps Elva –” Julian argued.

+15 BONUS

“Would it help Elva? How would she feel, when she grows up and learns the truth? To learn what we

did to her mother?” I asked.

“She’d understand,” Julian said.

I didn’t know if I believed that, but regardless it was a gamble I wasn’t willing to take.

“We catch her, and we do what we need to do then,” Nicholas said at last.

“But we do not curse her.

Piper’s right. We are not going to lower ourselves to commit torture.”

Julian snorted.

“Do you have something else to say, Julian?” Nicholas glared at his brother.

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Julian stood up like he was ready to fight, but one look at me, and my pleading face, and he swallowed

his words and sat back down. “Forget it.”

Veronica nodded. She didn’t seem bothered by the choice, nor did she seem pleased. She was

impassive as ever. Then, Veronica and Julian shared a subtle glance.

I watched it happen, but I had no idea what it meant, or even if it meant anything.

It was over too soon for me to call it out. They could easily deny it.

So long as the two weren’t planning on cursing anyone, I supposed it wasn’t a big deal if they shared a

moment of displeasure against me.

Nicholas held out his arm for me. “Come on, Piper. I’ll walk you back to your room.”

Julian stood up again. This time, he didn’t hold his tongue.

“No,” he snapped. “That’s not going to happen.”

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“What the hell are you talking about?” Nicholas snapped back.

“You need to stop walking Piper around,” Julian said, firm. “It makes me look bad. She’s supposed to

be my date, remember?"

"It's after hours," Nicholas said. "There shouldn't be any cameras."

"Shouldn't be," Julian said. "You admit it. There could still be some."

"You are being overly paranoid," Nicholas said.

"And you aren't being paranoid enough," Julian countered. He looked at me.

"If we want this to seem

real, we need to keep up appearances even without the cameras. I don't care what you two get up to

behind closed doors

His gaze dips to my neck, where the love bites Nicholas left are still prominent.

"But when we are in public, even if it's late, you have to respect that I'm Piper's boyfriend," Julian said.

Boyfriend? We'd never used that term before. We'd only been dating, or I was Julian's favorite. But

neither he nor I, nor any of the producers, had gone so far as to call Julian my boyfriend.

He didn't back down. He didn't take it back. He just glared at Nicholas like he planned to say it six or

seven more times to stab him with the word.

"You are not her boyfriend," Nicholas said, his voice dropping low and dangerous. A growl was hidden

there, revealed around the edges. "You are fake dating. That is not the same."

"Keep telling yourself that." Julian's lips quirked into a mocking smirk. He was baiting his brother, and

protective and jealous Nicholas was falling for it.

"Julian," I said, strained. My patience was thin. I'd already had a trying day, making Elva cry. I didn't

have the necessary calm to deal with these brothers and their deep-seated rivalry today. "Please stop

antagonizing him."

His smirk wavered a bit.

“And Nicholas,” I turned to him next. He seemed surprised that I would address him in this argument,

but a moment later, he met my disapproving gaze with a steady one of his own.

“Piper.”

“Julian’s not wrong. We should be careful...”

“There won’t be cameras,” he said, and made it sound so  
o sure.

+15 BONUS

“You think,” Julian chimed in.

I weaved my fingers together. My heart told me to go with Nicholas anyway. Our moments. were so

stolen and rare, I collected each like precious gemstones. But I didn’t dare risk my fake relationship

with Julian...

“All I want to do is walk you back to your room,” Nicholas said. “It’s all very innocent.”

I didn’t believe that, especially not with the heated glance he was giving me. He, like me, hadn’t

forgotten our time together the night before. Even now, every inch of my skin tingled for the touch of his

hand, or the press of his

of his tongue...

“Okay,” I said at once. For Nicholas, I was willing to throw caution to the wind. What could possibly

happen that we wouldn’t be able to cover for? “I’ll go with you.”

Nicholas held out his arm again, and I laced my arm through it.

Julian exhaled a loud, disappointed sigh.

To him, I said, “It’s going to be fine.”

“It had better be,” Julian said.

Veronica watched everything with a neutral expression. Though she seemed pleased now that we were

getting ready to leave. "Have a good night."

Julian stayed with us part of the walk back, but then he had to veer away to go to his own private

rooms. He looked back twice on his walk away.

"It's not like him to be so concerned about anything," Nicholas said, though I didn't think that was true. I

thought it much more likely that he was simply better at hiding his worries most of the time.

"This is a big deal," I said. "Sometimes it feels like the fate of the kingdom depends on Julian and my

fake relationship. We can't be careless."

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"No one's around," Nicholas said.

He was right. The hallways were dark and so quiet, we could likely hear a pin drop. It made me feel

bold, knowing we were alone.

I traced tiny circles onto the back of Nicholas's palm with my finger.

He closed his eyes a moment. His breath came a bit stuttered. It was nice to see how much I

affected him.

"It's almost been twenty-four hours since you kissed me," I said.

"That's not true," he said. "Eighteen, at the most.

"Feels like a full day."

He looked at me sideways. "Are you asking me for a kiss?"

I licked my lips. "That depends on what the answer would be."

His lip quirked. "And if it's yes?"

I stopped entirely, giving up the game, and turned to him. "Nick, please."

He moved toward me, and backed me up into one of the alcoves along the main hallway. Our bodies, half-shielded by the curtains there, he lowered down and kissed my breath away.

My entire body ignited.

When he swiped his tongue into my mouth, my panties went damp. My body remembered full well the many abilities of that talented tongue. I wanted him here and now, to hell with the consequences. If I didn't get some relief, I was likely to explode.

"Nick," I gasped or pleaded, or both, I didn't know which.

Nicholas knew what I wanted and what I needed before I did. He slotted one leg between mine, then grabbed my ass with both hands and dragged me toward him, pulling my core and my clit over the delicious friction of his thigh.

"Ah!" I moaned. Nicholas covered my mouth with his, swallowing my noises.

Guided by his hands on my backside, I grinded against the meat of his muscled thigh. Back and forth, over and over. I chased my own pleasure. His growing dick pressed into my hip. Then he started grinding too.

He rubbed against each other with increasing desperation. Faster and faster.

More. I needed more.

+15 BONUS

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Nicholas

I was relieved to see Piper rush away, but I was also furious at myself. All my talk about protecting her, and I couldn't stand up against my own father.

Julian was right. I was a coward. And my cowardice was what was going to cost me Piper in the end.

"Father," I said, ready to try again. Piper wasn't here anymore, so his anger should dwindle. Maybe we if

we just talked, I could reason with him.

"I don't want to hear anything from you, Nicholas, except agreement for what I'm about to say."

Except, his anger didn't disappear. Instead, it simmered at a high boil. He didn't shout anymore, but the

ferocity in his voice left little room for argument.

"Do you have any idea how lucky we all are that it was me who caught you, and not the cameras?"

Have you considered the optics of this at all?"

'Piper is a candidate in the contest, and I'm a prince. It would have been scandalous but

"You don't know at all! Everything we've worked for. Every plan we put in place. Ruined! Piper is a

candidate, and you are a prince, but you are not the correct one. We built Piper with Julian, and the

public must believe that if we are to survive."

"Piper is well-loved by the public. They would forgive any altercation but her."

"It's not her reputation I'm worried about, Nicholas. It's yours." The King sighed. "If you are to be my

successor, you must be seen as strong, with a capable family behind you. Piper is an embarrassment

to you, worse if she turns you into a cuckold."

"Then let her be with me, and not Julian. Then no one would be embarrassed —"

“I would be! My son, the prince most likely to wear my crown someday, dating a commoner?”

Ridiculous. Our family would never recover from the embarrassment.” He shook his head. ” You need

to stop seeing, or fooling around, or whatever you are doing with Piper.”

I was losing this battle. No, I wouldn’t be a coward. For Piper, I had to fight harder, even against the

man whose opinion and advice I valued above all others.

Standing tall, I braced my shoulders, and I said, “No.”

The King visibly startled. I didn’t think I’d ever said that to him before, and it showed in his

reaction.

“What did you say?” he asked, like he needed to be sure.

+15 BONUS

I stayed strong. I would not betray Piper. “I said, no. Piper is important to me, and I’m not willing to give her up.”

The King leaned back and looked at me like I was a different person. A stranger. An enemy. He

narrowed his eyes. I felt my skin itch. Going against my father went against the perfect son I had been

for years. Julian was the rebellious one, not me.

But Piper was important enough to rebel for.

The silence stretched. It was more unnerving than the yelling.

Then the King reached into his pocket and retrieved a neatly folded piece of paper. He unfolded it, then

shoved it at my chest.

I recognized it at once as one of the flyers that had been dropped from that plane the other day. I’d

heard about it more than seen it, but now, as I accepted it from my father and looked at it more closely,

I could see first-hand how disturbing it was.

My family with their eyes x'ed out. It made my heart ache.

“So v

you won't break things off with Piper to save yourself and your position as crown prince. But if you can't

do it for you, then maybe you would to save your family. And your kingdom.”

I gripped the flyer hard enough to crinkle the paper. I didn't want to be the reason my family lost

everything – including their lives.

If my relationship with Piper was truly endangering them.....