

THE LUNA CHOOSING GAME

Chatper 356

Chapter 0356

“It’s just strange,” Julian said, as he escorted me from our room for one of our dates. “I guess since

pretty much the time the King saw you and Nicholas, he’s been locked up with his advisors. I’ve seen

him many once in passing, but he didn’t stop to talk to me.”

To me, that didn’t seem all that strange. Up until the event began, the royal family were reclusive. Even

the King himself was not typically seen. However, for Julian to be so worried about it that he would

bring it up with me, indicated a deeper problem than I would have otherwise assumed.

“Is that so unusual for him?” I asked. “He doesn’t seem like a big family man.”

“Maybe,” Julian said. “But usually he keeps us three princes in on the plans. Whatever ideas he and his

advisors are coming up with now, I don’t think he’s even talking to Nicholas about

Watching his puzzled expression, I frowned in solidarity with him.

“My parents think I’m a wildcard, they might not tell me everything,” Julian said. “But to keep Nicholas

out of the loop, too? It’s troubling. God knows what kind of plans they are concocting without our input.”

“Surely the advisors would know what they are doing?” I asked.

Julian sighed. “I wouldn’t trust those guys with my lunch order, let alone the sake of the whole nation. I

guess the fact that nothing has happened yet is a measure of comfort. Some of those advisors, I’m

sure, want to chase away the protestors with violence.”

My nerves prickled. “Wouldn’t that just make the protests worse?”

“Protests?” Julian huffed a sharp laugh. It had no humor in it and died quickly. “That kind of act might trigger a civil war.”

My heart jumped once with sharp worry.

Julian noticed, maybe from the look of increasing worry on my face, and lamented. “I’m sorry, Piper. I

shouldn’t talk to you about these things.”

“You can talk to me about whatever you like,” I said.

He shrugged. “Yeah, but it’s cruel of me to put all of this on you. Besides, maybe you are right. Maybe

the advisors are actually coming up with good ideas this time. Or my father is. Anything is possible.”

I let the words settle in around me. Perhaps Julian was needlessly worrying, but... he was always so

observant. I had trouble believing he could be wrong about anything he’d witnessed.

1/2

“We haven’t seen much of Prince Joyce either,” I said, just to make conversation, and hopefully, to pull

the conversation away from more ominous worries.

“He does stay cooped up in his room most days. He loves to read,” Julian said. Though, as my words

lingered, he said, “When was the last time you saw him?”

I tried to think back. We’d had no formal dinners in a while, nor events.

“The last time I saw him was that night on the balcony,” I said. “When he’d given me that letter.”

“And locked you out there,” Julian added. He sounded suddenly pensive.

I didn’t really want to think about that part, but, “Yes.”

He’d never apologized for that, though perhaps he never realized that he’d done it. If he’s been locked

up in his room, then who would have told him? The only other people who knew about it were Julian

and Nicholas. 1

“You haven’t spoken with him, either?” I asked Julian.

“No. I haven’t even seen him myself.” Julian sighed. “But that’s not so unusual either. As I said, he

oftentimes stays in his room. And if father hasn’t summoned us...”

I nodded.

“Sometimes I think about that night,” Julian said.

“Me, too,” I said. What almost happened to Nicholas stayed with me all the time. I clutched it

my close. That memory was what would help me, when the time came, to deal with sister.

“I don’t just mean what happened after we went after Nicholas...” Julian added. He seemed far away

for a moment. I wondered where he went.

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“Then, what?”

He glanced at me. Slowly, he stopped walking. We were alone in the hallway though there was talking

up ahead. Around the corner was the dining room. Some of the girls must have gone down to lunch

early.

“Joyce called you out to that balcony,” Julian said. “He said it was because you are too

reckless, but when has he ever cared about something like that before or since. You aren’t one of his

selected candidates, and he’s never taken an interest in any of Nicholas’s or my relationships before.”

“You can’t think... he had ulterior motives?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” Julian admitted quickly. “It does seem unlikely. Joyce has never been rebellious. He’s

always done just enough to stay within the rules our parents set for him. I suppose he could have seen,

as I did, how fond Nicholas is of you, and wanted to step in, but..."

My throat went dry. "But?"

Julian squeezed my arm. "The timing is what concerns me. He locked you out there the same night

Nicholas was almost taken. It felt wrong to me, even then I felt something was off. That was why I was

so insistent we check on Nicholas."

My worries culminated into a dark jagged swirl that sliced mercilessly inside my chest. I had to voice an

unhappy question. I felt guilty even thinking it, so I whispered it to Julian rather than saying it too loudly,

"Could Joyce be working with the underground?" o

Julian looked at me. There was a hard edge to his gaze. "You should be careful around him."

"You do suspect him, then?"

"Piper," he said, and for a small moment, he sounded so very tired. "I suspect everyone."

I had no reply to that. He rendered me speechless.

After a moment's more quiet, Julian urged me into walking again, and we finally turned that corner into

the louder hallway.

Only it wasn't the candidates in the dining room making the noise. Instead, it was two different camera

crews trying to capture every angle of Nicholas and Olivia as they stood in the center of the hallway. A

producer was holding a microphone in Nicholas's face and asking Nicholas questions.

In the chaos, I couldn't make out the question, but it made Nicholas dip into his reservoir of

unpleasantly cold princely faces.

Julian might have heard it better than I did, because in the next instant, he called out, Nicholas! How funny meeting you here!”

1. e. that you

Suddenly every eye in the turn, looked at me.

crowded hallway turned to look at Julian instead, and then, in I half wanted to hide, but Julia..

Julian’s hold on my arm was fierce, like an unrelenting vice.

Julian led me straight you?

Nicholas and Olivia. Both

the crowd until we were standing directly in front of

with displeasure. It was eerie hatching faces of cool indifference, while their eyes burned

y heart ache

similar the glances were.

too. Maybe the

truly were perfect for each other. More perfect than

It made truly Nicholas and I had ever been, perhaps.

“Are you also on a date?” Julian asked.

Nicholas frowned deeper. “Yes, Julian,” he said it like it was obvious. Which, honestly, it was.

“About to have lunch, then?” Julian asked.

Nicholas narrowed his eyes. “Yes.”

“Great!” Julian brightened, smile wide. “Then we should eat together.”

“That’s not...” Nicholas began.

Julian spoke to the camera crews now. “Surely you guys would love to see a double date with the

princes and their favorite candidates, right?”

The crews cheered, vocalizing their agreement.

Looking at Julian, I wondered if he had somehow planned for this entire arrangement, just to upset his

brother. I had no idea how he would have pulled it off, but that didn't ebb my suspicion. If anyone could

have figured it out, it was him.

"What do you say?" Julian asked Nicholas.

Nicholas glowered. "I guess."

Chapter 358

Chapter 0358

For his date with Olivia, Nicholas had arranged a special two-person table in one of the sitting rooms,

where they would share their lunch together.

With Julian's insistence we eat with them, that two person table was turned into a four person table by

adding two chairs and two more table settings. The new arrangement barely fit. Everything was

crammed on the table, with barely room to set down a water glass, let alone food.

As such the meals were hand delivered on platters by the servants, and each of us would scoop out

our portion, then the servants would return the food to the kitchens and wait to be summoned for the

next course, or perhaps, seconds.

What they had prepared was delicious, as always, so the four of us – Nicholas, Julian, Olivia, and me

ate in silence for a time, as we each enjoyed the meal. 1

The seating arrangement had another, more personal problem. Julian had chosen to sit beside

Nicholas, which placed me between Julian and Olivia. That would have been fine, except now, seating

across from Nicholas, every time I raised my gaze, I would find myself looking directly at him.

He was the very last person I wanted to eat with at the moment, let alone look at.

The camera crews captured it all.

stolen

Remembering what Charlotte had said, that some of the viewers catalogued every glance and touch

Nicholas and I shared, I did my best to avoid looking at him too closely. Instead, I tried to focus my full

attention on Julian.

Julian seemed absolutely delighted by the change. He smiled brightly whenever our gazes met. More

than once, he nudged his hand against mine for no other reason than to gain my attention. Then he

would wink at me. 1

His winks always made me blush. They seemed so lewd somehow, even if it was just such a simple

gesture.

“Piper,” Julian said. “You have to try this.”

“Try what?” I asked, looking up.

He held his fork out, a bit of food on the end. He smirked as he held it out for me to bite.

I really wanted to roll my eyes at his antics. But with the cameras watching, I had to play up the role of

the doting girlfriend.

So I did the best I could. I quickly said, “Thanks,” and snatched the food off the fork with my

mouth.

1/2

Julian hummed, pleased.

I chewed and swallowed. "That is good," I said. I wasn't surprised, exactly, Everything the chefs had

prepared was excellent. But for Julian to select something I would actually enjoy more than most was a

surprise to me.

A pleasant surprise.

"Thank you, Prince Julian," I said, to properly convey my thanks, and not just for the

cameras.

"My pleasure," he said.

On the other side of me, Olivia daintily clinked her fork down on her plate.

"You haven't touched your

food, Prince Nicholas," she said. "Do you not feel well?"

I didn't mean to look. Really, I didn't.

But the thought of Nicholas being sick forced my gaze. Olivia was right.

Nicholas's plate was fully

covered in food, as if he hadn't taken one bite.

"I feel fine," Nicholas said. "I just lost my appetite all of the sudden."

I glanced up at him and found him staring back at me. My heartbeat kicked into fast gear and

thundered in my ears.

His eyes were molten, liquid gold. I was trapped. I was melting...

"Is the food selection not to your liking?" Olivia asked. "We can request a different meal prepared..."

Nicholas dropped his gaze, then slid it over to Olivia. "Do not trouble the staff with that. The food was

excellent, as always. The fault is mine alone."

Julian, who had just finished his own meal, stretched his arm out over the back of Such a pity, brother.

This was definitely a meal to savor. A pity you quit it so soon..."

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Slowly, Julian moved his arm forward, placing his hand onto my shoulder instead.

In my head, I commanded myself, Don't go stiff. Don't

go

stiff. Don't

go

stiff.

If I cared for Julian romantically, I would be pleased by this clear sign of ownership and affection. So I

tried to play the part and smile. It felt uneasy on my lips.

God, I was such a terrible liar. The cameras were likely capturing my awkwardness.

I had to try harder. I really had to sell my feelings for Julian.

I took a breath, giving myself a moment to think. If Nicholas had done this instead of Julian, how would

I have reacted?

It wouldn't be the same, but if I was playing pretend...

I imagined Julian to be Nicholas, and that it was Nicholas's arm around me.

Then I smiled for real.

Julian's own smile slipped. He blinked, his eyes wide for a moment. He swallowed hard.

On the other side of the table, Olivia was speaking softly, asking Nicholas things such as, "Perhaps we

can try again at dinner?" Or, "Would you like to go for a walk when we are done here?"

Nicholas gave no reply to either of those questions.

Curious, I slanted my gaze toward him. The ferocity of his glare stole my breath. He looked as if he wanted

to take Julian's head clear off his shoulders with his bare hands.

away. He

Julian, seeing Nicholas's expression as I did, just smirked wider.

A second more, and Nicholas's gaze slid to me instead. It instantly softened. My heart turned to goo at the sight.

1. to.

es were so full of affection that I couldn't look away even if I'd want

I remembered, rather suddenly, that I wanted to.

Or, at least, I was supposed to u

How was my plan to dote all of i

kept looking at me like that?

1. to.

my affection onto Julian supposed to work when Nicholas

I knew then that I needed to speak with him again. If he knew the danger he was causing simply by

looking at me like that, then surely he would stop.

For the good of the kingdom, and all that...

1/2

I waited until our double date was officially over. When both Julian and Olivia were pandering to

different cameras, I slunk back into the shadows and asked Nicholas, "Can we talk?"

He didn't say anything, just nodded, and led me toward the foyer. A series of closets lined one wall.

There was chatter around, but no one in the direct vicinity. No one would see us talking here.

"You have to stop," I said.

He stared at me. He didn't say a word.

Maybe he was waiting for me to clarify myself.

"You look at me like you love me," I said. "And the cameras see it. Charlotte said the public has been

able to tell. That some of them are rooting for me and you instead of me and Julian. So it has to stop,

Nick. When we're in front of the cameras, you have to, to..."

I didn't know how else to say it. He was still quiet, still staring.

"Maybe just don't look at me when they are near,

I said.

He licked his lips. Was he even listening to me?

My frustration began to spike. "You know what? Forget it. Do what you want."

I started to turn, ready to walk away from him, from everything. If he couldn't stop, then I'd just have to

avoid him. I could talk to Julian about it. If we could get on the same page, then

Nicholas grabbed my wrist. With his other hand, he reached for one of the closets and opened it. He

yanked me inside, then closed the door behind us. (2)

Before I could even realize what was happening, his mouth was on mine.

And I was lost.

Chatper 360

Chapter 0360

Maybe it was instinct, my b*dy's natural reaction when being k*ssed by the man I so deeply

cared for.

Or maybe it was habit, borne from so many shared kisses in our younger days, or since being reunited.

Whatever the reason, when Nicholas kissed me, my entire body seemed to come alive. As if these past

few days since our separation, I had been trapped in some kind of stasis. I'd been kept on ice, cold and

alone.

Now, Nicholas breathed fresh life into me.

His mouth was a furnace. His hands held me with an immovable grip. This was fine with me. I didn't want to be moved.

I wanted to be held, caressed, adored.

I wanted to give those things in return. My own fingers were clawlike as I gripped at his shoulders and

dragged him closer, as close as could be, until no distance separated our bodies. – only our clothes.

Those pesky things. Yet getting naked was too dangerous here.

We were in a coat closet. Rails of coats on hangers lined either side of the long, narrow room.

Nicholas released his hold on me, but only so long as to split the coats. Then he pushed me through

the opening until my back hit the wall. He instantly joined me, crowding around me as the coats

shuffled behind him, practically concealing the gap.

“Nick,” I whispered. The name came out as desperate as I felt. I was on fire. He was the only one who

could put me out. But first, he had to fan those flames to a record heat.

He was well on his way again as his mouth covered mine. His tongue licked into my mouth. I opened

my mouth wider, allowing him easier access.

His hands traced down the sides of my b*dy, down, down to my hips. There, he hooked his hands

under my thighs and he lifted me up.

I wrapped my legs around his waist as he pinned me to the wall with his body. His hands gripped my

a*s, maybe for support, maybe just to feel, as he was squeezing.

I broke the kiss to gasp. I was nearly light-headed from the lack of oxygen. This was all happening so

quickly. Maybe we should talk about it. Maybe we should...

It was dark in the closet, with only a dim light coming through from around the door. Yet even in the

darkness, his golden eyes sparkled as he looked at me with the same adoration he had when he sat

across the table from me.

1/2

That same look would get us into trouble someday, I was sure of it.

But weren't we already in trouble?

Our dates were giving interviews and we were here, so very nearly lost in each other.

Nicholas licked his kiss-swollen lips. His gaze dropped down to my mouth. "Piper."

That was all he said. That was all he needed to say.

Just low and deep and growly. My name.

And all other thoughts flew away. All consequences of what might happen here were immediately

dismissed.

Maybe when we left this room, we'd go back to ignoring each other. But for now, while we were here, I

could have this.

We were already here, after all. What was the point of holding back now?

The rest could wait. Reason could wait.

For now... This.

With the way he was holding me, my face was on level with his. It was so easy for me to lean forward

and claim his mouth with my own biting kiss.

He smiled against my mouth, but only for a moment, before he gave me more and his mouth was too

busy to smile.

I combed my fingers through his hair.

He hummed in pleasure. I felt his growing hardness press against my thigh. He shifted slightly, and now it pushed straight between my legs.

“N–Nick!”

At my reaction, he did it again, bucking his hard dick straight up against me. It slipped along my core

and pressed at my clit, providing delightful friction along all of my sensitive parts.

“Oh, Nick...”

“Feel good?” he asked, voice rough.

“God, yes.”