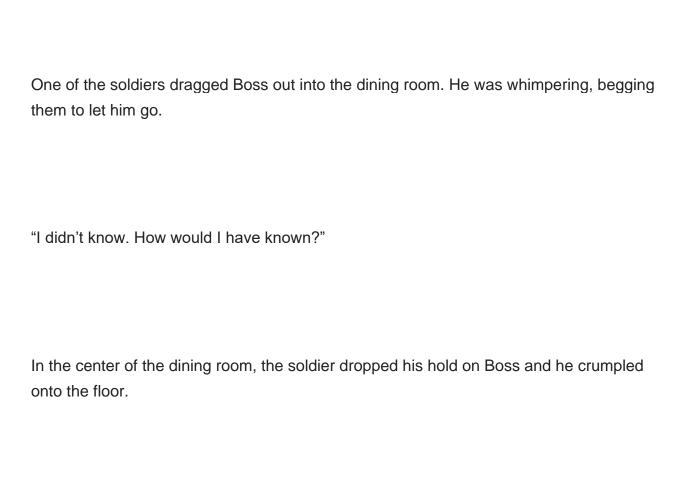
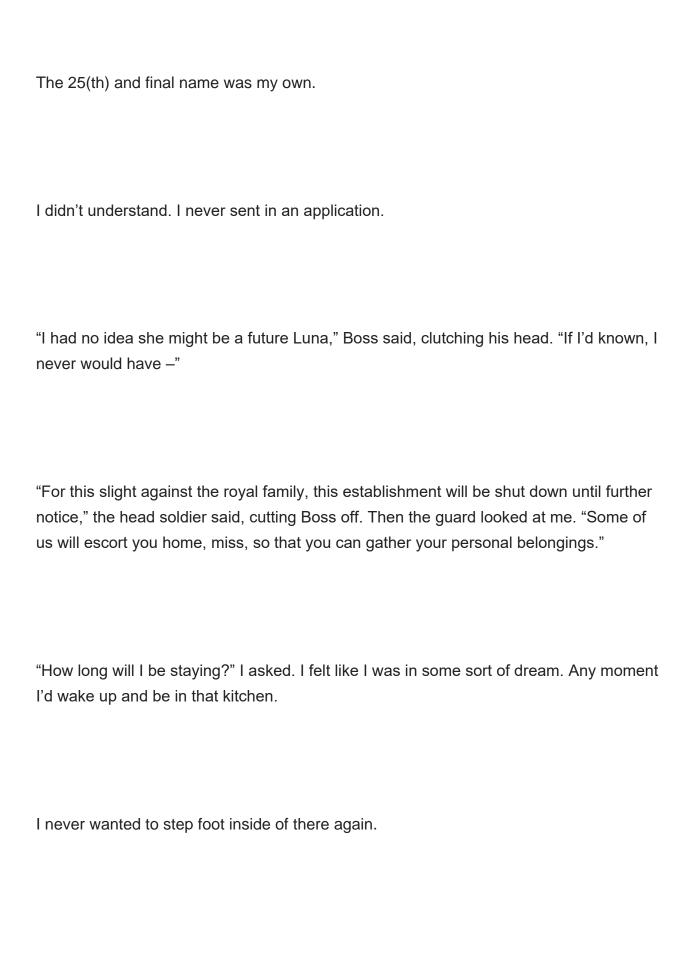
The Luna Choosing Game by Jane Above Story Chapter 4

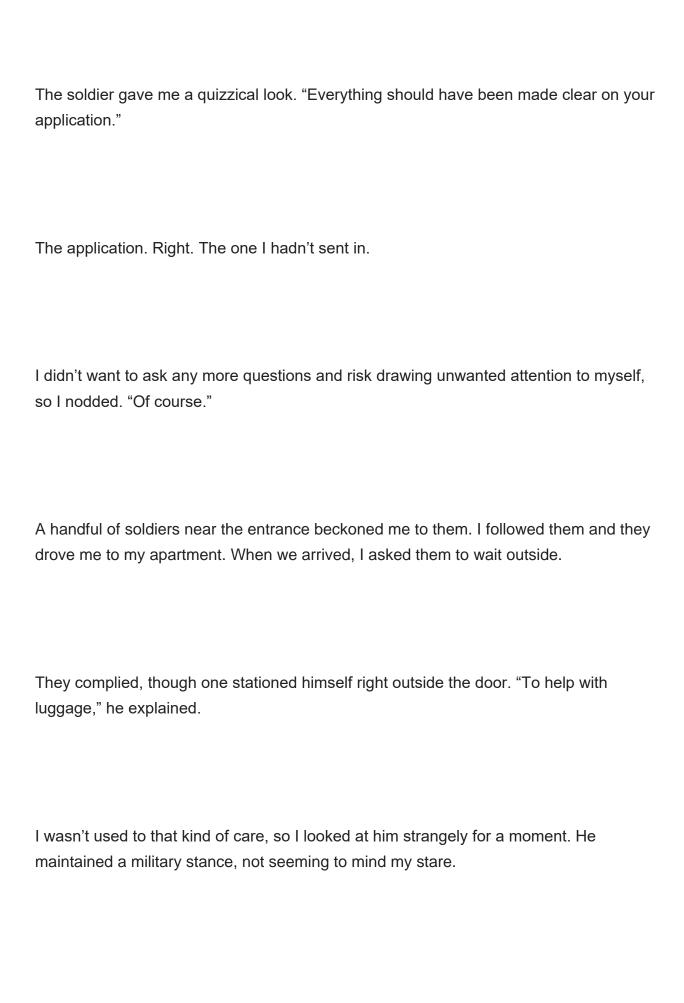
Chapter 0004



My attention flicked up to the television screens, which showed a replay of the selection

process, displaying names, one after the next.







Anna quickly glanced away.
"Anna."
"So I sent in an application on your behalf…"
"Anna!" I whisper-yelled.
"You don't belong in this town, Piper, and certainly not in that job with that creepy boss."
"I can't believe this. What am I supposed to do?"



"She has a lot of pretty dresses," Anna said. "And so do a lot of the other girls there."
Elva gasped. "Really?" When Anna nodded, Elva turned her doe eyes up to me. "Can I see the pretty dresses, Mommy?"
This was a low tactic from Anna. How could I resist Elva's doe eyes?
"Okay," I said. "We can see the pretty dresses."
As Elva cheered, I gave Anna a flat look.
She just smiled. "You'll thank me later."

Despite the royal family's magic having made the selection, choosing me had to have been some kind of mistake. I couldn't say that, of course. To dispute the judgement of the royal family was akin to treason.
What I <i>could</i> do was take Elva into the palace to see the dresses, and then politely withdraw from the competition.
We arrived to the palace at dawn, pulling into a long circular entryway. Carrying Elva, I followed the soldiers to a room to prepare for the morning's social.
I thanked the guard again. He seemed less surprised this time. At the door, he whispered, "Good luck, ma'am."
Twenty minutes later, I had changed and help Elva into the nicest outfits we had brought. We matched in simple sundresses. I brushed Elva's hair up into curly pigtails. I

kept my own down, which was unusual for me. Lately, I always had it up in a bun for work.
Dressed, we followed a waiting maid down into the main parlor, where many beautiful women had begun to gather. Their dresses were much more elaborate than mine, the other girls looking like they had stepped out of the latest expensive fashion magazines.
Elva's eyes went wide as saucers. She pointed to one dress, and then the next, like she didn't know what to look at first.
In the corner of the room, a maid had set up a table of mimosas and parfaits. I ushered Elva over there and handed her a parfait and a spoon. Her eyes, however, were still on the dresses.
Elva blessedly didn't seem to notice the sneers and sideways glances the two of us were earning simply by being present. One woman looked at my dressed with a disgusted sort of snarl curling her lip.



I placed my hand on Elva's shoulders, easing her back. "I'm so sorry," I said to the woman.
The woman's eyes were fire. Her glare shifted from me to Elva to back again. "Get that runt out of my sight."
"It was an accident," I said.
"I'm sorry," Elva said, voice small.
"There shouldn't even be a child here. What are you, a nanny? Who do you think you are to attempt to mingle with potential queens?" Her words were cruel and cutting, so ugly compared to her pretty face.
Elva's shoulders shook. She sniffled loudly.

This was no reason to make a child cry. My own anger spiked. "Now, hold on –"
"Didn't you hear what I said?" the girl snarled. "Get out!"
Suddenly, she shoved me – hard. I hadn't been expecting it, and without a wolf, I couldn't stand against her strength. I fell backwards, down to the ground.
I released Elva only so I wouldn't bring her down with me.
With me out of the way, the girl turned her aggression toward Elva. She shoved her toward the exit, pushing roughly.
Elva was crying in earnest. She'd totally dropped her parfait, and it splashed out, wasted, across the floor.

I scrambled to my feet.
An authoritative voice called out. "What's going on here?"
Elva must have sensed something protective about the man. She ran straight toward him. He leaned down to catch her.
My heart jumped into my throat.
Elva ran straight into Nicholas's arms.