

## The Luna Choosing Game by Jane Above Story Chapter 4

### Chapter 0004

One of the soldiers dragged Boss out into the dining room. He was whimpering, begging them to let him go.

“I didn’t know. How would I have known?”

In the center of the dining room, the soldier dropped his hold on Boss and he crumpled onto the floor.

My attention flicked up to the television screens, which showed a replay of the selection process, displaying names, one after the next.

The 25(th) and final name was my own.

I didn't understand. I never sent in an application.

"I had no idea she might be a future Luna," Boss said, clutching his head. "If I'd known, I never would have –"

"For this slight against the royal family, this establishment will be shut down until further notice," the head soldier said, cutting Boss off. Then the guard looked at me. "Some of us will escort you home, miss, so that you can gather your personal belongings."

"How long will I be staying?" I asked. I felt like I was in some sort of dream. Any moment I'd wake up and be in that kitchen.

I never wanted to step foot inside of there again.

The soldier gave me a quizzical look. “Everything should have been made clear on your application.”

The application. Right. The one I hadn’t sent in.

I didn’t want to ask any more questions and risk drawing unwanted attention to myself, so I nodded. “Of course.”

A handful of soldiers near the entrance beckoned me to them. I followed them and they drove me to my apartment. When we arrived, I asked them to wait outside.

They complied, though one stationed himself right outside the door. “To help with luggage,” he explained.

I wasn’t used to that kind of care, so I looked at him strangely for a moment. He maintained a military stance, not seeming to mind my stare.

This was all too weird.

I opened my apartment door and walked inside. Anna excitedly met me just inside the door. Elva, not quite as excited, was still on the couch, playing with her dolls.

“Hi, Mommy.”

“Hi, Elva,” I called to her before looking at Anna, who seemed ready to bounce straight out of her skin.

“You were chosen! Can you believe it?”

“No.” I ushered her away from the front door. Yet even away from it, I still kept my voice soft so the soldier outside wouldn’t hear. “I didn’t even put in an application. How did they get my name?”

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?”

Her eyes found mine again. She held hands out, palms up. "You are supposed to participate in the Luna Choosing Game."

"I never wanted to do this," I said. "If I go there, I'm going to be humiliated. I don't fit the criteria, Anna. I have a daughter."

Anna shrugged. "What's the harm in trying, Piper? If you go and they disqualify you, you come back here and nothing will have changed. But if they accept you..."

"That will never happen."

Anna sighed dramatically. "At least try. If only so you can get a free vacation to the Capital. Elva's never seen it." Anna kneeled down, claiming Elva's attention. "Wouldn't you like to see the palace, Elva? Where the King and Luna live?"

"The Luna had a pretty dress," Elva said.

“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 *could* 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.

Embarrassment struck me and I lowered my chin.

“Elva, honey, let’s...”

Elva wasn’t beside me. I glanced up, alarmed, and saw her only a few feet away, reaching for a woman’s sparkly pink dress.

“Elva,” I said, hurrying to stop her.

But I was too late. Some of her parfait dripped over the side of the cup and onto that sparkling dress.

“Oops,” Elva said.

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.