

Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates #Tasting 181 - Read Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates Tasting 181

Tasting 181

181–In The Comfort Of His Scent

Nora:

I watched his face change colors. It was as if the reality and the intensity of the situation were slowly dawning on him.

His eyes widened and he jumped off the bed, standing beside it with his hand on his forehead. “Did you—did you feel that-,” he stammered, stepping back in shock.

“I did,” I uttered, discreetly adjusting the ring on my finger.

“Are you okay?” Instead of bolting out of my room like crazy, he moved back towards me.

“I’m fine now.”

“Um, are you able to transition now?” I guessed it was his way of slowly understanding the seriousness of it. He decided to focus on my transition first.

I watched his face in silence before shaking my head slowly. “Are you in pain? Can you still feel her?” He asked all these questions despite having just received the biggest shock of his life. I could only imagine how many questions must be swirling in his head.

For me, it was shocking but not entirely unexpected. After feeling a mate bond with his two brothers, this one seemed like the Moon Goddess’s way of laughing at me. She wanted me to know she could give me many mates, yet none of them could entirely be mine due to the conditions and situations we found ourselves in..

“No!” I felt ashamed for lying to him, but it was to protect myself. After I had told Ryker about me and Cain, I saw how his behavior changed. His demands became unreasonable. I was still trying to

remember if I had told Cain any of my secrets. Now, I was even more secretive and wanted to take any step after careful consideration.

“That’s too bad. What if we scared her off?” he mused aloud. Obviously, he meant me, I was the one resisting her. But to deflect some of the blame away from me, he included his innocent self in the mix as well.

“I’m confused,” I uttered, eager to see his reaction and hear him talk about our mate bond.

“Me too, but let’s discuss it later,” he said, lowering his head and speaking softly.

“Okay,” I conceded, sensing he wasn’t pushing to continue the conversation. I gave up.

“I’ll get you something warm. Change your clothes; you’re... wet,” he finally looked down, realizing the situation was more awkward than we anticipated.

I nodded and watched him rush over to my closet, grabbing a black satin dress and a sweater. As he marched my way, I noticed his eyes. repeatedly drifting to my body. He shook his head and blinked frequently, clearly fighting some internal struggle.

I could be mistaken, but it honestly seemed like he was wrestling with something inside him. I took the clothes from his hands and started making my way to the bathroom. Pausing briefly, I turned around to

look at him.

“Will you still be here when I come out?” I needed to talk to him and

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forbid him from telling anyone about the mate bond we’d felt. If Cain and Ryker found out, they might do something reckless to ruin this bond for me.

“You will. I’m not the type to run away,” there was so much certainty in his eyes that I couldn’t help but smile and slip into the bathroom.

Once inside and under the shower again, I twisted the ring to check up on Akira

“Are you okay?” I asked, filled with worry.

“I’m feeling so much better. You have no idea how grateful I am to you for letting me stay. Now that I’ve felt a mate bond with another of my mates, new hopes have been born inside me. I’m not hurting as much as before,” she spoke softly, causing me to feel pity and guilt for her. It wasn’t fair to her that she had been mistreated and confined. I was keeping her caged, and her mates were treating her poorly. She was. trying so hard to grasp onto hope, find happiness, and comfort for herself.

“Let’s go outside and ask him not to tell anyone, okay?” I confirmed with her, ensuring she wouldn’t feel suffocated if I kept her inside me again. The urge to transform was now gone.

I adjusted my ring and changed into the dress, stepping out of the bathroom. As Nash had promised, he was still in the room. Though it seemed like he had been through a lot, he kept that anxious side.

hidden from me, at least visibly.

"I've ordered some soup for you, and before you say you're full, no excuses, just drink it," he insisted, making me blush and nod my head.

"You barely ever eat anything," him treating me with so much care pulled my heartstrings.

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My hair was wet and draped loosely over my back and shoulders.

"Come here," he gestured to the couch and sat down himself.

I followed his instructions and joined him on the couch.

"What happened was... out of the blue," he began, and I let him continue.

"I...", he paused, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath before continuing, "I want to tell you that the mate bond is a sacred thing. I'm sure it was shocking because your wolf woke up and immediately found her mate. I can't even imagine how she must be feeling, realizing she's mated to her stepbrother. I wish there was something that could have been done about it," the way he spoke about it gave me the impression he wasn't going to openly discuss the mate bond with anyone. Not that I wanted him to. In fact, I was going to say the same thing to him. I had heard Lord Atwood talk about my mother and the deal she had made with him. Of course, Lord Atwood wouldn't want to break that deal, and I didn't want him to feel pressured into making me his son's mate and going back on his agreement.

"I understand. Just please don't tell anyone that my wolf woke up," I finished, noticing the frown on his forehead deepening.

Tasting 182

182—I Wish I Wasn't Their Stepsister

Nora:

"Nora! Why would you want to hide such good news from anyone?"

"Don't you want them to know you're not someone who doesn't even have a wolf?" He smiled, anticipating my excitement at announcing my awakened wolf.

"I don't see it as that big of a news yet," I attempted to downplay it. But as a fighter and a boxer, who praised his strength and wolf, he was not agreeing with me at all.

"And then you will transition and get a rank, don't you want that?" He queried, probing into why I didn't want anyone to know about my wolf. These concerns had driven me to keep her hidden..

"No! She hasn't even woken up yet. And if I told anyone, they would ask me to transition. I'm not even sure she is fully awake yet because, didn't you see, she went into hiding once again?" As I explained, he nodded thoughtfully.

"Besides, they would ask me to transition before the council, and when I couldn't, they would think I lied just like Natalya had lied about her wolf," I finished, sensing his understanding as he nodded in

agreement.

"Then I will help you awaken her, and then we can tell everyone about your wolf," he suggested with a bright smile. He was always up for a challenge. I wished I could give him satisfaction and take off my ring. and transition before him, but that would be too dangerous for me.

I have learned a lot in these last few weeks. Firstly, I should have never

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let Natalya enter my life when I was keeping so many secrets. And secondly, giving April a chance even after she had bullied me on multiple occasions was just foolish on my part. It was honestly clear that she only befriended me to get closer to Ryker. And now she has now achieved her goal.

"What are you thinking about?" Nash asked.

I didn't want to do it, but after April's comments and threats, I felt like I shouldn't just sit on my ass and do nothing.

"I never knew Natalya got her wolf," I said, noticing Nash zoning out.

"I mean, she felt the mate bond with Cain, so she must have received. her wolf, right?" I attempted to sound nonchalant.

"Maybe her wolf is too weak?" He was confused but trying to give his brother the benefit of the doubt.

“Strange. Then why would they talk about it so openly?” I shrugged, planting seeds of doubt in his mind. I just knew they would never challenge Cain’s words hence he was lying so openly about the mate bond.

“Hmm, I don’t know. I’ll see. Listen, please take care of yourself and-” He paused, and I straightened my back, asking him, “So after I get her, will you reject me?” I noticed a sudden jolt from his body. The topic of rejection was sensitive for our kind.

It was because when somebody gets accepted by their fated mate, they become very strong. Even the babies they make with their fated mates are stronger than ever. However, Nash understood why

I was asking him that question.

“You see, it’s obvious that your father would never accept this

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relationship. And you also mentioned that there’s nothing that could be done. So,” I didn’t want him to reject me, and neither did I ask for rejection. I just wanted to know what was going on in his head because he was refusing to openly comment on our mate bond situation.

“Let’s wait for your wolf to wake up first, and then we can see what could be done. For now, go get your nails done and whatever you girls do before the ball,” he joked, trying to get up, but my hold on his arm stopped him, and he sat down again. I quickly removed my hand after getting his attention.

“What about you?” I inquired.

“What about me?” I couldn’t explain why my mood shifted so

pleasantly after feeling a mate bond with him, but I was starting to feel like myself again.

“Are you not going to the ball?” I questioned, and he started smiling widely.

“I am,” my heart sank in my chest, and I bet he noticed my smile. fading.

“I’ll be taking care of the security at the ball,” he quickly explained why he would be there.

“Oh!” A sudden sigh of relief escaped my lips, but he tilted his head, as if judging me.

“I wasn’t jealous, I was just curious,” I quickly retorted, lightly slapping

his arm.

“I know. In fact, it will be hard for me to see you with that asshole. And you’ll call me your stepbrother in front of him,” he huffed, trying to sound playful, but the way he clenched his fists hinted at some truth

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behind his words.

“It’s alright. It’s not like anything could be done about this mate bond,” I joined him in using a joking tone.

It was a weird kind of energy when I was around him. The fact that we were able to joke about the mate bond was exactly what I needed in that moment.

“Right,” he lowered his head, nodding.

“So I’ll leave then,” he scratched the back of his ear, slowly getting up. In fact, he was so deliberate in getting up that I began to wonder if he was expecting me to stop him..

But I didn’t.

It would only get harder if he stayed around me. I began to feel strangely happy that my third stepbrother was my mate. There was this weird connection we had formed that made me more comfortable seeing them as my mates than anyone from the outside.

However, as Nash slammed the door shut after leaving the room, I was shaken back to reality. I remembered it wasn’t such a good situation. The two mates had already turned their backs on me, and from the looks of it, Nash didn’t seem to have a plan to accept me either. All because I was supposed to be their stepsister.

“What if I’m not their stepsister?” Somehow, I found myself wondering about that too much.

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Tasting 183

183–The Beginning Of My Downfall

Nora:

Ever since Ryker started dating April, it was Lord Atwood who had been dropping me off at school. Numerous questions swirled in my head about it. Perhaps Ryker preferred to drop off April? But I always saw her arrive and leave in her own car, except for that first time.

Maybe Ryker didn't want to drop me off?

"Ryker will be picking you up from school today," Lord Atwood announced as I hastily got out of the car with my bag in hand. I didn't even get a chance to argue. Lord Atwood waved his hand and sped

away.

I sighed, realizing just minutes ago I was pondering Ryker's unusual behavior of not insisting on picking me up.

"I need to stop being so eager. The brothers have made it clear they don't want me, so I shouldn't try to justify their messed-up actions," I muttered under my breath, clutching my bag close to my chest as I zoned out while entering the school.

I hadn't made any new friends and didn't plan to. After what the two siblings had done to me, I was better off alone. If only I could talk to Akiura more often. I would feel so much more relaxed.

"Oh, look who's here!" April exclaimed from the end of the hallway, ensuring everyone noticed me before turning their heads the other way. Yep, it seemed like nobody wanted to be friends with me either.

"Oh not them again," I said to myself, wondering why couldn't they just

183–The Beginning Of My Downfall

leave me alone now. They got the alpha kings, so what was bothering them now? Shouldn't they be just enjoying the blessings now?

But Natalya and April had been attracting a lot of attention lately. And they were loving it. Yet, they were not entirely content and didn't lose a single opportunity to annoy me. I reached my locker and noticed Natalya standing beside April. Her appearance had changed; her hair was now cut in a bob and she wore heavy makeup. In fact, her skirt was so short that she kept tugging it down to cover herself.

Her top revealed deep cleavage, and her high heels made it difficult for her to walk.

"So, are you coming to the ball?" April asked me, surrounded by her friends as usual. She always came in groups, probably because she was too afraid to say certain things herself, preferring to have others speak for her.

"And why would I discuss it with you?" I gave her a forced smile. before opening my locker.

“Hmm! Looks like she’s scared. What if you say something to Brody about her, and he dumps her before they even go out,” Natalya said in a different tone, even changing her voice. How much did she hate herself to change almost everything about her life? And April seemed eager to steer her in whatever direction she pleased.

“I’m not afraid of anything,” I sighed.

But as I turned to leave, April stepped into my face, causing me to step back, my back hitting the lockers.

“Or maybe you should be. When was the last time you spoke to Brody?” she asked, a smirk playing on her lips.

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“What?” I frowned. Clearly, their questions meant something. If she was asking me something so seriously, there had to be another reason behind it.

“Maybe you should check on him,” Natalya continued with a snicker, “but only if he hasn’t already blocked you.” She covered her mouth with her hand, giggling and laughing at me.

“What have you two done?” I wanted to raise my voice, but it would only satisfy their nerve-wracking actions.

But it wasn’t a lie that they were acting suspicious. They must have done something.

“We didn’t do anything. He just saw something and let’s just say—he wasn’t very happy to find out that the girl he’s dating is such a whore,” April muttered the last word, causing my heart to sink into my stomach.

That was it. She had crossed the line now. I had been avoiding getting into a confrontation with her for a while, but now she had pushed me too far.

So I did what felt right. I raised my hand and slapped her hard enough for her to stumble to the side. Natalya quickly reached out to catch her and prevent a bad fall.

April was just staring at me, her mouth gaping and tears welling in her eyes. She seemed shaken up.

“How dare you. The only whore here is you! You’re the one who befriended me just to get into my home and seduce my stepbrother. I don’t know how you did it because he used to be repulsed by

the idea of dating you,” I shouted at the top of my lungs. I was done with them acting like bullies and constantly appearing out of nowhere to ruin my

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day.

“What have you done?” Natalya asked in a much softer tone this time.

“Do you want me to do the same to you? Because I can,” I threatened, taking a step briskly towards her. She looked so frightened that she stepped back.

April looked around, then dropped to her knees, crying into her palms after feeling the humiliation.

“If anyone speaks to me like that again– I will–” I began to threaten, but I was interrupted by a voice behind me.

“And what will you do?” It was the principal, standing with his arms folded across his chest, wearing a disapproving look on his face.

“Violence is forbidden. Not only did you strike the poor girl, but you also used such horrible language towards her. And now you’re threatening others too? It seems the title of being the stepdaughter of the ex–Alpha King has gone to your head. However, this kind of behavior will not be tolerated in my school. Come with me to my office,” he hissed, using a stern tone and giving me a harsh glare.

As he walked away, I noticed April slowly uncovered her face. After rubbing her cheek, she smirked.

So this was all her plan to get me in trouble?

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Tasting 184

184–I Look Guilty

Nora:

I was now sitting in the principal’s office, my head down, feeling guilty. He had been pacing angrily before leaving the office to call Lord Atwood.

I had gotten myself into this mess for no reason. But it was so shocking that April didn’t even seem to care when I hit her. She provoked me, knowing I would react explosively. Was it just to get me in trouble? Why couldn’t they just leave me alone?

“Please come inside,” Mr. Fortin returned, holding the door open for his best friend.

I remembered this was where it all began. He had once called in Lord Atwood to discuss how I was being bullied. Today, he was summoned to talk about how I had become the school’s biggest bully.

Lord Atwood walked in and saw me sitting there. He stood with me and then reached out to gently tap the back of my hand..

Mr. Fortin had taken his seat and was waiting for Lord Atwood to give him his full attention.

“So, what am I here for?” Lord Atwood questioned. “Has anyone bullied her again?”

I almost bit my bottom lip when I heard him ask that question so confidently. It was as if he was certain I could do no wrong.

“Actually, it’s quite the opposite this time,” Mr. Fortin said. Lord

Atwood turned to me, making me lower my head even more.

“What do you mean by that? She couldn’t hurt a fly,” Lord Atwood’s unwavering trust in me sometimes drowned me in guilt.

He didn’t even know a tiny bit about me. He just believed me and wouldn’t question anything. That kind of blind faith from him was why I felt so terrible about lying and hiding things from him. It also made me anxious about when he would discover the truth about me. I couldn’t handle it.

“She slapped one of the students. In fact, she slapped Alpha Brody’s cousin. And then she called her many names, including ‘slut’ and ‘whore,’” Mr. Fortin shook his head in disappointment, barely able to repeat those words. But Lord Atwood gasped in disbelief.

“You must have been lied to. Nora is not the type to even raise her voice—” I didn’t know why he was defending me so vehemently. No one is completely innocent like that.

His expectations of me were sometimes too high. I wanted him to understand that I was not the person he thought I was. His trust in me was beginning to waver.

“I heard it all myself. And as for not hurting a fly, let me bring the girl in and you can see her check. Nora left a pretty bad mark on her and she was crying on the floor in front of everyone. She even threatened everyone and I was there,” as he continued to recount my behavior, I buried my head even further.

“Nora! What is Mr. Fortin saying? Did you do any of that?” Lord Atwood turned to me, questioning. I felt so guilty to be in this position. I was only trying to stand up for myself.

I took a deep breath and nodded my head. But before he could dwell

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on my actions any further, I added, "She called me a whore and made Brody block me."

It was the right thing to do. I wouldn't hide their cruel games anymore.

"What?" Lord Atwood asked, shocked.

"You didn't tell me that," Mr. Fortin, who understood the importance of protecting an Alpha's Luna, now looked slightly shaken.

"Did you even ask her why she did that?" Lord Atwood turned to his friend, who gulped.

"I couldn't. After seeing her behavior, I was so taken aback that I couldn't question her without your supervision," Mr. Fortin explained, sounding subdued.

"And you wonder why she hit her? It's not a small thing for an Alpha to block his girlfriend," Lord Atwood's voice was tinged with anger.

"April told me that she did something and said something about me to him that made him angry at me. I haven't even spoken to him yet and I'm worried about what he might be thinking," I uttered anxiously, rubbing my palms together.

"Let me call Alpha Brody here and ask him what those nasty snakes have done," Lord Atwood took charge, gesturing for Mr. Fortin to step aside from the speaker.

"Alpha Brody, you're needed in the principal's office," Lord Atwood announced himself. I could only imagine how furious he would become at those two girls when he found out how much hate they had been stirring against me to Brody. It might also send a message that these two should not enter the mansion when I'm not around.

"Is Brody in school today?" It was only after making the announcement

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that Lord Atwood asked Mr. Fortin, who nodded. My heart was pounding now. What could they have possibly shown him to get him so riled up?

Then a knock on the door revealed Brody, who entered the office and frowned upon seeing all of us staring at him.

"Nora!" he said my name before turning to Lord Atwood and giving him a slight bow.

“Save your greetings. Don’t you think you should first come talk with my daughter when somebody accuses her of something instead of blocking her?” Lord Atwood was no longer playing around. His voice raised so much that Mr. Fortin, reached for a glass of water, only to abandon the idea when Lord Atwood shot him a deadly glare.

I didn’t want Brody to be scolded, but why didn’t he speak to me? He could have just told me what those two had said about me and given me a chance to explain whatever was shown to him.

“What? When did I block her and who accused her of what?” Brody, who seemed genuinely confused, looked at me.

My heart sank and skipped a beat.

“April and Natalya, what did they tell you about my stepdaughter?” Lord Atwood wasn’t screaming anymore, but his reaction was still intense.

He looked around at everyone and then at me before replying, “Nothing.”

Tasting 185

185–Looking Bad

Nora:

I rose from my seat to confront him directly, but I had to walk past Lord Atwood to do so.

“Nora! They didn’t say anything bad about you,” he continued, sounding sincere.

“Although they did show me something,” he paused, turning to the principal and Lord Atwood.

“See! I told you they have shown him something that angered him,” I was standing up for myself. I was simply trying to explain to them that she had told me she had shown him something, and now he was admitting to it.

“But it’s not something negative. When did I tell you that I was angry at you, Nora?” Brody asked, his voice tinged with concern.

“Just show me what those two have shown you,” Lord Atwood rose from his chair. He appeared to be searching for an explanation for my behavior as well. Until now, he had still believed me over everyone else.

“This,” Brody showed them an image of a dress, and then the conversation below was from April.

April: I think you should get her this dress, and if not, get her these glass slippers. She's a real-life Cinderella and will look so good in these.

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My jaw dropped as all eyes turned to me.

Mr. Fortin scoffed and shook his head, giving a sly smile to Lord Atwood, who seemed dismayed while reading this chat.

"My daughter! He blocked you, right?" He still wanted me to provide some proof to support my side.

"She told me he did," at this point, I realized she had deceived me. No! I had deceived myself. She had riled me up so much that I believed every scheme she claimed to have plotted against me.

"I think there's enough evidence indicating that Nora was bullying April. She insulted that poor girl and called her names—" Mr. Fortin began speaking, but Brody frowned.

"Hold on. There's no way Nora would bully someone," him taking my side brightened Lord Atwood's face.

"In fact, I think you need to investigate and ask other students who have been bullied," he continued in a stern tone before stepping up in front of me.

"You just saw how she lied," Mr. Fortin mentioned the whole misunderstanding of the accusations I had made against April.

"And what makes you believe April didn't say all that to her?" he placed his hands on his waist, facing Mr. Fortin and not even taking his own cousin's side.

"She's your family, and you're telling me you don't believe her?" Mr. Fortin was directly arguing with Brody now.

Lord Atwood turned to me, placed his hand on my back, giving me the reassurance I needed.

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It really helped.

"Yeah, that's why I'm telling you, because she is my family and I know her. She has been bullying Nora a lot. That's why when she sent me this picture, even I had to ask

her why she was suddenly being so nice,” Brody continued, but Mr. Fortin had more to talk about. He wasn’t holding back.

“Okay! What about their friendship? I believe they’ve been friends. So how can you say she’s been bullying Nora?” Mr. Fortin’s smirk turned into a frown when Brody scoffed.

“Maybe you don’t remember the two girls spreading rumors about Nora. Weren’t they caught lying and only got away because they started dating the Alpha King brothers?” My mouth went dry when Brody mentioned the rumors. But it was more because Ryker and Cain had saved their skins. My skin started to burn with anger. If they hadn’t intervened, those girls would never have dared to get me into another

mess.

“Hmm,” Mr. Fortin lowered his head this time.

“I won’t tolerate anyone spreading rumors or playing games with Nora again. If this school can’t take care of her and protect her, then I guess I’ll have to transfer her to the school in my pack,” Brody made that bold statement, causing my heart to jump and catch in my throat.

“I feel like you wanted my stepdaughter to be in the wrong. Look at you siding with and arguing for those two,” Lord Atwood took his turn this time, prompting Mr. Fortin to defensively shake his head.

“Atwood, I’m your friend. Why would I ever be against someone who is dear to you?” His tone had changed, and his actions were very contradictory. In fact, Lord Atwood was right.

It did seem like he wanted the two girls to be proven innocent and for me to take responsibility for this messy situation.

“I don’t know, but you have disappointed me today,” Lord Atwood held my hand to lead me outside when Mr. Fortin cleared his throat and regained everyone’s attention.

“I think you should really consider marrying her off to Alpha Brody as soon as possible.”

We all turned to him, even Brody was frowning.

“I am just saying that we have been receiving complaints about Nora a lot lately. Some students are making explicit drawings of her and her stepbrothers—and spreading them around,” he paused, noticing Lord Atwood narrowing his eyes at him.

“Why is that rumor still circulating? And who are these students? Why haven’t they been caught yet?” Lord Atwood yelled. I noticed how tightly he was holding my hand, and he was shaking with anger.

"I don't know. I can't enter someone's head and erase these things. As for the students, we've called in a maintenance guy to fix the cameras. Some students broke them a few weeks ago. Once that is done, hopefully, nothing will be spread around the school, but I can't be certain about the internet," he finished, causing my eyes to fill with

tears.

"I will take care of it. As for you, just do your job and don't get involved in high school drama," Brody took over, warning Mr. Fortin outright. Once again, I felt like the walls were closing in on me.

The way Mr. Fortin looked sadly at Lord Atwood before he passed me a very disapproving glance let me know that he still thought I was wrong in this scenario.

Tasting 186

186–Focus!

Nora:

I had been in tears ever since I left the school holding hands with Lord Atwood. Though Brody and Lord Atwood had defended me in there, I could still sense tension in their body language.

"Do you mind if I drop her off and spend some time with her before letting her attend classes?" Brody asked Lord Atwood, who nodded and calmly made his way towards the exit. Watching him walk away with his head down only made me hate myself more and more.

Why did I let those two fool me so easily? Couldn't I have confirmed with Brody first? But how could I have? Everything was happening so quickly that I wasn't given a chance to defend myself.

"Nora!" Now that it was just the two of us, Brody straightened his back. and called my name. We were sitting in the school courtyard now.

"I swear, April told me she had shown you some things and now you've blocked me," I quickly started explaining, feeling irritated with the kind of games those two were playing with me.

"I understand, and I believe you. It's just that you need to learn not to react to everything so impulsively. Look what happened today. Lord Atwood is old and he's already dealing with a lot of grief. He can't tolerate all these things," he was right.

I had been acting so nonchalantly, always causing him to receive complaints about me.

“As for the issues with April and Natalya, I will warn April to stay

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186 Focus!

away from you. She won't dare to speak to you or against you ever again,” he seemed so angry when promising me that she wouldn't be allowed around me again.

“I upset you and Lord Atwood today, didn't I?” I poured out, slowly sighing.

“Not really. I was more proud of you than upset when I found out you hit her. Sometimes, we have to take extreme measures to stop the bullies. But be aware of their schemes,” he held my hand, rubbing it between his warm palms and smiling at me.

“Thank you,” I said with a bright smile on my lips.

“I'm always here for you, Nora,” he uttered sweetly. “Oh, and by the way, I got that apartment I've been talking about. Whenever you're free, I'll show it to you. Right now, I'm waiting for the furniture to be delivered.” That was indeed good news.

If he stayed under their roof, they would not stop him from getting riled up against me in one way or another.

“How long do you plan to stay here in this pack? I'm worried once you leave, life will become so hard for me.”

Brody was actually not a bad option to have as a mate. He had shown on many occasions that he could be trusted, and today, how he went against his cousin and took care of the whole matter really helped me see him in a positive light. In a light that one sees their potential mate

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“Just a few more months, why? Do you want me gone already?” he joked. When I didn't laugh, he held my hand and then gently lifted my chin, compelling me to raise my head.

106–Focus!

“Hey, I will not leave you alone. Don't worry!” he reassured jokingly. “Now go back and attend those classes. I'll keep an eye out on April and even have a word with her,” he promised, helping me up and walking me all the way back into the school.

As we walked through the hallway, everybody noticed that he was there for me and was really overprotective of me.

“Go inside,” he stopped near my class and let go of my hand. I noticed many she-wolves ogling at him, but he never looked away from me.

I hadn’t seen him look twice, or even once, at someone else. Every time I glanced his way, he would be looking at me with a cute smile on his lips that compelled me to smile back at him.

The classes were really boring. I couldn’t get the whole mess from the morning out of my head. The teachers also called me out multiple times for not paying attention. I just couldn’t forget how sad Lord Atwood looked. The principal also made sure to guilt-trip him a lot for letting me into his life and dealing with all the messes I was creating

now.

After classes were over, I rushed out to avoid seeing those who had made my life miserable. Natalya and April did walk past me, but they didn’t seem as happy as they had been in the morning. April, in particular, looked more upset. She had a huge bruise on her cheek, a blow to her ego, and hadn’t even managed to make me look bad. She must be furious.

However, the moment I took a step outside the school, I remembered that Ryker was supposed to come pick me up today. So, the misery was not over yet.

His bike arrived, and he took off his helmet, his eyes shining but not fixed on me. I started walking towards him, but April rushed past me.

52.30%

1930

186–Focus!

He didn’t get off the bike and hugged her back when she tightly wrapped her arms around his neck.

“I’ve been missing you so much,” she mumbled, rocking her body against his.

He glanced at me and replied, “Me too.”

As she broke the hug and he focused on her face, a frown crept onto his forehead. “What happened to you? Did somebody hit you?”

The possessiveness was evident on his face, but not directed towards me this time. He gently pressed his finger against her cheek, and she grimaced.

“Ask your sister,” she pouted, running her finger up and down alongside his black jacket’s zipper.

He looked back at me, his eyes widened, a shocked expression on his face.

“She called me bad names too. The principal called your father, and he looked so defeated when he left.”

I was seething with anger the way she was delivering the story to Ryker, who was eating it up and getting angrier with every word she said.

Tasting 187

187–The Mised Stepbrother

Nora:

“What is she saying?” Ryker asked me, his jaw clenched.

“Why? You have a problem hearing it directly from her?” I hissed, making him narrow his eyes at me in warning.

“You better watch your tone, Nora,” he hissed back, and April smiled in succession.

“You know what, screw you two. I’ll walk back home,” I didn’t want to stick around and let them talk to me badly. Ryker was becoming her puppet, and I wouldn’t allow any disrespect.

“Good, I’ll go home with him,” April smiled, shrugging before reaching for his helmet.

“I have to drop her home,” however, Ryker took the helmet back and pointed at me.

“And you, don’t create a scene and hop on,” he gestured to the back of his bike, but I shook my head.

The

way he reacted when she told him what had happened today had upset me. It made me realize he should be the one looking guilty instead of raising his voice at me.

“Nora! Don’t do that. Did you not hear what she said? Dad is already upset and exhausted. Don’t give him more stress,” him bringing his dad into the mix and again calling me responsible for his sadness was concerning.

0.004

1224

183–The Maled Stepbrother

“She lied to me to get a reaction out of me. She lied about Brody blocking me,” as I started explaining in a harsh tone, he interrupted me when Brody was mentioned.

“You hit her because of Brody, and then Dad faced such humiliation because of him too?” he asked, a smirk playing on his lips, but it wasn’t a taunting smirk. It was the type of grin someone gives when they catch someone in a situation that is too unbelievable.

I just glared at his face for making it sound so wrong.

“So, because you thought Brody had blocked you, my dad went through all this mess?” he asked again, using a different tone this time.

April watched us both, her eyes examining how Ryker stared at me, demanding an explanation.

“Now get in the back and stop making it difficult,” he said firmly, clearly thinking I had hurt his father because of Brody.

Was

“I will go,” April spoke softly after noticing our awkward interaction. It the kind of tone someone uses when they are trying to grasp reality but failing. She stormed past me, and Ryker shook his head. Maybe he finally realized he was acting strangely with me, or maybe he was upset he couldn’t give his beloved April a lift.

Not wanting any more trouble or arguments, I got into the backseat and put on the helmet. Instead of holding onto him, I held onto the bike, keeping my hands to myself this time.

A few seconds into the ride, he started muttering something. Since the wind was too strong and we were wearing helmets, I couldn’t hear him clearly. Nor did I want to ask him what he was on about. If it was something he had a problem with, I’m sure he could deal with it himself. So, I let him be.

1224

187 The Mised Stepbrother

But obviously, he wouldn’t let it slide. How could he, right?

He slowed down near the woods and eventually stopped. I frowned because I could tell he was stopping to have an argument with me, and I wasn’t really in the mood for it.

“Why are we stopping here?” I grunted.

“Why? You don’t feel safe around anyone but your Brody?” he taunted, getting off the bike and grabbing my arm to pull me off as well.

“Ahh! Are you crazy?” I complained, shrugging myself free. But he was the one who had forcefully taken off my helmet. The moment the helmet was off, he found me glaring at him with my hands on my

waist.

“What’s the matter? Why did we stop here?” I asked him angrily, ignoring his attempt to provoke me.

“You will not bother our dad from now on,” he hissed, pointing his finger in my face.

“Okay! Anything else?” I replied, showing no interest in arguing with him. His eyes narrowed as he looked into my face.

“You really don’t care, do you?” he asked, and I finally gave him a blank stare. Our eye contact deepened, and in that moment, I recalled how he and his brother had shown me that they didn’t care.

“You’re the one to question my behavior?” I scoffed, steadily measuring him up and down. I folded my arms even tighter across my chest, giving him a deadly glare this time.

“We should not talk about that anymore. That topic is over,” he stated.

“Of course, because you have no response to my questions. You were

48 634

12:24

forcing me to reject Cain and dismiss Brody, all so that you could also ditch me for April?” I let out a taunting laugh, making sure he knew that just because he said the topic was over, it wasn’t.

“Don’t act like you’re all sad. You’ve been happier ever since I stopped bothering you,” the way he recalled asking me for attention and to reject others wasn’t how I saw it. Sure, he was forceful and very aggressive at times, but I never felt exhausted by him, nor did I say something in anger that suggested to him that I was exhausted.

“You happily jumped into Brody’s lap and started making out with him,” he aggressively raised his tone.

“Seriously? As if you don’t know why I did that. Do you not see what you did to me when you accepted April without any conditions but had a plethora of rules for me to follow only so that you could betray me?” As I started to tear up, the harshness on his face began to fade away.

“If you had accepted me and made it public, Ryker, I would have gladly rejected the world for you. But I wasn’t sure how much I could trust your word, and turns out, I was right,” my lips were quivering as I spoke to him.

“I don’t even know why you and Brody hate each other. You brothers never shared anything with me, and neither did he. But you knew what April had done, yet you—” I paused as a sudden pain in my head shook

1. me.

His eyes widened at my lips, but it wasn’t because he was lusting after me. There was something wet on my lips; I was bleeding from my nose.

73.68%

122

Tasting 188

188—In His Arms But Not Comforted

Nora:

I gently touched my lip and then the blood, nearly stumbling at the sight of it.

“Are you okay?” he asked, briskly taking a step toward me. But I raised my hand to stop him and stepped back. I was so out of it that as I raised my head to continue arguing with him, my world spun and I fell onto my butt.

“Nora! What’s happening to you?” he inquired, kneeling down before me and gently holding my arm so I wouldn’t lie flat on the road.

“You and Cain—both of you can go to hell from now on—just tell your women to stay away from—” I blinked hard because my vision had blurred.

I don’t even know when Ryker shifted from in front of me to behind, but I managed to rest my back against his chest.

He placed his hand on my forehead and gently pushed my head back to rest against him, and I did.

“You’re fine. It’s just stress,” he comforted me in the softest tone.

“I hate you,” I whimpered, but couldn’t really cry because I was so dizzy. I don’t know how long we stayed like that, but it must have been. hours. I even bet I took a nap for an hour.

His phone ringing was what woke me up again.

12240

I gently pushed him back and slid to the side, seeing him look at me with concern in his eyes.

“I’ve called the driver. You can’t ride the bike right now,” he said. giving me a guilty look.

“I can call a cab,” I insisted, but who was I kidding? I wasn’t in a condition to travel alone. My body was aching so badly. And if it was truly because of stress, Ryker should be ashamed of himself as he was part of the reason why I was so depressed now.

His phone had been ringing, and he had been avoiding it.

“Either attend to it or put it on silent. It’s giving me a headache.” I groaned, frustrated as I stayed sitting on the road with my face in my hands. I still couldn’t get up, so waiting for the car was the best option in this scenario.

He finally gave up and answered the call, which only worsened my mood when I realized who had been blowing up his phone all this

time.

“No, I’m not home yet.” Ryker replied, trying to be discreet, but his phone’s volume was too loud and I could hear April on the other end.

“But we were supposed to go for lunch,” she said, and I bet she was pouting. To think that I always had to be secretive about my relationship with Ryker while he openly took her out on a date was just

so sad.

“I don’t think we can go for lunch today. Maybe some other day,” Ryker replied, giving me a sidelong glance.

“Why? Is everything alright? Is Nora with you?” she questioned, and my body stiffened.

188 in His Arma But Not Comforted

“Yeah, we had to stop because she wasn’t feeling well,” Ryker decided to be honest with her. Wow, their relationship was definitely stronger than I had expected.

“Are you sure she’s not well? She tends to steal attention a lot. Look what she did in school today,” she said, leaving my jaw hanging low and Ryker noticed it. Too late for him to turn down the volume when I heard her badmouthing me.

“Not everyone is as deceitful as you,” I yelled, and Ryker almost dropped his phone in shock before giving me a disapproving glance.

“I’ll talk to you later,” he insisted, “No! You won’t say anything. Just know I will call you later,” he hung up after convincing her not to argue with me.

He then slid the phone into his pocket and stared at my face in disbelief.

“What? You seriously think I want attention? Why didn’t you tell her I’m not like that? Or maybe you believe her words too,” I couldn’t shake off the feeling of him choosing her over me. It felt like I was still in a constant competition, wanting to regain my mates’ approval, but was I truly ready to accept them back after everything that had happened?

“I just know I don’t want to be in this drama between you two,” he scoffed, still kneeling on one knee.

“Huh! You don’t have the guts to face the truth. But I can. April had provoked me this morning—” my naive self thought he would give me a chance to expose his toxic girlfriend to him.

But he wasn’t ready to hear a single bad thing about her.

“Nora, can we not talk about it? I don’t want you to talk about her

when she’s not here. Just let it go. Mistakes happen, and sometimes she acts recklessly. Didn’t you befriend her even after knowing what her attitude was?” I hated how they constantly dragged me into this, as if I knew she was incapable of changing.

“Good, thank you for letting me know where you stand. From now on, I don’t give a damn about what you and Cain do with your girlfriends. Just reject me already so I can live peacefully with my boyfriend,” the moment I mentioned rejection, he rolled his eyes and quipped, “You’ll have to spin that ring on your finger for me to reject you. Are you ready to do that?” His taunt hit me on so many levels.

It felt like they knew my secret and were using it against me. Yet, they didn’t even know the kind of wolf I truly was. I couldn’t be sure how much more brutal they would be if they found out.

“No! You can’t do that. So shut up and let us live,” he hissed, standing up as he watched the car arrive.

“Drop her home,” he didn’t even bother helping me up, waving his hand at the driver to take care of me.

The driver assisted me into the backseat of the car, and we drove off, leaving Ryker behind on his bike.

Tasting 189

189–The Doctor!

Nora:

We arrived home, and Ryker hastily departed, probably to make up for that canceled date. The moment I stepped out of the car, I thought I would be fine, but I collapsed.

Not quite!

Strong arms enveloped me, carrying me without a word of explanation. It was Nash. He swiftly ascended the stairs, voices trailing behind him.

Once he settled me onto the bed and I raised my head, I saw Silas entering while Cain lingered in the doorway.

“What happened to her?” Silas took the initiative to inquire.

“I don’t know. Ryker just called me to be here for Nora,” Nash explained, clarifying why he was anxiously waiting near the car.

“Nora!” Silas hissed at Nash, motioning for him to step aside and joining me on the bed, facing me.

“Did your nose bleed?” He must have noticed the dried blood. I simply nodded, which seemed to make him understand what was happening.

“Maybe we should take her to the doctor,” Cain suggested cautiously, but I shot him a deadly glare, causing him to pause and tilt his head.

I am a doctor,” Silas interjected sharply, not appreciating his brother’s attempt at humor.

12241

The The Doctor!

“Hmm! Well, then, Doctor, tell me what’s wrong with her?” I couldn’t believe Cain had the nerve to barge into my room and question Silas, who genuinely seemed concerned for me.

“Let me examine her first,” Silas insisted.

“But I think we should take her to the hospital,” Nash agreed suddenly. I didn’t appreciate them ganging up on Silas, who was only trying to help me.

I knew they were joking, but I didn’t like Cain’s smirking. It reminded me of the game he had played with me.

“Actually, I feel more comfortable with Silas than with any other doctor,” I said, and silence fell between them. There was a smile on Silas’ face that I had never seen before. He turned to his brothers, even smiling broadly before returning his gaze to me.

“I promise to take the best care of you,” he spoke softly, earning a nod from me.

“I believe you,” I continued, and his smile grew warmer.

“Huh!” Cain scoffed and walked out, leaving Nash unexpectedly

attentive to our every move.

“So, tell me, Nora, what happened?” Silas looked reassuring as he sat in front of me, his arms spread and hands resting on the mattress.

“I felt a pain in my head, and then my vision turned blurry. Next thing I knew, my nose was bleeding, and I sort of dozed off or passed out, I’m not sure,” I explained everything to him while he listened silently, his expression turning somber.

“Is it because of what happened in school today?” He asked bluntly. I guess Nash wasn’t aware because he looked slightly lost.

19.815

12.251

16 The Doctor

“What happened in school today?” Nash inquired. I gulped as I instantly started to wonder whose side they would take.

“The principal called,” Silas turned to Nash, then faced forward as he recounted everything that had transpired during those few hours at school.

“What the fuck?” Nash groaned, his demeanor instantly gearing up for a confrontation.

“Cain!” he yelled, rushing out of the room. I didn’t want the argument to escalate.

“You stay here,” Silas ordered before rushing out himself. But I didn’t listen and followed after him to see how Nash would respond to Cain. and his brother’s mention of Natlaya.

I emerged from my room to find Nash and Cain locked in a stare–down.

“I’m not sure where Natlaya went wrong in this. April explained everything, and Nora took her anger out on her, so why bring Natlaya into this?” Cain’s tone was gentle, but he was clearly defending his girlfriend.

It was evident that his brother shouldn’t have brought Natlaya into this

mess.

‘Because those two make plans and do everything in sync now,” Nash groaned. It was clear that he understood the plans those two have been making. But why was Cain and Ryker so blind to the games now? Why were they trusting those two so blindly?

Or maybe Nora wants you to drag Natlaya because she thinks she’s been defeated?” Cain suggested, causing heads to turn towards me.

I was there, and Nora didn’t say a word to Nash. I’m the one who told

11%

12.25

him about the school incident. So what do you have to say about that now?” Silas stood up, blocking Cain’s view of me as he positioned himself between us.

“Oh! So now she’s going to use you two to fight your brothers because she doesn’t want them dating the girls she doesn’t like. Isn’t it weird that she’s so invested in our love lives?” Cain calmly dragged me through the mud in my own head.

“You tell your girlfriend to stay away from her, and everything will go smoothly from now on,” Silas warned his brother, creating an awkward atmosphere as Cain tilted his head, almost challenging him.

“Since you and Ryker seem to want to date those who are at odds with Nora, you’d better tell your chicks to keep their paws to themselves. You know very well I can intervene if I want,” Nash added, igniting Cain into a fiery reaction I couldn’t quite comprehend.

Cain stretched his neck, closed his eyes, and clenched his jaw. However, he didn't say anything else because Silas turned to me.

"What you went through was due to intense stress. You don't need to stand here and deal with this mess. Just rest, and let the rest be on your stepbrothers," Silas stated, giving Cain one last glare before guiding me back to my room.

I was so tired that the moment he gave me medicine, I fell asleep. Nash stayed in the room while Silas checked my blood pressure and administered the medicine.

I recalled what Nash had said about Silas. Was he worried that Silas would hypnotize me?

This reminded me of the day I went shopping for a dress with Silas. He was about to say something but then stopped. What could it be?

Tasting 190

190—Finding My Second Chance Mate

Brody:

The entire situation escalated at school today. It really bothered me when Lord Atwood raised his voice and spoke disrespectfully to me in the office. I grunted as I kept driving back home.

"All because of April," I muttered under my breath. That whole mess happened because of her. There's no way she didn't play a game with Nora. I knew that much. Once I arrived home after spending the day working on some stuff, I found Natalya and April in the living room with a bunch of snacks scattered around and a TV playing. Both were engrossed in their phones but kept the TV on because apparently, it made them look cool. I didn't appreciate such showy behavior.

There have been she-wolves that had attempted to win my heart but my wolf never felt towards them. Nora has that pull that I couldn't ignore.

Fortunately, there was Nora. She was so unique and different. Unfortunately, she was so stunning that everyone had their eyes on her. I noticed how the other students checked her out today, and it pained my heart.

"Brody!" April called out, a frown creasing her forehead, while Natalya sat up properly now that I was going to join them.

"Why did you defend her today? She lied about you blocking her and got you called out on speaker. Seriously?" April spoke as if I were born yesterday, thinking she could fool me. I wasn't as naive as Nora.

“So you played her today,” It wasn’t a question but a statement. I had been simmering with anger ever since I saw Nora cry earlier.

12250

190 Finding My Second Chance Mate

“I didn’t,” April grunted, folding her arms defensively.

“Actually, Nora was calling her names. She even threatened me—” The nerve of this girl to speak against Nora in front of me.

“Did I ask you?” I hissed, and she instantly fell silent, looking to April for support.

“What’s wrong with you? You’re fighting everyone for her? The one who sleeps around with her stepbrothers?” That same rumor surfaced again, and my fists clenched.

“April!” I groaned, giving her one last warning to change her ways. “If you don’t start respecting Nora,” I stepped closer, hunching over to ensure she heard me loud and clear. I had always seen her as my little sister, but I would choose Nora over her without hesitation. She

needed to understand that.

“The thing is—Nora is not like others. She is not the type to sleep with everyone, and I still won’t leave her. She’s my girlfriend, and I love her very much,” I noticed her body flinching. “But if you or your unruly friend attack her character again or do anything to upset her—I might have to intervene in your relationship with the Alpha King brothers as well.” The moment she heard the threat, she gasped.

Natalya covered her mouth with her hands, looking frightened for her relationship.

“Are you threatening me for her?” April must really be delusional to ask me that question. Couldn’t she tell already that I stand with Nora?

“And I’m sure you wouldn’t want that,” I patted her head, forcing a smile. “So be a good sister and leave my girl alone,” my tone hardened, and they both noticed. Natalya avoided eye contact while April stared at me before quickly nodding.

27.41

12250

“You even got her an apartment.” April mentioned cautiously, careful not to provoke me further. Even Natalya looked sad. Why did these girls hate her so much?

“I’m not going to bring her here or anywhere she doesn’t feel safe. I don’t know about her stepbrothers, but April, for me, her comfort comes first. And I know she won’t be comfortable around the two of you.” I straightened my back and stretched my neck.

“You’re spoiling her. Soon, she’ll think she can use you however she wants without fear of losing you,” April warned, and it’s not like I wasn’t aware of it.

“And? That’s what I want.” I replied, noticing them exchange a glance. “I want her to know I’ll be there for her no matter what. Because April, what is love if your lover can’t trust you to stand by them in good and bad times?” I shrugged. I wasn’t sure why they kept trying to poison my mind about Nora. It wasn’t going to work. Even if I caught her in bed. with someone, even with her stepbrothers. I’d be upset and angry, but I wouldn’t break things off with her.

She was special to me. I wasn’t going to lose someone my heart and wolf cherished so deeply.

In fact, recently. I’ve been feeling a strange pull towards her whenever she’s around, and her scent would fill my nostrils. It was the kind of pull one feels when they’re on the verge of a mate bond. However, since her wolf hadn’t awakened and we hadn’t been together during a full moon, I hadn’t experienced it fully. But I was convinced that someday, this miracle would happen.

“Now, I’ll go because I have to order some more stuff for the apartment.” I knew these girls were probably upset that I was giving Nora so much attention. But did I care? Nope! My focus was on comforting Nora and letting her know she wasn’t alone. Sometimes, I