

Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates #Tasting 191 - Read Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates Tasting 191

Tasting 191

191—Silas' Patient

Nora:

I had been feeling much better but couldn't bring myself to leave my bedroom to join Lord Atwood and the others for meals. Nash would bring me breakfast, Silas handled lunch, and Mia brought me dinner, but beyond that, I kept to myself. I sensed that Lord Atwood was starting to regret his decision to exclude me.

I couldn't help but wonder if he was angry with me. Normally, he would come to eat with me, but it had been three days without a visit. He hadn't even inquired about why I wasn't attending school.

Summoning all my courage, I decided to go and see Lord Atwood. As I ventured out of my room, I noticed Cain's studio door was open, and I instinctively drew closer. I didn't intend to peek inside, but it was evident who was there.

Natalya was wandering around the studio, engaging in awkward conversation with him.

"And then the teachers said I did an amazing job on the test," she cheerfully recounted her grades. She was a bright student, so it wasn't surprising.

Lately, though, she had been garnering attention from boys, likely due to her association with April and her choice of attire, which left little to the imagination.

"That's good," he replied. I detected a hint of dryness in his voice, though I may have been overanalyzing.

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He seemed engrossed in his work, but she wouldn't stop talking. Couldn't she take a hint that he needed space?

"And then—," she continued, reaching for a painting to touch it, and I heard Cain groan.

"Don't touch it, it's still wet," he sounded exhausted, understandably so. She was intruding on his privacy so much.

But why did I care? I shouldn't.

I stomped my foot and hurriedly made my way downstairs to find Lord. Atwood. Luckily, I found him in his study in the basement.

"May I come in?" I asked, watching as he slowly lifted his head and smiled at me.

"You don't have to ask," his tone was peculiar, not angry or upset.

I entered and took a seat across the table.

"Tell me, how are you?" he inquired politely.

"I've been fine. But you never came to check on me," I complained, feigning a pout.

"I wanted to, but then I thought you wouldn't want to see my face after I failed to protect you," the sadness in his voice and his choice of words finally made me realize that his absence wasn't due to anger towards me but guilt over not preventing stress and harm from reaching me.

"Why do you always feel like you've failed to protect me when you're the only one I can rely on?" I reached for his hand and held it. "You've been the father to me that my own father couldn't be. It breaks my heart every time something happens, and you feel so guilty. Do you think I

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"

would have survived all these storms without you standing beside me like a sturdy wall?" I wanted him to understand that whatever I had become, it was because of him. The confidence to stand up for myself, even after being knocked down so many times, came from his support.

"That helps me feel so much better," he finally smiled, patting the back of my hand that rested on his.

"Now come on, we're going to eat dinner together. No more hiding when we've done nothing wrong," I stood up and took his hand, coaxing him to join me. He chuckled and followed along. Every time I restored a friendship or a relationship, I felt freed.

I led him to the living room where we would sit and chat while dinner was served.

“Wow, you’ve brought Dad out of his cocoon,” Nash laughed from his seat in the living room.

“He’s always done that for me,” I smiled warmly.

“But there’s something I need to ask,” Nash leaned forward to speak to Dad quietly.

“What is it?” Lord Atwood inquired.

“Nora has been accused of causing you harm. They were upsetting her with the idea that she’s the reason you’ve been so low. And you hiding in your shall only confirms that, do you think it is right that you behave. that way?” Nash explained earnestly. I might have tried to diffuse the situation, but sometimes the truth needs to be confronted. I won’t defend those who are now my enemies.

“That’s ridiculous. Tell me who was saying all those things to her,” Lord Atwood inquired firmly from Nash. I signaled to Nash not to

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101–Silas Patient

mention Ryker’s name. He had already been through so much, and hearing that his own son was discussing why he was sad and misjudging his grief would be too much for him.

“I’ll let you know if anyone says it again,” Nash reassured me with a nod.

As silence settled in, we turned our attention to the TV. News was playing, and then the headlines flashed across the screen.

My interest suddenly piqued, and I wondered why. There was a recent incident at the border where a woman attempted to cross into enemy territory. My heart sank as I focused on the woman’s pictures displayed on the TV. I recognized her all too well.

“We caught her,” Nash informed his dad, referencing the news.

“She

must have been a spy. Why else would she be crossing the border?” Lord Atwood sounded disappointed, but I couldn’t tear my eyes away from the TV.

“What’s going on?” Silas appeared, holding his phone and idly playing with it until his eyes landed on the TV. Suddenly, he nonchalantly shifted his mood as if he wasn’t interested in the news. But he should

have been concerned.

Why?

Because the woman on the screen was the same woman I had seen in

the mansion the other day, the same woman Silas had introduced to me as his patient.

She was here just before deciding to cross the border? And why was Silas acting so nonchalant as if he didn’t even recognize her?

Tasting 192

192–My Ruined Ball Gown

Nora:

I couldn’t look away from Silas’ face. It was as if I wanted to scrutinize his every reaction. However, he seemed nonchalant. If I hadn’t seen her in the house, I would never have suspected him of having ever seen her.

“I will rest for a while before dinner is served,” Lord Atwood sighed tiredly, walking away from us, while Nash attended a call, probably to discuss the breaking news with Ryker, as he was mostly patrolling the border.

“Ahem!” Now that it was Silas and me, I cleared my throat to initiate a conversation with him. He casually turned to me, lounging on the couch and raising his brow. He was probably playing a car racing game. on his phone.

“Did you see the news?” I asked, trying to be less intrusive.

“Which one?” he inquired even more casually.

“The one about the wandering omega on the border? Did you not recognize her?” I asked, and he steadily put his phone down, looking my way before zoning out as if trying to remember something.

“Not really. Why? Have you seen her before?” It was odd that he had forgotten.

“Silas! She’s the woman I bumped into the other day in the mansion. Remember, you told me she was your patient?” I smiled, even though I

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was a bit taken aback that he forgot about his patient – not just anyone, but the one who had come to his mansion for treatment.

“Ah!” He zoned out again, this time squinting his eyes slightly and nodding thoughtfully.

“I guess I remember her. But I can’t be sure. You know, I meet new people every day. So many patients,” he shrugged, quickly returning to playing on his phone.

“Hmm,” I didn’t know how to continue the conversation when he made it clear he no longer recalled her. But I did. I remembered her vividly.

“So, how are you feeling?” He kept his eyes on the screen, adjusting his car just a little.

“I’m feeling much better now,” I reassured him.

“Good. Make sure you’re eating and getting enough sleep. You’ll be dancing a lot at the ball, so be prepared for that,” he chuckled to himself, still focused on the screen.

“You should come too,” I insisted, and he paused the game, turning to look at me.

“I don’t have a mate or a girlfriend,” he said with a shrug.

“Maybe just come? I heard others can join. Even Nash will be there,” I wanted us all to be there, at least Nash and Silas. As for Cain and Ryker, their presence only brought me stress these days.

“I don’t think so. I have a list of patients piled up, so I’ll be working while everyone else is dancing,” he replied in a sweet tone. With his deep voice, whenever he spoke softly, it came out incredibly charming and cute. I couldn’t quite describe the allure of it.

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“Oh, that’s too bad,” I mumbled.

“Why? You’ll have your alpha with you. It’s not like you were going to dance with me anyway,” he joked, though it reminded me of the day in the mall when he seemed about to say something before Brody

appeared and he changed the subject.

“What were you planning to say at the mall the other day?” I inquired, noticing how his body language tensed up. “And don’t lie about it before you do. I know there was

something you wanted to say, but Brody's arrival made you hold back. So come on, tell me." I sat on the carpet, kneeling beside his couch.

"What?" he acted like he had no clue. So I had to raise my brow and pout, waiting for him to remember the conversation that was left unfinished the other day.

"You look like a puppy right now," he teased, patting my head.

"Don't change the subject," I groaned, and he laughed even louder.

"Okay," he relented, "I was saying—if I weren't your stepbrother, you would be going to this ball with me."

The moment he said that, a shiver ran up my spine, and my body visibly flinched.

"You wanted to know, now deal with those goosebumps yourself," he remarked, hinting at the goosebumps on my skin as he got up.

He left the living room chuckling to himself. It was true. Hearing him say that made me shiver and blush.

"Did he really mean that?" I asked myself, biting my bottom lip.

12 251

He wasn't the type to flirt with anyone. So far, I hadn't seen him admire any girl. For him to say all that to me was indeed unusual but strangely special.

I stood up, a bright smile on my lips. I'd noticed it before as well; every time my stepbrothers complimented me, I blushed and felt oddly happy.

Since no one was left for me to spend time with, I decided to return to my room and place my dress, which had arrived earlier, in the closet. It was a heavy gown, and I was afraid of causing it damage. Taking one step at a time, I reached for my door cautiously.

As soon as I opened the door, a horrifying sight awaited me. The dress was no longer in its cover. In fact, it was torn apart, burned in places, and left in the middle of my room. I couldn't react properly for the first few seconds as I stared at the ruined dress, and when the reality settled on me, I started screaming.

"Nash!"

"Silas!"

"Lord Atwood!"

I was freaking out. I don't know what happened in that moment, but I was so angry and scared that I had to call them to come see what someone had done to my dress. They appeared within minutes. Even Cain rushed out of his studio to check on the commotion.

"What's going on—" Nash was the first one to see the room. He was left speechless, with the same shock on his face as the others.

There was only one explanation for this.

Freaking Natalya had done it.

Tasting 193

193—I Am A Drama Queen

Nora:

"Calm down. Drink some water," Nash said, sitting beside me on the bed, while everyone else inspected the room and checked the windows to see if someone had sneaked in while I was away.

"But who could have done it?" Silas asked, looking confused and lost. However, I wasn't lost. I knew exactly who could have done it.

"I know who did it," I muttered grumpily, wiping away tears and clearing my cheeks with the back of my hands. Their eyes turned to me and then to their father, waiting for him to ask further questions. Cain stood in the doorway as usual, leaning against the frame with one hand in his pants' pocket and the other holding a brush, gently stroking it between his fingers.

"Who did it?" Lord Atwood took the lead, briskly walking back from the window to stand by the bed.

"I think she should rest," Cain intervened, which made things even creepier. Did he know Natalya did it, and was he trying to cover for her?

"No, I don't need to rest. I know who did it," I said angrily, making eye contact with Cain and gesturing for the others to follow my gaze.

"It was Natalya." As soon as I said her name, they looked at me before glancing back at Cain.

"She was in the mansion, and she did this. There's no other

explanation,” I insisted. I was certain she was behind it. For her to come here and for my dress to be ruined on the same day wasn’t a coincidence.

“Hmm, I don’t think Natalya did anything,” Cain said calmly, tilting his head.

“But she was here, and we know they’ve been having troubles,” Lord Atwood grumbled, giving his son a disapproving glare.

“There’s no way Natalya did that. She left the mansion an hour ago, and I escorted her to the exit myself. She didn’t go to any rooms in between,” his confidence in defending her side irritated me, and I jumped off the bed.

“You’re lying! You’re covering for her. If she didn’t do it, then who did?” I yelled, not realizing my tone or behavior.

“You think I would cover for her if she had done something wrong? I am not just her boyfriend but I am also the pack’s alpha king. I have some duties—,” before he could finish his ramblings, I intervened.

“You are very much capable of lying.” I yelled and his eyes darkened.

“Tone!” Cain hissed, straightening his back. “There’s a working camera in front of my bedroom. We can take a look,” he muttered, sending shivers down my spine as I recalled standing outside his room for too long, peering inside.

“Shall we?” Cain asked, but it was Nash who dismissed the idea.

“That won’t be necessary. The truth is, someone messed up her dress. She was so excited when she received it,” Nash sounded slightly bothered by the situation unfolding in our lives.

22.59%

1931 Am A Drama Queen

I couldn’t understand why Cain was defending her so vehemently. He knew she had done it, yet he was taking her side?

“I understand you all want her to be comfortable, but why is it that every time something happens, my girlfriend is being questioned?” Cain addressed his brothers directly, not even looking my way.

“Because she—” as I tried to make a point, he turned hastily towards me, pointing his finger.

“Not talking to you! I’m talking to my family,” he grunted through clenched teeth, making everyone visibly uncomfortable.

“Cain!” Lord Atwood interjected, urging him to be polite with me, though it sounded more like a request.

“No! If there’s a problem, I’ll never bring my girlfriend here again. I’ll consider this place Nora’s home only,” he made it clear he wouldn’t tolerate any disrespect towards Natalya again.

As he stormed out of the room, I watched his brothers and father sadly eye his empty spot. In that moment, I sensed their urge to stop him, which filled me with a strange sense of guilt. Was I truly coming between them and ruining their happiness?

“Don’t worry about the dress; we will arrange something else for you,” Lord Atwood placed his hand on my head, but the lack of eye contact was concerning. It had been happening so often that he would be lying if he said he wasn’t slightly uncomfortable with the drama.

They all left while I stayed in my room, confused as to why Cain took Natalya’s side. After a few minutes of silence, a knock on the door made me open it to find Cain standing outside with a laptop in his hand. He didn’t say a word but turned the screen to me, showing me footage from outside his studio. At first, I thought he was threatening

to show it to Lord Atwood, but as I watched further, I realized he was simply showing me that after I left, Natalya walked out of the room with Cain. They went downstairs together, and then Cain returned to his studio alone.

“I think you should stop accusing others so bluntly because at this point, it seems like you’re doing it on purpose. I suggest you stay out of everyone’s life and not mention Natalya or say her name again,” his tone was stern. I wasn’t sure if it was a warning or advice, but he didn’t stick around to explain.

As he left, I paced around my room in bewilderment. If she didn’t do it, then who could have?

I felt so lost that I lay down on the bed and dozed off. I didn’t understand why all of this was happening to me, but I was afraid of burdening everyone around me.

Soon, I heard another knock on the door and woke up to realize dinner time had passed. Strangely, Lord Atwood hadn’t called me this time either. He had made it seem before like he didn’t contact me out of guilt, but what about this time? Was he changing too?

I sighed and got up from the bed, walking to the door. As I opened it, a bewildering sight awaited me.

Tasting 194

1226

194–The Red Gown

Nora:

“What is this?” I asked, my gaze fixed on Silas, who held a crimson dress in his hand. Not just any dress, but the one I had picked out in the mall before choosing Brody’s option.

“Now you don’t have to worry about a gown,” he whispered, passing by me. As he entered the room, I saw Lord Atwood following behind him.

“He mentioned he had something that might cheer you up,” Lord Atwood explained, and I realized why he hadn’t come to ask me to dinner.

“She liked this gown initially, so I suppose no harm done,” Silas said to his father, placing the gown on the bed and turning to me. The white hoodie made him appear so imposing and pristine.

“Try it on, and if it needs any alterations, let me know,” he smiled faintly, but it was his gesture that touched my heart.

“Thank you so much,” I said with a sniffle, almost on the verge of breaking down at his kindness.

“Oh no! Please don’t cry again. It’s time you prepare yourself for the ball. Go show them all who will be the most gorgeous,” he playfully pinched my cheek, sending a shiver through my body.

Lord Atwood watched us with satisfaction, finally seeing his son getting along well with his stepsister.

“I don’t know how I will ever repay you for this,” I was becoming so

1276

194 The Red Gown

weak when I should have been stronger by now. It was just that a mate’s betrayal can really mess someone up.

“Okay, let’s go eat something now. I’ve been starving,” Lord Atwood rubbed his tummy like a child, hinting at the truth about skipping dinner because I hadn’t joined them. The three of us walked downstairs to dine.

Nash wasn’t home and would arrive early in the morning. Cain chose to skip dinner, probably because he was upset with me for constantly confronting his girlfriend and accusing her unfairly when, oddly enough, she was innocent.

Ryker, as usual, was nowhere to be found, likely at the border. That’s when I recalled the patient who had wandered around the woods. I swear I recognized her, but then again, it might not mean much. Silas was the pack’s doctor, so it’s natural he wouldn’t remember everyone, and his association with her wouldn’t necessarily mean anything.

Every pack member received treatment from Silas, so just because someone commits a crime doesn’t imply Silas knew their intentions. Besides, I was too happy with him to be suspicious of him not remembering her. He had done a lot for me.

After dinner, we all retired to our rooms.

“He’s so nice,” I told Akira, twisting the ring on my finger as we discussed the gown.

“Of course, he really cares about you now,” she replied, but there was a hint of playfulness in her voice that I couldn’t ignore.

“What’s wrong with you? Why are you talking so strangely?” Her tone made me wonder what was on her mind.

2263%

12 26

“I’m sure you know what I mean,” she giggled, causing me to frown at her.

“No, I don’t. So please, tell me what’s been on your mind,” I placed my hands on my waist, standing before the gown and admiring its beauty.

“What if—just hear me out,” she quickly interrupted me, “what if you let me out around him on the full moon, and we—”

I had to interrupt her because what she was suggesting was outrageous.

“That is crazy. Why would you even suggest something like that? Don’t we have enough mates already?” I groaned at her, but in the back of my mind, this idea had been recurring lately. It didn’t seem like a

coincidence that I was fated to three of the brothers. Why would the Moon Goddess leave out one of them? Could it be more than fate, maybe even a miracle?

“Is it, though? It would be strange if he’s the only one who isn’t our mate,” she remarked. She wasn’t entirely wrong, but I wasn’t sure if I was ready to see how he would react to this news.

Then again, it’s not like there’s anything we can do about it.

“Akira! We need to accept that we’re with Brody now, and he’s been nothing but loving towards us,” I emphasized, making sure she understood that betraying Brody wasn’t an option, especially after

all he had done to protect our reputation.

He had been there for us when we needed his support. I couldn’t just hurt him and move on to someone else. I had been feeling down about myself ever since Cain and Ryker used and dumped me. I felt like I needed to stop being so focused on physical attraction and commit to someone, whether I felt a mate bond with them or not.

1226

“You’re probably right. I’m sorry, I don’t know what came over me. It’s like trying to figure out how many Pokémon I have,” she said, making me laugh with her statement. After trying on the gown, pretending to be a princess and waving my hands at imaginary subjects, I finally decided to put it away and go to sleep.

When I woke up, it was early morning. Way too early. I had left one of the windows open, so the noise of birds in the early morning startled me awake. I tried to go back to sleep, but after fifteen minutes, my stomach started growling. Changing into blue jeans and a white top with wet hair from the shower, I headed downstairs. I needed a snack before breakfast. Everyone else was still asleep, as it wasn’t their usual waking time. I’m not an early riser either.

Once I reached the kitchen, my steps halted because I realized not everyone was asleep. There was my handsome, shirtless mate in the kitchen, his hair also wet and his eyes scanning the refrigerator.

Some warmth inside me encouraged me, and I sneakily approached him on tiptoes. Nash had his entire head in the fridge when I poked him in the back with my fingers and yelled, “Boo!”

Well, let’s just say, I made a mistake.

78.25

Tasting 195

195–The Meek Monster

Nash:

A Few Hours Ago:

I felt sorry for Nora and how she kept getting into trouble left and right. It seemed like she couldn't catch a break anymore.

"I'm more surprised that we're mates," Shan was still fixated on that point. It was indeed surprising, but even more shocking.

"To think we couldn't find mates for years, only to discover it's our stepsister," he continued, and I sighed sadly.

It was heart-wrenching to recall my father's words. Nora's mother had wanted her to be our sister. If it had only been a wish, we might have convinced Dad. But he was convinced it was a deal, and he feared growing sicker if he didn't keep his promise.

"Her mother is dead though. Dad should understand—," Shan argued, frustrated that we couldn't be together with our mate.

"Shan! Do you really think I would have left her if I hadn't been worried about my father breaking the deal? If that weren't the case, you would have grabbed her by the back of her neck and kissed her right then and there when I felt the mate bond with her."

"Let's have a talk with Dad and see what he says," Shan suggested, his determination clear on this topic.

Feeling more aroused by her presence now than ever was daunting. I didn't want to lead her on and then reject her. It would scar her for life.

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"It could go very wrong too. What if Dad demands that we reject her?" I reminded him of the possibilities that could ruin everything.

"And you think hiding the mate bond means we've accepted her?" Shan scoffed.

"Well, anyway, she's dating Brody now. Didn't you see how she shared a kiss with him?" Even remembering that kiss made my blood boil. I was afraid I would lose control

and tear that alpha's head apart, but I held back my anger because once I let it out, Nora would be afraid of

1. me.

As I decided to head to the cell to see if he had finally woken up and was ready to speak, my phone rang and I rolled my eyes. It was Daphne again. Ever since I lied to her about not breaking things off, she had been bothering me incessantly for a date or to spend time together. I had managed to dodge her due to pack matters, but how long could I keep avoiding her when she was so clingy?

"Hello, Daphne! I'm sorry, I can't talk right now, I'm at the prison." I quickly hung up without giving her a chance to respond.

But of course she called again and again. Her stepfather had been overly concerned about me not showing up to his training ring for the past few weeks. After he called Nora those horrible things and I confronted him for them, I lost respect for him.

I let out a sigh of relief, feeling as though I had narrowly escaped a chase. Now, I headed to the cell to confront the Whistler about the monsters and his motives.

The man who orchestrated the attacks.

He had been unconscious for some time, and each time he woke, he would just sit and silently stare at me. Today, however, I planned to

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12:2

reveal a side of myself that I usually kept hidden.

"What is your game? Waking up and not even being useful," I taunted as I dragged a chair closer and sat down.

He was bound to a chair with ropes soaked in wolfbane, his strength dwindling, and I had no intention of feeding him until he started talking. Any nonsense would suffice.

"I just need one answer: why the monsters?" I demanded, crossing my legs with some difficulty due to the bulk of my muscles.

"You can stay silent all you want, but know that deadlier creatures have begun using the fog now," I shrugged, watching his interest pique.

“You thought your monsters would be the only ones causing terror. Seems like someone stepped up the game,” I smirked, shaking my foot since his attention remained on my shoes.

“I like your sneakers. I always wanted them but couldn’t afford them,” he finally opened his mouth, talking about his miserable life because of unattainable sneakers?

“I can get you some if you start talking and I don’t chop off your foot,” I muttered, putting my foot down and leaning over him.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked with a deadly look in my eyes.

“Or should I ask, who are you doing this for?” I pressed him again, getting straight to the point.

There had to be a reason he wanted everyone to suffer so badly that he had somehow tamed the monsters and summoned them to harm the she-wolves of our pack.

53.38%

12 26

He locked eyes with me before a broken smile spread across his lips. “My daughter!”

I frowned in confusion because I hadn’t expected that answer.

Maybe if he had asked for money or a higher rank, I might have believed him. But then he gestured for me to come closer to him.

With my eyebrow still raised and confused by his response, I leaned in closer, and he whispered in my ear, “She doesn’t want her daddy because he’s a weak man who wanted her to be strong. She wants a strong family, so she refuses to come back to daddy.”

My body was covered in goosebumps, and countless questions raced through my mind. “Who is she?” I asked out of curiosity.

He chuckled slightly and then shook his head at me. “You know her, probably very well. She’s no less than a monster herself but chooses to play meek,” he evaded revealing her name, and then his eyes began to roll back into his head. He was having another one of those seizures.

“Guard!” I yelled for assistance, and soon guards rushed in to help. I was now filled with curiosity and anxiety to understand what was going on. However, it was already 5 am, and I needed to return home

and rest.

78.97%

Tasting 196

196–Boo! Let Me Hold Your Onions

Nora:

I thought I could stare him down, but he stood firm like a brick wall before briskly grabbing me by the back of my neck and pulling me closer to him. My hands landed on his chest, and just before our lips could meet, he abruptly released his grip. Even as I resisted and broke free from his grasp, he appeared shocked at himself for a moment before bursting into laughter.

“Now who scared whom, huh?” he chuckled, a hand on his stomach, laughing like a maniac.

“That wasn’t funny,” I pouted, folding my arms across my chest.

“And that cute little ‘boo’ was scary?” he teased, raising his brow, then quickly turning to focus on finding something to eat.

“Let me help you,” I insisted, prompting him to turn around with a raised eyebrow, judging me.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that?” I rolled my eyes.

“Am I hearing this right? Nora wants to cook?” his taunting tone made me grunt in response.

I pushed him aside to grab a loaf of bread, and before he could comment further, I started gathering eggs.

“I’m making you an omelet,” I declared firmly. He responded with a closed-lip smile, waving his finger to decline.

12:26

“Why?” I hissed, hands on my waist.

“Because I don’t want to eat bad food. It’ll give me a stomach ache,” he said dramatically, placing a hand on his stomach, which only deepened my glare.

“Then you shouldn’t be cooking,” he commented playfully, compelling me to roll my eyes at him.

“Do you wish to die?” I grabbed a knife and steadily waved it around in my hand. He knew I was being playful. If he wanted, he could have snatched the knife out of my hands without me even noticing.

Yet funny how sometimes I entirely forgot I can fight back even if I cannot win against the alpha king brothers.

“Okay, if you insist,” he pretended to be intimidated by me.

I was determined to prove him wrong, but only if I could cook properly. I’ve never been much of a cook, so it was going to be challenging. The worst part was that every time he stared at me, I seemed to mess up even more.

“I’ll show you what a good cook I can be,” I shrugged, grabbing an onion to chop. He remained standing near the counter, hands resting on it, slightly hunched over.

However, I really wasn’t skilled at it. As soon as I tried to cut the onion, it slipped from my hand, and the next thing I knew, there was

blood on the counter.

“Ouch!” I grimaced, dropping the knife.

“Nora! What the heck!” Nash quickly moved closer to me, holding my hand to inspect the wound. It was a pretty deep cut.

21.104

12-27

105 Bon! Let Me Hold Your Drinki

“It hurts,” I pouted, wincing every time the cut stung.

“Let’s get you to the hospital,” he insisted, concerned about the severity of the cut from the dirty knife.

I didn’t argue. The fact that he had let me use the dirty knife to cut onions so as not to discourage me further made me feel touched, though the pain reminded me quickly.

We were now headed to the hospital with his towel wrapped around my hand. I had my head resting against the seat, staring out the window.

“I think I’ll lose enough blood to end up dying in this car,” tears welled up in my eyes, though deep down, I knew I was being overly dramatic. I was just feeling sensitive because of everything that had happened recently.

“I won’t let you die, okay?” Instead of laughing at my dramatic statement, he played along.

I turned slightly towards him and continued watching him as he drove. He was so handsome and comforting. But when we reached the parking lot, I had to divert my gaze back to the window.

“Can you walk? If you feel too weak, I’ll carry you inside,” he spoke softly, still not calling out my exaggerated reaction.

“I’m fine, just hold me,” I gave him my other hand, and he held it tightly, helping me out of the car.

It felt odd because moments ago I had thought I was being overly dramatic, but as soon as I stepped into the fresh air and stood on my own feet, I began to feel weaker. Perhaps my mind was playing tricks on me. He walked me inside and we took the elevator to the second

floor.

However, that’s when I saw a familiar face. There was no mistaking her after encountering her twice —she was the woman from the news, Silas’ patient. I noticed she was strapped to her bed in the room.

Her eyes were fixed on the ceiling, devoid of any emotion. Her purple lips were dry, and dark circles and bags hung heavily under her eyes. Nash stayed beside me the entire time while my wound was being cleaned. The doctor mentioned the injury looked deep but thankfully didn’t require stitches. They were probably wondering why I wasn’t transitioning and healing.

Yet, my focus remained on the woman.

After my bandage was finished and we stepped into the hallway, Nash excused himself to call Dad and update him on our whereabouts. The reception was poor inside, so he had to walk to the terrace to speak with Lord Atwood.

While he was gone, curiosity got the best of me. I found myself marching towards the woman’s room. I entered quietly, standing near her bed with my hands clasped in front, my uninjured hand faintly resting on my wounded wrist.

“Hi!” I greeted her, and at the sound of my voice, she turned her head. from the ceiling to look at me. Her stare was so blank that I couldn’t discern her emotions.

"I'm Nora. Remember, we met at the Alpha King's mansion?" I tried to sound cheerful, sensing she looked sad, possibly mistreated for attempting to cross the border.

She studied my face for a moment, then shook her head ever so gently. In the meekest voice, she replied, "I don't know you."

Tasting 197

197—She Wants My Stepbrother

Nora:

"Do you really not remember me?" I asked, hoping she might change her answer, but she remained confident in shaking her head, indicating she had no clue who I was.

"Have we met before?" she asked with a slight frown on her forehead. She looked paler and weaker than when I had seen her first.

"Yes! I just told you we met at the Alpha King's mansion," I tried to jog her memory, though I began to doubt if I had a memorable face.

"How could I meet you at the pack's mansion when I've never been to one?" She managed a broken smile, clearly thinking I was mistaken or perhaps a bit crazy.

"You came to meet Alpha King Silas, the pack's healer," I explained, stepping closer. Her body flinched at my proximity, prompting me to step back and maintain a respectful distance for her comfort.

"I never met him at the mansion," she lied through her teeth.

I couldn't tell if she genuinely didn't remember or if she was intentionally misleading me. It bothered me deeply. How could neither of them remember our encounter? Sure, Silas meets patients daily and might forget one or two, but how could an omega not remember the pack's mansion?

"How is that possible? I saw you at the mansion. You bumped into me." I muttered to myself, feeling perplexed that she seemed so

unaware.

1327

197—She Wants My Stepbrother

“Why were you at the border? Why did you want to leave werewolf territory?” I knew she must have been asked these questions before, but I wanted to hear her reasons directly. Why take such a risk to cross the border?

“I don’t know. I didn’t want to, at least that much I know,” she replied softly, her breathing shallow.

“Why were you there then?” I raised an eyebrow. “Did someone ask you or threaten you to cross the border?” My questioning gaze was met with a sigh, and she seemed lost in thought before responding.

“No, not really,” she shook her head, seeming distant. “I just... I know I tried to cross the border,” she added quietly.

“But—” I started to press further, growing more comfortable with asking deeper questions about why no one had come to see her or where her family was. Just as I was about to continue, Nash arrived and called out to me.

“What are you doing here?”

I jumped, feeling caught off guard as if I had been caught stealing from the royal vaults.

“I saw

her and recognized her from—” I paused, unintentionally increasing Nash’s curiosity before adding. “TV. I thought to ask her why she wanted to leave.”

Now that Nash was here, I couldn’t continue talking to her. I didn’t want to bring up Silas and potentially cause unnecessary trouble.

“She gives the same answer to every question—she doesn’t know!” Nash summarized, walking closer to me but keeping his gaze on her.

“We’re looking into her background to see if we can find something.

1227

197-5 Warts My Stepbrother

So far, she seems okay. No criminal history, no troubled family connections,” Nash clicked his tongue, studying her intensely as if trying to unravel her mystery.

“Anyway, let’s go home. I’ve told Dad about your injury, and he’s worried.” Nash gently touched my arm, breaking my focus from the

Woman.

I nodded and followed Nash out of her room. “Dad’s being dramatic,” I joked, but secretly appreciating Lord Atwood’s concern for me.

“Really? Have you heard yourself earlier?” Now that I was feeling better, Nash was obviously going to tease me about my earlier dramatics regarding losing too much blood and dying.

“I was just joking to lighten the mood,” I retorted, and we made our way to his car, where I slid inside.

“Tell me about this woman. How was she found at the border?” I asked

once Nash had settled into the car and started it up.

“Ryker caught her. She was mumbling something under her breath and acting strange,” he replied.

“What was she saying?” I pressed for more details.

“Something about belonging on the other side—” he paused, a realization dawning on him. “Sometimes when people commit a crime or feel guilty, they start believing they belong among the monsters. She might have thought she deserved to be on the other side with the ‘big monsters,’” Nash speculated, describing the woman’s state of mind regarding the border.

His casual shift to a speculative explanation he seemed confident in was somewhat unsettling. I leaned back and zoned out for a moment.

1237

107 She Wants My Stepbrother

My mind was having weird thoughts even when I was trying my best to not think too deeply over this matter.

When we arrived, I saw Lord Atwood pacing at the entrance, rubbing his palms anxiously.

“Look, Dad, I brought your stepdaughter back from the brink of death.” Nash joked, earning a grunt and a playful pout from me as I hurried towards Lord Atwood.

“Has he been giving you a hard time too?” Lord Atwood hugged me, waiting for me to complain about Nash.

“He called me dramatic,” I said as I broke the hug, pouting and giving him a sad look.

“How dare you!” Lord Atwood mock–scolded Nash, who rolled his eyes at both of us with his hands on his hips.

“Well, you two are dramatic. She didn’t even need stitches,” Nash groaned, but Lord Atwood waved him off with a dismissive gesture. It was all in good humor.

After that, we sat down for dinner, and Mia arrived to serve us. Silas wasn’t around, but Ryker and Cain were. Their eyes narrowed at the bandage on my hand, but before they could react, Mia walked in. Instead of leaving after serving the food, she discreetly moved closer to Lord Atwood as if she had something important to say. I knew what she was about to bring up, and I couldn’t help but feel it was a bad

idea.

“May I have a word, Your Highness?” she asked nervously, fidgeting with her fingers.

“Of course, what is it? Do you need something?” Lord Atwood

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responded gently, and she nodded before speaking hesitantly.

“Alpha King Silas.”

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Tasting 198

198–Everyone Is After My Mate

Nash:

Mia approached my father to speak with him, but I was already fielding calls and needed to return to business. I grabbed my cereal bowl and

hurriedly excused myself, rushing out to check whereal bowl and

had been

incessantly calling me. But not before I glanced at Nora. It happened unintentionally. Her face was so bright and full of beauty that my eyes would wander off to her face very often.

It didn’t take much guessing; I had a hunch it was Daphne. When I reached my room and picked up my phone, sure enough, it was her calling for the twentieth time in the last two hours. I was starting to tire of her persistence.

“Mm?” I managed with a mouthful of cereal, hoping to avoid a lengthy conversation.

“Where are you? I’ve been trying to reach you,” she said in her high-pitched tone, clearly annoyed.

“I was busy,” I replied, hastily taking another spoonful of cereal.

“Busy where?” she asked, prompting an eye roll from me.

“At work,” I scoffed tiredly. It was so annoying that she wouldn’t take a hint.

“What kind of work?” she shocked me with her next question. What the fuck did she mean by what kind of work?

“What kind of work do you think I do?” I groaned at her nerve to

1227

follow me up with questions when her own life had been so secretive from me.

“No! I meant to say—,” she shut up but it was time I proceed with my own questions.

“Daphne! Why are you calling me so early in the morning and interrogating me like I’m on trial?” I snapped, irritated by her questioning.

She fell silent for a moment before clearing her throat and restarting the conversation.

“Because someone messaged me saying they saw you with Nora in your car. Where were you taking her so early in the morning?” So that was the reason behind her persistent inquiries.

I had to compose myself before responding to her. She had cheated on me several times, and every time I mentioned breaking up, she threatened to take her own life. This time, though, I refused to let her manipulate me and ended things with her. Yet, here she was again, leveling accusations against Nora, forcing me to relent once more.

“To the hospital,” I muttered quietly, hoping she’d pick up on my hint and not prolong this already awkward conversation.

“Why?” she pressed once again. Her entire vibe was off throughout the time. It was like she wanted me to confess something.

“Why do people go to the hospital, Daphne?” My exhaustion finally escaped in a grunt before I explained, “She cut her hand.”

“Are you sure?” she asked in a meekest voice, trying to exert less pressure on the words.

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“Yes, I was there,” I hissed, slowly losing my temperament with her. That should have been the end of it. But of course, with Daphne, it

never was.

“Oh! No, I am just slightly confused. Did she do it for attention?” That was it. I’d been working since yesterday and came home to rest, not to answer interrogations.

“She didn’t do it for attention. I need to go, I’m really tired,” I grunted, rubbing my face in frustration before she stopped me from hanging up.

“You didn’t as

me which gown I chose for the ball,” her words compelled me to lift my face from my hands.

When did I invite her to the ball? Talking to her was so draining that I didn’t even realize I had finished breakfast, let alone enjoyed my cereal.

“Daphne, I’ll be on duty that day,” I said, subtly indicating I wouldn’t be dancing with her at the ball.

She fell silent for a moment before adding, “You can surely manage some time. If not, I will speak to Lord Atwood myself.” Her voice carried a hint of authority that didn’t sit well with me, and I could tell she sensed it too because she quickly retreated.

“I feel like you’re brushing me off because of Nora. She told you I led her into the woods and pushed her,” she continued, as expected, blaming Nora for something she hadn’t done.

I wanted to remind her how she had wasted time when Nora went missing, only revealing the information about the river and woods when she felt threatened. But for Nora’s sake, I chose to remain silent.

“It’s not like that,” I grumbled, already weary of the conversation.

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“Nash! She’s your sister and all, but trust me, there’s something wrong with that girl. She’s not as innocent and naive as she appears. Do you really think everyone is her enemy? Can’t she ever be wrong?” I rolled my eyes, tired of hearing the same accusations from people around me.

“I have to go. I only have a few hours to rest before I have to wake up again for work,” I finally hung up when I couldn’t bear her complaining any longer.

“It’s odd though,” Shan interjected, catching Mia’s attention.

“What is?” I asked.

“I don’t understand what you’re trying to say,” I admitted, puzzled by Shan’s cryptic remark.

“So you’re taking their side now?” I asked in disbelief, but Shan quickly clarified that wasn’t his intention.

“Of course not. I’m just concerned about her. Why did her wolf awaken and then retreat so suddenly? I’ve never heard of a case where a wolf tries to transition so intensely, faces resistance, and then vanishes,” Shan pondered aloud.

Although I never discussed Nora’s wolf with anyone again, my concern for her didn’t diminish.

“There could only be one explanation for this,” I whispered reluctantly.

“Maybe that was the only time her wolf awakened. Perhaps it was her first and last attempt, and I hope that’s not the case,” feeling deeply troubled for Nora, I lay down on the bed, memories of that day flooding my mind.

“She was soaked through, her body exposed when I felt the mate bond with her. I wish there weren’t restrictions. Her scent and form tempted

73.04%

me,” I confessed quietly.

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99.53%

Tasting 199

199–Hating Their Stepsister

Daphne:

Few Weeks Ago:

I watched her enter the woods with the water bottles like a fool, and after a few seconds of waiting around, I followed her. I just had a very bad feeling about this girl.

“She’s such an attention seeker. If she wasn’t in the picture, the brothers would have seen you as their sister–in–law and treated you well. But now they have someone they can play little sister with,” Daph remarked, reminding me of this woman’s first day in the mansion. Before she arrived, everyone used to refer to me as their sister. I was much respected because I was the only girlfriend of one of the brothers. Even Cain used to respond to my calls. I regret seducing him. He didn’t even touch me, and I lost my credibility as well.

“And who did that?” Daph brought up Nora’s memory again. She must have some agenda for coming here to live with the brothers. It remember her mother was a member of the pack. And I also know the rumors. Her mother was able to make the alpha king cheat. They must have toxic blood in them. She will be no different than her.

And then I remembered how important it is for me to get rid of her and be with Nash.

Flashback:

“Have you spoken to Nash?” Ford Ledger, my stepfather, asked. His hazel eyes briefly glanced at the plate before him and then shot up to meet mine. He was much younger than my mother. I didn’t understand

12:27

why she accepted him after my father’s betrayal. This man was no better; he would yell at me, hit me, and control every aspect of my life.

“I did. He’ll be there for the match tonight,” I replied, trying to focus on my food. My mom kept attending to him, fetching this and that, refilling his juice glass, which he barely acknowledged. I disliked him for many reasons. For one, he consumed my mother’s time and attention without reciprocating care or respect.

“Where’s dessert?” He dropped his fork onto the plate and turned to my mother, who had barely eaten her own food because she was busy attending to his needs as if he were still a child.

“I’ll go get it,” Mom said with a forced smile, trying to appear happy for him. Everytime she would leave us alone, I would feel the pressure of his eyes on me.

The lengths she went to for this marriage were astonishing. She would go the extra mile to please him, even when she was sick, dressing up with makeup and high heels, striving to maintain a cheerful facade.

“But did that earn her his love? No! He was preoccupied elsewhere. I held my breath when I felt something against my leg under the table. The jerk had stretched his legs, intentionally bumping into mine. He wouldn’t miss a chance to harass me.

“Did you ask Cain to paint something for you?” he inquired, openly discussing what he had requested from me when my mother wasn’t around.

“I did. But I’m a bit nervous. His paintings are quite different,” I muttered, watching him tilt his head and glare at me.

“I’m not saying I’m backing down. But what if—” I couldn’t bring myself to explain why I was so opposed to the idea. I didn’t want him to know

1237

my wolf was always eager. He would exploit it against me and try to manipulate my wolf into doing things with him. Even the thought made me wince and grimace.

“You’ll do it and try to provoke Nash. Give him something to be jealous about. Then, he’ll decide to propose to you,” he wiped his hands and rose from his seat, leaning close behind me to speak in low murmurs. “I know you can do it. You must make Nash accept you as Luna Queen.”

He placed his hands on my shoulders to massage them, but I could feel the heat from his palms, knowing it was from his arousal. He wasn’t the only one eager for Nash to accept me quickly. I wanted to escape this situation and take my mother to safety myself.

“Okay!” I shrugged his hands off, quickly standing up to put some distance between us. He didn’t appear angry; instead, he smirked at my unease. The fact that he could intimidate me so easily seemed to bolster his confidence.

I knew I had to do whatever it took to become Nash’s Luna Queen and the brothers’ sister-in-law.

End of Flashback:

“Then I have to take matters into my own hands,” I muttered determinedly, following after Nora while keeping a low profile. I watched her glance around a few times, clearly uneasy without a wolf by her side. She wouldn’t be able to defend herself without one.

The thought of killing someone made my stomach turn like crumbled cookies. But it was crucial to eliminate her. Moving silently behind her, I halted when I saw her near the cliff. I recalled whatever had been happening. The way Nash was taking her side and focusing on her. She was definitely going to ruin our relationship just like she had done

12:270

before when she told Nash that I was in his brother’s studio.

She had seen it. There was no turning back now; she would surely try to retaliate. I had to act swiftly.

Summoning all my courage and determination, I hurried to her and swiftly pushed her. Despite her voluptuous figure, she was lifted effortlessly.

I resented how she seemed to have everything without earning it. But not anymore.

Her scream pierced the air, jolting me back to reality.

“Shit!” I cursed under my breath, swallowing hard and looking down. “What have I done?” My body trembled in fear, but I knew there was no going back. What was done was done.

With hesitation and sweat forming on my forehead, I sprinted back to the car. “What did you make me do?” I yelled at my wolf, who, as usual, caused chaos and offered no comfort in return.

Tasting 200

1228

200–The Forced Lover

Nora:

“What?” Cain was the first to ask Mia, a look of surprise on his face. I felt sorry for her because I could tell she was making a mistake. In fact, I had warned her not to do so. Silas had been clear that he wasn’t interested in anyone and wouldn’t be attending the ball, but I never thought she would be so stubborn.

Flashback: A few days ago

“May I have a word with you?” Mia knocked on my door while I was busy folding my laundry. She was a sweet girl. Her mother was actually a noble woman and had worked for the alpha king her entire life.

“Sure, come inside,” I gave her a smile, allowing her to step in. Her body language was odd from the start; she fidgeted with her fingers and glanced around, avoiding eye contact.

“What’s on your mind?” I turned to her, giving her my full attention. I could tell she needed my help in something.

“I heard about the ball,” she smiled weakly. Of course, she would bring it up. She was single too and had every right to attend.

“Oh yes, are you going?” I asked, watching as she shyly lowered her head and nodded.

“Aw, please let me know if you need any help,” knowing her financial situation, I was prepared to assist her with a gown. I would even enjoy selecting one with her; her opinion would be valuable.

200 The Forced Lover

“I actually do. That’s why I’ve come to speak with you,” she cleared her throat and stepped closer, her discomfort evident.

“Anything. I’m here for you,” I reassured her with a nod..

“Thank you. I knew you’d be able to help me,” she said, abruptly grabbing my hands. It startled me for a moment.

“Tell me, what do you want?” I asked, feeling hesitant as she held my hands aggressively and stared into my eyes without blinking.

“I want to go to this ball with Silas,” she declared, shaking my world. beneath me.

“Oh...” I subtly slid my hands away, causing her smile to fade. That was not something I had expected to hear from her.

“Please, It is my dream to go to the ball with him,” she continued, her eyes lighting up at the mention of Silas.

“I don’t think he’s even going to the ball. He’s been very vocal about focusing on the event,” I said, avoiding telling her directly that he had never even noticed her. In fact, he hadn’t noticed anyone. There were times when I saw her eyeing him up and down but he would avoid her like she doesn’t even exist.

“But if everyone tells him to take me, he will, right?” she nodded eagerly, her eyes becoming even more intense.

“I don’t think that’s how it works. Firstly, you can’t force someone to do anything, especially not my stepbrother. Besides, wouldn’t you want this ball to be special for you?” I asked softly, hoping she’d

understand and let go of this wish.

“It’s Alpha King Silas. If I get him to date me, I’ll be the happiest, even if it means he’s coerced,” she said in a harsher tone this time.

200–The Forced Lover

I didn’t like it. What she seemed to forget was that these were my stepbrothers, and she was speaking of him as if he were some object.

“Mia! You can’t force him. He’s a free man and gets to decide who he wants to date.” I told her firmly and sternly.

She needed to understand that I wouldn’t allow her to scheme or manipulate Silas.

She realized her mistake and quickly looked down before me, a sign that she understood and felt guilty.

“I’m so sorry. I don’t know why all that nonsense slipped out of my mouth. I’ll leave now,” she said. There was something odd about her sometimes, an energy that made me uneasy. Even when she apologized just now, it seemed obvious she was insincere.

End of Flashback

“I want to go to the ball with Alpha King Silas,” she repeated.

Lord Atwood’s jaw dropped. It wasn’t every day someone demanded to date an Alpha King.

“Have you two met?” Lord Atwood asked, and she shook her head.

“No, but given the chance, we could make a good pair,” she enthused.

Nash and Cain were momentarily speechless until they saw their father. needed help with a tactful response.

“Mia, right?” Nash asked, and she nodded. “That’s not how it works. You need to understand that we seek mates, or at the very least, someone compatible. If he hasn’t

noticed you until now, I doubt he'll agree to go to the ball with you," he said politely, trying to make her

see reason.

12:28

200 The Forced Lover

"If he just gives me a chance," she insisted, her jaw visibly tense.

Honestly, I was starting to feel second-hand embarrassment for her.

"How about we ask Silas directly? Would that settle things?" Cain interjected, but she seemed to tune out.

"What if he says no?" she pouted, leaving everyone confused once. again.

"Then it means no," Nash shrugged.

"But—" Before she could say anything else, Silas stepped in, as if the Moon Goddess herself wanted drama to unfold..

He entered and halted, his gaze sweeping over everyone present.

"My son, do you wish to take Mia to the ball?" Lord Atwood asked without hesitation.

Mia anxiously faced Silas, who narrowed his eyes at her and then turned to me before responding to his father.

"I don't even know her."

I had expected as much. It was true that I hadn't seen them together before.

"But if you ask him—" Mia tried to persuade Lord Atwood to pressure his son, but he raised his hand to silence her.

"You have your answer, child. Don't let anyone reject you twice," he said sympathetically. I could tell he felt sorry for her, seeing how desperately she wanted Silas to take her.

Finally, she fell silent, bowing to everyone before hurrying towards the

1228

door. Silas appeared stunned and lost, still processing what had just happened.

