

Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates #Tasting 381 - Read Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates Tasting 381

Tasting 381

381—The Man In Chains

Nora:

Throughout the car ride, Clara kept trying to make small talk. She jumped from talking about the brothers to mentioning Brody, clearly hoping to get a reaction out of me. But I wasn't in the mood. Returning to the place I once felt trapped in wasn't easy for me.

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More importantly, leaving my babies behind weighed heavily on my heart. It felt unbearable, and no matter how many times I repeated it in my head, it wouldn't change the fact that nobody cared.

I let out a sigh, staring out the window as a strange haze settled inside me. It was going to be a long journey, and as always, we were covering it by car.

As we neared the border, I noticed a sudden shift in the weather. The sky grew cloudy, and a looming storm threatened to break.

"That's strange," I muttered, turning to see why Clara had gone quiet. She was fast asleep, her rabbit nestled in her lap.

The car came to a sudden halt, and I glanced at the driver, my brows furrowing.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"I'm not sure. Let me take a look," he replied before stepping out of the car to inspect the problem. In the meantime, I slowly got out as well, savoring the fleeting freedom of being able to make small decisions on my own.

These were minor decisions, but they reminded me that I wasn't becoming comfortable with this life of captivity. No one could ever get used to that.

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381—The Man In Chains

But I wasn't resigned to it either.

I knew the moment I had a chance, I'd take my babies and show these people just how difficult it is to control me.

As I stood outside, scanning the surroundings, something caught my attention. It was a set of silver chains, muddied and tangled in the dirt.

Leaving the driver with the car issue, I approached the chains and followed them behind a large tree. To my surprise, there was a wounded man bound in those chains. His face was obscured by long, unkempt hair, and his beard had grown wild. His clothes had turned into one filthy layer of dirt and grime. I couldn't figure out who he was or why he was chained near the border.

"Hey," I knelt down in front of him, careful not to startle him with any sudden movements. But he seemed oddly calm. The way he peacefully opened his eyes to examine me sent a chill down my spine.

"You didn't do it," he said, his..

"Didn't do what?" I asked, confused.

soft but accusatory. I frowned at him.

"You were supposed to look for me," he muttered, looking offended as soon as I showed no sign of recognition.

"Huh? Do I know you?" I tilted my head, trying to get a better look at his face. There was something familiar about him, but I couldn't place it.

"You were supposed to find me. That should have been on your mind all along. How could you-" His demeanor suddenly shifted, becoming aggressive. He sat up and grabbed my hands tightly, his grip raw and overpowering.

I thought I could fight anyone now, but somehow, his hold on me was so strong I couldn't even wiggle free.

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"Hey! Let me go," I shouted, struggling to break away.

"I said, let me go!" I screamed again, and he took it a step further, pulling me closer so I could look directly into his eyes.

"You need to find me.

"

That was all he said before I jolted awake.

"Fuck!" I gasped, hyperventilating and drenched in sweat. I glanced to my side, and sure enough, Clara was still asleep, the car cruising along just fine.

So, it was just a strange dream.

I shook myself fully awake as we entered the pack's territory. Clutching my shirt, I tried to calm my nerves. It wasn't going to be easy walking back into that mansion, pretending I'd been on a vacation and everything was back to normal.

van More can go back home. I am not

"We need to finish our job quickly so

going to stay away from my babies for too long," I told Akira, who I could feel was growing emotional.

There were moments when I even wanted to let myself feel something, but I couldn't. It wasn't that I didn't understand my state; it just didn't bother me. As long as it kept me from feeling pain or getting hurt, I was okay with it.

Soon, the mansion came into view, and I took a deep breath, straightening my back and putting on a neutral expression. The large doors opened as our car rolled into the driveway.

Standing there, waiting for us with wide smiles and bouquets of roses, were Lord Atwood and Silas, their maids trailing behind them.

Tasting 382

382—Clara Needs To Shut Up!

Nora:

"Welcome back home, daughter," Lord Atwood greeted me with a hug, but I barely returned it, offering more of a side embrace. The atmosphere and surroundings made me feel sick to my stomach. They were a constant reminder of the last moments of the old Nora, the one they had all wronged. I couldn't afford to be emotional. I shouldn't be.

"I brought a friend," I said sarcastically, pointing at Clara, who stepped out from behind me to meet Lord Atwood and Silas.

"Nora!" Silas, however, completely ignored her, even as Lord Atwood greeted her. He stopped in front of me, trying to catch my attention, but I quickly averted my gaze. Still, I noticed him—he was wearing a black hoodie and matching pants, his long curly hair messier than before, though somehow, it suited him.

"Hello," I greeted him, my eyes focused on the car trunk instead.

"Alpha, Brody sent some gifts. Kindly take them out," I instructed one of the warriors, who looked visibly displeased to see me back. Then I

Was

remembered why. Last time I here, I was accused of murder and a host of other vile things. I supposed they weren't thrilled to see me return.

But I couldn't care less about their feelings. I wasn't exactly thrilled myself.

"Do as she says," Silas ordered quietly, his voice holding an unspoken threat. The warrior immediately bowed, moving swiftly to retrieve the gifts and our bags.

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382—Clara Needs To Shut Up!

288 iVouchers

"Come inside, you must be tired. The others have been waiting for your arrival," Lord Atwood gestured for me to take his hand, but I just stared at it, keeping my hands clasped behind my back. Instead, I motioned for him to lead the way.

I wouldn't hold anyone's hand. I had learned my lesson the hard way- once you get too used to holding hands, when they pull away, you're left lost.

"Wait! I need to talk to you," Silas stepped in front of me, blocking my path.

"Sure, we can talk inside. I'm pretty tired—do you mind if I get comfortable first?" I replied, not needing his affection or attention anymore. He had no choice but to nod and step aside.

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I quickly walked into the mansion, my eyes taking in the elaborate decorations. The entire place was lit up with soft lights and adorned with white flowers. They had gone to great lengths to prepare for my arrival.

"My sons did all this by themselves," Lord Atwood smiled proudly as he led me into the living room where the others were waiting. Ryker, who had been lounging casually in a chair, quickly straightened when he saw

1. me.

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"Nora!" Though he barely whispered it, I could still hear his voice echo through the room.

Cain stood by the window, his back turned at first, but upon my arrival, he glanced at me briefly before looking away. Nash was occupied giving orders to the maids for refreshments, and once everything was arranged, he walked over to greet me with a polite smile.

"Welcome back," Nash said, offering a warmth I matched with a reserved, closed-lip smile.

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382—Clara Needs To Shut Up!

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Clara, clueless about the sudden shift in how I was being treated, added a comment that almost made me cringe. "Wow! You guys did all this for her arrival? I thought she was kicked out-" She cut herself off when she noticed the brothers exchange quick, almost warning glances before turning toward her.

"I was just saying," she shrugged it off, grabbing a glass of wine and sipping nonchalantly, clearly missing the tension in the air.

"I don't drink," I said, waving away the offer of alcohol before settling into a chair. I could feel the brothers' gazes on me—assessing, observing—nonstop. It was like they were waiting for something.

"You must be tired. You should rest before dinner," Lord Atwood

suggested, trying to keep the small talk flowing, but I remained uninterested.

“Okay,” I agreed, but then quickly got to the point. “When do we start looking for the Fog People?”

My question caught them off guard. The brothers exchanged wary looks, almost as if they were silently judging me for bringing it up.

“Why such a rush?” Nash asked, eyebrows raised. “It’s not like you have to leave soon, right?”

I adjusted in my seat, letting out a sigh. “I have a pack back home that I take care of with my mate. I’d like to finish this task and return home as soon as possible.”

I couldn’t reveal the real reason for my desperation to leave—not to them. They wouldn’t understand why I was so eager to go back to a place where I was treated as nothing but a slave.

“Aha, I think he’ll be fine without you for a while,” Ryker added dryly, clearly referencing Brody. He wasn’t smiling, and his tone held a hint of

57.17%

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bitterness. Their ongoing personal war was no longer my business, yet it seemed to linger in every interaction.

“I am his Luna,” I retorted, trying to sound calm but feeling the annoyance creeping into my voice. “An alpha is nothing without his Luna.”

Clara, as clueless as ever, added a surprising comment: “But he has Janet too. So, I guess we can stay here for a while.”

Her words stung, and for a second, the room fell silent. Janet. Of course, she would mention Janet, the one Brody had always kept close.

I clenched my fists under the table, my calm exterior starting to fracture.

Tasting 383

383—Mine Forever!

Nora:

I couldn't believe Clara was suggesting that we overstay here. I kept staring at her, trying to signal her not to say anything ridiculous, but she seemed to be avoiding my gaze on purpose. Is this what she came for?

I didn't think she was acting on Brody's or her brother's orders. She was here to get under my skin.

"Then how about you stay here? I'll go back to my husband," I gave her a tight-lipped smile, but at the mention of my husband, she let out a little chuckle that once again caught the attention of the brothers.

I hated how they were watching us.

"I think Clara is right. You can stay here for as long as you like," Lord Atwood muttered as he dragged his body to the edge of his seat, about to continue, until he noticed Clara raising her brow and glancing our way.

"You should go to your room and rest now," he quickly changed his mind.

"Sure," I replied. Now that I knew I'd need to convince them to start on the task soon, I had no choice but to take the rest they had been insisting

1. on.

I didn't need rest. I needed my babies.

But who would tell them?

"Clara! You have a guestroom ready for you," Lord Atwood said, taking her along, leaving me with the brothers who were watching me like a hawk eying its prey.

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33 Mine Forever!

"Where are you headed?" Ryker asked when he saw me getting up from my seat, ready to follow Lord Atwood.

"To the guest quarters," I forced a smile, even though I didn't feel like offering one.

"You're not a guest here. You'll be staying in your own room," Ryker continued, while the others examined me from head to toe.

"I think I'd feel more comfortable in the guestroom. Walking upstairs and staying in that room makes me feel too isolated," I joked, but in reality, I didn't want to stay in that room again. I was avoiding the flood of memories, and they somehow knew it.

“Why? Is it because of what happened there last time?” Silas had the nerve to ask, almost as if he wanted to see me relive the pain just to satisfy their egos, proving I hadn’t fully moved on.

“Not really. Nothing much happened. The only thing that did was that I escaped false accusations,” I shrugged.

“Well, your room is prepared for you. And if you’re so happy and have moved on-” Ryker’s tone was challenging. He was implying that my life was a lie, or just an attempt to seem content.

“Then why can’t you stay in that room again?” He tilted his head, eyes filled with judgment.

“Well, I heard someone else was using that room last time. I don’t want anyone to be kicked out,” I rolled my eyes, knowing exactly who had taken over that room.

It was Ryker.

“Oh yeah, the room is incredibly peaceful for some reason,” his comment made me quickly avert my gaze.

383—Mine Forever

“Fine. If you insist on me staying in that room, I’ll do it. But I want the investigation file on the fog people by the time I’m done freshening up. It’s not wise to delay such an important matter when the lives of pack members are at risk,” I kept my voice authoritative, sounding like someone who knew exactly what they were talking about.

“Look at you. The one who used to hide behind us for protection has grown so much in such a short time,” Nash observed, and I hated how strangely perceptive he was.

Them prying into the truth about my relationship with Brody and my position in his pack could lead to huge trouble.

They needed to leave me alone and let me handle my affairs. Why were they coming back into my life now?

“It’s been months, Nash. People change,” I pouted at him before getting up to walk toward the room where I would be staying—hopefully, not for too many days.

But I noticed Ryker quickly following me to lead the way. There was silence for a while as we walked, and then I passed by Cain’s open studio.

It was only for a moment, but a flash of memory hit me—sneaking up to his door and watching him paint me—before it vanished again.

“Just like you left it,” Ryker wasn’t wrong. He showed me my room, and it looked the same as before, only cleaned up.

I noticed, though, that the rest of the mansion had new furniture and the walls had been repainted, except for my room.

“And this will be your room forever. No one will ever take this room, it will belong to you like I do,” Ryker murmured from behind, causing me to gulp and shake my head, quickly dismissing the idea and avoiding his statement.

Tasting 384

384—Extremely Single

Nora:

Ryker didn’t stick around and left me alone to settle into the room. After locking the door, I wandered around, wondering why*.

“Why are they back now? Why do they want me back now?” I asked. Akira because I couldn’t find the answer on my own anymore.

“You should be asking, why the new furniture? And what is that smell?” she shocked me with her response. I frowned, sniffing the air to figure out what she meant.

“The room freshener?” I asked, closing my eyes to enjoy the pleasant scent. The brothers always smelled good and made sure their home were filled with wonderful fragrances.

“I’m talking about the *pungent* smell,” she corrected me, surprising me even more.

“I don’t smell anything bad,” I pouted, confused by her questions. I looked around to make sure there wasn’t anything rotting or off in the room.

But there was nothing. So, what was she talking about? I just couldn’t understand her words sometimes.

“Nora, there’s a weird smell, like something bad happened in the mansion. I’m not feeling it in this room, but the rest of the place smells strange,” she continued, sounding uneasy.

“Maybe the furniture smell isn’t your favorite? They’ve replaced pretty much everything.” I recalled how cluttered it had been the last time I was

here. Even the wall they had been building around the mansion was gone. Had they changed their minds, or just decided to tear it down because it didn't look good?

"I'm not sure. But tell me, what are we going to do now?" she finally snapped out of her thoughts and focused on our plans.

"I'll get the file from them and study the fog people. If they try to delay this task, I'll do it myself." I was determined to finish the job and go back home.

"Or we could confide in them about our babies and what Brody has been doing, and maybe-" I had to cut her off immediately.

"You're not serious, are you?" I clenched my jaw, anger rising at her suggestion.

"Weren't you with me when they hurt us? You heard them, loud and clear, when they said-*multiple times*-that they didn't want me as their mate, and that it would be a nightmare if I ever got pregnant with their children. Do you want to put us in danger? To endanger our children's lives by telling them *anything* about them?" I hissed, my frustration boiling over in one breath, appalled she would even suggest it.

"I'm just worried," she yelled back, her voice filled with concern.

"Then be properly worried. They're not any better than Brody. For all we know, if they had known about the babies, they might've even killed them just to avoid the responsibility," I hissed, my frustration leaking through every word. After she went silent, I took a deep breath, trying to calm myself.

"Sometimes I feel like you enjoy watching me in pain. It's as if you're always reminding me of the time when I was weak and dependent on these mates of mine," I muttered, turning my face to the

side and gazing

384 Extremely Single

out the window.

After a brief moment of silence, she responded in a guilty tone. "Because I don't want to lose you again. I like the way you are now—so full of emotions and empathy. But you're becoming what you were meant to be."

I didn't fully understand what she meant, but I was too upset to ask her to explain.

After taking a shower and getting dressed for dinner in a black dress, I left my room to find the table set in the garden outside. The wind was blowing gently, the air fresh and soothing—but my arms felt empty. I would've loved for my babies to be here.

“Here, come sit with me,” Lord Atwood patted the empty seat beside him. Instead of refusing, I sat down. Clara emerged from her room, surprisingly without her rabbit, and honestly, she seemed far too content in this pack.

“So, I heard you all were dating someone,” Clara began, her tone light as she filled her plate with food.

The brothers exchanged glances before Cain spoke up to answer her.

“We’re not dating anyone anymore.” My heart flipped inside my chest, but I kept my face neutral.

Is that why they were back to thinking about their mate? Because they were single again and wanted to have some fun before finding someone else?

“Oh? You’re not dating April anymore?” Clara turned to Ryker, asking him directly.

His response was sharper than I expected. “Nope. I never wanted to date. her. But I had to.”

384—Extremely Single

The intensity in his stare and his choice of words were intriguing. *He had to?*

Was it so he could punish me? Put me back in my place?

Tasting 385

385—Weeping Guardians

Nora:

Throughout dinner, Clara kept suggesting we stay longer. Each time she made that suggestion, she’d glance at me and smirk secretly. She seemed to be enjoying my irritation as I glared back at her. After dinner ended, I didn’t stick around and headed straight for my room.

I was so exhausted that the moment I lay down, I fell asleep. The bed and the pillows somehow felt incredibly comfortable. I thought I wouldn’t be able to rest here again, but I guess I was wrong.

I woke up to gentle knocking on my door. It was a maid who had brought me the file I had requested from the brothers the day before.

While brushing my teeth, I skimmed through the pages, and sure enough, the whole fog situation was back. In fact, this time, it was pretty bad. Many people had lost their lives and loved ones.

I got dressed quickly after my shower, throwing on blue jeans and a black top. If I was not mistaken, these were the same fog people Silas had mentioned when he talked about visiting Brody's pack. Did that mean the fog people weren't restricted to just one place?

Leaving my room, I found Nash and Silas at the breakfast table. It was still early, so I knew the others were probably still resting.

I reached the garden, wondering why they were eating outside so often, and slammed the file on the table before settling in comfortably, leaning back. I grabbed a sandwich from the plate and started eating while continuing to read the file.

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"Morning," Nash greeted, Temmums

"Oh, morning!" I corrected myself, raising my head briefly before tapping my finger on the file. "So, according to this-" I paused to take a bite, "these fog people don't have a pattern or a proper name?"

I watched them stare at me, their fingers tapping on the table and feet tapping on the ground.

"What?" I asked, confused.

"What's up with you? You're not acting like yourself. It would have been believable if you'd shown anger towards us. But you've shown nothing," Nash complained, causing me to tilt my head.

"You want me to be angry?" I questioned, raising an eyebrow.

The way the two of them were examining me felt odd. It was as if they were certain something was wrong with me.

"Anyways, tell me what the progress is. Here in the file, it says there was a witness to the fog people?" I asked, diverting their attention back to the file in my hand.

Nash had his eyes glued to me before he shook his head and returned to reality, while Silas continued to watch me, not paying much attention to the task at hand.

"More like a survivor," Nash corrected me.

“Umm, how so?” I was intrigued.

I remembered that the last time this happened, people ended up dying, but I still didn’t understand exactly how it occurred.

“As for not having a name, there is one. We just didn’t want to inform the

385 Weeping Guardians

pack members about it. We didn’t want them to freak out over a name for this monster,” Silas adjusted himself in his seat, leaning over the table to point to the next page where a picture of a young boy was taped, along with information about him.

“You have a name for it?” I asked, and the brothers nodded in unison.

“Ever heard of ‘weeping angels’?” he asked. “It’s like that. They only move when you’re not watching them. When you look away, they move so fast. that you regret taking your eyes off them. But they don’t just reach you like that. You need to be alone, and the places where they used to be found are now gone. However, I’ve heard they’re attracted to a certain type of person,” he explained, and I began to wonder about what I had

seen.

I recalled the day I had come face to face with them. I’d look away, and when I looked back, they had gotten closer.

“We call them ‘weeping guardians,” Nash added.

“Hmm, Robert Mitch. Let’s go pay him a visit at school, then.” I checked the details on the witness, the guy they were calling a survivor. He must have some insight into what happened to him and how he became a survivor when I thought it would be that easy to escape them.

“Sure,” Nash agreed with the plan.

“But tell me again, how did he survive? And what happens when they finally get someone?” I was still in the dark, needing full information before we embarked on this mission together.

“You have to stay alone for them to come and attack you. Once they approach you, they kill you. I’m not sure how, but dead bodies turn up, all blue and cold,” Silas explained, and I nodded in understanding.

Tasting 386

386—Going Back School

Nora:

Before anyone woke up, we had already left the mansion and were on our way to the school. I could tell the lockdown had gone well for the pack members; they were now out and about. I wondered what the pack must have looked like during the lockdown—empty roads, no giggles, no laughter, or cries.

I sighed as I shook myself back to reality.

“So, are you continuing your studies?” Nash cleared his throat and asked. We were approaching the school, so I guessed that warranted the question.

“Nope, I’ve achieved it all,” I replied, the answer confusing them.

“I wanted to be a fighter, and I became one,” I lied. I had never wanted to be a fighter, but I couldn’t remember what other dreams I had before that.

“Let’s go.” As soon as they parked the car in the lot, I jumped out to avoid any small talk with them. The sooner I finished this task, the quicker I would return to my children.

Students were rolling in with their bags, looking so happy. Life had been the same for them, while so much had changed for me. I remembered how I had been kicked out of the school because of those two girls. We headed straight inside and were welcomed into the principal’s office by his

assistant.

I took a seat with Silas, while Nash wandered behind, staring at the pictures on the wall.

“Sorry I was busy-” Mr. Forun wam— landed on me, and his smile began to fade.

Oh, I missed this so much.

He had always been nasty towards me. Not even realizing how the bullying had gone on in his school, he had only pointed at me, believing that getting rid of me was the only right thing to do.

“Mr. Fortin,” Nash responded to his greeting with a nod, walking towards us to take a seat.

“I’m sorry, but I’ve got to ask, what is she doing here?” He took his seat in slow motion, his eyes fixated on me.

“She is working on this case with us,” Silas informed the shocked man, who seemed even more stunned upon hearing about my involvement in

the case.

“On the weeping guardians case,” I added with a cheeky grin. It’s no secret that when people dislike you, they can’t hide it from the disdain shown on their faces.

“Oh! How come? Last time I met her, she was just a student,” Mr. Fortin tread carefully with his words, his gestures oddly nervous as he sneakily adjusted his glasses and gave a very unsettling smile to the brothers.

“Oh, you don’t know? I’m the best fighter at our pack. You should come by someday.” Crossing my legs, I shifted into a more comfortable position, his eyes following my every move.

‘Anyway, we’re here to speak to Robert Mitch. Can you call him in for us?’ Nash broke the awkwardness by jumping straight to the main topic.

Mr. Fortin hadn’t absorbed the information that someone he kicked out of school was doing so well. That’s what they all thought when hearing

386—Going Back School

about my strength—my story would make them rethink their opinions of my life.

He made a call, and after a few minutes, a timid-looking guy appeared in the office. He was wearing blue-framed glasses and a black hoodie. He reminded me of myself back when I had to act a certain way to avoid trouble. His hands were clasped obediently in front of him, but the agitation in his fidgeting fingers told me he was afraid of this meeting.

“Robert, they are here to talk about your experience with the fog people,” Mr. Fortin said to the boy, who nodded and then walked over to us.

As the boy settled down, I looked over at Mr. Fortin. If he really thought he could sit here and enjoy watching us investigate the whole matter, he was mistaken. He had once shunned me, now I had the power to kick him out of his own office.

“Why don’t you wait outside?” I said, watching Mr. Fortin point a finger at his chest, confirming I was talking about him. “Yes, you. It’s a known fact that students are not very keen on talking in front of their teachers or principals. So please, wait outside.” With a closed-lip smile, I pointed at the door.

Mr. Fortin turned to the brothers for help, but Silas got up from his seat and walked over to the door, holding it open for him. “She wants you gone.”

Watching Silas side with me made Mr. Fortin nod his head reluctantly before stomping out of the room.

The minute he was gone, the boy's very first statement caught our attention: "They are going to kill me."

Tasting 387

387—Do Your Homework

Nora:

"They're not going to let me live," Robert muttered, shaking his head repeatedly. I rose from my seat and walked over to the principal's desk, taking his place and smiling to myself—until I lifted my gaze and saw Nash staring at me.

I quickly wiped the smile away. I wasn't being inconsiderate of Robert's feelings; I just didn't understand why I felt so at ease here.

"Robert!" Silas handed him a glass of water, then crouched beside his chair, watching him drink.

"We won't let anything happen to you. Just start from the beginning, and maybe we can help," he encouraged, and Robert nodded, adjusting his glasses.

"You see this fighter here-," Nash pointed at me, causing me to narrow my eyes at him, "she's really good at dealing with monsters. In fact, that's basically all she does, aside from emotions and feelings," he added, making my jaw tighten. He was clearly frustrated that I hadn't been sharing my emotions with them.

"Anyway, go on," I muttered, resting my chin on my hands, my elbows propped on the table as I focused on Robert.

"It happened a few days ago when I was on my way home. I decided to take an abandoned road, not thinking much of it. Since the lockdown had just ended, I assumed everything was fine. But then I saw these people- people surrounded by fog. I couldn't make out their faces, but every time I looked away, they were a little closer. And then, I finally saw their faces

387 Do Your Homework

I had to interrupt; there were too many questions running through my mind.

"You didn't turn back?" I asked, and he shook his head, looking almost ashamed.

“Why not? You must have heard about them before. Why didn’t you turn around and run?” I watched as he lowered his head further, nervously pinching the skin between his fingers.

“And how did you see their faces? Did they come that close?” I pressed, and he let out a heavy sigh.

“I walked toward them,”

Nash and Silas turned to me, their eyes reflecting the same shock I felt. Why would someone willingly approach something so sinister?

Unless... he believed they weren’t the biggest threat in that moment.

“Keep talking, tell me, what made you take that abandoned road?” Silas asked, pulling a chair closer and sitting down.

“I didn’t want to be seen by the others,” the boy’s voice trembled, clearly burdened by stress and depression.

“Why?” Nash inquired.

“Because... they were coming after me. They were looking for me, so I heard their voices and decided to run past the fog people. I thought if I didn’t look away, I’d be fine. But then I found myself moving toward them instead, and once I was passing through the fog, that’s when I saw their faces.”

387 Do Your Homework

The horror in his expression was palpable, his eyes wide as he recalled the memory. He gulped nervously, the weight of the story pressing down. on him.

“You heard voices?” I zeroed in on that detail, curious about what had driven him to push past the ominous figures instead of turning back.

“The voices of the students who bully me. They make my life miserable,” he finally broke down, and I closed my eyes for a moment, trying to calm myself.

It became clear that this poor boy had chosen the abandoned road over the safer route to avoid the bullies. It reminded me too much of my own past.

“But how did you survive?” I asked, getting to the core of the mystery.

He shrugged, his confusion apparent.

"Tell me, how have you been feeling these days?" I pressed on, wanting to understand how he could have made it through such a dangerous situation.

"I've been getting sympathy, attention... it's not as bad as it used to be. But sometimes, when I feel really down, especially when the bullies stare at me, I feel so cold and sick," he admitted, swallowing with difficulty.

"The bullies aren't bothering you anymore?" I asked, placing my hand on the desk, my fingers tapping thoughtfully.

"No! They've stopped temporarily because of how others are treating me for surviving those dangerous beings. But I don't know how long they'll resist the urge to bully me again. They even

made some comments about my appearance this morning, so I'm afraid they're going to start again," he said, lowering his head sadly. His words made me feel genuinely sorry for

him.

room again.

"So?" he asked, eyeing me as I sat comfortably in his chair, leaning back.

I could tell he didn't like it, but at this point, there wasn't much he could do about it.

"Do your job and put an end to the bullying. That's your homework," I muttered under my breath as I stood up, facing him briefly before walking past him toward the exit.

Tasting 388

388—Oh! So We Meet Again

Nora:

"You guys explain what I mean," I said, leaving the office and leaving the brothers to deal with Mr. Fortin, who needed to understand that he had been the problem all along. Instead of stopping the bullying, he kept expelling the victims.

I wasn't the first student he'd kicked out, he'd done it before. He always asked for help to cover up the bullying issue instead of taking a stand and doing something about the bullies.

As I wandered down the hallway, memories of my time at this school flooded back. I used to have such a stressful time here—all the bullying. trying to make friends, getting

into trouble, and finally getting kicked out. It was too much for an outsider like me. I used to think this part of the world would be peaceful, but I was so wrong.

It was just as messy, but the people here hid behind sweet facades.

I sighed, running my hand along the wall until I reached the lockers, where I stopped. The students passing by gave me quick glances, trying not to come too close. I pouted and walked past them, even turning my head to stare at them, but they kept avoiding my eyes.

"She kills monsters," I overheard one girl whisper. It made sense why they weren't making snide comments anymore. They must've recognized me as the girl they used to bully.

"Nora!" a voice called out, and I didn't expect to cross paths with *her*. Standing by her locker was April.

-Oh! So We Meet Again

She looked like she had lost some weight, and I couldn't help but wonder if it was because Ryker had broken things off with her.

"I should have known you were coming back. It all makes sense now," she hissed, but then forced a smile. There was pain in her eyes.

"Oh! Are we talking about your breakup? Trust me, I had no part in it. But I must say-" I added before she could assume I would deny anything, "seeing you look so sad is... mesmerizing. Those tears in your eyes really suit you."

I noticed a group of girls gathering around me, while the boys kept their distance.

April clicked her tongue, shaking her head before meeting my gaze. "Of course, you'd say that. You're the one who seduces her stepbrothers, lets them paint her naked, gets obsessed with them, and kisses them outside her room."

Of course, the things she was saying caught the attention of the passersby. They began gasping and murmuring, whispering about me as they leaned

in to listen.

"How exactly did you manage to trap them?" she asked, her tone dripping with bitterness. There were dark circles under her eyes—had she been crying every day?

I parted my lips, inhaling deeply, then exhaled slowly before pulling out a small notebook from my pocket. I'd been keeping notes on the weeping guardians there.

“Come here, let me show you exactly how I managed it,” I said, tapping my fingers on the cover. Her brows furrowed in curiosity. There was something in her eyes, almost like she genuinely wanted to know what I had written in that notebook.

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She stepped closer, probably surprised that her sarcastic comment had led me to offer a full explanation. But the moment she got near, I slipped the notebook back into my pocket and grabbed her by the back of her neck.

Gasps filled the hallway as her eyes widened in shock. Without warning, I slapped her. Once, then again, and again. My hand kept striking her, holding her in place with my grip on the back of her neck as her stunned expression turned to pain. I gave her a moment to catch her breath, but as soon as she tried to scream, I let her go, and she collapsed to the ground.

“Say all that one more time,” I demanded, stepping closer and pressing my foot down on April’s stomach, daring her to repeat those words.

“Ouch!” she whimpered, unable to move or push my foot aside. The crowd that had gathered around us had now backed off, everyone giving me a wide berth.

“You should be ashamed of yourself, April. What kind of words do you use?” one of the girls quickly jumped to my side, eager to stay in my good graces, barking at April.

“She’s always been like that,” another girl hissed, casting April a look of disdain. April, on the other hand, just stared at them, wide-eyed, stunned by their sudden change in attitude.

I let them throw their insults before I finally moved my foot off her and crouched down to speak more directly.

“It’s true, isn’t it? Associating with the Alpha King brothers gives one a certain power, but once that’s stripped away, anyone can come and belittle you, right?” I said, tilting my head as I spoke.

“As for the Alpha Kings, they’re not my brothers, so...” I shrugged casually, “thanks to you and-” I paused, raising my gaze to see Natalya standing among the crowd, nervously swallowing as fear flickered across her face.

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388 Oh! So We Meet Again

It was time to have a little chat with my old friend.

Tasting 389

389—Did They Hear? : ©.

Nora:

I didn't know what came over me, but seeing her again brought back all the messed-up things she did after I befriended her and cared for her. My steps didn't stop until I had briskly closed the distance between us, forcing her to retreat as much as she could. But with the crowd unable to move, it was impossible for her to get away from me.

I reached her, my fingers wrapping tightly around her neck, slamming her against the lockers. She hadn't even said a word, and yet I was already glaring into her wide, panicked eyes.

"No! I didn't do anything." Natalya begged, her voice trembling, which only made me tighten my grip.

"Please, don't hurt me," she cried out again, her tone drenched in fear now that it was her turn to suffer. I wondered if she ever considered how much pain I had felt when they dragged me to the mountains and

disrespected me. No, none of these bitches did. They all happily watched my downfall, adding fuel to the fire whenever they thought I wasn't being tortured enough.

"Why? Are you afraid of pain?" I hissed in her face, not even noticing the growing number of students gathering around us.

"I am. Unlike you, I'm just an ordinary she-wolf without an active wolf," she whimpered, as if even the mention of our differences pained her. It wasn't the first time she'd made it clear how much she resented that I wasn't like her.

Her words only made me clench my jaw tighter. It was always a

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competition with her. First, she was jealous of my living situation, and she didn't stop until she'd wormed her way into the mansion, making sure I ended up homeless. And now she wanted to compare our strengths?

"Yet you were able to cause so much damage," I remarked, seething at how a so-called "ordinary" she-wolf had managed to play such manipulative games.

"Talk about being ordinary," I scoffed, bitterness dripping from my words.

“Yeah, she’s so nasty,” one of the girls chimed in, but quickly silenced herself when I grunted in annoyance. These girls were no better.

“I did whatever I had to do to survive all the bullying,” Natalya kept trying to defend herself, sounding desperate to justify her actions. I didn’t believe a word of it.

“Even after I took you under my wing? I was saving you, wasn’t I?” I brought my face closer to hers, knowing that meeting my gaze was an intimidation for her.

“But April and the others would still bully me. You remember how Alpha Brody made me feel during training, right?” She was grasping at straws now. If things had ended with her dating Alpha Cain, maybe I could’ve considered her excuse. But now, it just sounded like more lies.

“And then you decided to befriend your bully and betray the only person who was protecting you? Not only that—after you secured yourself a prestigious spot, you didn’t stop until you kicked me out of the pack. So tell me again, how much of it was done in defense?” I was done with her excuses. If she thought she could fool me again, she was dead wrong.

She gulped, the movement noticeable against my palm.

As I tightened my grip around her neck, she hesitantly whispered, “Please, spare my life, and I won’t tell anyone you’ve given birth to

300 Did They Hei

newborns.”

My fingers loosened ever so slightly at her threat, but I narrowed my eyes at her. She quickly added, “I’m not threatening you—I’m just asking you to spare my life.”

She tried to twist it, to make it seem like she was using the baby threat out of desperation, not malice. But I could see through her.

I took a step back, releasing her. Yet her gaze lowered, filled with shame.

“I’m sorry,” she mumbled, but I didn’t buy her dry apology. I knew for a fact that if she could, she would hurt me again.

“Your life is spared for now, but, Natalya, if I hear that you’ve tried to come near me or the ones I love-” I said, my tone sharp and deliberate when mentioning my babies, “then next time, I won’t be so gentle. I’ve had enough. I’m not making the same mistake of feeling pity for you again.”

Her eyes flickered with fear, and I knew she understood. This was her final warning.

Every word I spoke made her nod and tear up. She had once been so dear to me that I would argue with my mates for her sake.

However, once I finished my threat and turned around, I saw Silas and Nash standing behind me, their expressions puzzled.

For a moment, I felt like it was Natalya's plan to ensure they heard about the babies, and I wondered just how much they had overheard. Would that cause me trouble? Brody had specifically asked me never to mention my babies to anyone.

"We should go now," Nash said, maintaining eye contact with me. But the confusion in his tone was worrisome.

389 Did They Hear?

Did they hear about the babies?

Tasting 390

390—Harsh Questions

Nora:

We left the school and got into the car in silence. Nash was the one driving while Silas sat in the passenger seat with his brother. I had rushed into the back seat before either of them even sat down.

"So," as Nash cleared his throat, I lowered my head and took a deep breath. I was mentally preparing an excuse. What would I say when they asked me about babies?

"You did April pretty dirty," Nash continued, and I nodded my head, straightening my back and raising my gaze to look at him.

"Yeah. I am scared Ryker would punish me now," I joked, looking outside the window. But when the silence grew thick, I turned my head to them. and found them sharing glances at my response.

"Why would he? Didn't you hear that he had broken things off with her?" Nash sounded almost defensive.

"Oh, yeah, but if he was still dating her, he would have kicked me out of the pack again, wouldn't he?" I shrugged.

The way they exchanged glances every time I spoke made me wonder if they were noticing the change in me. I guess I needed to tone it down a little. I was not someone

who always responded sarcastically, so this new attitude must be a lot for them. To keep a low profile and avoid getting them on my back, I had to revert to my old ways.

"I mean he cared about her a lot," it was just a statement after a whole storm, and I thought it might save me.

11:100

390—Harsh Questions

They didn't say anything, and I thought I had perhaps gotten them off my back until they suddenly stopped the car in the middle of the road.

"Why are we stopping here?" I inquired suspiciously as Silas got out, then walked all the way to my side and opened the door for me.

"Come out, we need to talk," he said, jerking his body and placing his hands on his waist, looking ready to confront me.

"What is it about?" I steadily got out because the two were standing around the door as if I would run away if they didn't block me.

I now faced them, and Nash slammed the door shut behind me, making me lean back against the door since they didn't seem to budge out of my way.

"What is going on with you?" Silas was the one who took the first step.

"What? Did I do something wrong again?" As I spoke sarcastically, Nash pointed his finger at my chest, indicating that this was exactly what he was talking about.

"You have changed. And I get it that time has passed, but it has been only a few months. There is no way someone can change like that. And you let Brody have another mate?" Nash hissed, placing his hand on the roof of the car and leaning over me.

Oh wow, I haven't seen those eyes in so long.

"That is a situation between my husband and me-" Before I could add anything more, Silas interrupted.

"Husband? When did you two get married?" He too placed a hand on the roof of the car, almost similar to Nash. Now I had their arms extended over my shoulders from both sides.

390Harsh Questions

“When we were leaving-” Their presence was really intimidating. It confused me as well as shocked me. Since I had changed and started fighting the mutants, I faced Brody and the others with much more confidence.

I thought that would be the case with the brothers too. But screw them! I am in front of them, and I can hear my heartbeat again.

And I hated every second of it.

“That was not a wedding. It was just an acceptance, and I know for a fact that he didn’t even mark you, and you haven’t marked him. So tell me, when did you get married? And how the heck did you call it a marriage if you haven’t even marked him yet?” Silas tilted his head, his eyes fixed on my empty neck.

“It’s not like the mark would be visible,” I rolled my eyes.

“Nora! I am serious. Got it?” He bobbed his head, showing me how annoyed he was that I wasn’t answering his questions. “I can tell you are not marked.” : ©.

Even though he said those words almost under his breath, I was pretty sure they left Nash in confusion. A mate can tell if their partner has been marked, but I was wearing a ring, so I could use that excuse.

“I am wearing a ring, my magical ring. I’m sure you won’t be able to see the mark when my wolf is sleeping,” I shrugged, but he stubbornly shook

his head.

“You weren’t wearing any ring on that battlefield. So tell me, what kind of wedding did you have without marking each other?” Now he was really getting on my nerves because, after so long, I was speechless.