

Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates #Tasting 71 - Read Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates Tasting 71

Tasting 71

71-It's Getting Hotter And My Stepbrother Is The Reason.

Nora:

I buried my face in my hands when Cain revealed to my mate that he sensed the bond with me. I couldn't even bring myself to look at either of them. I expected Ryker to acknowledge feeling it too, but Ryker kept surprising me.

"When..." There was a slight hesitation in Ryker's voice as he asked his brother the question. I was in the middle feeling like a guilty one.

"The other day in the woods," Cain sighed, taking deep breaths and pacing while running his hands through his hair. I uncovered my face and saw Ryker staring at me.

I felt so guilty, as if it was up to me to choose whoever I wanted to feel the mate bond with.

"So, what are you going to do now? Are you going to reject her?" Ryker asked, almost suggesting it, and goosebumps covered my skin.

Even if I wanted him to reject me, I couldn't. For the rejection to take effect. I would have to remove my ring, and I'm afraid Akira might take the rejection badly and channel that energy into a quick transition.

"I don't know." Cain sighed, stopping near the wall in front of me and leaning against it. His eyes scanned me strangely.

"I just don't understand why I would feel it with my stepsister?" Cain's voice held a hint of disgust as he asked himself that question.

"Because she's not our stepsister by blood. We didn't grow up with her.

nor were our parents married. That tag is just a loosely based title to give her a family," Ryker quickly explained, making me wonder if he was making up that excuse for himself or for his brother.

"Hmm! You're right," Cain uttered. I noticed that Cain sounded too exhausted and probably overwhelmed when talking about the mate bond.

“So, what’s the plan?” Ryker asked once again. We three were standing far apart, facing each other but hesitant to make direct eye contact.

“I’m not sure. It’s just that—we brothers haven’t been able to find mates. It was like a curse, and suddenly I feel a mate bond. I don’t know—you know me, Ryker. It’s not easy for me,” Cain grumbled and quickly walked away to stand by the window. I noticed the rise and fall of his chest from his back movement and could tell he was in some sort of pain.

“Do you want to have a physical relationship with her?” The moment Ryker asked that question, I frowned and snapped my fingers. I wouldn’t let them talk about that matter without me.

“Don’t say that. I’m not some toy your brother bought and is planning to use,” I hissed at Ryker, approaching him aggressively. Cain turned around and raised his brow, so my aggression faded.

“I mean, it’s odd. He’s my stepbrother, and he’s very rude and inappropriate,” I scoffed as I stomped my foot on the ground.

“Why? What did he do?” Ryker raised his brow, staring at his brother with excitement.

“I didn’t do anything,” Cain eyed me, extending his arm to hush me down.

(HSDer And My Stepbrother Is The Reason

“Tell me, what did he do?” The way Ryker kept asking me that

question was an obvious sign of him trying to get under his brother’s skin.

“He said he doesn’t care if he felt the mate bond with me or not, I’m just another girl he’s going to use anyway,” I exaggerated his mockery, using a rather high-pitched tone as I recalled how rudely he said that. Cain shook his head in disapproval, whereas Ryker’s face lost its color.

“Do you think that’s nice?” I asked Ryker, who shook his head steadily.

“Say sorry to her,” Ryker told his brother, and I was shocked. The atmosphere and the dynamics of the studio had changed so much.

“No! You know me,” Cain shook his head.

“Fine. I don’t need his apology anyway. I’m headed to my room because I don’t want to deal with this whole nonsense. Just know that I’m not just another she-wolf that you can take advantage of,” I looked Cain in the eyes before I left his studio.

Once I was in the hallway, I decided to go grab myself some ice cream. I wasn't feeling well. Deep down inside, I just couldn't fathom what had just happened. Cain shamelessly told his brother we were mates. Ryker didn't tell his side. Cain didn't say he wanted to reject me, and neither did he show much disgust to the idea of being mates with me. But then again, why did Ryker lie about my wolf?

As I was in the kitchen, I felt someone stand behind me near the refrigerator, and before I could turn around, I found my body being pushed to the side and against the wall. I quickly placed my hands on the wall and gasped when I smelled Ryker's usual enticing scent.

He always smelled so good.

"Ryker!" I yelped, trying to understand what had happened to him. He had his hands over mine, tightly holding them against the wall while pressing his body against mine from the back. He didn't

even utter a single word and started kissing me all over my earlobe and my cheek. As much as I wanted to resist, I couldn't. His scent and strong muscles were making me feel intoxicated.

"Ryker!" I uttered again, so confused by what had happened to him all of a sudden.

"Don't stop me tonight," he whispered, sending shivers down my spine. All

Him losing his control for the first time was surprising. But I had questions for him, and I didn't know if I wanted to be seduced by anyone in this state, especially someone everyone called my stepbrother.

"Oh Nora!" he uttered as his lips pressed hard against my cheek.

"Ryker!" Finally, I managed to move, and his grip over my hand and his body pressed against mine began to fade away. I quickly turned around and faced him. His hands were still on the wall, caging me in between as we stared into each other's eyes, letting our heavy breaths take control over our bodies.

Tasting 72

72-My Stepbrother And I... Nora: "Hey, why did you lie back there?" I inquired, observing him. hunching over even more until his face was barely inches away from mine. "Because I knew you wouldn't transition," he muttered. "I knew you were scared he wouldn't rest until he sees it himself." He spoke in a breathy, deep tone, causing my heartbeat to quicken. Yet, I pretended to appear unaffected. "But you believe me," I insisted, and his gaze dropped to my lips. "I don't know why, but-" he paused, closing his eyes. I had never seen him like this before. The fact that he seemed so affected by tonight's events left me in shock. "You've never felt anything towards me before," I

reminded him, and he opened his eyes, lifting his head slightly. "I thought it was forbidden-" he trailed off, making his point clear. Now that his brother was in the picture and didn't seem to object, Ryker was realizing he didn't have to feel too guilty either. "Are you only doing all this because you're in a competition with your brother now?" asked curiously, not wanting to become an object of interest between them just because of some playful rivalry they usually indulge in. 72 My Stepbrother Tot (Vouchers. "No!" he exclaimed, shaking his head. "I'm jealous!" The way he said it, without breaking eye contact, left me stunned. A mixture of emotions made me feel like I was going crazy. "Ryker-" I tried to come up with another question because every time we were silent, I just couldn't tear my gaze away from his muscular chest and sharply defined collarbone peeking from his half-

unbuttoned shirt. "Would it be too much if I kissed you?" he asked, leaning in even closer. That was unlike him. He was acting out of character, and so suddenly. I had to come up with an excuse because I couldn't rush into anything. "No! You may not," I replied, feeling guilty when his face turned emotionless and he steadily pulled away from me. "Oh! I'm so sorry, I don't know what happened," he chuckled awkwardly, trying to lighten the mood, but he didn't say anything else. He stood facing away, one hand on his waist and the other on his eyes. "If only you had shown a little interest before. But right now, it seems like you're only interested because I felt a bond with your brother. I'm not unaware of the fact that neither of you brothers has been able to find mates. Is that what's bothering you? What if your brother and I-" I noticed him shaking his head, even though he didn't directly look at me to answer the question. "You should go upstairs," he uttered before turning around and sprinting away. I was left in shock. He didn't even answer my question, but I wasn't offended. It 21.66% 20 19 was an odd situation anyway. I returned to my room where I had left Natalya and found her sleeping in the bed. I paced around the room until I heard a little knock on the door, and a frown covered my forehead. I wasn't expecting anyone. It was 3 am, so who could be knocking on my door at this time. anyway? I opened the door to find a new box of ice cream on the floor with a note on it. R: I ate the ice cream in the refrigerator. I smiled, and when I raised my head, I saw Ryker standing just right where the hall curved. He was leaning his back against the wall in the dark, his head resting back, and his eyes staring at me. This was new. I wanted to give him a smile, but we just stood in our spots and stared at each other before I

grabbed the ice cream box and went into my room after giving him a nod. My heart was going crazy inside my chest. I was feeling shy all of a sudden, and even amazed at how he was treating me. Maybe it was just a one-night thing. He would be back to being cold in the morning? "What is it?" I jumped at Natalya asking me that question. "You're awake?" I asked in shock. "Yeah, I woke up when you left the room. But what is this? Is it ice cream?" she asked happily, and I looked down to stare at the 40 071 ||| 20.19 box in my hands. A smile crept over my lips when I recalled the way Ryker was looking at me through the dark. It seemed like he was being so romantic. "Yes, it is," I smiled when responding to her. "Wow, who left it at the door?" she asked excitedly. "Ryker! I was craving it and there weren't any in the refrigerator so I requested him," I quickly slid the note into my pocket and sat down with her on the bed, grabb the wooden ice cream

spoons that were with the ice cream. "Wow, you are so lucky. I have been noticing that the brothers take care of you so well," the sadness in her voice made me feel for her. But she didn't know it wasn't always like that. They tortured me in the worst way in the past. The other two were still very rude and crazy, but these two, I'm not sure how things would go now. And why the hell did the Moon Goddess make me a mate to both of them? That too, after not giving them mates for years. "Come on, what happened?" Natalya nudged me, and I shook my head, indicating I was fine, and started eating the ice cream. As we were busy watching some videos on the laptop, something Natalya said actually made me look at her and raise my brow.

"Do you think you will like me more if I become your sister-in-law?" she asked and giggled, shrugging her shoulders happily. "Huh," I didn't know what was brewing in her mind, but I just hoped she wasn't talking about Cain. At least not anymore 72 10% ||| 20:19 72-My Stepbrother And i 1288 vouchers box in my hands. A smile crept over my lips when I recalled the way Ryker was looking at me through the dark. It seemed like he was being so romantic. "Yes, it is," I smiled when responding to her. "Wow, who left it at the door?" she asked excitedly. "Ryker! I was craving it and there weren't any in the refrigerator so I requested him," I quickly slid the note into my pocket and sat down with her on the bed, grabbing the wooden ice cream spoons that were with the ice cream. "Wow, you are so lucky. I have been noticing that the brothers take care of you so well," the sadness in her voice made me feel for her. But she didn't know it wasn't always like that. They tortured me in the worst way in the past. The other two were still very rude and crazy, but these two, I'm not sure how things would go now. And why the hell did the Moon Goddess make me a mate to both of them? That too, after not giving them mates for years. "Come on, what happened?" Natalya nudged me, and I shook my head, indicating I was fine, and started eating the ice cream. As we were busy watching some videos on the laptop, something Natalya said actually made me look at her and raise my brow. "Do you think you will like me more if I become your sister-in-law?" she asked and giggled, shrugging her shoulders happily.

"Huh," I didn't know what was brewing in her mind, but I just hoped she wasn't talking about Cain. At least not anymore 72.10% || 72-My Stepbrother And I because he is my fated mate too pack's she-wolves.

Tasting 73

73-Jealousy Is In The Air Nora: We crashed out after finishing off the entire box of ice cream. It was actually me who resisted stashing the leftovers in the fridge; I didn't want to waste it, and I was just too scared to step out of my room and risk bumping into Ryker again. My earlobe still throbbed whenever I reminisced about the sensation of his kisses. But deep down, I cursed myself for freaking out and not relishing those kisses more. I was so afraid of getting caught that I didn't fully immerse myself in the moment. "I can't thank you enough for looking after me," Natalya said as I assisted her in walking around, her arm draped over my shoulder, guiding her to the terrace. I hadn't frequented the terrace much myself. The second-floor terrace was actually quite beautiful, with pristine white furniture and a view of the mountains and the garden

below. "It was my fault anyway. I should have known better," I said, sinking into the chair after settling her onto the couch. "It was not though. And there was no way you could have found out about the alpha king's plans. They are like that. And for them, the pack's security is always over anything," she spoke about them with a smile on her lips before she shook herself out of the trance to stare at me again. "Oh! Him!" I was surprised at how quickly I'd forgotten about him. "Nothing. After he split from this mansion, I never heard from him," I shrugged. "I heard he's joining our school from tomorrow. He'll be teaming up with Alpha King Ryker. I think it'll be a disaster, at least for me," she sighed, adding that part "No! Don't think like that. You've already faced your punishment. I don't think they'll hold it against you anymore," I wasn't sure if Ryker would or not, but I had a hunch he wouldn't make a big deal out of it. "Easy for you to say," she remarked, prompting a raised eyebrow from me. "I'm just stating the truth. Look at you; your stepbrother takes care of you, then Brody definitely has

some feelings for you," she continued to speak, and I found myself raising my eyebrow higher and higher. "Brody doesn't have any feelings for me, Natalya. We only met once," I chuckled at her tendency to jump to conclusions. "I don't know. The way he looked at you and how he kept striking up conversations with you. You didn't notice that?" she asked, and I shook my head. That was a lie. I did feel something when we met, and when he stayed over that night. But after that, especially after last night, I "Oh! Him!" I was surprised at how quickly I'd forgotten about him. "Nothing. After he split from this mansion, I never heard from him," I shrugged. "I heard he's joining our school from tomorrow. He'll be teaming up with Alpha King Ryker. I think it'll be a disaster, at least for me," she sighed, adding that part. "No! Don't think like that. You've already d your punishment. I don't think they'll hold it against you anymore," I wasn't sure if Ryker would or not, but I had a hunch he wouldn't make a big deal out of it. "Easy for you to say," she remarked, prompting a raised eyebrow from me. "I'm just stating the truth. Look at you; your stepbrother takes care of you, then Brody definitely has some feelings for you," she continued to speak, and I found myself raising my eyebrow higher and higher. "Brody doesn't have any feelings for me, Natalya. We only met once," I chuckled at her tendency to jump to conclusions. "I don't know. The way he looked at you and how he kept striking up conversations with you. You didn't notice that?" she asked, and I shook my head. That was a lie. I did feel something when we met, and when he stayed over that night. But after that, especially after last night, I just don't know. I had started to harbor some hopes from my fated mate. At least, not from Cain, even when he said he was reconsidering rejecting me. I'm sure his decision stemmed from

25 77% || 2020 ■ finding a mate after such a long wait and fear of losing an opportunity to ever find a second chance mate after that. "Oh, look! It's like these hot alpha kings just want to remind you how irresistible they are, and none of us can have them," she raised her head slightly, gazing down at the garden. I heard her sigh and followed her gaze to find my stepbrothers standing there. Not all of them, just Silas, Nash, and Cain. Ryker was crouched over, tearing apart a red rosehile lost in thought, listening to his brothers. "We?" I couldn't help but laugh at her comment. "I can't have them because I'm not that special, and you're their stepsister, remember?" she laughed as I rolled my

eyes at her. "That's why I ask you. Why are you dragging me? I'm not even in the mix," I joked, feeling awkward. "Oh, look!" she pointed excitedly, then added, "No! Don't look. That would be wrong," wrinkling her nose, but I couldn't resist sneaking a peek. It was Cain slowly peeling off his shirt while chatting with his brother. That was his problem; he knew he was attractive. His fingers casually roamed across the buttons, effortlessly undoing them and revealing his chest, then his abs. He discarded the shirt onto the nearby table. Silas and Nash stood before him, scrutinizing his physique. It seemed like Nash was particularly interested in their muscles. I knew he would be; he was obsessed with staying in shape. But oh, sweet Moon Goddess! Cain looked incredibly sexy under the soft sunlight. The rays highlighted the tattoo that I thought he had. I couldn't quite make out the tattoo from here because 2020 they were still far away. On top of that, Cain started to remove his pants. "What the heck, Natalya," I exclaimed, rushing over to her and pulling her down. "What? Let me see," she hissed, attempting to rise again. "I think he's working out," I muttered, cautiously rising to see what he was up to now. Well, he still had his shorts on. Contentt

"He scared me," I whispered, and Natalya slapped the back of my head. "You shouldn't be watching," she groaned, casting a judgmental glance at me. "I wasn't. I was just making sure you weren't watching," I hissed at her. As I continued to rise slightly to steal a glance, I saw Ryker lifting his head, narrowing his eyes at me before gesturing, for me to lower my body and refrain from peeking. It was Nash watching Cain do push-ups and not getting tired. My phone beeped, and I lowered my body, letting Natalya be the curious one. No matter how much I tried to pull her down, she wouldn't budge. She was eagerly ogling at my mate, and for the first time, I openly admitted to myself that her stares at him bothered me. But my mood shifted instantly when I saw the ID of the texter and read the message. R: Can you stop? Do you want me to come up there an

Tasting 74

74-My Bully Has A Crush On My Stepbrother Mate Nora: "Oh my! Is he ever going to stop?" Natalya kept an eye on Cain while I was engrossed in my phone. Me: You never paid attention to wher was looking before. Why now? That part was still bothering me a little. He never cared, but suddenly he was all up in my business. R: I thought you were off-limits. You're lucky I didn't pay attention. My cheeks flushed as I read his text. I didn't even realize Natalya had shifted her focus from Cain to me. Me: I still don't believe you. You need to be honest with yourself, or else I'll keep reminding you I'm your stepsister. I waited for his response more anxiously this time, not even realizing Natalya was getting curious about who I was blushing for. Rk: Do it. It turns me on even more. I gasped and quickly rolled my eyes when he sent a tongue- hanging-out emoji. He was so bad. So bad, yet he was so comforting and s**y. "Is it Brody?" I jumped to hide my phone when Natalya, out of the blue, slid onto the couch to get near me. 0.00% 2021 74 My Buy Has A Crush My Shepler Mate 288 Vouchers "Hey, I want to read those juicy texts too," she pouted, eyeing me to show her what we were talking about. "It's no one," I felt like a fool. A bad liar, in fact. "I saw your texts to someone. Who is it? It has to be Brody, or is it someone else?" she raised her

brow. "It's, umm, some guy I met... some day," I watched her, confused, before she looked puzzled and gasped again. "What?" I followed her gaze and saw ush taking off his shirt and pants, revealing his brown shorts. And let me tell you, when I say I saw the most muscular dude ever exist, I wasn't lying. I've seen him before, but the sunrays just made their muscles pop out even more. However, I frowned as I noticed a tattoo in the same spot as Cain's. It was on his back, on the side of his ribs, but it didn't look like Cain's. Nash started doing push-ups next, while Silas waved his hand at them to dismiss them. "Come on, Silas!" Nash suddenly stopped to get on his feet and glare at his brother for not joining them. "What are you doing standing here for?" Nash yelled. "I'm not doing anything in front of you all," Silas uttered in his soft yet deep, comforting voice. "Why?" Nash seemed so offended that someone was not joining him in the exercise. "Have you ever seen Alpha Silas work out?" Natalya asked, her neck stretched up, watching the whole interaction between my 1867% ||| 20 201 34 My Bully Has A Chahe My Stepbrother Mate brothers. "No! And why are you spying on my brothers?" Now calling them brothers was a bit hard. It gave me a little ick. "I'm just curious. Have you heard those rumors about him?" She sat back and asked, and I shook my head. "Fine, go f**k off!" Nash dismissed him, and Silas walked away. As he was walking back into the mansion, he was facing us. He raised his head and kept glaring at me til he disappeared. I noticed that Nash never asked Ryker tu join them.

I was beginning to recall all the times the brothers fought. They were too rough and rude to each other but wouldn't pick on Ryker as much as they would on each other. In fact, Ryker was more free to do whatever he pleased without anyone telling him. otherwise. "That alpha king Silas never lets anyone see his body. He transitions and all, but he hates taking off his clothes. Have you not noticed that he always wears hoodies?" She raised a good question because as I looked back at the day when I had opened his closet, can't forget that day, there were so many hoodies there. And he always wore hoodies too. "Maybe it's a personal preference" I shrugged. "What about alpha king Ryker?" she inquired, and I frowned even more this time. was a** "What about him?" I but she didn't get the hint. I don't know why she kept talking about my stepbrothers. "He has never transitioned before anyone. His brothers and his 4305% ||| 2021 D en kby Stepbrother father saw him, and that's about it. He usually uses his fighting skills and his strength from his wolf but never lets him take over in front of anyone. Have you seen him transition?" she asked, and I suddenly took interest. "I have never," I said, feeling a bit jealous that he never showed me his wolf either. But then I quickly shook myself out of it because I shouldn't be having too strong of feelings until Ryker tells me why exactly he was changing his behavior with me. "Why do you think he never shows his olf?" she excitedly slid closer again, making me roll my eyes at her. "I don't know. Maybe he doesn't want anyone else to feel insecure because he has a better wolf than everybody else in the pack?" I had to comment to shut her up. "Hmm! Maybe," she never took hints.

"Do you speak to April on the phone?" She had so many questions. There were times when I felt like I was in constant interrogation whenever I was with her. "No, Natalya. I don't talk to her. I don't even have her number," I recalled, and yep! I haven't spoken to her on the phone. "Hmm, well, you are going to someday," her comment seemed a bit

odd, so I turned to her, giving her my full attention. "You don't know? Oh, Nora! Why are you so unaware of everything happening around you?" She first commented on how clueless I had been to everyone and then decided to steal my sky, "April has a crush on Alpha Ryker, and she doesn't calm down until she has who she wants. She is obsessed with your stepbrother." O 11, Bully Has A Truck in K, Stepheather Mate I knew that already, but to hear that she was obsessed with Ryker made my skin feel a burning sensation. "Who knows, maybe Ryker and April are already talking behind our backs," she shrugged and continued to look down, but I was now more concerned than before. 75 Back To School 75-Back To School Nora: Time was flying by, and Natalya had fully recovered. I anticipated her return to the hostel, but she seemed a bit hesitant. I didn't directly inquire, but sensed her worry that others at school might single her out, leaving her to navigate back to the hostel alone and sink deeper into depression. So, I thought it best for her to stay a while longer. "Really?" I questioned as she slung her bag over her shoulder. She hadn't been her usual self in the mornings since we started going to school. I swear I could detect the scent of anxiety emanating from her. She was as nervous as could be. "Don't worry, I'll be there with you, I reassured her, squeezing her hand to comfort her. "Thank you," she murmured, trailing closely behind me. I had asked the warriors to bring her

belongings here so she could get ready and head to school directly from our place. As we descended the stairs, I noticed Ryker standing by the exit door with his cellphone in hand, head down. He was clad in a black long coat with high collars and black pants, his weapons protruding from his belt as usual "Um, you usually ride his bike, don't you?" Natalya whispered in my ear. The way she spoke about my living arrangements and my stepbrothers made me feel like she wished she could experience that attention someday. 5. Back To S "Yeah, but we're definitely not biking today," I replied, addressing her as Ryker's attention shifted to us. He lifted his head, slipping his phone into his pocket, realizing it wasn't just the two of us today. "The driver can take her to school" Ryker whispered, prompting me to give him a discreet glance, signaling not to mention that. It would be odd for me to ride with him on the bike when I could go with her in the car. "I'll start the car," Ryker stated with an eye roll after receiving my cue. He exited the mansion ahead of us while we lingered to give our outfits one last check. Once he was ready, we left the mansion and found him standing next to a black car. He didn't say anything but held the passenger side door open for me while Natalya settled in the back. I sat beside him and adjusted in my seat as he leaned over to help me fasten my seatbelt. I wasn't a child; I could do it myself, but I understood what he was trying to do. He came so close to my chest when adjusting it that I had to squeeze myself back into the chair and hold my breath. Once we hit the road, I started feeling uneasy. I was still curious. about the change in him. I didn't want to discover he was playing me because he wanted some secrets from me. That was my biggest fear. On top of that, I had too many secrets myself. That was the worst. I wasn't very clean myself. There was so much that I had hidden, and I feared the day they found out; they would just cut ties with me. "Scared for your first training session with me?" Ryker asked, snapping me out of my bewildering thoughts. "Not really," I sighed.

"I'm scared of what will become of us. Everyone will question. why we're not exercising like them, and then they'll bully us," Natalya quickly shifted to the edge of the seat to poke her head out from between our seats as she complained. "Hmm! It will be some easy exercising. Like running a mile and light stretching today," Ryker addressed me again. It was as if he wanted to talk to me, but she kept interrupting. "As if we can hit a mile," she scoffed sadly. "You think we'll be fine. The most important thing is that we don't give up," I turned to her and noticed Ryker adjusting the rear view mirror to steal glances at me. "Easy for you to say. Your stepbrother will cover it up for you," she said it right in front of Ryker, who frowned at her words. "Um, Natalya," I glanced at her. There was no such sense in her that we weren't supposed to talk about everything in front of everyone. She just didn't get hints and hence would always end up in a mess. "You should worry about yourself. Now that you've lied, you'll be under scrutiny," I had a feeling she had p**d him off to the point that he began to comment on her situation. "Really?" Natalya gasped. "No! I'll be there for you. Don't worry, don't listen to him," I grunted as I glared directly at Ryker, but he was focused on the road. However, as he noticed my eyes on him, he smirked a little, and just like that, he melted my heart again. "Please help me if I need it, okay?" Natalya brought my attention back to her, and I gave her a nod. The school arrived, and we both got out first before Ryker joined us. I understood he was going to stick around for classes and then drop us home before he went to the border for his rounds. "You go ahead, she'll join you in a minute," Ryker gestured at Natalya, almost waving her off when she tried to reach for my hand. "Okay! Please be quick," Natalya uttered in a lost state, requesting I don't leave her alone for too long.

"What was that? Why were you so rude to her?" I asked Ryker, tapping my foot on the ground. "Why does she keep interrupting?" he frowned, his hands on his waist. His beautiful eyes narrowed in my face made me feel so shy. The double shade of his hair and eyes was just enchanting. "Because she didn't know she wasn't welcome to have an input," I retorted, "what did you stop me for?" I then inquired of him. "There are two teams today, mine and Brody's. Sign up for mine," Ryker said with a furrowed brow without explaining anything else.

Tasting 75

75-Back To School

Nora:

Time was flying by, and Natalya had fully recovered. I anticipated her return to the hostel, but she seemed a bit hesitant. I didn't directly inquire, but sensed her worry that

others at school might single her out, leaving her to navigate back to the hostel alone and sink deeper into depression. So, I thought it best for her to stay a while longer.

“Really?” I questioned as she slung her bag over her shoulder. She hadn’t been her usual self in the mornings since we started going to school. I swear I could detect the scent of anxiety emanating from her. She was as nervous as could be.

“Don’t worry, I’ll be there with you, I reassured her, squeezing her hand to comfort her.

“Thank you,” she murmured, trailing closely behind me. I had asked the warriors to bring her belongings here so she could get ready and head to school directly from our place.

As we descended the stairs, I noticed Ryker standing by the exit door with his cellphone in hand, head down. He was clad in a black long coat with high collars and black pants, his weapons protruding from his belt as usual

“Um, you usually ride his bike, don’t you?” Natalya whispered in my ear. The way she spoke about my living arrangements and my stepbrothers made me feel like she wished she could experience that attention someday.

5. Back To S

“Yeah, but we’re definitely not biking today,” I replied, addressing her as Ryker’s attention shifted to us. He lifted his head, slipping his phone into his pocket, realizing it wasn’t just the two of us today.

“The driver can take her to school” Ryker whispered, prompting me to give him a discreet glance, signaling not to mention that. It would be odd for me to ride with him on the bike when I could go with her in the car.

“I’ll start the car,” Ryker stated with an eye roll after receiving my cue. He exited the mansion ahead of us while we lingered to give our outfits one last check.

Once he was ready, we left the mansion and found him standing next to a black car. He didn’t say anything but held the passenger side door open for me while Natalya settled in the back. I sat beside him and adjusted in my seat as he leaned over to help me fasten my seatbelt. I wasn’t a child; I could do it myself, but I understood what he was trying to do. He came so close to my chest when adjusting it that I had to squeeze myself back into the chair and hold my breath.

Once we hit the road, I started feeling uneasy. I was still curious. about the change in him. I didn’t want to discover he was playing me because he wanted some secrets from me. That was my biggest fear. On top of that, I had too many secrets myself. That was the worst. I wasn’t very clean myself. There was so much that I had hidden, and I feared the day they found out; they would just cut ties with me.

“Scared for your first training session with me?” Ryker asked, snapping me out of my bewildering thoughts.

“Not really,” I sighed.

“I’m scared of what will become of us. Everyone will question why we’re not exercising like them, and then they’ll bully us,” Natalya quickly shifted to the edge of the seat to poke her head out from between our seats as she complained.

“Hmm! It will be some easy exercising. Like running a mile and light stretching today,” Ryker addressed me again. It was as if he wanted to talk to me, but she kept interrupting.

“As if we can hit a mile,” she scoffed sadly.

“You think we’ll be fine. The most important thing is that we don’t give up,” I turned to her and noticed Ryker adjusting the rear view mirror to steal glances at me.

“Easy for you to say. Your stepbrother will cover it up for you,” she said it right in front of Ryker, who frowned at her words.

“Um, Natalya,” I glanced at her. There was no such sense in her that we weren’t supposed to talk about everything in front of everyone. She just didn’t get hints and hence would always end up in a mess.

“You should worry about yourself. Now that you’ve lied, you’ll be under scrutiny,” I had a feeling she had pissed him off to the point that he began to comment on her situation.

“Really?” Natalya gasped.

“No! I’ll be there for you. Don’t worry, don’t listen to him,” I grunted as I glared directly at Ryker, but he was focused on the road. However, as he noticed my eyes on him, he smirked a little, and just like that, he melted my heart again.

“Please help me if I need it, okay?” Natalya brought my attention

15 Back To School

back to her, and I gave her a nod

The school arrived, and we both got out first before Ryker joined us. I understood he was going to stick around for classes and then drop us home before he went to the border for his rounds.

“You go ahead, she’ll join you in a minute,” Ryker gestured at Natalya, almost waving her off when she tried to reach for my hand.

“Okay! Please be quick,” Natalya uttered in a lost state, requesting I don’t leave her alone for too long.

“What was that? Why were you so rude to her?” I asked Ryker, tapping my foot on the ground.

“Why does she keep interrupting?” he frowned, his hands on his waist. His beautiful eyes narrowed in my face made me feel so shy. The double shade of his hair and eyes was just enchanting.

“Because she didn’t know she wasn’t welcome to have an input,” I retorted, “what did you stop me for?” I then inquired of him.

“There are two teams today, mine and Brody’s. Sign up for mine,” Ryker said with a furrowed brow without explaining anything else.

Tasting 76

76-Team Brody! Nora: Once I stepped into the building, I spotted Natalya standing by the tables where teams were being assembled. “Nora!” She grabbed my arm and pulled me away before I could even grab the pen. “Which team are you going for?” She asked, agitation evident in her eyes. I could sense something had happened, hence her fearful look. I wondered if she had already signed up for a team or not. “I have to join my stepbrother’s team. Dad asked me to pick him,” I fibbed, noticing the change in her expression. She went from scared to completely mortified. “What’s wrong?” I grasped her arm and gently shook her to get her attention. “You said you’d stick by me today,” she pouted, her voice on the verge of tears. “I am sticking with you. Let’s sign up for Team Ryker,” I suggested, noticing how quickly she shook her head to reject the idea. “Why? What’s wrong with you signing up for his team?” I was concerned because Ryker had told me to sign up for her, and I didn’t want to go against his wishes. “Nora! Ariel has signed up for his team, and she’s going to be a captain. Our lives will be miserable. There will be days when Ryker won’t be around, and then what? She’ll chew me out,” Natalya pleaded, holding my hand and shaking it vigorously, trying hard to dissuade me from the idea. “It’s alright. I’ll talk to Ryker and ensure he doesn’t make her a captain,” I reassured, shrugging. “But he’s already picked her, so I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she pouted, shaking her head at my cluelessness. “Huh? There’s no way he would pick her,” I almost grunted, feeling a surge of jealousy. “Why? Did you tell him not to make her a captain? No! He doesn’t know anything. For all we know, he might even be talking to her this whole time,” she reasoned. She was right. Ryker must not have known. But could it be that he was talking to her and they were dating? I sighed and nodded.

“Please just take Team Brody. I mean, you’ve mentioned in passing that you’d be happy to be on his team,” she urged. But I still wasn’t certain if I wanted to go against Ryker, until I recalled how difficult it would be for me to avoid getting aroused when he helps me stretch. The thought scared me. “Give me a second. I’ll go speak to Ryker and see if he can—” I began to walk away, but a firm grasp on my arm stopped me. “He wouldn’t because she’s already signed. And even if he doesn’t make her the captain, she’ll still be on his team and make my life miserable. I’m sorry for putting you in this situation, but

I thought you'd want to help me after what happened in the woods. I went there thinking you'd be there, Nora," her voice broke, tears forming in her eyes. "Natalya! I apologized for it," my voice faltered as she reminded me of that horrible night. I "And I forgave you because you said you'd be with me through and through. Nora! You were the one who helped me lie when you said you saw me kill that monster. After that, I got so hyped up that I couldn't step back, and now you're stepping back even after you promised to stick with me," she held my hand tightly, refusing to let go. I felt odd and guilty. "Okay! Let's sign up for Team Brody. I'm sure my brother would understand," it was hard calling him that, but I had to remind myself to keep a distance from him because that label had sadly become attached to our names. "Oh my, thank goodness," she hugged me, jumping up and down. I sighed and approached the tables, signing up for Brody. Once we were done, we headed into the changing room, and immediately, I was stunned to see everyone glaring at Natalya. "Yo! It's the superhero we ordered from Amazon!" one of the girls laughed, pointing at Natalya, who started to step behind me. "Natalya! Please save us," another one yelled, laughing maniacally. "Oh! Let her change. I want to see if she has wings behind her

back since she's so special—" one of the girls eyed the others, and they brought out their phones. I was in disbelief. I was already under so much stress, and these girls messed me over. "Go change. I'll stand here and see who even gets close to your stall," I instructed Natalya to go to her stall. We each had our own stalls with lockers to secure our bags and other stuff. We could take showers in privacy and all. "Are you sure? They'll make your life miserable too," Natalya sounded so low whenever she had to face these bullies. "I'm sure. Just go! I'll handle them," I pushed her into her stall and stood outside with my arms crossed and my brow raised. "Oh look, it's the other useless girl, who's hiding behind the alpha king brothers these days," the girl commented as she approached the stall with a phone in her hand. "Do you think you can stop us?" she smirked, and the minute she tried to get past me, I grabbed her arm, twisted it, and spun her to the ground. She landed with a thud, and for a moment, she remained frozen. It took her a whole damn minute to come to her senses when her friend gasped. "What the f**k—" the girl quickly crawled away, getting to her feet and watching my face. "Who says a wolf is the only thing that can make you powerful? Baby! I can fight too," I smirked, watching their faces change colors. Well, it's good to see them realize that just because they had wolves didn't mean they could pick on anyone. "Anyone want to come have a word with me?" I yelled and noticed that the girls began to s** away. "We are only leaving because we don't want to upset the alpha king brothers," the girl saved her face with that excuse.

Tasting 77

77-Made A Mistake Nora: "Alright, everyone line up, Team B over here, and Team R over there," our leader Mr. Owen declared motioning for us to take our positions. Ryker's crew gravitated toward the open mountain side, while ours formed a line beside the building. The backyard sprawled out, offering a panoramic view of mountains and a yawning abyss. Ever since I enlisted with Brody, I'd been pondering how Ryker would take it. I'm pretty sure he wouldn't care much. I recall how nonchalant he was the first

time I spotted him on the field. Soon enough, Brody and Ryker strolled in, sporting white shirts and khaki shorts. They both looked incredibly handsome, but Ryker's magnetic presence captivated everyone's attention. His muscles were prominently defined, especially in his shoulders. His complexion was fair, but his muscles boasted numerous cuts that stood out. "We'll kick things off with a simple striking drill," Brody began, while Ryker approached his team with a scowl. I wasn't sure what he was searching for, but he seemed to scan the lineup, fixing his gaze on each person until he locked eyes in my direction. He nodded in acknowledgment, and I quickly averted my gaze, feeling a lump form in my throat. He briskly moved on, returning to the front to retrieve a register. I noticed him scanning the names before slamming the register Mode & Mistake shut. Damn! I shouldn't have listened to Natalya. I don't know what went down there, but her words got to me emotionally, and I just went along with it. Even though Ryker had specifically told me to choose him. "Let's pick up the pace, everyone!" Brody motioned for us, and we began jogging toward the trail. Meanwhile, Ryker was guiding his team through exercises and their rotations. I couldn't shake the image of Ryker slamming the register shut and shaking his head. "Hey!" I snapped out of my reverie as I glanced slightly to the side to see Brody jogging beside me,

a smile playing on his lips, indicating he was glad to have me on his team. "Feeling okay? If you need a breather, just give me a heads-up, alright?" He sounded calm, even as I struggled to catch my breath from the jogging. Despite how far we'd come, I refused to let my guard down. No way was I letting my wolf out in public. "Thanks," I managed a smile before clearing my throat to address something else. "Could you please look out for Natalya? She's feeling scared because, you know-," I trailed off when I noticed a slight tension in Brody's body as he looked straight ahead. "I heard about her and Nora! I'm not one for empty apologies," his comment caught me off guard. I had to gather my thoughts before responding. "What do you mean? Empty apology?" I inquired, hoping he'd sense the concern in my tone. "She only apologized because she got caught. Do you realize what chaos would have ensued if she hadn't stopped lying?" His tone shifted to aggression, but to calm himself, he focused ahead and took deep breaths through his mouth. "Because she was terrified of facing bullying every day-" I attempted to explain, but once again, he remained unconvinced. "And her brilliant plan was to put ever pack in jeopardy? I don't understand how she thought she could face the monsters if war broke out. Did she imagine she could just say, 'Oops, sorry, I know you were planning for war, but I was lying'?" he scoffed, referring to her. I noticed how furious he was with her. No wonder, when he passed by her, he shot her a deadly glare. Initially, I didn't read too much into it, but now I could see he was genuinely angry with her. "I know she messed up and apologized, she faced consequences. But now-the bullying has escalated, Brody!" I couldn't believe he was so unsympathetic. Sure, she wasn't in the right either. But she faced consequences and admitted her mistake. If they wanted to punish her more, that's their call. But for the girls to threaten to record her while she's showering and all, that's just crossing a line. "I'll need some time to accept her apology," he stated, keeping his expression neutral. "Sure," I muttered under my breath, feeling annoyed that this foolish girl had caused tension

between Brody and me. Maybe I'm overreacting. He won't do anything to harm her, just avoid her. Maybe it won't be as bad as having April as the team * Abode A Mistate captain. "Alright, everyone! Let's take a break here," Brody announced, and we all halted. I walked over to the side of the track and sat down on a large rock with Natalya, who appeared flushed and hyperventilating. "I heard everything," Natalya uttered. I was sure she did because she was right in front of me, and Brdy was speaking quite loudly. "I'm sorry," I reached for her hand, but she sneakily slipped away. "I wish you had stopped me from lying," she turned her face away. I had no response until I saw Ryker's team pass us, noticing how upset Ryker seemed with me. He paused me a brief glance and when I passed him a mild smile, he looked away. It was obvious he was mad at me. "You know what, that's unfair. You can't just blame me, Natalya. I thought you were taking full responsibility for your lie. But ever since I came to school, you've been trying to make it seem like it was all my fault that you got into this mess," I finally said it. The frustration inside me erupted after seeing Ryker's reaction and realizing I had upset him for someone who wasn't even grateful for my efforts to help her. She stared at me in shock before uttering, "I know. I'm really sorry. Please don't end our friendship." "I am not going to end this friendship, but please, refrain from such actions," I warned her with a sigh. The damage had been -73 Made A Mistake done anyway. I sighed and nodded, but soon we resumed training, and I didn't speak to either Brody or Natalya.

Tasting 78

78-Please, Accept My Apology. Nora: Ryker was waiting for us in the parking lot, and I felt nervous about joining him. I even worried he wouldn't let me into his car. But, as I started to approach, I saw him open the passenger-side door without even glancing my way. His window was down, and his arm reached out, bent upwards to rest on the top of the car as he tapped it lightly. "We're all set," Natalya announced from the backseat while I remained silent. Sitting with him felt strange since he didn't even turn to acknowledge me. "Did you enjoy teaching our class today?" Natalya leaned forward, poking her head out and addressing Ryker. "Mm-hmm," Ryker responded, seeming uninterested in conversation. "Our team leader can't stand us," she remarked, eliciting a response from Ryker for the first time. He turned his face towards me briefly before looking ahead again. "He doesn't hate us," I corrected her but didn't elaborate on the fact that he had a problem with Natalya, not me. "He does. I can't forget how he was talking to you today," she pointed out, catching Ryker's attention even more. "Brody? Did he say something to Nora?" his sudden interest -made Natalya glance my way before responding. "Yeah," she replied with a sad sigh. "No! He didn't," I frowned, turning to face Natalya. I couldn't tell if she genuinely thought Brody was rude to me or if she was downplaying her own role in the situation. Brody only sounded harsh when talking about her. He didn't have a problem with me in particular. "I'll have a word with him," Ryker grumbled. "What will you tell him? He's already upset with us for lying about the monster thing. I don't know how he'll react when you bring us up," she continued, somehow making me feel guilty as well. "Wait," Ryker slowed the car to a halt on the side of the road and turned to look at Natalya. "He's

mad at Nora for it? Why?" Ryker asked, his voice laced with aggression. At this point, I allowed her to speak because I wanted to understand if she had a valid reason for believing what she was saying. I wanted to know her intentions behind this conversation. "Remember, Nora also confirmed that she saw me transition and kill the monster? So, somehow, I think everyone believes she's as guilty as I am," she explained sadly, casting a glance at me. But her words made me turn to her dramatically, my mouth agape. There was no way what she was saying was true. "Huh?" Ryker hissed. "First of all, Nora never said that. And secondly, even if she did, she has nothing to do with this issue. Nobody even remembers that she was there. As for guilt, you were guilty for lying, and you alone. Nora shouldn't be brought up in this matter again," he spoke aggressively, using his body language to emphasize his words to her. Not only Natalya but I was also surprised. Although I was confused about Natalya's actions, Ryker's reaction improved my mood a bit. "You're right. I'll tell everyone the s e thing," Natalya added, making me side-eye her. "You know what, we should have taken your team," she sighed, folding her arms over her chest and sliding back, resting comfortably. Ryker rolled his eyes and focused on starting the car, muttering under his breath, "You shouldn't, but Nora should have." His comment made my skin crawl, but I remained silent for the rest of the car ride. Once we arrived home, I rushed upstairs with Natalya to confront her. "What were you thinking?" I asked, throwing my bag on the couch and standing with my hands on my hips. "What?" she shrugged, placing her bag in the corner and grabbing a dress to change into. "The whole conversation in the car. You know Brody never accused me. Is that how you see the situation? Do you think I should have been equally blamed?" I scoffed, and she finally turned to face me.

"No! I only did it to provoke Ryker into talking to Brody so he would treat us better," she explained, holding her hands in front of her body, her head hanging low. "Natalya, I understand you're going through a tough time, but I don't appreciate you playing games with my stepbrothers. Next time, I'll speak up and expose your lies myself," I warned her firmly, feeling like I had been treating her too gently and she was starting to take advantage of it. "Okay, fine," she sighed, leaving me wondering if she had always been like this or if this change was recent. "I am just messing up these days. I am scared if I didn't do anything to please everyone soon, I will be kicked out of the pack," she expressed her fears and I knew even when she was wrong, being kicked out to live a life of a rogue when the monsters roam freely in the woods was scary. "Go and freshen up for lunch. I'll go talk to Ryker about the team situation," I told her before leaving the room to find Ryker. I was sure he would be upset with my decision, and it turned out to be even worse than I expected. I had chosen Brody for Natalya's sake, but he seemed to be the biggest antagonist against her. Finally, I found Ryker in the kitchen, sitting on a stool with his body hunched over the table, a sandwich in his hand. He raised his eyes to acknowledge me before lowering them again, focusing on the phone in his hand. "Ry—" Before I could even say his name, he cut me off. "You disappointed me a lot today, Nora." "I wanted to pick your team," I uttered, but my words felt dry in my mouth when he straightened his back and shoved his phone in his pocket, indicating he was ready to leave. "But you didn't. You chose Brody!" he hissed, walking past me. Feeling a pang of

guilt, I grabbed his arm and pulled him to a stop. He halted and even glanced down at my arm before meeting my gaze. "I'm sorry," I uttered.

Tasting 79

79-1 Am Having An Affair With My Stepbrother.

Nora:

"I'm sorry!" I apologized again, refusing to release his arm.

He rolled his eyes before pulling h m away, but then paused and returned to face me. "Why did you go for him?" he leaned against the wall, placing his hand behind me.

"For Natalya. She insisted on him because you had April on your team," I explained, observing his disapproving head shake.

"Nora! You're clueless!" his remark made me frown.

"I was just trying to help my friend," I defended, but his head shake silenced me.

"Natalya can handle herself. She's not as helpless as you think. If anyone needs looking after," he paused, and I expected a joke, but his tone remained serious as he continued, "it's you."

I pouted, "I can manage on my own--," but his cold finger against my lips silenced me.

"Forget it. I can't rely on you. I'll look out for you myself," he said, bringing his face close to mine and whispering.

My cheeks tingled, but I managed a faint smile. "So, you're not mad at me anymore for not choosing your team?" I asked, winking playfully.

"Nope! You just doubled my workload," he sighed, rolling his

79-1 Am Having An Affair With My Stepbrother.

Nora:

"I'm sorry!" I apologized again, refusing to release his arm.

He rolled his eyes before pulling his arm away, but then paused and returned to face me. "Why did you go for him?" he leaned against the wall, placing his hand behind me.

"For Natalya. She insisted on him because you had April on your team," I explained, observing his disa roving head shake.

“Nora! You’re clueless!” his remark made me frown.

“I was just trying to help my friend,” I defended, but his head shake silenced me.

“Natalya can handle herself. She’s not as helpless as you think. If anyone needs looking after,” he paused, and I expected a joke, but his tone remained serious as he continued, “it’s you.”

I pouted, “I can manage on my own–,” but his cold finger against my lips silenced me.

“Forget it. I can’t rely on you. I’ll look out for you myself,” he said, bringing his face close to mine and whispering.

My cheeks tingled, but I managed a faint smile. “So, you’re not mad at me anymore for not choosing your team?” I asked, winking playfully.

“Nope! You just doubled my workload,” he sighed, rolling his

2024

eyes as he casually leaned against the wall, hands still resting there, and leaning over me slightly.

“How did I make your work double?” I asked, genuinely puzzled.

“Now I’ll have to keep an eye on Brody to ensure he treats you well,” he sighed, his tone devoid of playfulness, which touched my heart.

“Actually, Natalya exaggerated. He wasn’t being mean to me. He’s just upset with Natalya because he found out she lied,” I explained before he went off to confront Brody over something that didn’t happen.

“But-,” he paused, realizing Natalya d.

“I don’t like how she messes with your head,” his comment made me frown.

“She doesn’t. She just wanted to provoke you to get her help,” I mumbled, noticing for a moment his gaze lingered on my lips, and then he licked his own, nodding as if he were listening to

1. me.

“Aha!” he finally snapped out of it, realizing I had stopped talking. He shook himself out of his thoughts and looked away awkwardly.

“Why?” My question made him look back at me.

“What do you mean, why?” he frowned, his scent hitting my nostrils as he stood so close to me.

“The change in you is new. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you look at me like that before,” I said, no longer blushing as I recalled

the harsh and cold months we’d had.

“Maybe you weren’t looking at all he replied with a sad sigh, his lips heaving.

“Do you remember that monster baby you left in the woods? | could have exposed you and gotten you in trouble. They wouldn’t have even let you defend yourself. The punishment for harboring a

monster means you’re labeled a liar. Do you think anyone would have believed you about us being mates after that?” he watched me gasp as I now understood why he helped

1. me.

“But why are you so open about wing your emotions now?” I folded my arms over my chest, making it clear that I’m not the type to blush and forget to ask important questions.

“I thought I had time,” he admitted, “I had time to understand my feelings and you. But I was wrong. Time never stops for anyone.”

“So, you’re afraid I’ll choose your brother over you?” I whispered softly, watching him close his eyes and nod. It was

heartwarming to watch him show his emotions and even be sad at the thought of losing me. I haven’t thought about choosing anyone yet. I didn’t even know until now that one of my mates wanted me to choose him.

“I don’t want to lose you-,” the words slipped from his lips. before he realized, and once he did, he instantly corrected himself, “my mate.”

“I know it won’t be the same for you because you have two mates. And that’s confusing me so much. Why would a she-wolf be granted two mates without the first one rejecting her?” he

rambled until he faced me again, his body hunching even more.

“Just know—I’m not backing down. So you better be ready to remember, if you choose him, I’ll be there to steal you back,” he hissed, and my heart raced in my chest at how openly he was saying these things now.

“Everyone knows us as step-siblings,” I murmured, but he silenced me by lowering his face to mine and blowing air softly over my lips.

“I don’t care. They can label you a traitor, and I don’t care,” he added, sending a strange shiver down my spine.

He stared into my eyes from up close, and then his lips crashed onto mine. I instantly felt weak in the knees at how good his lips tasted.

But before the kiss could deepen, I heard someone’s voice, and it shook the world from under my feet.

“Nora!”

I recognized the voice. My body got covered in goosebumps at the realization that she had seen us in that state.

It was Natalya.

I quickly pushed Ryker back and swallowed my fear, turning to my left. As Ryker moved away, I saw Natalya standing in the kitchen doorway, her eyes wide open.

“What—,” she gasped, covering her mouth, “you two are—,” she started. My heart was pounding hard in my chest now.

I shouldn’t have been so openly romantic with my stepbrother.

“Natalya!” I tried to call out to her, but she dashed away. I noticed a flinch in Ryker’s body, but I had to stop him from going after her.

“I’ll go talk to her,” I reassured him, but deep down, I didn’t even know how I would do that. She seemed pretty shocked, and who wouldn’t be when catching stepsiblings in such an intimate situation?

“If she gives you any hard time, let me know. I’ll make sure she remembers who she’s dealing with,” Ryker hissed before walking past me, presumably to go outside and cool off.

Tasting 80

80-Everyone Will Hate Me For Kissing My Stepbrother Nora: I went after Natalya and found her in the bedroom. She was pacing around, hands on her face, constantly wiping off the sweat. Once she saw me enter the room, she turned her face away and gazed out the window. “Why did you leave like that?” I tried to sound casual, pretending I hadn’t just been caught kissing my stepbrother. “What was that, Nora?” she raised her voice, showing how shocked and disgusted she was. “What?” I felt guilty for gaslighting her,

but it was my life, and she kept interrupting my peace. “I saw you—,” she suddenly lowered her voice, “kissing him. He’s your—Oh Goddess, Nora! What are you doing?” Her reaction made me feel revolted. “I wasn’t kissing him,” I said, “actually, his back was blocking your view so you couldn’t see properly. We were just talking. He was whispering in my ear,” I tried to cover it up. Because there was no way I could tell her he was my mate without revealing my wolf. And knowing her, she would force me to show her my wolf, exposing all my secrets at once. “Really? I saw your lips against his,” she clasped her hands over her waist and shook her head in disappointment. I can’t believe you would pull such a stunt. Weren’t you already feeling important enough? Why did you have to go after him? Do you not realize the consequences if anyone finds out?” As she kept rambling, I couldn’t help but feel uneasy about her choice of words. “I’m not seducing anyone,” I defended myself, shocked that she was placing all the blame on me. “Nora! You don’t have to lie to me. I know you and I know them as well,” she sighed, rolling her eyes and passing judgment on me. “Huh? Please tell me, what do you really know about me?” I inquired, my tone hinting at a warning for her to think before she speaks.

But she ignored all the warnings and proceeded to explain what she truly thought of me, “First Brody and now your own stepbrother? Nora, I understand you’re attractive and have a great body, but come on!” she yelled, her words cutting deep. “I never seduced Brody, you saw that he was into me himself. I can’t believe you think this way about me,” as soon as I started sharing my feelings, she shook her head to silence me. “Nora! Don’t change the subject. I’m only saying this because you’ll get in trouble. I can’t scold your stepbrother, but you!” she softened her tone as tears welled up in my eyes. “Nora! It’s not a healthy way to find a mate. Do you even realize what will happen when the council finds out that you’re involved with your stepbrother?” She approached me and gently took my hand, rubbing the back of it. At that moment, I couldn’t even admit that I hadn’t kissed my brother. “It was just a quick peck, there’s nothing going on between us,” I lied, lowering my head as her words frightened me. It wasn’t a lie, though. I couldn’t explain to her the deep connection I felt with Ryker and Cain that went beyond mere attraction. “Then you should keep it that way. It should never go beyond kisses,” she hugged me, but I couldn’t bring myself to return the embrace. “I’m not only saying this for your sake, but Alpha King Ryker could be expelled from the pack for being involved with his stepsister,” she sighed and released the hug. “I know I may seem like the villain in your story right now, but I’m saying this for your benefit. If you still choose to continue, I’ll support you.” Her statement shocked me. I lifted my head and saw her smiling at me. “I’m ready to face the consequences of another lie. I won’t tell anyone what I saw, and if anyone suspects, I’ll pretend I’m blind and never saw anything.” While her attempt to comfort me and assure me of her support was sweet, I had been warned. I didn’t want Ryker to suffer or lose his position. So, in my heart, I decided to let it go for now. “I won’t do anything to bring shame to my name or Ryker’s. Lord Atwood brought me here with love and respect; I can’t betray his

49 04% trust,” I resolved, and she gave me a reassuring nod. “By the way, now that this is out of the picture, I’m really curious about something,” she bit her bottom lip and shyly tucked her hair behind her ear. “Is Ryker really in love with you? I mean, was it just a

heat-of-the-moment thing or do you think that's why he cares so much about you?" The way she asked me that question made me recall how Ryker had been treating me lately. He was being gentle, no unnecessary taunts or mockery. "It was just a heat-of-the-moment thing," I lied. As I tried to walk away, she grasped my arm to stop in my tracks. "But no other brother looks out for you the way he does. So—" Before she could jump to the conclusion of Ryker being in love with me, I hushed her. "Cain and I have a good bond. He shares his work with me and treats me well. It's just that he's been a little busy lately," I replied and walked away, leaving her frozen in her spot. "So you and Cain are also good friends?" she asked with a hint of excitement in her voice. I would be lying if I say I have not noticed how her face lights up at the mention of my mate. "Yeah! We are," I uttered and attempted to walk away but she held my hand tightly and I knew in the moment that something dangerous was creeping through her mind. And I was right. What she said next left the world beneath me shaking. "Then can you ask Cain to paint tonight like he paints his other models?" Her request halted my steps.