

# **Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates #Tasting 61 - Read Tasting Nora-Pleasing Her Stepbrother Mates Tasting 61**

Tasting 61

61–In The Woods With My Stepbrothers

Nora:

I collapsed onto my bed like a character from a 90's drama, burying my face in the pillow as tears streamed down my cheeks. The sobs were muffled by the soft fabric.

I cried until the sound of footsteps interrupted my solitude. "Nora! Your life's in danger in the woods," it was Cain. His voice was oddly calm, lacking any trace of disdain for my presence. I wiped my tear-streaked cheeks and sat up, meeting his gaze.

"But I don't want to be left behind. He's done so much for me, and now that he's in danger, am I just supposed to stay here?" I sniffled, feeling a mix of frustration and sadness.

"Fine. You can come with us," Cain's decision came swift, catching me off guard.

"Really?" I asked incredulously, and he nodded affirmatively.

"We don't have time. So get up and follow me," he instructed in his usual casual but firm tone. Despite his cold demeanor, his actions spoke volumes. He may not have been warm, but he was willing to include me.

I trailed after him to the living room, where I found the brothers wearing matching frowns. Clearly, they hadn't anticipated Cain's decision to bring me along.

"Don't tell me she's coming too. We need to focus on finding Dad." Nash groaned, shooting a disapproving glance at Cain.

"You guys don't need to worry. She'll stick with me." Cain reassured them, alleviating their concerns about looking after me.

As Cain relieved them of the burden they'd previously cited as the reason for not wanting me to join. I expected them to get going. But no, they remained adamant, their disdain for me apparent. They preferred leaving me behind, vulnerable to the monsters lurking in the

shadows

“Why?” Ryker’s imitation was evident in his voice. He hadn’t spoken directly to me since the incident with Silas.

“Because instead of wasting time on arguments, we should be heading back to the woods.” Cain reminded them of the urgency of our situation. Nash and Silas exchanged glances before turning their attention back to Ryker, who was surprisingly vocal this time.

“And here we thought you couldn’t multitask,” Ryker’s comment was a jab at Cain’s tendency to claim he gets easily distracted, thus preferring to focus on one thing at a time.

“What’s your problem, Ryker? You don’t want to take her to the woods yourself, and you don’t want me to take her either. Do you want her to remain here, in danger?” Cain’s calm demeanor began to falter under the scrutiny of his brothers.

I couldn’t fathom why Ryker was objecting so much now.

“Even if he does, why does it bother you so much?” Nash redirected the question to Cain. It seemed they were united against me, regardless of whose side they had to take. All

“It doesn’t. We can’t fail Father,” Cain explained, his stance strong.

“Now, I won’t be indulging in any pointless chatter. Go on, Nora, grab

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your sweater and boots,” Cain motioned for me to rise, and like a dutiful student, I nodded and hurried upstairs. I changed into cargo pants and a white top with a gray hoodie layered on top. With

comfortable high boots adorning my feet, I rejoined them in the living

room.

Following Cain’s lead, I murmured a quiet “thank you” as we made our way. However, he only nodded in response, escorting me to the car where Nash sat in the driver’s seat. The car ride was tense, filled with the brothers discussing the possible scenarios surrounding their father’s disappearance.

The monsters typically targeted omega she-wolves, which made this situation even more frightening, as they only attacked others when they sought to consume them.

“Nora, hold this,” Cain instructed, handing me a silver knife without turning around, his arm stretched over his shoulder, offering the blade. I took it, noticing Nash observing the exchange through the rearview

mirror.

“You know how to use it, right?” Cain asked, his eyes focused on the road as he cracked his knuckles.

“I can when I’m under attack,” I shrugged, catching Cain’s amused chuckle. His laughter was so effortless that I couldn’t tear my eyes away from him.

After the car came to a stop, we exited and joined the others.

“Let’s go,” Ryker said determinedly.

As I stepped into the woods, a shiver ran down my spine, mirroring the eerie silence that enveloped the forest. The trees towered ominously, their branches stretching out like skeletal fingers. I edged closer to

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Cain, feeling a surge of anxiety without the protection of my wolf. A thick blanket of fog hung low, obscuring my vision and enveloping the world in a suffocating haze.

I was

The air was chilly, nipping at my skin despite the sweater I wore. Sure Cain noticed because he subtly intertwined his fingers with mine, holding my hand as he led the way forward.

He kept his gaze mostly fixed on the ground, searching for the monster’s trail to follow. My heart raced at the thought of finding my stepfather in a worse state. I pushed aside the unsettling thoughts and continued walking beside Cain. Suddenly, I heard rustling behind me, causing me to tense up, ready to defend myself. To my relief, it was only Ryker.

He appeared out of nowhere, startling me to the point where I instinctively clung closer to Cain.

“Cain! Nash wants you by the river,” Ryker informed, sneaking a glance in my direction before turning back to his brother.

“Why?” Cain asked, slipping his hand out of mine,

“You’ll find out if you go to the river,” Ryker replied, rolling his eyes. I couldn’t help but wonder what was going on. Why would Nash call for Cain without discussing it openly with all of us?

“You stay here. I’ll take care of you,” Ryker said as he watched me follow Cain once again.

“Take care of her,” Cain reminded Ryker before hurrying off. He cast one last glance at Ryker, as if warning him not to do anything foolish, before disappearing into the distance. Now it was just me and my angry stepbrother, who seemed poised to say something to me.

Tasting 62

62—Their Eyes On My Friend

Nora:

“What was that?” Ryker asked as soon as we were alone. I took a deep breath and turned to face him, wondering what he was referring to

now.

“What?” I inquired.

“You and Silas. Do you have any idea what would happen if anyone else had caught you with him?” Ryker hissed, mentioning that incident. I wasn’t very proud of myself, but it’s not like I had any idea that would happen. And neither was I answerable to him.

“It wasn’t anything inappropriate. We were just wrestling,” I awkwardly tried to excuse, when I should have been straightforward about Silas hurting me and then applying ointment. But wouldn’t that have sounded even weirder?

“He had his mouth around your—nipples, Nora!” Ryker clenched his jaw, emphasizing exactly what state he found me in.

“He fell on me accidentally,” the more I tried to come up with an excuse, the more I messed up. Besides, his angry glare was making matters worse for me. It was as if he was going to eat me alive.

“Look at me. Just because you are in the mansion doesn’t mean you can go after your stepbrothers. Don’t forget, Dad brought you in as our stepsister,” he continued, wanting to make eye contact with me, probably to see the shame in my eyes, and I kept looking away to avoid that from happening.

“What do you think I am?” I groaned, finally frustrated by his questioning.

“My perception will depend on your actions,” he nodded his head, making me take a deep breath before I glared at him. I didn’t like the way he was portraying me as this horny bitch going after her

stepbrothers. They were not any less either. They were the ones always instigating it.

“What? What are you staring at me like that for now?” he snapped his fingers in front of my face, anger visible through his eyes.

“Nothing.” I hissed, folding my arms over my chest and looking away. I didn’t know how else to tell him, but his perception of me really made me consider my own actions.

“Nora!” his tone was much softer this time when he said my name. I started up and watched him stare at me with his head tilted and his beautiful eyes looking into mine.

“I’m only saying this because I know my brothers, okay? They hate you. They will not leave a single chance to get you kicked out of the house. Don’t fall for their sweet words,” he shocked me with his words. I didn’t expect that from him. If anything, I thought he would yell or call me names again. But he was using a much gentler tone this time.

“And why do you care if I get kicked out or not?” I shrugged, keeping my gaze steady to be able to look at his face. The way he watched my face after my question gave me a little goosebumps, but then he quickly shrugged and clicked his tongue, looking around casually.

“You are right. I don’t care. But you have blackmailed me with the mate bond. I don’t want you to use that to re-enter the house,” he finally answered, but his tone was different this time. Was it truly why?

“Don’t worry about that,” I mumbled, giving my shoulders a shrug too.

“Good,” he echoed my action, and we both faced away before we saw Nash approaching us.

“I think we know what needs to be done,” Nash returned with Silas and Cain, his eyes mostly on me.

“You’re not going to lure in the monster using me as bait, are you?” I raised my brow, watching them not appreciate that I was joking in such a stressful time.

“I wish!” Silas commented under his breath, thinking he was being sneaky, but everyone heard him. Or maybe he meant for everyone to hear it.

“Call your friend, we need her here,” Nash suddenly brought up Natalya, and I felt like the world had been shaken from under my feet.

“Natalya?” just to be sure I was not hearing things.

“Who else? She fought with the monsters before. We will need her by our side,” Nash sounded confident that he was making the right choice. I knew it would have been the right choice had Natalya actually been telling the truth. I gulped and watched everyone’s face one by one, wondering how the hell could I save her a\*s now?

“But... her wolf is not very reliable. She comes out whenever she wants. I don’t think it’s a good option to bring her here,” I bet my voice came out all broken and stuttering. I wanted them to understand that Natalya should definitely not be here. But they seemed offended that I was reluctant to bring in help.

“Why not? Do you not want Dad to be found?” Silas shook his head, probably showing disbelief over my lack of worry for Lord Atwood.

Which was not true. If anything, I would love to give my all to find him. It’s just that I knew Natalya would be a waste of time, and bringing her here would jeopardize her life too. Contentt

“She doesn’t really work that way. Her wolf wakes up whenever she wants. I don’t think she can do anything other than maybe become a burden like me. One of you will end up taking care of her just like you are taking care of me,” I tried, I really did, and it made them share a glance before looking back at me. In fact, in order to save her, I made myself look so wrong that even Nash couldn’t help but make a comment about it.

“This is not the right time to be jealous of her. Call her right now,” Nash demanded, making me grunt inwardly.

“Nora! If you’re not going to call, we will,” Silas hissed, and at this point, I felt like my hands were tied.

I thought about bringing her here but staying around her. One of them has to keep me safe for their father’s sake, so if she stays with me, she will somehow end up with one of the brothers taking care of me.

With that in mind, I gave her a call.

Tasting 63

63–Something Fishy

Nora:

“What?” she almost whispered into my ear from the other side. I could tell she was terrified by what I was asking of her, and I was worried for her myself. But the brothers just stared at me, waiting for me to get Natalya here.

“Um, don’t tell anyone, but we kind of got into trouble. Lord Atwood got taken away by the monsters, and the brothers think—” Before I could finish, Nash snatched the phone out of my hands and put it against his ear. I didn’t mind. Honestly, it was better that he brought her here because I was having such a difficult time telling her to come.

Nash steadily walked away while talking to her and filling her in on the happenings.

“Are you really jealous of your friend’s abilities?” Silas scoffed, making a joke out of my concern for Natalya.

“No! Why would I be? She’s my friend. If anything, I’m worried,” I sounded offended, and that gave Silas pleasure, as he smirked at himself for getting under my skin.

“Such a friend you are. You know she’s much more powerful than you are, right? If anything, you should be worried about your own safety. She’ll be fine here,” he clicked his tongue and looked around until his eyes fell on Cain.

“Are you done?” Cain asked him in his tough tone.

I don’t know what’s been happening, but Cain had been acting really mature unlike the others. Maybe he truly was finally coming around.

“Someone is hurt,” Silas commented before he went silent as Nash returned.

“I’ll go get her. I told her to stay prepared,” Nash informed, handing me my phone back. I took it but wondered what would happen when she comes here and is unable to transition.

“Just so you know, her wolf—” I tried to remind them not to have too many hopes but also not to judge her because her wolf does whatever she pleases, but Nash’s grunt silenced me.

Ryker had been really lost this whole time. He was constantly checking the GPS and then looking around, vaguely passing me a glance before stealing his eyes away.

After some time had passed, Ryker straightened his back and approached me. We were sitting on the ground, or at least I was, waiting for Natalya to appear with Nash.

“Give me your phone?” Ryker asked, stretching his hand out to me.

“Why?” I questioned.

“We’ll be heading into the deep woods, the signals will be down. So let me keep your phone,” Ryker insisted, but I shook my head.

"I'll use it as a flashlight," I said, watching him stare at my face before sharing a glance with Cain.

Things have progressed rather weirdly ever since Nash left. The brothers kept exchanging glances as if they didn't want me to know what they were up to.

"I think we should take her home then," Ryker said, speaking directly to Cain, who nodded a little.

"I think so too. The night is upon us, and we will be using our senses and strength to follow Dad's scent," Cain agreed with Ryker, but I was not okay with it.

"I don't want to leave. Natalya will be here," I hesitantly got up, watching Silas, who was leaning against the tree, staring at the sky. Then I looked at Cain, who was sitting on a big tree branch, his legs dangling on the ground. Finally, I looked over at Ryker, who stood facing me.

"She can take care of herself," Ryker uttered.

"But what if her wolf doesn't wake up?" I asked, and Ryker stretched his neck back, staring at the sky as if he was exhausted by my questioning.

"Nora! Then we'll be here with her. Do you think we're not aware of the fact that there's a high chance her wolf wouldn't even come out? We're here for it," he finally looked down and said in a calming tone.

"But—" I looked at them one by one again.

"Nora! We can't take this pressure on us anymore. Our dad needs us, you understand that, right?" Cain got on his feet and approached me, standing next to his brother.

Wow, the two were really tall and handsome, each breathtaking.

"I guess," I cursed under my breath so that nobody hears it.

"Please take care of Natalya," I said to Cain directly, and Ryker frowned, cocking his head to look at his brother, who gave me a comforting and reassuring nod.

"I'll be coming with you anyway," it was Cain who said that.

Ryker was silently examining our expressions, making me feel uncomfortable, but what can I do? I had to leave with Cain.

"Can you tell them to take care of Natalya?" I stopped when I had only taken a few steps to request Cain, who turned to his brothers and watched them look back at him.

“Guys! Natalya, make sure she’s safe, okay?” he confirmed, and the others only nodded.

Even when I walked away, I felt like Ryker was still watching me. By the time we were in Cain’s car, I felt really anxious and worried for Natalya.

“You worry too much,” Cain said.

I noticed how s\*xxy he looked when holding the steering wheel with one hand while he stretched the other arm behind my seat comfortably. It wasn’t his way of showing me affection, it was just his habit.

“It’s not a bad personality trait, but it can make you sick at times. Natalya will be fine. She has three alpha kings with her, don’t worry,” Cain’s soothing voice was enough for me to believe they would look after her fine.

We arrived home, and I went straight to my bedroom to take a shower. I had this weird feeling in my body, not anything s\*xual but something that made me feel like I shouldn’t have returned.

Even when I was under the shower, I couldn’t help but repeat the entire day in my head, and then I finally decided to let my wolf speak to me.

I twisted the ring on my finger to hear her out, and the very first thing she said made my body numb, “We should not have listened to the

brothers.”

Tasting 64

64—Paint My Nipples

Nora:

My wolf left me puzzled. I couldn’t chat with her much because I had to rush out and make a call to Natalya, just to check on her.

“Who are you ringing?” Cain’s sudden appearance caught me off guard. I thought he’d be in his studio. Perhaps he couldn’t work due to stress over his father’s disappearance.

“Natalya!” I uttered, peering down at my phone, but once again, her phone was turned off.

“She might be deep in the woods right now,” he replied, his scent slowly wafting into my nostrils.

"I'm so stressed about Natalya and dad," I said, sighing and plopping onto the couch, getting comfortable with my legs dangling down.

"I get why you're worried about dad, but Natalya? I'm sure if anyone's safe out there, it's her," Cain said, leaning over me, resting his hands on the counter on either side of my thighs, ensuring our faces were level, so we could gaze into each other's eyes.

I wasn't sure if he realized how intense his eye contact could be, but since he didn't seem affected, I acted like I wasn't intrigued either.

"I understand, but her wolf--," I began to repeat myself, and Cain just chuckled to silence me.

"Is unpredictable, blah blah blah," his lips moved so gracefully when he talked, "she also has your stepbrothers with her. So, if you don't

trust her wolf, trust theirs."

That's exactly why I worried about her. My stepbrothers weren't very reliable when it came to taking care of someone.

"You don't trust us, do you?" Cain noted, raising his brow. He was vigilant. His eyes tracked every movement of the person he interacted with.

"I don't trust them," I confessed, but it only made his brow raise even higher.

"What about me?" he asked, tilting his head. I noticed a slight smirk on his lips, making my heart flutter at the way he looked at me.

"You--," I paused as his eyes narrowed further, "I don't know." With a shy smile, I lowered my head, focusing on my hands in my lap.

"There is no way you don't know, tell me," he uttered, bringing his face even closer to mine. I got to see how deep his eyes were. They were so soothing.

"Maybe I trust you a little," I wasn't lying to him. He made me change my mind.

"Aha! I thought I was in the same list as them. What made you change your mind?" The more he talked, the more I urged to shove my tongue down his throat and even when it was wrong, it felt like the only right thing to do in the moment.

"Why do you blush so much around me?" He never let anything pass. If he noticed something, he had to comment on it.

"I don't." I replied, without lifting my head.

“Do you want to see your painting?” His voice softened even more. I raised my head, and our eyes met once again.

“You finished it?” I inquired, surprised. I thought he was too stressed to do anything, but I guess painting helped him relax.

“I did,” he nodded, giving slight jerks to his head, causing his hair to bounce and fall into his eyes. I watched his face and the unruly strands bothering his sight. All I wanted to do was gently push his hair off his face before he did it himself.

“What?” he queried again, not yet fixing his hair.

“Your hair-.” I pointed delicately.

“Can you fix it?” he lowered his face for me to get a good view of his crown, looking at me through his eyebrows.

“Sure!” It felt like a wish granted. I quickly raised both my hands, stopping near his head, and then gently ran my fingers through his hair.

Oh sweet Goddess, have mercy on me and my little heart.

His hair was so smooth, and they smelled so good. If I could, I would bury my face in his head and inhale the scent until there is nothing left. I then gently touched my fingertips to his eyes, brushing the strands away from his vision.

“Alright! Thank you,” he suddenly pulled away, walking over to the refrigerator to grab a can of soda.

“Follow me,” after retrieving the can, he ordered me, and I trailed behind him to his studio like a lost kitten.

Once inside, I found my painting facing the other side, placed in the middle of the studio. With my heart pounding loudly, I walked to the painting and noticed the moonlight from the window

illuminating it.

When I say my jaw hung low, I really mean it.

Every stroke was done so perfectly. But not only that, the exaggerated details made my heart skip a beat.

Wow!” I exclaimed as he settled beside the canvas, facing me and sipping from the can.

His eyes narrowed as he gazed at me, while I was engrossed in studying myself in the painting.

“I didn’t realize I looked this good,” I shyly remarked, noticing how he intricately detailed my breasts.

I remembered covering them, but he made the fabric transparent and even depicted a reflection of my nipples. A tingling sensation spread across my skin, causing goosebumps as I imagined him painting them.

What thoughts must have crossed his mind while capturing these details?

“Do you like it?” he inquired, and took slow steps towards me, only to turn and position himself behind me.

“I love it, it’s perfect—” I turned around abruptly, expressing my delight in an excited tone, unaware of how close he was standing to me, causing my chest to brush against his.

My words trailed off, and I raised my gaze to meet his, both of us locked in a silent exchange. The silence grew thick, and an awkward tension lingered, yet neither of us looked away or spoke.

My heart pounded in my ears, pondering where this silence would lead us. It was evident that he, too, was lost in the moment; otherwise, he would have averted his gaze from mine. Just then, a

familiar voice interrupted.

“Nora?” It was Lord Atwood.

“Dad’s home,” my smile widened, elated by the news. However, as I turned to rush out of the room to greet Natalya and Lord Atwood, Cain grasped my arm and pulled me back, as if unable to resist any longer.

Before I knew it, he cupped my face in his hands, his lips inching closer to mine.

Tasting 65

65—The Big Game Played By My Stepbrothers

Nora:

I didn’t even resist and forgot about Natalya and Lord Atwood. I thought the kiss would happen because the way he pulled me back suggested he was in the mood. However, just when our lips were about to connect, he pulled back and let go of my face.

“I can’t do this,” he muttered under his breath, leaving me stunned.

“Huh?” I asked in shock.

“I can’t do this. You are my-,” he turned away, running his hand through his hair and breathing heavily.

“Nora! Cain! Are you two home?” Lord Atwood’s voice snapped me out of my trance-like state. I didn’t quite understand what had just happened, but what my brain could comprehend was that maybe he was feeling uneasy about the fact that I was known to everyone as his stepsister.

To break the awkwardness, I never questioned him. What could I even ask him anyway, ‘Why didn’t you kiss me? I am desperate?’

Lord Atwood’s arrival back home was a good excuse to break the awkwardness and change the subject. I turned around and left the room while Cain still had his back towards me.

I rushed downstairs to meet Natalya and Lord Atwood, but my steps. slowed down when I could only spot Lord Atwood.

“You’re back. You have no idea how worried I had been for you,” still

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not thinking too much into it, I ran up to him and hugged him. His arms felt like a father’s love. I wish my father was even the slightest bit like Lord Atwood. But he wasn’t. He would never be, at least not to

1. me.

“Hey! What happened? Is no one at home with you? Is that why you are so scared?” he was laughing, not even sounding worn out.

I broke the hug to examine his face. He looked up from me and smiled at someone. I followed his gaze and saw Cain standing at the top of the stairs, watching us interact.

“Did the monsters hurt you?” I

wondering why Cain wasn’t coming back at Lord Atwood,

father.

to check up on his

“What?” Lord Atwood laughed, staring at me like he had no idea what I was saying.

“You were captured by the monsters? Do you have any idea how

worried we all had been? We all went to the woods and looked for you and then we called Natalya-,” I pushed on, even as I saw his frown grow. He was watching me cluelessly, and then he looked at Cain, who had now come downstairs.

“You were captured by the monsters, right?” My heart started to lose

its beats.

“Cain, what is she talking about? Did you guys take her to the woods?” Lord Atwood used his commanding tone with his son, and right off the bat, I understood that everything I had been told was a lie. I turned to face Cain, and then I understood why he couldn’t kiss me. That was his way to distract me from meeting Lord Atwood so that the brothers could do whatever they were doing.

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“Natalya!” I covered my mouth in shock.

“What is going on?” Lord Atwood held my hand to comfort me because tears started to appear in my eyes.

“We had to take that step. That girl Natalya was lying about being a special one and the one who killed the monster,” Cain was no longer talking in his sweet and calm demeanor that he had been using with me for the past few days. I watched his face with big tears in my eyes and wondered how long they had been planning this for.

“So you lied to her?” Lord Atwood yelled, pointing at me.

“She is her friend and would have blown our plan,” Cain had his hands in his pockets and talked casually.

I was so disgusted that he even tried to kiss me just so that he could stop me from confronting Lord Atwood and finding out about their plans. That’s why he couldn’t kiss me. Not because he was shy or considered me as his stepsister, but because he was disgusted and couldn’t go to that extreme length for the sake of this plan.

“Natalya is in the woods with the brothers. What are you trying to do to her?” I screamed at Cain and noticed his jaw clenching. He was suddenly angry.

“She’s right. I didn’t know while I was busy in a meeting with the council over trivial matters, you were here playing this game. This is not the right way to expose someone’s lie,” Lord Atwood was yelling at Cain, who seemed nonchalant. Such a drastic change in his

personality. Where did the gentle monster go?

“I am going to find Natalya and save her. I didn’t want to stay behind anymore. Screw these stepbrothers. Why the heck did I even believe them?”

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“Nora! You cannot go. Let me handle this,” Lord Atwood held my hand and pulled me back, stopping me from going into the woods on my own.

“There will be no need. The test has begun, and I am sure Natalya will realize there are consequences to lying about such a huge power,” Cain seemed both bitter and angry towards Natalya. Every time he reminded us of her lie, his jaw would clench.

“What consequences and what test?” I screamed at him before I freed my arm from Lord Atwood and ran upstairs to my bedroom. No way I planned to stick around. I opened the window and took a deep breath before jumping out.

I would find Natalya and save her myself. After how Cain and the others tricked me, I honestly lost control. I was reminded that a helpless person can trust no one but themselves. Once I was on the ground, I shifted the ring on my finger, letting my wolf loose.

“I am sorry for what happened,” she uttered, making me hastily wipe the tears from my eyes.

“It was all my fault though. One would think that after so many betrayals, I would have learned a lesson,” I said, racing towards the woods where I had left the stepbrothers with my innocent friend.

## Tasting 66

### 66–The Bad Stepbrothers

Nora:

I dashed through the woods, branches scratching my skin, yet my body healed effortlessly because of my wolf being active in the moment. All I could think about was getting to Natalya and save her from whatever evil games these brothers were playing with her.

The leaves rustled and the wind whispered, taunting my frantic search. But I shut out the noise, focusing solely on the task at hand. Each moment dragged on like an eternity, the weight of responsibility pressing down on me.

I couldn't shake the feeling of guilt for leaving Natalya alone with my crazy stepbrothers in the woods. They would interrogate her and then punish her, pulling me into their twisted game. They'd made me call her, so now she probably thought I was in on it.

My breath caught as I tripped over a root and tumbled face-first onto the ground.

"Hey, calm down. I'm sure she'll be okay." Akira reassured me, but tears blurred my vision, and my mind swirled with terrifying thoughts.

"How can you be so sure? You know what those brothers are capable of," tears streamed down my face as I sniffled and took deep breaths.

It was unfair how the brothers played such a cruel game.

"I admit I lied!" her distant scream pierced through the air, and my heart sank. I winced as I imagined what might be happening there.

As I poised to dash towards the direction of the voices, a grip closed around my arm, and I was yanked back into the familiar scent of a stepbrother's chest.

"Let me go," I whispered under my breath, attempting to break free. Cain twisted my arms behind my back, pressing my chest against his own while restricting my movement.

"What are you doing?" he whispered, his tone sharp and unfamiliar. "Leaving the mansion in the middle of the night to come here and save your friend?"

He had never been so harsh and rough with me before. I could only gaze into his eyes, illuminated, by the full moon. Though I was powerful, I was shocked that he held my wrists firmly in his hands behind my back. It was an uncomfortable position to be in with my stepbrother.

"You all lied to me," I hissed back at him, grunting as I shifted and realized our bodies were uncomfortably close.

"Nora! She was lying to us. Do you have any idea what that meant?" he leaned over, causing my body to jolt as he tugged on my wrists.

"Enough!" he yelled, and my protests ceased. Now it was just us, facing each other with our bodies pressed together, his arms tightly around mine, pulling them back behind me.

“Enough!” he repeated himself, but this time more like a whisper. Our eyes locked, delving into each other’s souls as the full moon reached its peak, and I felt a flicker of unease within me.

Without hesitation, I understood what was happening.

The reminder of Akira being left alone while Cain was so close to

finding out about her identity made me worried. I began to squirm a little, attempting to reach my fingers behind my back to adjust the ring on my finger.

“What are you—” Cain was in the midst of asking me why I was moving so much when he fell silent. Even my body lost its ability to move as my heartbeat slowed down before synchronizing with his.

In that moment, everything else faded into silence, and the only sound I could hear was his heartbeat melding with mine. Our hearts beat in perfect harmony before I heard Akira utter, “Mate!”

“Ah!” my gasps shattered the moment, and he released me. His eyes watched my face in horror.

“What the heck is going on?” he almost seemed frozen, but his lips formed the words as he finally realized we had felt the mate bond.

“ARGH!” a blood–curdling scream from afar diverted my attention from him to Natalya. It was her screams.

Avoiding Cain, I turned on my heel and rushed towards her. As I reached the open area of the ground, I was shocked to see Natalya, wounded and on her knees, with my stepbrothers standing around her.

I swiftly adjusted my ring and attempted to push through them, but Ryker stepped forward and grabbed my arm, thwarting my efforts to reach her and pulling me away.

“Let them finish their round,” Ryker hissed, restraining me from approaching her. She knelt with her head bowed, blood seeping from multiple wounds. Her muted cries would haunt me forever.

“Cain! How the heck did she leave the mansion from you?” Ryker hissed at Cain, who had followed me here in silence. I couldn’t focus.

hadn’t even lifted her head.

“Let her go. Fine, she lied, she’s admitting it,” I muttered through heavy breaths as Ryker dragged me away. Now Cain was left behind with them.

“The test is long over. This is her punishment for lying to us,” Ruyker pushed me against the tree, and I dropped to my knees, hands on the ground and head buried.

“Is that how you’ll punish me as well?” I asked, and when he didn’t answer, I raised my head to meet his gaze.

“Nora!” he grunted under his breath.

“It’ll be worse for me, because who the heck am I to any of you anyway?” my voice cracked as I complained in whimpers.

“You don’t have to worry about the mate bond. I’m more ashamed to feel a mate bond with someone as cowardly as you than you would ever be to feel it with me,” I hissed, meeting his gaze directly.

“Okay, you’ve had enough time to stop this. Now get up. I’m taking you home,” he shook his head and roughly approached me, grabbing my arm and trying to pull me to my feet.

“Don’t touch me. I can walk on my own, and I won’t leave this place until I hear from Natalya,” I shrugged my arm free and hissed at him, watching him glare at me.

Then a blue signal was released into the air, “the test is over. They’ll take her to the hospital,” Ruyker announced as he observed my face.

Tasting 67

67–Maybe If They Cared

Nora:

After everything, I headed back home with Ryker, and we didn’t exchange a word. I went straight to my room and avoided everyone the next day. Lord Atwood took me to the hospital where Natalya had been admitted. Dad explained her injuries to me. They weren’t inflicted directly by someone but from her falling down and hurting herself.

They chased her around, exposing her to wild animals, let her get attacked, and then saved her, only to repeat the process. She finally admitted to lying about it. It didn’t matter to me because the way they handled it upset me.

“Lord Atwood, I want to bring her home with me. I want to take care of her.” I requested as we spoke to the doctor, who informed us that her injuries weren’t severe. She was initially in a bad state due to the fall, blood loss, and the fear of encountering a monster in the woods.

"I'm okay with whatever you decide." Lord Atwood uttered, looking guilty about his sons' actions. He made it clear that the test and punishment were a normal criteria everyone had to go through. But the way they deceived me and made me call her upset him too.

"Thank you so much. But I must ask, what about your sons? What if they get upset?" I inquired, noticing the shift in his demeanor. I was sure he noticed that after the incident, I hadn't referred to them as my stepbrothers anymore.

"They will have no say in the decisions you make or who you bring home, okay?" Lord Atwood gently placed his hand on my head, giving me a weak smile. I was certain that if he wasn't as supportive as he is, I

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would have been in a huge mess living in this pack. I was grateful to him for helping me throughout this time.

We remained at the hospital until evening, and then Natalya was discharged. She hadn't uttered a word to me, just kept staring out the window. The nurse informed her she was coming with me to my mansion, so I assumed she had to comply instead of upsetting Lord Atwood.

"You two girls need anything—anything!" Lord Atwood said as the warriors helped Natalya out of the car, with me following closely behind.

"You give me a call or ask the warriors, okay?" Lord Atwood added, and I nodded. I felt bad for Natalya. She had so many bandages on her body.

While taking her upstairs, I noticed the brothers in the living room. They stopped whatever they were doing and stared at us. I could sense their judgmental glares toward their father from the corner of my eye.

Once the warriors settled Natalya onto my bed. I faced her with my hands nervously locked together. "I'll be back in a minute," I excused myself and dashed downstairs to see what they were up to.

"Why is she here? She lied so much." Ryker was hissing at his father, facing him and unaware that I had joined them. Not that it would make him shut up.

"She's my friend. She lied and admitted her mistake," I intervened, facing the brothers and giving them deadly glares but avoiding Cain. I couldn't bring myself to speak to him, nor did I want to. I was slowly becoming aware that once my anger faded, I would be on edge, worrying about what

Cain would do with the information that I lied. about my wolf and that I was his mate. It was even odder that he hadn't

## 67 Maybe I They Cared

told anyone anything yet.

“And your friend lied. I know you have privilege, but don’t you think it’s wrong to use it in the wrong way? The other pack members would have faced the same consequences, but your royal highness thinks we should change the rules for your friend,” Nash hissed, not even a tad bit guilty of using me against my own friend.

“And she apologized. Did you once, during your whole test, ask her why?” I yelled, noticing that Lord Atwood quickly rushed over to stand between us, making sure none of us crossed our boundaries.

“Because she wanted to f\*\*king feel special,” Silas muttered under his breath, casually leaning his back against the wall with his muscular arms crossed over his chest.

“To avoid getting bullied,” my voice broke down as I explained to them why exactly she lied. “She was tired of being mistreated. She had not other option but to lie because it gave her a sense of relief. This one lie helped her walk among others freely without constantly getting kicked to the ground. Don’t you think it’s your fault too that your pack members are relying on lies instead of asking you for help?” I sniffled as I finally delivered what had been in my head all these days.

They were all silent now, just staring at me. “I didn’t want to come here. either.” I noticed the look Lord Atwood gave me. “I came here to avoid getting bullied.” He lowered his head, knowing that too well. Lord Atwood brought me here after finding out how worse the bullying had become.

“I was bullied because I wasn’t one of them. Because as an orphan, omega, and a poor girl—I didn’t deserve to stand among them with my head held high,” I almost choked on my tears as I remembered how much worse the bullying was.

## 57–Maybe if They Card

“You never told us—” Nash uttered, looking at his brothers before he frowned. “You all knew?”

“I mean, I knew she was getting bullied in school. Remember, Dad told us to tell everyone she’s our stepsister so the bullying stops?” Ryker cleared his throat. “I watched her, um, get beaten up in school too.”

“Hey! Don’t act like you didn’t know. We know omegas and weak ones get bullied every day,” Silas gently slapped Nash’s chest, who lowered. his head in guilt.

“Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go take care of someone who probably thinks her only friend betrayed her and unleashed her stepbrothers on her,” I hissed, stomping my foot and running upstairs.

Tasting 68

68–The Desperate She–Wolf

Nora:

“I’m sorry,” I murmured as I sank onto the bed beside Natalya, my head bowed low, unable to meet her gaze.

“What are you apologizing for?” she inquired softly, her voice hoarse. It was the first time she had spoken since waking up in the hospital.

“Because—the brothers used me to reach you. I didn’t know they were going to do that. They made me believe Dad had gone missing,” I confessed, not even attempting to deceive her. I had tried my best to dissuade them from contacting her long before I realized it was all a setup.

“It’s okay, Nora. I believe you. And I’m not angry with them. I lied and got the same punishment as everyone else,” she murmured under her breath, her voice barely audible.

“Really? You’re not angry with them?” I found it strange because I couldn’t imagine forgiving them myself. In fact, I was finding it hard to even speak to them now.

“Nora! Claiming to be a special wolf who can fight monsters is a serious offense. They explained it to me in the meeting they had right after I claimed to have killed that monster. They told me why it was important for them to be sure I wasn’t lying,” she recounted, her breathing slow and deep.

“Why?” I asked, curious about the meeting. I suddenly remembered that gathering and how she never told me what it was truly about.

“They told me that in the future, if the monsters became too much to handle, they might declare war and would need the special she–wolf to fight against them. I lied and said I was that she–wolf. Just

imagine if they had declared war and then found out I lied?” she shocked me with her revelation. I hadn’t known any of this.

“I wish she had told me: I would have warned her against the idea.”

“But I want to ask you something, Nora!” she suddenly raised her head, and our eyes locked. I had a feeling that something was wrong.

“Why did you lie?” The moment she asked me that, I nearly choked on my saliva.

“What do you mean? I didn’t lie about anything.” I laughed nervously, trying to avoid meeting her eyes.

“You know you lied too, but I’m not sure why,” she insisted, and I turned to face her, asking her to explain herself.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I felt like gulping, but she was examining my face, not missing any details.

“That you saw me kill that monster,” she recalled, and I sighed in relief. I honestly wondered what lie she had caught me in.

I had lied a lot, and only recently, after what happened to her, did I begin to ponder what my fate would be..

“I guess I was too scared to see what really happened. I just saw someone attack the monster, and once you confirmed it was you, my brain clicked and agreed with you because that was the best

explanation I could come up with for what I saw.” I played the fool and felt guilty.

The way she was watching me and believing me made me feel like a

bad person. I only wished I could tell her my secret, but some things need to stay secret.

“Then who do you think that person was? Who came to my rescue?” The fact that she went from being a hero to a damsel in distress filled me with awe as I looked at her.

“I was thinking about it too. Somebody came when they saw me in danger.” she beamed at the idea of someone coming to her rescue.

“I don’t know,” this time, I didn’t want to entertain any theories and give her false hope. I could tell she was upset right away.

“You don’t think it’s someone who might be—like—you know, stalking me? Maybe someone is watching me to make sure I’m fine?” The more she spoke, the worse I felt because there was no way I was entertaining that thought.

I knew it was me, and I wasn’t stalking her. Sure, I was worried about her, but I wasn’t some secret lover.

“I don’t know, Natalya. I think maybe someone just came to kill the monster and save whoever was in danger,” I watched her face go numb when I didn’t agree with her.

However, I needed to change the topic and distract her from staring at me with judgmental eyes. It was making me uneasy.

That’s when my phone started ringing.

I watched Cain’s name pop up on the screen, and goosebumps formed across my skin. We hadn’t talked since feeling a mate bond. But he was calling me now, so I assumed he was finally ready to talk about how I lied about my wolf and then how we felt the mate bond.

“Alpha King Cain is calling you?” she asked with a hint of excitement

in her voice. It shocked me even more because, ugh!

I wanted to yell at her and remind her how he punished her in the woods.

“Maybe he’s worried about me? I feel like he wants to check on me,” she curiously tried to snatch my phone out of my hands when Cain texted me.

“Um, Natalya!” I grabbed my phone back and hurriedly jumped off the bed. Her weak smile faded as she watched me quickly read the text.

Cain: Come to my studio, we need to talk.

My heart sank in my chest, and I knew for a fact he wasn’t calling me to his studio to ask about her.

“Is he asking about me?” she continued to pester me.

“No, Natalya, he’s not asking about you. I got upset with him after what he did to you, so—he wants to talk to me,” I lied, but that wasn’t the lie she was asking about.

“Oh! He’s concerned that you’re upset, why?” At this point, even though I felt bad for what she had been through, she had gotten on my nerves a little.

“Because he’s my stepbrother, and he cares?” I secretly rolled my eyes before I shoved the phone into the back pocket of my tight shorts.

But he began to ring me again and again. It was then that I realized the urgency from his side.

“You’ve got five minutes to explain yourself,” he warned, striding past me to grab a stool and position himself in front of me.

His eyes conveyed a clear message: no more lies would be tolerated. The nervous tapping of his foot only added to my distraction.

“I lied about not having a wolf,” I confessed, meeting his gaze, which hardened at my words.

“What else?” he pressed.

“Nothing else,” I lied once more.

“Nora!” He shut his eyes tightly, his neck tensing before he reopened them. “I’m not here to play games. I gave you days to come clean, but you remained silent as if that would absolve you of the lie.”

The sternness in his tone made it clear that broaching the topic of the mate bond would be challenging. He was already infuriated at the thought of me deceiving them about my wolf.

“I’m not lying. I didn’t want anyone to know how weak my wolf is,” I admitted, biting my tongue after the confession.

“So you believe all omegas should deceive and conceal their wolves?” he tilted his head, though his clenched fists betrayed his true feelings.

“No! Mine is... weaker. She can’t even transition properly. Whenever she’s forced, she becomes exhausted and experiences pain, sometimes. even enduring the agony of broken bones,” I rambled, already breathless from weaving the lie.

In that moment, I realized how effortlessly I had deceived Ryker. But facing Cain and his penetrating gaze brought me immense stress.

“Hmm! Then how did you conceal her? Why didn’t we discover her

Tasting 69

69–Demanding That Take It Off

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earlier?” he asked, his foot tapping anxiously now.

“I wear this ring—” I began, lifting my finger, but seeing his narrowed gaze, I quickly withdrew my hand behind my back.

“Hmm!” he nodded, “take it off.”

His command left me utterly shocked.

“Huh?” I attempted an awkward smile, trying to steady my breathing.

“I said, take it off,” he repeated, rising from his chair and walking over to a nearby side table to pour himself a glass of wine.

“But she’ll cause me pain,” I persisted with that excuse, but he remained unmoved.

“Nora! I won’t ask again. Take it off,” he demanded, sending my heart racing in my chest. I was anxiously looking around as I could find an answer in the air or on the walls. Except there were only n\*ked she- wolves on the walls.

“If your wolf is so weak, why did you unleash her when you needed help to find Natalya?” he stunned me with his observation.

“Um—I told you, she can track scents and all, but, see, I didn’t transition to run faster,” I stammered, his intense gaze making me feel

queasy.

I wished I could vanish, never to wake up, so I wouldn’t have to meet his eyes or answer his inquiries.

“Do you think I would lie if she wasn’t sick? Don’t you think I’d seek her help to fend off my bullies?” I questioned when I couldn’t conjure up another excuse.

69—Demanding That Take in Off

Take Of

“Because you wanted my dad to sympathize with you, and he did,” his assertion made me look down, closing my eyes briefly.

He wasn’t listening to me at all.

“I know why you’re so angry,” I hated resorting to this secret as a distraction tactic.

“And that would be?” he inquired, setting his glass aside and advancing toward me. As he approached, I began to retreat.

“Because you’re upset that you felt the mate bond with me,” I finished, expecting him to gasp dramatically, grow angry, or perhaps even deny it and halt in his tracks. But he did none of that. In fact, he continued advancing until my back was against the wall.

“Really?” he uttered, his breath brushing over my face.

“Why would I be angry? I’m getting a pussy to f\*ck, why would it anger me?” his tone and choice of words caused me to involuntarily gasp in disappointment.

I wished he had become upset rather than saying that.

“Now, take it off and show me your wolf,” he demanded, his eyes locking onto mine as he leaned over, placing his hand against the wall.

“You know—” I paused, needing to steady my breaths, “Ryker is much kinder than you. When he found out about the wolf, he didn’t just talk about how he’s going to f\*ck me.”

I don’t know what came over me or why I said that, but suddenly Cain’s expression hardened, and he straightened his back.

“Ryker knows about your wolf?” he hissed. It was then that I realized I had made a big mistake.

69 Demanding

His breathing became erratic and his glares intensified in my face as he narrowed his eyes at me.

Tasting 70

70—Between The Two Brothers

Nora:

“What are you up to?” I asked him as I watched him grab his cellphone.

“Cain! What on earth are you doing?” I was losing my cool at whatever mischief he was up to now. He seemed aggressively entering the code on his phone.

“Sit here,” he yelled at me, pointing at the stool.

I gulped before shaking my head. I knew I messed up when I dragged Ryker into the middle. But after what Cain said, I really lost respect for him. I thought of Ryker, and somehow, he seemed like the better one. Or maybe I was just surrounded by horrible people, so anyone less horrible seemed nice.

“I’m leaving. Natalya is in my room, and if she wakes up, she’ll be worried about where I went,” I declared and had only turned around to leave when I felt an arm wrap around my waist, pulling me back.

“Argh!” I screamed a little, being dragged away from the door and slammed against the wall.

“Stop doing that. You brothers are going to break my back one day, and then because of my weak framework. I wouldn’t even be able to heal.” I hissed, adding a little lie in the middle.

‘Hush!’ Cain placed a finger on his own lips, gesturing for me to shut up as he hunched over me, pinning me against the wall and placing the phone next to his ear.

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“Come to my room, we need to talk,” he said on the call, and my heart began to pump loudly.

“N—” I thought about making a noise so that Ryker knows something is off and can get out of this situation by making up an excuse, but Cain hushed me again.

“It’s about Nora!” Cain said, and my only hope of giving Ryker a hint that it was about me drowned.

Cain made it clear he wasn’t playing anymore. I watched him hang up and then grab my arm.

“What are you doing now?” I complained as he took me to the side. There was a door that I had never explored. He opened it and shoved me inside. I found out it was his massive bedroom. All dark with black curtains and paintings he had made. At least some of them. They depicted erotic poses of she-wolves with messages under them from direct sources. The she-wolves knew these paintings were going into his bedroom, and they were more than delighted by the idea. However, there was an empty painting right above the bed. One side of the bedroom was basically a glass door which led to the other side of the mansion and the side garden.

“Cain!” I attempted to get out of the room, but he had locked the door after me.

“Shit! What is he up to?” I hissed under my breath. That’s when I heard the door open and close, and I knew it was Ryker.

“What happened? Why did you want to talk about her at this time of night?” Ryker asked.

“She told me you knew about her wolf, and—” Cain stopped, leaving the words to be finished by Ryker himself.

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“Huh?” Ryker seemed to have been taken aback.

“You know you cannot lie, Ryker. So tell me, look me in the eye and say you didn’t know,” I didn’t know what was going on, but the silence made my heart jump up and down. Would that make Ryker angry at me?

“I knew,” Ryker answered, and I buried my face in my hands, kneeling down. Soon, the door opened, and I uncovered my face from my hands, sitting on my knees and raising my head to watch them stand in the studio. Ryker stared at me in shock.

“What the heck is going on here?” he asked his brother, pointing at me.

“You tell me. The fact that she made you not tell her secret to anyone makes me believe what else you two are hiding?” Cain had never been so confrontational before. He was shooting glares at his brother and also suggesting that Ryker change his side.

“Yes, I knew about her wolf. But I didn’t think it was of much importance since it is not like it would make any difference in our lives,” Ryker explained, for the first time revealing why he had kept my secret for so long. Even I used to wonder why it was so easy for me to lie to him and why he believed me so easily.

“Listen—even if we tell Dad, he will feel bad for her. Her wolf is weak and—” Ryker continued to make his brother understand, who shook his head.

“That’s not true. Her wolf is not weak. Or else she wouldn’t be calling her wolf when rushing to the woods to save Natalya,” Cain hissed, making Ryker steadily turn to me.

I got up from my knees and walked out of the room steadily.

70 Between The Two Brothers

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“Her wolf is weak,” Ryker confirmed, his eyes piercing mine.

“How do you know? She told me the same story. And I think the only way we can find out her truth is if we make her shift,” Cain demanded once again, his hand running through his hair to fix them.

I was scared Cain would not rest until he had exposed my truth entirely. Just because Ryker didn’t question so much, I assumed it was a piece of cake to lie to these alpha king brothers. Oh boy! I was so Wrong.

“Cain! I know her wolf is weak because I have seen her,” however, Ryker’s statement shook the ground from under my feet. Both Cain and I looked at him as he continued.

“When I first found out she had a wolf, I demanded she change, and she did. She was in agony, and I was scared Dad would not forgive me if he saw her in that state,” Ryker lied, making me tilt my head at him. I was not sure why he was elaborating on my lie.

“When was that?” Cain asked.

“When—she first left the mansion. That’s when,” Ryker added to the lie, and Cain turned to me to stare at me before he uttered,

“Is that all brother?” Cain noticed that Ryker nodded so Cain added,

“I felt a mate bond with her.”