

## Alpha Reid chapter 7 -

REID I'm closing the front door behind my friends and their mates when I hear a creak on the stairs behind me . I don't have to turn around to know it's Serena both because she's the only person staying upstairs in my wing of the packhouse and because my wolf perked up as soon as her sweet scent registered .

I keep discovering aspects to the mate bond that I never anticipated , like how my senses all seem heightened when it comes to her . I've been hyper – aware of her presence when she's near , oddly attuned to her body language like I can almost read her well – hidden emotions . I turn to look her way , my eyes wandering her form as she hits the bottom step .

She's evidently gone through some of her new clothes she's changed into a pair of navy blue high – waisted yoga pants and a white cropped hoodie , her long red hair swept up into a neat ponytail . I'm not sure how it's possible for her to be dressed so . casually and still look like a goddamn runway model , but she does , and I'm completely captivated .

I must be staring at her wordlessly for a moment too long , because Serena . narrows her eyes , tilting her head as she looks back at me . " What ? " Her question knocks me out of the trance I'm under and I give a little shake of my head , mumbling " nothing . " Then I draw a breath , scrubbing a hand over my face and wincing ,

" Sorry about the girls , I didn't know they were coming over or I would've at least warned you . She shrugs , the ghost of a smile dancing across her lips . " No worries . They were nice . " " I know they're a lot , " I chuckle wryly . " Nothing I can't handle . " Serena wanders toward the kitchen , shoving her hands into the front pocket of her hoodie . The way that it's cropped leaves a little strip of her flat stomach visible , just enough to tempt another glance . " You hungry ? " I ask , watching her intently as she wanders toward the fridge . She moves so fluidly , like a dancer.

She swivels in my direction , sweeping her tongue between her lips . " Starving . " 39 My wolf rises up inside of me in response to the quick flash of tongue , teeming with excitement , but I'm quick to shove him back down and keep my composure . " You like pizza ? " Serena's blue eyes light up . " Love pizza .

" I can't keep the smile from creeping across my face . Any positive reaction from her has me feeling like a hero and makes my wolf stand up . and preen . " Well then c'mon , little wolf , " I drawl , flicking my head in the direction of the door . " Let's go get a pizza . " I grab a jacket from the coat tree beside the door , slipping it on and reaching into the pocket for the keys to my Mustang .

I've always had a thing for fast cars and the Mustang is my latest acquisition , shiny and black with white racing stripes . Serena follows me outside and I click the key fob to unlock the doors , climbing into the drivers ' seat as she slips in on the passenger side ,

We make casual conversation on the short drive to Dino's , the little pizza place in the town square owned by one of the families in my pack . They mostly do carryout , though there's a counter and a few tables inside for those who choose to dine in and they're almost always occupied .

I park the Mustang out front and lead Serena inside , and as soon as we walk through the door , every eye in the place flies in our direction . " Alpha , " Dino greets from behind the counter , wiping his hands on his flour covered apron and striding closer . " Welcome in , what can I get started for you ?

" Dino's eyes flicker from me to Serena several times , sizing her up with interest . Admittedly , I haven't showed up here with a girl on my arm in ... ever ? So I suppose I don't blame him for his curiosity . He isn't the only one , either – I feel the tension rolling off of Serena in waves as I glance around the interior of Dino's , realizing that everyone here is checking out the bombshell beside me ,, trying to figure out who she is and what she's doing with their Alpha .

My wolf pushes forward with a need to comfort our mate and I sidestep closer to Serena , slipping my arm around her shoulders . I feel her relax slightly under my arm and my wolf settles . It surprises me how natural this gesture feels ; how right , despite having only just met . " Are you sticking around , should I clear you a table ?

" Dino asks , darting a glance at the grouping of tables in the back . They're all occupied , but any of the patrons would gladly give up their spot for their Alpha . I shake my head , not wanting to displace anyone or put Serena through further examination . " Nah , we'll take it to go , " I reply , glancing down at her .

" Is that good with you , Red ? " She looks up at me , her wide eyes colliding with mine . Fuck , I could drown in those clear blue pools . " Yeah , sounds good to me , " she says quietly , and I swear she tucks closer into my side . My chest rumbles as my wolf growls in satisfaction . " What do you like on your pizza ? " I ask , arching a brow .

Serena shrugs her shoulders . " Anything . really . I'm not picky . " " You like spicy ? " She licks her lips and my eyes track the movement . " Love spicy . " " Pepperoni and jalapeño ? " " Mmm , that sounds amazing , " she moans , and the inflection in her voice makes my dick twitch in my slacks .

I wonder if she has any idea how fucking sexy her responses sound to my ears or how affected I am by her delivery . I suck in a breath , turning back to Dino . " The usual , " I mumble , giving him a little nod . He tosses me a thumbs – up in acknowledgement , heading through the kitchen door to the back of the restaurant to prepare the pizza .

Right as he disappears from view , the chime on the front door sounds out . I turn over my shoulder to see who entered and I'm met with a familiar pair of eyes and a smile that matches my own . " Hey old man , " I grin , my arm slipping

from Serena's shoulders as I turn around to greet my father. "Son," he greets with a nod, throwing an arm around me in a half-hug and slapping my back. I return the gesture, and as soon as we step apart I move beside Serena again, sliding my arm around her shoulders once more. "Dad, meet Serena," I say, gazing down at her proudly. "Serena, this is my dad." "Erick," Dad says quickly, extending a hand to Serena and flashing her a suave smile. "It's a pleasure to meet you. She places her slender hand in his, giving it a shake as a rosy blush creeps across her cheeks.

"Likewise, sir." Dad's eyes return to mine, and though I can tell he's got quite a few questions, he keeps them to himself for now. He knows better than anyone how quickly anything said in the presence of pack members can become gossip. "Sorry I haven't been over in a few days," I grumble, suddenly realizing how long it's been and feeling guilty over it. "I've been busy. How's Mom doing?" "She's alright," Dad replies. He steps a bit closer and drops his voice low.

"She's had a rough few days, you know how that can be. I swallow hard, nodding in understanding. "Yeah, sorry to hear that. But that means she's due for a good one, right?" Dad winks. "Exactly." 31 Dino emerges from the kitchen, greeting my father warmly before slipping away again to retrieve his order for him.

"Hey," I murmur, leaning in toward my dad again before Dino returns with his food. "Next good day, why don't you bring Mom over to meet Serena?" "I sure will," Dad replies with a knowing grin, clapping me on the shoulder. I hear the kitchen door swing open and Dad quickly masks his expression, shuffling past me to the counter to collect and pay for his pizza. Every time one of us comes here, Dino puts up a fight about us paying for our dinner, insisting that our money is no good to him.

When I was younger, I used to ask my father why we didn't take more goods and services for free when offered by members of our pack – I mean it seems like a pretty sweet Alpha perk, right? But Dad always said that it's important for us to lead by example and support our pack, not take advantage of their generosity and abuse our position.

Like many of his lessons, I didn't realize the value of that one until I got older. As I watch the familiar back and forth between him and Dino, I can't help but chuckle. Dad, of course, wins, and Dino rings him up, depositing his change on top of his pizza box and handing it to him. Dad spins back around, pizza in hand, giving a little nod as he moves past me to the door.

"Good to see you, son. I'll bring your mother by soon, huh?" His gaze shifts to Serena and he flashes her another charming smile. "It was so nice meeting you, Serena. If this guy steps out of line, you be sure to let me know." Serena lets out a soft little giggle. "Nice to meet you too, sir."

"Erick," he corrects with a wink, turning away and exiting through the door. My dad may be in his forties, but I have to hand it to him, he's a smooth sonofabitch. I glance

down at Serena to see her blushing as she watches after him . Maybe I should be taking pointers from my old man on how to charm her . I lead Serena over to a pair of empty stools at the counter across from the register , both of us taking a seat while we wait for the pizza to cook .

Curious gazes continue to flicker in our direction while the two of us make quiet conversation , leaning in close to one another for some semblance of privacy . It's the closest I've ever felt to Serena , and I don't mean in a physical way – it feels like we're just a normal couple , out for a casual date night . It's nice . I finally learn some more about her .

I learn that her favorite color is green , that she loves to listen to Taylor Swift , and that she likes to draw and once won an award for her art- though I already knew that last one from the file Theo brought . over earlier . I learn that her family raised horses and she once considered becoming a veterinarian , until she realized she'd have to euthanize animals on occasion and decided she couldn't do that . Brick by brick , her walls slowly come down as I earn another smile , another soft laugh .

After ten minutes or so , Dino brings out the pizza and we engage in our usual back and forth before he accepts my money . I tell him to keep the change , balancing the pizza in one hand and grabbing the door with the other , ignoring the whispers of speculation from the other patrons as Serena and I exit and get back in the Mustang to head home .

I slide the pizza onto the back seat before I take my position behind the wheel , firing up the engine . " Your dad seems nice , " Serena comments as I pull out onto the road . " Yeah , " I grin . " He's great . The two of us have always been close , probably the whole only child thing . " 19 She's quiet for a moment , and I wonder if I've struck a nerve by talking about my relationship with my dad , knowing that her own was recently taken from her . I'm again . about to apologize when she speaks up " Is your mom sick or something ? " . " Not exactly , " I sigh . I glance over at Serena and she's watching me intently , waiting for me to continue .

So I do . " My parents were in a bad car wreck about six years ago . My dad was okay , but my mom's injuries were extensive . Her shifter healing helped , but she has permanent damage . " " I pause , clicking on my turn signal and cruising around a corner before going on . " The pack doctor said she suffered a TBI ... a traumatic brain injury .

She hasn't ever been the same since , though she has good days and bad days . The good days can be really good , like she's her old self again . But the bad days ... sometimes they're really bad . Sometimes she doesn't even know who I am . " " 44 Serena reaches over to touch my arm . I'm so sorry , Reid , " she breathes , her eyes wide . I shrug my shoulders . " Hey , it is what it is . " I glance over at her , offering a small smile . " We've all adapted .

I became Alpha so my dad could take care of her full time , and like I said , the good days are really good . I'm just glad she's still around . It could've been worse . ” Serena flinches back , her gaze falling to the floor , and I'm immediately kicking myself for my choice of words . I should be more sensitive , knowing what I do . It's also the perfect opening for Serena to talk about her own family , but she doesn't take the bait , and I don't push .

I'm still trying to come up with the right thing to say to lighten the mood and smooth things over when I pull into the packhouse driveway . I grab the pizza from the back and the two of us make our way up the front walk and through the door . I'm half expecting to see Taylor and Cy , but they've been making themselves scarce all day , giving me space to get to know Serena .

I head straight into the kitchen and deposit the pizza box on the counter , shrugging off my jacket and doubling back to the front door to hang it on the coat tree . As I do , I notice something the deadbolt on the front door is in the locked position again .

I turn over my shoulder , watching Serena as she walks up to the pizza box and lifts the lid , licking her lips as she peers inside . ” Mmm , this looks amazing , ” she comments , letting the lid fall closed again and turning to me . ” Where can I find plates ? ” ” In the cabinet , ” I reply , pointing out which one .

Without missing a beat , Serena pulls open the cabinet I indicated , reaching inside and retrieving a couple of plates for us . ” Hey ... did you lock this ? ” I ask , tossing a thumb over my shoulder to indicate the front door . Serena's head snaps in my direction , her eyes wide , like she's been caught doing something she wasn't supposed to . ” Um .... yeah , ” she breathes uneasily , her gaze flickering away as she sets the plates onto the counter . ” Is that alright ?

” ” I mean , we usually leave it unlocked , ” I shrug . ” So the pack has access . 31 Serena doesn't respond . I stride toward her , and when she doesn't look up at me I realize I must've struck a nerve . ” Hey , ” I say gently , reaching out to touch her hand . Soothing sparks ignite beneath my fingertips when our skin makes contact , her eyes coming to mine . ” You're safe here , you don't have to worry . ” P She presses her lips into a tight line , giving me a halfhearted nod .

Her eyes flutter to the floor again , and I lift my hand from hers to bring it to her chin , tipping her face up to mine . ” I mean it , ” I murmur , her eyes returning to my own . ” We've got a state – of – the – art security system installed on the borders of the territory and a security team that monitors it and runs patrols .

And even if anyone could get through that , you'd still be safe , because if someone was trying to get to you , they'd have to get through me first . ” Her wide blue eyes hold so much vulnerability , her pink lips pouting and releasing a little puff of air . My gaze drops to those lips ; all I want to do is kiss them . Without thinking , I feel myself leaning ” closer , dizzy as her vanilla and tangerine scent swirls around me .

My lips are a whisper away from her own when she suddenly presses a hand against my chest , taking a step back " You don't have to do that , you know Serena mumbles . I stare at her , my brows drawing together in confusion . " Do what ? " She folds her arms across her chest protectively , staring down at the floor The whole knight in shining armor thing I don't need to be saved . " I pause , unsure how to respond . Giving her the space that she clearly needs .

I wish I knew how to handle Serena , but it's like she's two people- I get glimpses of this light , easygoing side of her , and then there's this other side where something darker resides , a side of her that's so damaged that I'm not sure I can touch it " I can fight , you know , " Serena mutters , her eyes returning to mine I furrow my brow as I study her face What ? " " I've had warrior training , " she replies quickly . " The girls said you were part of

some warrior squad or something , that I should ask about joining . " Yeah , the security squad . I run it with the other alphas . If you're interested , you can get involved ... " " I'm definitely interested , " Serena interrupts . I nod slowly . " Sure . I can take you up there tomorrow . " " Cool . " Serena fiddles with the end of her ponytail , her eyes downcast again . Sorry , I didn't mean to ... " . " Don't worry about it , " I say reassuringly , setting my hands on her shoulders .

Her eyes snap up to collide with my own and the pull of the bond between us is so strong that resisting it is excruciating . In her eyes , I can see that she feels it too ... I have to say something , anything to diffuse the tension . " Should we eat this pizza ? " I ask , and the corners of Serena's lips slowly turn up into a little smirk . " Yeah , " she chuckles , twisting at the waist to grab the plates off of the counter .

She hands one to me as I flip open the pizza box , depositing two slices on each of our plates before leading her over to the table . I take my usual seat at the head of the table and Serena slides into the one beside me , eagerly lifting a slice of pizza from her plate and sinking her teeth into it .

" Mmm , " she hums as it hits her tongue , stringy cheese stretching between the slice and her lips . She bites down , her eyes sliding closed as she pulls back the slice and chews , still moaning in satisfaction . I can't even take a bite of my own pizza I'm too distracted watching her enjoy hers as my dick grows painfully hard behind the zipper of my pants .

I've been on the edge just being around her all night , and the sounds she's making right now ? Totally tipping me over it . Serena's eyes pop open and she looks at me with a sated smile on her lips . " This is amazing , " she groans before taking another bite . " Mmm ... " " You've gotta stop making those sounds , Red , " I rasp , and my voice sounds pained .

She turns to look at me , her eyes wide in question . " What do you mean ? " she asks innocently , but there's a flash of something darker lurking just beneath her sweet

expression . Something sexy and playing with . dangerous . Something I wouldn't mind " You know , " I growl , narrowing my eyes .

I take a bite of my pizza , not taking my eyes off of hers , and I swear I feel the temperature rising between us . It's not just me , right ? She has to feel it too . There's no way I'm alone in this . " Sorry , " , " Serena whispers , but then she takes another bite , making a little humming sound that's oddly reminiscent of a moan .

As she chews , a sly smirk creeps across her lips . Oh yeah . She knows exactly what she's doing . Driving me crazy as I try my damndest to exercise control- and from the looks of it , she's enjoying watching me squirm . And just like that , everything I think I know about Serena flies out the window and I'm back to square one .

8 SERENA " This is it , " Reid says as he turns a corner and I get my first glimpse of the squad complex . He told me all about this training facility on our way here , but even so , nothing could've prepared me for the reality of actually seeing it with my own eyes . His description didn't do it justice this place is absolutely massive , surrounded by imposing walls that tower nearly as tall as the trees that surround it on all sides . As impressive as it is from the outside , I can't wait to see it from the inside- I'm antsy as Reid swings the Mustang into a parking spot up front beside a big black Escalade , shifting the gear into park and cutting the engine .

" This place is incredible , " I breathe , craning my neck to look up at the structure through the passenger window as I unbuckle my seatbelt . " This is all just for training ? " " Our full – time squad members live here , too , " Reid clarifies , turning his gaze to me . Damn him and those baby blues- they get me every time . " And our IT unit operates out of here . " a " Oh that's right , you mentioned that , " I nod , opening the door and climbing out of the car . To be fair , Reid inundated me with so much information on the way here that half of it went over my head . He climbs out from the drivers ' side , closing the door and leaning his bulky forearms on the roof of the car , flashing me a smile over the top of it . " I'm sure it's a lot to take in .

" . " Definitely , " I agree , and I can't help but smile back at him . As much as I don't want to admit it , Reid's starting to get to me . I mean , how could he not ? He's as sweet as he is sexy , always giving me that look that makes my knees go weak . He gives a little flick of his head and I follow his lead around the side of the building and through a gate , taking it all in we step onto the large practice field within the walls of the complex . It's packed with people- some are running laps around a track on the outside while others are gathered in groups stretching and chatting on the inside . Right away , I see some familiar faces- Quinn and Astrid are standing with a few of the alpha guys that I met in Reid's kitchen yesterday , and as soon as Quinn spots us , she starts waving excitedly .

" Throwing her to the wolves already , Reid ? " the guy with the wavy blonde hair jokes once we're within earshot . Reid leans in toward me , slipping an arm around my shoulders . " Don't listen to Jax , " he murmurs teasingly . " He's just salty that so many

of these females can kick his ass . ” >> ” I heard that , ” Jax calls , shooting Reid a glare . He slides his gaze over to me . ” For the record , Serena , that’s not true . ‘ ” } ” Sure it isn’t , ” the Jason Momoa lookalike chuckles , tucking Astrid under his arm . The tall one- Theo , I think ? – turns his attention to Reid , his mouth set in a frown . ” Hey Reid , did you hear what our girls have planned for tonight ? ” ‘ Our girls ‘ . Something about the way that sounds makes my heart squeeze .

” No ? ” Reid replies slowly , looking down at me and raising a brow in question . ” Theo , don’t be a douche , ” Quinn scolds , rolling her eyes . I recall Reid mentioning that the sister of one of the alphas was mated to another , and seeing Quinn beside Theo , the pieces to the puzzle click together , the family resemblance apparent . ” I’m not ! ” he fires back , furrowing his brow . ” I’m just wondering how he feels about it , that’s all . ” ” Did I miss something ? ” Jax asks , glancing between Theo and Quinn suspiciously . ” What’s Theo getting his panties in a bunch about now ? ” Fallon asks as she approaches with Gray . ” Wait , let me guess , ” she gasps , holding up her hands for dramatic effect . ” Our girls ‘ night ? ” Theo makes a face at Fallon and I nearly laugh out loud . From the way their dynamic seems , I’ll bet those two butt heads fairly often- which is even funnier considering that his mate is Fallon’s twin sister , if I’m remembering correctly .

” Girls ‘ night ? ” Gray questions , turning to Fallon with a brow arched . 23 ” It’s ladies ‘ night at the Stillwater Tap , Quinn supplies , heaving a sigh . ” Theo’s blowing things out of proportion , we’re just taking Serena out . ” Jax whips his head around to stare at his mate , eyes wide . ” The fuck you are ! ” Quinn throws her head back , groaning in exasperation . ” Oh what the hell , not you , too ... ” ” I’ve seen how dudes prowl around that place on ladies ‘ night , ” Jax scowls . ” Yeah , you were one of them , ” Theo mutters , shooting daggers at Jax through his eyes . ” Don’t you guys trust us ? ” Astrid asks , throwing in her two cents . Brock frowns , looking down at his mate and pulling her in closer . ” Of course we do , ” he grumbles . ” We just don’t trust a bunch of drunk dickwads to keep their paws off of you . ” ” Exactly , ” Jax snaps , turning back to Quinn .

” If you girls wanna go out , that’s fine with me , baby . But we’re coming with ” } you . She rolls her eyes . ” I think you’re missing the whole point of girls ‘ night out . ” ” } ” Reid , help me out here , ” Jax groans , scrubbing a hand over his face . Reid glances down at me . ” I mean ... ” he starts , tilting his head and searching my face for a reaction . When I have none , he looks back to his friends . ” Will it really throw off your whole night if we join you ladies ? ” ( C Jax points a finger in Reid’s direction . Exactly . ” } } ” Ugh , whatever ! ” Quinn sighs exasperatedly , throwing up her hands in defeat .

” If you guys can’t handle one night apart from us , then I guess you can tag along . As long as Serena’s alright with it . ” ” ( My eyes go wide as I’m put on the spot , everyone suddenly looking my way . Who , me ? ” I stutter . ” Yeah , of course . ‘ ” } Jax grins triumphantly , wrapping an arm around Quinn and pulling her in as she resists , feigning annoyance . It lasts for a whole thirty seconds until she’s giggling , letting him plant kisses all over her face . ” Are we gonna start this workout or what ? ” Theo grumbles ,



deliberately knocking into Jax with a shoulder as he passes by him to join Gray . ” We’d better , ” Gray agrees . Jax and Brock join them , but Reid stays glued to my side , waving the other guys ahead . ” You guys got this . ” The others nod , and the looks they give Reid are a little suspect , like they were expecting him to stay back with me . That’s when it suddenly occurs to me that maybe he’s not doing it to be chivalrous ... maybe he’s my goddamn babysitter .

As soon as we walk into the Stillwater Tap , I can see why the guys put up a fight about accompanying us here tonight . It may be ladies ‘ night , but the crowd is disproportionately male , and people are packed inside the place wall to wall . It’s not the worst thing entering with five alpha types , though- rather than having to fight through the crowd , it parts like the red sea to let us through . The girls are I attract a lot of attention as we pass , but given who we’re with , nobody allows their gaze to linger for too long . The five of us got ready together this evening and we’re all dressed to kill in short skirts or dresses and sky – high heels . I’m wearing the black leather miniskirt that Quinn was so fond of , paired with a white ribbed tank top and a pair of black ankle booties . My hair’s down , crimped into waves , and Fallon went heavy on my eye makeup . The whole look is finished off with bright red lipstick , and I must look damn good because ever since I came downstairs , Reid’s gaze has been constantly bouncing between my bare legs and my red lips , the heat behind it telling me he likes what he sees . 20 A group quickly offers us their table , and while Reid tries to do the diplomatic thing and decline , they’re so insistent on it that we have no choice but to acquiesce .

There aren’t enough seats for all of us , but the four couples we’re with don’t seem to mind , the girls sliding easily onto the guys laps and leaving the sixth stool open for me to take . I’ve barely slid onto it when a waitress appears at our table , laser focused on Reid beside me . ” Alpha , what a pleasant surprise , ” she chirps , reaching out to touch Reid’s arm . As she does , I feel my wolf rise up inside m y chest , the bitter taste of jealousy on my tongue . I’m completely taken aback by it I mean I’ve known Reid for all of what , two days ? Definitely not long enough to b e feeling this possessive .

My human rationality doesn’t extend to my wolf , though- as far as she’s concerned , the mate bond makes Reid ours , and right now , another woman is encroaching on our territory , ” Hi Sophie , ” Reid greets politely , twisting around on his stool so her hand slides off of his arm . ” How’s it going ? ” ” Crazy as usual , ” she chuckles , gesturing around her . ” Always is on Wednesdays . What can I bring you ? ” ” Beers for the guys , ” Reid replies , glancing around at his friends . ” And whatever these ladies want . ” He turns his attention to me , his gaze dropping to my lips . ” Serena ? ” I’m so focused in on suppressing my wolf that it takes me a moment to realize he’s spoken my name . I stare back at him , half dazed , then turn to the waitress my wolf i s so fond of . ” Um , do you have grape vodka ? ” I ask , and I don’t miss the judgy look she gives me before nodding .

” Grape vodka and sprite , then , ” I say , and I swear she rolls her eyes a little before moving past me around the other side of the table to take drink orders from the girls . 2 ”

You alright ? ” Reid asks quietly , leaning i n toward me . I catch a whiff of his strong , masculine scent and butterflies take flight inside my tummy . ” Fine , ” I reply quickly , nodding . ” Why ? ” Reid studies my face , narrowing his eyes . ” Your wolf’s showing . ” As I look at him , I see a flash of silver in his own irises , his wolf peeking back . ” So’s yours , ” I say defensively . The corner of his mouth ticks up into that sexy ás fuck half – smile as he leans in closer . ” What are we gonna do about these two , huh ? ” Did it just get hot in here ? The air between us feels too thick to breathe . Reid’s gaze drops to my lips again as I sweep my tongue between them , my heart pounding in my chest . ” Serena ! “

Quinn interrupts , and I whip m y head in her direction , drawing a breath . Funny , as soon as I turn away from Reid , I’m no longer lightheaded and oxygen deprived . ” How’d you like your first day with the squad ? ” she asks from her position on Jax’s lap . ” You think you’re gonna join ? ” I nod eagerly . ” Yeah , I think so ! I haven’t had a workout kick my ass like that in a while . ” ” Just wait till tomorrow , ” Fallon smirks . ” We’ll be starting off with sparring . We can partner up , if you want ... “ ” Uh oh , ” Theo mutters , his lips drawing into a grin . ” What ? ” I look around at the others clearly I’m missing something . ” Nothing , ” Jax chuckles , shaking his head . For a second I feel like I’m being left out o f an inside joke , but then Brock fills me in . ” It’s like a right of passage to go up against Barbie Beast , ” he murmurs , pulling Astrid backwards into his chest and tucking his chin over her shoulder to look at her . ” Isn’t that right ? ” Astrid sighs , shooting me an apologetic look .

” I mean , let the girl work up to it ! ” ” Aw , c’mon , I’m sure she can hold her own . ” Fallon tosses me a wink . The waitress approaches our table with a tray full of drinks , wedging herself between Reid and I to pass them out . She sets beers in front of all of the guys , drinks in front of the girls , and ... nothing i n front of me . ” Oh , my bad ! ” she exclaims , acting like it’s some big mistake . ” What’d you have again , sweetie ? ” I grit my teeth at her patronizing tone , but then Reid speaks up , his deep voice cutting through the bar noise , ” She had a grape vodka and sprite , “

he says calmly , his eyes flickering from me to the waitress . ” I’d appreciate if you could bring that over right away . Thanks , Soph . ” She sucks in a breath , nodding quickly as she tucks the empty drink tray under her arm . ” Sure thing , sorry about that . ” The waitress scampers away and we go back to chatting about tomorrow’s training with the squad until she returns with my drink in record time . She actually brings me two , apologizing again for her forgetfulness . I almost believe her . 2 After a couple more drinks , I’m feeling pretty loose when Quinn suggests that all the girls head to the bar for a round of shots . I’ve never been a fan of shots straight alcohol is way too bitter for my liking- but Quinn convinces me that a lemon drop shot is an ‘ easy ‘ one . She’s wrong . It’s just a shot of straight vodka , dressed up by licking some sugar beforehand and sucking on a lemon after . I feel like I just sucked down jet fuel and I’m spitting fire , the other girls giggling a t my reaction .

” Fine , we won’t make you take anymore , ” Quinn laughs , spinning around and ” leaning her torso over the top of the bar , waving to the bartender to get her . attention .

"Count me out, too," Brooke mutters, making a face. She turns to me, setting a hand on my arm. "I'm with you, Serena, shots are gross. If it wasn't for peer pressure, I'd never do them." Astrid hiccups, tapping Quinn on the shoulder. "I'd better sit this one out, too, Time for me to switch to water." "Looks like it's just you and me, Fal," Quinn sighs, slipping an arm over Fallon's shoulders. The two of them each take two more shots while I sip another grape vodka drink and Astrid sucks down a water. "Let's go dance!" Astrid suggests, throwing her hands in the air and wiggling around excitedly. I look out to the dance floor and it's packed with people, the DJ's colored lights sweeping over the crowd and illuminating the sweaty bodies.

"Yes!" Quinn and Fallon agree almost in unison. Fallon's the first to push forward, A grabbing her sister's hand on the way and pulling her toward the dance floor. Astrid's quick to follow, and Quinn's about to join them when she turns to me. Coming? ("Two seconds," I reply, holding up two fingers. "I just wanna finish this drink." Quinn stops her tracks, reaching out for Astrid's arm. "We can wait," she offers. "You guys go ahead," I insist. "I'll be right behind you. ' " } I watch after them as they head out to the dance floor behind the twins, raising my glass to my lips and taking another little sip. I turn at the waist to set it behind me o In the bar when I inadvertently lock eyes with the guy leaning over the bar top beside me, his lips immediately drawing u p into a slick smile. "Hey there," he greets, his dark g gaze focused in on mine. "Come here often?" I snort, rolling my eyes. "Nice line. " }

He leans back, rising up to his full height and this guy has got to be six and a half feet tall, he towers over most everyone around him. "Not a line, just a question," he shrugs, playing it cool. "I'm Chase." @ Where do I know that name from? I take i n his bulky physique, feel the alpha energy rolling off of him, and it clicks. Chase. The elusive sixth up – and – coming alpha, Funny, he doesn't look like he's still in high school .... "Serena," I breathe, lifting my chin. "Serena," he repeats, like he's testing it out. "You wanna do a shot?" I wrinkle my nose in distaste. "No thanks." Aw, c'mon," Chase urges, chuckling as h e leans in a little closer. "It's my birthday," A group of four guys come piling off of the dance floor loudly, filling in the space around Chase. "You've gotta get out there, man!" one of them urges.

"Totally," another agrees. "What's taking so long?" "Serena here doesn't wanna take a shot with me," Chase fake pouts, his eyes coming to mine again. A stocky blonde dude swings his gaze to m e. "Aw, why not?" "It's his birthday!" his other friend adds. "I roll my eyes at their insistence. Now I can see the high school maturity level. Sorry boys, I'm not a fan of shots," I reply, draining the rest of my drink and sliding my empty glass onto the bar top. "Well if you won't take one with him, why don't you let him take one from you?" A dark – haired guy asks, grinning mischievously. I narrow my eyes at him. "Huh?" "Why don't you climb up on the bar, let him do a body shot off you," he suggests, wagging his eyebrows. My first inclination is to tell him to fuck off, but instead, I take a beat and turn over his suggestion in my mind. Fuck it, this is what being young is all about, right?

Being alive ? Why shouldn't I let loose and have a little fun ? Lord knows I've earned it . I sweep my gaze around the group until it lands on Chase , a smirk creeping across my lips . " Okay . " His brows shoot up in surprise and he nearly chokes on the sip of beer he was drinking . " Really ? " I shrug , sweeping my hair behind my shoulders and acting like I'm not as surprised as he is that I just agreed to this . " Sure , why not ? " " Allright ! " the dark – haired guy cheers while the others whoop and yell excitedly , pushing empty glasses out of the way and making space on the bar top . I spin around so that my back's to the bar , placing my hands on either side of my body and hoisting myself up to sit on the edge .

This is a little complicated in a short skirt , but I manage to make it work without flashing everyone . The guys yell at the other patrons to give me room as I twist around , lying back on the bar and propping myself up on my elbows . One of the guys starts chanting ' body shots ! ' as a bartender makes her way over , a bottle of Patron in hand . " Lift your shirt , hon , " she says , and I comply , baring my belly so that she can pour the tequila onto it . She hands me a lime , which I think I'm supposed to put between my teeth ? Shit , I didn't think this part through . There's so much commotion that I don't even notice the crowd around the bar parting , and it isn't until they hush that I turn my head to see why ... I'm met with a very disapproving pair of blue eyes staring back at me . Then comes his voice , a hard edge to it that I've never heard before sending a shiver down my spine . " Up . Now . "

9 REID I don't know what it is about a woman in red lipstick that I find so damn attractive , but when that flame – haired little vixen descended the packhouse stairs tonight in a tight little skirt and red lips , it immediately did something to my dick . I've been sporting a semi all night , barely able to think straight around Serena . Hardly able to breathe . I'm actually somewhat relieved when one of the girls suggests they go take shots and I'm given a little bit of a reprieve to collect my thoughts . " So how's it been going ? " Gray asks as soon as the girls are out of earshot , turning his attention to me .

" Good , " I mumble absently , eyes glued to Serena's ass as she heads for the bar . The crowd fills in behind her and I turn back to the guys , meeting Gray's dubious stare . " Yeah ? " he asks skeptically . I shrug . " Sure . I mean ... as good as it can be going ? " I scrub a hand over my face , chuckling wryly . " Fuck , man , I don't know . I can't get a read on that girl at all . As soon as I think I have her figured out , she pulls something that has me guessing all over again . " Gray sighs , leaning back on his barstool . " I mean , you can't know anyone after just a couple of days , right ?

" The girl's been through it , " Brock grumbles from beside me . " Give her time . " Jax leans in , dropping his voice low . " Has she told you anything else about her time as a prisoner or how she got away ? " I give a little shake of my head . " Not yet . Like I said , I'm not gonna push her until she's more settled here . " " Well don't take too long , we need all the intel on the shadow pack we can get , " Theo says gruffly , lifting his beer bottle to his lips and taking a swig . " Another round ? " Sophie asks as she approaches our table , reaching in to collect the empty bottles . I like Sophie , I really do , but I'm still

a little pissed about how she fucked with Serena earlier . Not that she'd know it- I pride myself on my ability to conceal my emotions .

Think first , react second . " Sure , thanks Soph , " I nod , grabbing the last few empties off of the table and handing them to her so she doesn't have to lean over me to retrieve them . She flashes me a smile , hustling away as I turn back to the guys . " What were we talking about ? " I ask , lifting a hand to rub my temple . All the beer I've consumed is making me a little fuzzy .

" How you're gonna get some shadow pack intel from that mystery mate of yours , " Theo supplies , smirking . I blow out a breath . " Yeah . We'll see . Like I said , I wanna be careful with her . She's fragile . Innocent . " " Uh , Reid ? " Jax mumbles , eyes wide . " Hm ? " He points a finger , his eyes focused in the direction of the bar . I turn to follow his gaze , seeing a bunch of commotion around it . Jax clears his throat . " That fragile , innocent mate of yours is climbing up on the bar .....

I see a flash of red hair as Serena tosses it back from her seated position on the bar , grinning as she twists sideways and starts to lean back . What the fuck is she doing ? I shoot to my feet , stalking in her direction . I'm pretty sure my wolf is steering this ship , not me- I'm not forming a single coherent thought as I push through the crowd . So much for thinking first and reacting second . Serena starts to lie back on top of the bar , propped up on her elbows , and when the bartender comes over with a liquor bottle and she pulls up her shirt to expose her stomach , I suddenly realize exactly what's happening- this girl is about to let someone do a body shot off of her like . she's at a goddamn frat party .

Then when I put together which one of these idiot guys put her up to it , it's a miracle I don't lose : my shit on the spot . Alpha Vaughn's son Chase is right beside Serena , egging her on and grinning like a fool . I push closer as the bartender hands Serena a lime and she just stares at it for a moment , her throat working as she swallows hard . She's still holding it in her hand hesitantly when the bartender starts to tip the tequila bottle , the first few drops splashing Serena's belly as I step forward and the crowd hushes . The bartender looks up and freezes , her wide eyes coming to mine .

I shake my head and she immediately yanks the bottle of Patron into her chest and starts to back away . Time moves slow as I stare down at Serena and she turns her head toward me . Her eyes collide with mine and she draws a short gasp . My knuckles crack as I ball my fists at my sides , going to great lengths to maintain my composure . " Up . Now . " " She sits up quickly , her mouth hanging open . Clearly at a loss for words . I take a step closer , bringing a hand to her waist and leaning in , speaking through gritted teeth . " What the hell are you doing ? " " Hey , what's it to you , man ? " Chase protests , stepping up beside me . The fucking kid is pissed that I'm ruining his fun . I whip my head sideways to shoot him a warning glare . " She's my mate , " I snap .

I watch as the realization washes over Chase , his jaw going slack . He holds his hands up , eyes wide . " Hey , I had no idea , I swear ... " " 1 " Leave . " I turn away from Chase

and his buddies as they scramble to clear out , because honestly , though I believe him , I don't give a shit what anyone other than Serena has to say right now . Yesterday she was blushing under the stare of a few people at the pizza place , and today she's offering body shots in a crowded bar ?

Nothing adds up . It's like the more I get to know her , the more questions I have- and maybe it's time I actually start asking them before this girl makes me lose my damn mind .. Serena swings her legs over the edge of the bar , moving to hop down . With one hand still on her waist , I bring my other hand to the opposite side and lift her down gently . " Sorry , " she says with a sheepish smile as I set her on her feet . " I was just .... " Fuck , our bodies are so close . All I see are those blue eyes , those red lips . I flex my fingers around her narrow waist , drawing a deep breath in an effort to keep it together .

" Let's go , " " I growl , steering her away from the bar and toward the exit . To my surprise , she doesn't protest- she just looks embarrassed . Her cheeks are stained red as I lead her toward the door by an arm , the other patrons in the crowded bar staring inquisitively as we make a quick exit . > As I push the door step outside , open and the cool night air slams into me , a stark contrast to the thick , stagnant air inside the bar and the stifling heat resulting from packing so many bodies into one place

. I feel Serena shiver beside me as the cold air hits her exposed skin , and as soon as the door swings closed behind us , she wrenches her arm free from my grasp . I let her- and when she takes a step back , putting space between our bodies , I let her do that , too , because it's the only way my wolf and I will settle down . " You gonna tell me what that was ? " I ask calmly , folding my arms over my chest and staring at Serena . Drawing deep breaths in an effort to keep my cool .

She looks up at me , defiance in her eyes . 44 " You've never done a body shot ? " My temper flares , my wolf pushing forward- but by some miracle I rein us both in , drawing another breath and taking a beat . " What the hell is going on with you ? " I ask , narrowing my eyes . " This isn't like you ... " 33 " You don't know me , " Serena responds quickly , looking away .

I have no retort because she's right , I don't . I swallow hard . Her eyes come back to mine and I just stare at her for a moment , trying to get a read on her . Trying to piece together what's going on inside that beautiful head of hers . " Let's just go , " she says with a flippant wave of her hand , turning on a heel and strutting across the parking lot in the direction of the Mustang . I take another deep inhale of air and watch after her for a second , the clack of her heeled ankle boots echoing off the pavement .

What the fuck am I going to do about this girl ? I can't remember the last time I was pushed this close to the edge of losing my shit . I'm always in control . I scrub a hand over my face , blowing out a breath and starting after Serena , reaching into my pocket for the key fob and unlocking the car doors . By the time I reach the Mustang , she's already in the passenger seat . I take my spot behind the wheel , a heavy silence

hanging between us as I turn the key in the ignition and rev the motor . I pull out of the lot and onto the road , and though the drive back to the packhouse is short , neither of us say a word in the five minutes it takes to get there . It isn't until I've pulled into the driveway and cut the engine that I break the tense silence , turning to Serena with a heavy sigh . " You're right , " I say , reaching up to rub my temple in exasperation . " I don't know you , Serena . " I turn to face her , furrowing my brow . " I'm fucking trying to , though . " B She narrows her eyes on me in challenge . " Why ? " It's not a question I expect , and honestly ,

it's a fucking ridiculous one . " Why do you think ? " I scoff . " You don't want me as a mate , " she grumbles with a shake of her head . M I feel the flames of anger licking inside of my chest , threatening to consume me . Still , I manage to keep it together . " Don't presume to know what I want , little girl , " I murmur , my voice steady . " I've been waiting a long time for you .

" " Sorry to disappoint , " Serena snaps . " Who said I'm disappointed ? " I fire back , raising my voice as I feel my blood start to boil . " Please . It was written all over your face tonight . " She throws her car door open , climbing out and slamming it behind her . I'm quick to hop out on my own side , flinging the door closed and walking around the front of the car to head her off . " Hey ! " I call , but she doesn't look at me , just attempts to charge past me . I step in her path , not letting her around me . Hey ! " I repeat , more firmly this time as I reach out to grasp her arms , holding her in place . "

She begrudgingly looks up at me , fury and the silver of her wolf flickering in her blue-eyed gaze . " You're right , I don't want you doing shit like you did tonight , " I grind out through clenched teeth . " That doesn't mean I don't want you , Serena . Because I do . But if you're going to be Luna of this pack , you can't be pulling that kind of crap in front of them . >> " I never asked to be Luna of any pack ! " she shouts , wrenching her arms out of my grip and stomping a foot like an insolent child . " Besides , your pack didn't seem to have a problem with what I did tonight . You were the only one who seemed to have a problem with it . " She points a finger into my chest , staring up at me with wild eyes .

" Yeah , I do have a problem with it , " I bark , raising my voice to match her volume . I've fully lost my cool now ; this girl has pushed me over the edge and then some . " Why would I want some other dude slurping tequila off your stomach ? You're supposed to be mine , Serena ... " " Oh , so that's what this is really about , huh ? " she chuckles wryly , folding her arms across her chest . " Some possessive Alpha shit where you assert your claim over me ? " I scowl , shaking my head .

" No , I just don't want you doing shit like that , it reflects poorly on both of us . " I scrub a hand over my face , heaving a sigh . Seriously , what were you thinking ? " " L " Honestly , Reid ? " She throws up her hands . " I wasn't ! I was just letting loose , having fun . Have you ever fucking tried it ? " " Watch your tone , " I snap , my patience wearing razor thin . " What are you gonna do , punish me ? " she spits , rolling her eyes . My own go dark . " Do you want me to punish you ? " I hear her breath catch in her

throat as she stares up at me , eyes widening in surprise and ... interest . It's the last thing I expect – well , the second to last thing . The last thing is when she purses her lips , her cheeks flushing pink as she whispers ” ...yes .

I take a step closer , my chest slamming against hers as I trap her body between mine and the Mustang . She gasps , her wide eyes searching my own as I trail my fingertips up her bare arms . She shivers under my touch . ” Turn around and put your hands on the hood , ” I command . Serena draws another sharp breath and I see a tremble of excitement run through her as she complies , spinning around and bending over to place her hands on the hood of my sportscar .

She arches her back and sticks that perfect leather – clad ass out toward me , her skirt so short that her ass cheeks are peeking out under the hem when she bends . ” Like this ? ” she pants , tossing her hair back and looking at me over her shoulder . Fuck . Me . Is this really happening right now ? Should this happen ? I've done this with other women , but they were submissive b y nature , and none of them had a past like Serena's . Or the past I assume she has . I realize that I've been operating completely on assumptions when it comes to her , building a picture of a girl from a stack of papers in a file that clearly doesn't match the person in front of me right now . She says she wants this , and fuck , I need i t . I'm all riled up and this is the only catharsis that'll bring me back down . I answer Serena's question by way of a growl of approval , setting my hand on her back , trailing it down the delicate curve of her spine . ” Exactly like that , gorgeous .. ”