

## Alpha Reid chapter 11 -

11 REID Using a pair of tongs , I grab the last piece of sizzling bacon out of the frying pan , adding it to the plate beside the stove that's already piled high . Despite the chaos of last night , I had a fucking fantastic night's sleep and woke up feeling refreshed , ready to take on the day . I came downstairs , started cranking Bruce Springsteen , and got to work making breakfast – my mom's famous French toast that she used to make when I was a kid and two full pounds of bacon .

I turn off the burner on the stove , nodding my head and singing along to the Springsteen hit ' I'm On Fire ' as I head to the fridge to pull out a carton of orange juice . My favorite line of the song drops and I bust a little dance move as I turn around to set the juice on the counter , reaching into the cabinet overhead to retrieve a couple of glasses . Now all that's missing is ... I glance up toward the staircase , smiling as I spot Serena on the landing , watching me .

" Hey ! " I call , reaching over for the speaker that Bruce's voice is currently blasting from . I turn the volume down low , looking back up at Serena still perched on the landing . " Good morning . A little smirk tugs at her lips and she slides her hand along the railing , beginning to descend the rest of the stairs . " Good morning . " > Like always , I can't take my eyes off of her . She's dressed in tight pair of leggings and a sports bra with an open zip -up hoodie over it , her red hair pulled back into a snug ponytail . She looks like she stepped straight off the cover of a fitness magazine and into my packhouse , and I'm still raking my gaze over her form when she hits the bottom of the stairs , her hand lingering on the rail and her eyes coming to mine again .

T " What ? " she asks , arching a brow in question . " How'd you sleep ? " I pick up the carton o f juice and glasses , carrying them over to the table . Serena's eyes go wide , like my question makes her nervous for some reason . She flexes her fingers on the stair rail . " Uh , fine . How'd you sleep ? " I set the juice beside the heaping platter o f French toast and a glass in front of each place setting .

" Great , " I reply , crossing back to the kitchen to grab the plate of bacon . I glance over at Serena to see that she's looking to the door- and that's when I notice that she's got a pair of gym shoes on , like she was on her way out . " Going somewhere ? " " I was gonna go for a run , " she mutters , watching me as I pick up the bacon and walk it over to the table , her eyes lingering on the meat . " But that was before you knew I made us breakfast , right ? " I tease , setting the plate down and flashing her a grin over m y shoulder . " I ... " I turn to Serena , beckoning her with a flick of my head . " Take a seat , Red . You can go for a run later . "

I see her hesitate for a moment , gripping the stair railing tight- but either my insistence or her own hunger wins out and she strolls over , sinking down into a chair at the table . 2 I take my own seat at the head of the table , reaching for the juice . I uncap it and pour us each a glass , then pass her the French toast and bacon so she can help herself before I proceed with loading an embarrassing amount of each onto my own plate . "

You made all this ? ” Serena asks , eagerly cutting into a piece of French toast . ” Mhmm , ” I hum in response , my mouth full of bacon . I swallow it down before continuing .

” My mom used to make this meal all the time . I can’t cook a huge variety of things , but the few things I can , I do well . ” I toss her a wink , taking another big bite out of a bacon strip . She forks a piece of French toast into her mouth , her eyes slipping closed as she starts to chew . ” Mmmmm ... ” she moans , savoring the bite . Again , with the sounds she makes while eating . This girl is trying to drive me crazy on purpose , isn’t she ?

I draw a breath , my dick hardening as she swallows the toast and her tongue darts out to lick a dusting of powdered sugar from the corner of her mouth . ” Serena , ” I growl in warning . She slides her gaze over to me , innocent eyes wide . ” Yeah ? ” I give her a stern look and watch as a blush spreads out over her cheeks . She knows . ” Sorry , ” she mumbles , though I don’t miss the smirk tugging at the corner of her lips . She likes getting a rise out of me . Literally . ” This is amazing , Reid . ” } ” Thanks , glad you like it , ” I drawl . Her words of affirmation make me feel like a million bucks and my wolf stands up and preens . ” Though , ” I breathe , stabbing a piece of French toast with my fork , ” I have to admit that I did have ulterior motives for cooking breakfast this morning . ” Serena’s eyebrows shoot up . ” Oh ? ” I shove a forkful of French toast into my mouth , chewing . I see that look on her face again , like she’s nervous or something , and I almost change course ... but I’ve set my mind to what I’m gonna do this morning , and I intend to see it through . I swallow the bite of food , wiping my mouth with a napkin and nodding . ” I wanted to ask you a few questions , if you’re open to it . ” I see Serena’s body go rigid , and there’s that nervous look again . ”

W – what kind of questions ? ” she asks carefully , lifting her glass of juice and taking a sip . I heave a sigh , staring into Serena’s blue eyes over the top of her juice glass . She sets it down and swallows , swiping her tongue between her lips as her eyes flicker with an intensity that makes my dick grow harder . Damn it , I’ve gotta stay on task here , stop thinking about those eyes , those lips ... I clear my throat , setting my fork down . ” Questions that you might not want to answer . About what happened before you came here . >> Serena’s eyes flutter down to stare at her plate . ” Yeah , okay , ” she breathes , eyes flickering back to mine . ” I knew this was coming . I mean it’s not every day a girl just wanders into your territory , right ?

So , what do you wanna know ? ” For some reason , I’m relieved by her response . She could’ve pushed back or refused to talk about it , which would only arouse more suspicion . I want to trust her , and her being open to having this conversation is a step in the right direction . 3 ” So you said your pack was attacked , ” I begin , treading carefully . ” Your family ? ” ” Dead . ” Serena stares down at her plate again , pushing around a piece of French toast with her fork . I blow out a breath , reaching over for her hand that’s resting on the table . I cover it with mine , giving it a little squeeze . ” I figured . I’m sorry .

Do you wanna ... ' She shakes her head . " No. Maybe sometime , just not ... " Serena looks up at me , her eyes welling with tears . The sight and scent of her tears sets my wolf off – h e starts rattling my cage , clawing at the inside of my chest . I'm overwhelmed with the urge to comfort our mate , soothe her . Take her tears away by any means necessary .. " Hey ... " I say gently , scooting my chair closer to hers . I grab the bottom of her chair , pulling it so that it's right in front o f mine , her knees resting between my own . I reach up to cup her face in both hands , staring into her blue eyes , shiny with tears that she's obviously forcing back . " We don't have to talk about that right now , "

I say , rubbing my thumbs soothingly against the smooth skin of her face . " But whenever you do , I'm here to listen , okay ? " 4 Serena brings her hands up to circle my wrists , giving a little nod of her head . " Okay , " she sniffles . She takes a few deep breaths and I lower my hands from her face , taking hers in mine instead and holding them between us in a show of support . 2 Serena looks down at our intertwined hands , giving mine a little squeeze with her own before her eyes lift to lock with m y gaze again . She blows out a shaky breath . " What else do you want to know ? "

Damnit , I hate this . I feel like I'm torturing the poor girl . Still , these are things I need to know , especially considering the impending war with the shadow pack . I've given her a few days to settle in , and now it's time to ask the hard questions – both for information on the shadow pack , and so I can get to know her better as a person , too . Try to really understand her , because clearly I've been way off in that department . " So they took you as a captive ... " "

Serena nods slowly , her jaw clenching . Their alpha has a thing for females that meet certain ... criteria . As the daughter of an Alpha , I guess I met it . " " Yeah , ' " I mutter , staring down at my lap . " We kinda know about that , from when they captured Astrid . " " So then you know that he basically kidnaps alpha females to use as brood mares , " Serena scoffs , her distaste evident . " It's disgusting . " ( 2 ) I suck in a breath , pressing my eyes closed . Not wanting to ask , but also needing to ask . " Did he ... to you ... ? "

Serena shakes her head quickly . " No. He was supposed to come for me on the full moon shortly after I was taken , but something came up and he never did . I put it together later from the bits and pieces I heard from my guards that it was because he had Astrid in captivity . And then the next moon ... well , I was here . I only met him once in between , and it was . brief and unpleasant . But he didn't fully " So were you in the same place as Astrid ? " I interrupt so she doesn't have to finish that sentence .

The thought of Xavier touching Serena in that way – of anyone touching her in that way , for that matter- makes me murderous . " I don't think so ? " Serena heaves a sigh , pulling back one of her hands from mine . She lifts it to her face , rubbing her temple . " Honestly , I don't know . Where they were holding me ... there weren't any windows . It was just four concrete walls and a door . I didn't even realize how long I was there , every day just blended together . And when I got out I just ran like hell , I couldn't even tell you what direction it was in .

I nod slowly . Fuck , it hurts to hear this , I didn't realize how much it would . It feels like my heart's being torn open as she describes what she endured , and I can't help but feel some sort of responsibility for it . Like I should've known somehow and saved her .  
2 " Are you alright ? " I ask , watching as Serena grits her teeth and her jaw ticks . Dredging up this shit obviously isn't easy for her , but it doesn't seem like she feels sorry for herself having endured it . Instead , she seems ... mad .

Her eyes return to mine and she gives a curt nod , determination flickering in her eyes .  
" Yeah . What else do you wanna know ? " I ask the question that has been nagging at the back of my mind since that first night I brought her home- the one piece o of the puzzle that I haven't been able to put together . I was involved in Astrid's rescue , so I know how tight the shadow pack's security is . There's no way Serena could have waltzed out of there unassisted right ? \*\*\* " How'd you escape ? "

Serena pauses , her eyes flickering away . She gnaws at the inside of her cheek like she's considering her answer . " The guards got sloppy . I guess they forgot to lock my cell door , and nobody was on patrol since it was the full moon . " Her eyes return to mine . " I got lucky . " I nod slowly . Honestly , I was expecting something more , but is it really fair to be suspicious given what she's been through ? Blindly trusting her would be foolish , but damnit , I want to trust her . I want that more than anything . 3 " Anything else ? " Serena asks , lifting a brow . " Nah . That's enough for now . " I reach up to cup her cheek again , smiling fondly . " You did great . Thank you . " I scooch back in my chair , moving to return to my place at the table . " ) " Reid , wait ... " I look over to see that Serena is still rooted in the same spot . I see her throat work as she swallows hard , that hint of uncertainty in her gaze again as she looks over at me .

" Yeah ? " I question , searching her face . There's a sadness in her eyes that I haven't seen there before , and it hits me there's something she's not telling me . Something she's holding back . \* 22 Whatever it is , it seems she changes her mind about sharing . Serena shakes her head , forcing a smile to her lips . " I just ... " her voice trails off . " I really appreciate everything you've done for me . I just want you to know that . " " 5 " Nah , don't mention it , " I drawl , giving her a little grin . " Now c'mon , little wolf . Eat breakfast with me . " 3 She sighs , scooching her chair back in and picking up her fork . She tosses me a little sideways glance as she brings a bite of French toast to her mouth , humming i n satisfaction when it hits her tongue and she starts chewing . " Mmm ... " >> I shoot her a warning glare and she just smirks , swallowing the bite of food and bringing her thumb to her top lip to capture the powdered sugar there , swiping it off and sucking her thumb into her mouth .

I nearly groan in frustration . Serena pops her thumb out of her mouth , licking her lips . " Sorry , " she giggles , like this is her favorite game . ' I should punish her for teasing me like this . I'm sure we'd both enjoy it . She flashes me a sultry little smile , playing coquettish . " It really is delicious .

12 Serena " Fuck , " I mutter as I trip over a tree root protruding from the earth , coming down hard on a knee . I catch my upper body with both hands , skinning my palms as

they slide across the hard – packed dirt of the forest floor . I'm tired and sweaty and exhausted , tears of frustration springing t o my eyes as I struggle back to my feet . I've been out here for hours , trying my damndest to figure out where Reid and I first ran into each other the other night .. Trying to retrace my steps , though at this point that exercise seems pretty fucking useless . It doesn't help that I don't know this terrain at all .

I tried my best to study the of the six – pack territory in Reid's map office last night , but I didn't want to linger in there too long and risk getting caught- and it's a lot different looking at something on paper than it is actually trying to navigate it on foot . The territory borders are fairly easy to pick out , as they're framed on this side by a treeline opposite a clearing . Even so , there's a lot o f ground to cover when you have no idea how to get to where you're trying to go .

I hiss and wince as I scrub my palms together to rub the dirt out of them , though it only seems to rub it further into my skinned flesh . Damn it , I can't stay out here much longer without arousing suspicion . I've already been gone for too long . Maybe I'm not having any luck because someone already found it- I was supposed to retrieve the package first thing this morning , but I foolishly accepted Reid's breakfast invitation instead . Not that I had much choice in the matter . I t was pretty clear that he wasn't taking no for an answer , and how could I say no after he put all that effort into cooking ? The food smelled amazing , and when I started to come downstairs and spotted that big sexy man holding a carton of orange juice and dancing like nobody was watching , I couldn't help but want to stay for breakfast . He wasn't embarrassed at all when I caught him , either- he just flashed me that irresistible smile of his and launched into conversation . Like this . was all part of our normal morning routine . Like we're just a normal , happy couple .

Part of me wants that There's a part of m e that looks at Reid and sees all the possibility , but I have to silence that part o f myself because deep down , I know better . I know better than to think I can have that with anyone ; I know better than to get attached . I know better than to think Reid could save me- and even if he could , it would only be a matter of time before he figured out that I'm not someone worth saving . By next full moon , the mate bond will dissolve away and he'll be free . Free to find someone else , free to b e happy . I want that for him . As for me ? I'll never be free . When you make a deal with the devil , there's no getting out of it . Your fate is sealed whether you like it or not .

Reid was the one thing I never expected ; the wildcard in this whole scenario . He's making it difficult to stay the course and d o what I have to do because I'm hard wired to want to be with him . All my instincts are screaming at me to give into the bond between us , not to mention my wolf , who has already firmly decided that he's ours and we're his . The bond is so strong , it's painful to constantly fight against it . Reid smells like heaven and he looks even better and somehow that's all topped off by the fact that he's the nicest guy ever . He's basically perfect in every way- which , coincidentally , is also

the reason that things could never actually work between us ; because I'm far from perfect .

He's an angel sent from heaven , and I've purchased a one – way ticket to hell . I've been floundering since I arrived here and the mate bond snapped into place , but that phone call I made last night gave me some much – needed clarity . I'm here for a purpose and I have to remain on target . I can't allow Reid or our bond to distract me from my objective . Now isn't the time to be selfish . 5 I heave a sigh , following the treeline at the border of the territory , squinting as I look out across the clearing to the trees on the other side . Looking for what I'm here to find while actively trying to force thoughts of Reid out of my head . As I scan the trees in the distance , I'm trying to not think about how cute looked when I caught him dancing to Bruce Springsteen , or sweet it was for him to go through the effort to make me breakfast , or how kind he was when he held my hands and comforted me about the loss of my family . Or how fucking good it felt when he put his hands on me last night

The way my body came alive beneath his strong , capable hands . Mmm ... That's when I spot it- a yellow ribbon tied to a tree across the clearing . I was told to look for a yellow ribbon . My breath catches in my throat and my blood runs cold . That has to be it , and if it is ... that means I really have to go through with this . I feel sick . There's no time to second guess things ; no turning back now . I draw a deep breath , looking around one last time to ensure the coast is clear . Then I make a run for it . My heart races as my feet pound the earth in my new Nike running shoes , my eyes focused on the bright yellow ribbon moving gently with the breeze . I'm sure I've tripped the border alarm by crossing it , but if I move quickly enough , I can get back over before anyone finds me . I skid . into the treeline on the other side of the clearing , grabbing for the ribbon .

There's a tiny white envelope tied to one end of it , but I don't have time to look at what's inside . I have to move fast if I'm going to pull this off . I tear the ribbon from the tree , immediately sinking into a crouch to conceal myself as I untie the little envelope and shove it into my sports bra . I frantically start digging at the dirt below the trunk with my fingers , creating a little hole to hide the ribbon . I drop it in and dirt back over it to cover it up , scoop looking wildly through the brush toward the other side of the clearing , toward the border of the six – pack territory .

The coast is clear , so again , I make a run for it , sprinting as fast as my legs will carry me toward the treeline . My throat is burning when I reach it , but I don't stop I keep going , full steam ahead . The thick foliage of the forest tears at the fabric of my clothes , branches whip me in the face and tug at my hair . I don't stop . But something stops me . I hear a snarl , and before it can even register , a tawny wolf leaps at me from the side , tackling me to the ground . I eat dirt as I hit the forest floor so hard that it knocks the wind out of me , sputtering as

my body skids to a stop , the weight of the wolf on top of me . I'm gasping for air as it slinks off of me , taking a couple of steps before the air starts to shimmer around the

wolf and I hear the familiar sounds that accompany a shift – bones snapping and rearranging . A few seconds later , someone’s crouching where the wolf stood . It’s someone I recognize . ” Fallon ? ” I croak , rolling onto my side and pushing myself up on an arm .

My whole body is screaming in pain from the impact with the earth . She rises to her feet across from me , and fucking hell that girl is stunning . Her lithe body is bare , covered in toned , lean muscle beneath her beautifully tanned skin . Her long blonde hair hangs loose around her shoulders , her blue eyes still sparkling with the silver of her wolf . . ” What were you doing off territory ? ” Fallon demands , narrowing her eyes on me . ” L ... what ? ” I stutter , trying to think fast . I struggle to my feet and bring a hand up to

my cheek , wincing when my fingers come into contact with a cut on my cheekbone . Was I off territory ? ” Fallon doesn’t look amused by my theatrics . She folds her arms , her lips set in a tight line . ” I don’t know my way around here yet , ” I groan , brushing dirt off of my clothes . ” I’ve been lost for the last hour ... ”

33 Fallon arches a skeptical brow . ” Then why didn’t you call for help ? ” ” Uh , no phone , ” I say , holding up my hands to illustrate my point . ” I was out for a run . I should’ve stuck to the path , but I wanted to explore a little bit ... guess i t backfired , right ? ” I chuckle softly , trying to play it cool- though on the inside , I’m panicking . ” Hm , ” she muses , still looking unconvinced . This fucking girl , man . I thought Astrid would be the one I had to worry about , but Fallon seems to have had me pegged from the start , always casting suspicious glances in my direction . And for her to be the one to find me out here ... it just

fucking figures , doesn’t it ? A tense silence stretches between us as I shift my weight uncomfortably , gnawing on the inside of my cheek . Fallon’s eyes are still narrowed on me like she doesn’t buy my story . I don’t blame her- I’ve never been a great liar . Though I’m getting better at it . ” C’mon , ” she sighs after what seems like an eternity , giving a little flick of her head . ” Shift , I’ll take you back . ” 11 ” What ? ” I blurt , my eyes flying wide and my hand instinctively flying to the top left corner of my sports – bra where the little envelope is hidden . I nearly sigh in relief when I feel the bump underneath the fabric that tells me it’s still there . Her eyes narrow again . ” What’s wrong ? ” Shit . Think fast , Serena . Like your life depends on it . I look down at myself , then back u p . at Fallon . ” Reid just got me all this stuff . I. don’t want to shift and leave it behind .....

33 I should’ve guessed that clothes would speak to someone like Fallon . Her expression softens and her lips spread into a grin . ” Hey girl , I get it , ” she chuckles . ” I don’t really feel like streaking , so how about ! shift and you just try to keep up on two legs ? ” ” Sure , ” I agree , flashing her a smile of my own . She rolls her shoulders , stretching . ” You’re lucky I was close by when the call came out for someone to check the alert at the border . ” She turns to me , tossing me a wink . ” Or else you might’ve had to leave that stuff behind and let your wolf lead you back . ” ” For sure , ” ” I nod .

She gives me another smile , and my heart's still pounding as Fallon shifts into her wolf form again , shaking out her fur . As she turns tail and starts to jog ahead , I finally breathe a sigh of relief. Fuck . That was a close one .

REID I look up from the open refrigerator as I hear the front door of the packhouse swing open , my wolf instantly perking up as Serena breezes through . " Hi ! " she greets brightly , her delicious scent practically slapping me in the face as she pushes the door closed behind her . She's wearing leggings and another one of those cropped hoodies that shows a tantalizing strip of her flat stomach- this one is light blue , the same hue as her eyes . Her hair is pulled back in two French braids , and I can't help but crack a smile as I recall a joke that Theo used to crack about pigtails being used as ' handlebars ' .

" Hey , " I call back to her , reaching for a bowl in the fridge filled with fruit . I select a juicy looking red apple and step back , the refrigerator door swinging closed as I step over to the sink to rinse the piece of fruit . " How'd it go ? " I had some pack business to tend to this morning , so I asked Cy to bring Serena over to the complex for the morning training session since she seemed to enjoy working out with the squad so much the other day . While playing chauffeur for the pack's future Luna doesn't exactly fall within Cy's job description as Beta ,

he was all too eager to help out- he's been chomping at the bit to learn more about my mate . Though knowing what little I do about Serena , I doubt she divulged much personal information on the ride over . I was going to go pick her up myself after practice , but Gray called to let me know that Fallon actually offered to give her a lift back here instead . I was glad to hear it , thrilled that my friends ' mates seem to be warming up to Serena , but then Gray mentioned something else that Fallon responded to an alarm at the border yesterday and discovered that it was Serena who tripped it ; she wandered off territory during her run . While Gray didn't outwardly accuse Serena of anything , I could pick up the subtle hint of suspicion in his tone . I know it shouldn't , but it irritated me- so I ended the call and asked Cy to cover for me here this afternoon , determined to spend more time with my mate and continue my efforts to knock her walls down . I figure that the sooner I know I can trust her , the sooner my friends will have

to come around too ... right ? " Training was great ! " Serena replies , practically glowing . I'm not sure what has her in such a great mood probably the endorphins from her morning workout but I'll take it . Her smile is gorgeous , it lights up her whole face . And once again , I'm captivated and can't look . away . I smile back at her , turning off the tap and flicking water droplets off of the piece of fruit . " Glad to hear it . You hungry at all ? " Serena gives a little shake of her head as she starts to make her way toward me . Nah , I ate lunch at the complex . " ( C 33 I lean against the kitchen counter with one arm , bringing the apple to my mouth with the other . " I heard you were off territory yesterday , " I comment , sinking my teeth into the fruit . I bite off a piece , crunching , carefully watching Serena's reaction . She stops in her tracks , looking a bit like a deer in the headlights . It's only for a moment , though her demeanor quickly shifts . " I got lost , " she says nonchalantly , shrugging a shoulder .



Damn it's hard to get a read on her . swallow down the bite of apple , smirking . " Always getting lost , little wolf . " A faint blush spreads across Serena's cheeks as she peers back at me , and I'm amazed at the way her expression can simultaneously convey both wide – eyed innocence and devious sin .

I hold the apple up to take another bite , extending a finger to point toward her . " I've got a solution for that . " I bite down and chew , tossing her a wink . Serena lifts a brow , waiting for me to go on . Impatiently waiting- she starts to fidget as she watches me chew the fruit . " Well are you gonna tell me ? " she finally asks , unable to hold it in . I smirk . She's a feisty little thing sometimes . Swallowing the bite of apple , I take a step toward her , then another . Invading her space until our bodies are mere inches apart , dropping my head beside her ear and my voice low . " Careful with that attitude , Red , or I'll have to take you over my knee . " " 1 She gulps as I pull back to look at her , the blush on her cheeks deepening . " I ... "

I swear I can feel the heat coming off of her body , my own body heat ratcheting up like it's absorbing hers . Still clutching the apple in one hand , I reach up with the other , sliding my index finger underneath her chin and tipping her face up toward mine . " You'd like that , wouldn't you ? " I growl out , searching her eyes . Something flickers in them in response to my question . Something dark , dangerous , intertwined with the silver swirl indicative of her wolf rising to the surface .

Her tongue darts out to wet her lips and my eyes track the movement . My own wolf pushes forward as the scent of her arousal hits my nose , a low growl rumbling in my chest . I drop my hand from her chin , snaking it around to trail down her spine until it lands on her ass . Giving her ass cheek a demanding squeeze , I yank her closer . Serena's plush pink lips part and she lets out a little puff of air . I nearly shudder when I feel her touch me , her fingertips dancing across my abs . " I ... " she breathes again , like she can't get her thoughts together .

I don't blame her . This proximity has my own head scrambled , and there's only one thing on my brain right now- bending her over the kitchen counter and yanking her leggings down to her ankles . I need to get it the fuck together , so I release my grip on her ass and take an abrupt step backwards , putting some space between us so we can both think clearly . " C'mon , " I say with a nod of my head , taking two more big bites of my apple before turning to toss the core in the trash . " I've got a little surprise for you . 11 " What kind of surprise ? " Serena asks skeptically , but I can hear the excitement in her tone .

I don't answer her , just toss her another wink and start for the door to the back patio of the packhouse . I draw deep breaths to calm my erratic pulse , my heart pounding in time to Serena's quick footsteps on the hardwood floor behind me as she catches up . I hope she's into this . I know she likes being out in nature and she seems to be the thrill – seeker type , so it should be right up her alley . I pull open the back door of the packhouse and Serena follows me outside , around to where a large storage shed sits behind the garage . The door is standing open and two matching ATV's are parked

outside of the shed with helmets perched on the seat of each . I hear Serena draw a breath . " Up for a ride ? " I ask , swinging around to take in her reaction .

Oh yeah , I nailed this . Serena is grinning from ear to ear as she stares at the four wheelers , her excitement palpable . " Figured this would be a fun way to show you around the territory , " I continue , smiling smugly as I watch Serena advance toward the ATV's , wide – eyed and eager . " Yeah , let's go ! " she exclaims , reaching out to touch the handlebar of the nearest one . She whips her head around to dart me a glance over her shoulder , and I'm not sure if she means for her : gaze to convey so much sexual energy , but damn . There goes my pulse again . I clear my throat , stepping up beside her and moving the helmet off the seat to reveal a black bandana underneath . " Have you ever done this before ? " I ask .

She shakes her head , buzzing with anticipation . " This , " I breathe , picking up the bandana , folding it lengthwise , and bringing it up to tie around her head , " is so you aren't inhaling dirt the whole time . " I secure the bandana so that it's covering her nose and mouth , tying it off . Then I rock back on a heel , smiling to myself as she looks back at me with the bandana in place like the cutest little bandit I've ever seen . I turn to grab the helmet next , unbuckling the strap . " Do I have to wear a helmet ? " Serena protests , eyeing it as I lift it up over her head . " Safety first , little wolf , " I murmur , bringing it down over the crown of her head . I make sure it's snug , tightening the strap and then placing my palms on either side to ensure it doesn't wiggle too much . " All set . " 33 She turns to mount the ATV and I deliver a swift slap to her ass as she does , unable to restrain myself . Serena lets out a little

yelp and I chuckle , walking around to my own ATV . I tie a black bandana around my face and yank a helmet on over my head , tightening the chin strap . I know most other shifters would forgo a helmet , but given what happened to my mom , I figure you can never be too careful . I give Serena a little crash course in how to ride the four – wheeler , pointing out where the key rests in the ignition and explaining how to turn it on and where the throttle and brakes are located . She's practically jumping out of her skin the whole time , raring to go , but she waits until I give the go – ahead to fire up the motor and give it a little gas , lurching forward .

I take the lead , steering toward a wide trail and watching in my mirror as Serena follows on her ATV . There are several trails in my territory wide enough to take the four – wheelers on , but I take her on a nice easy one to start with so she can get used to riding . As we advance deeper into the forest , I keep an eye on her in my mirror . The girl seems to be a natural she takes to riding the ATV like she's done it a million times before .

As we approach one of the territory borders on our first trail , I slow to a stop , cutting the engine . Serena picks up on my cue , pulling up beside me and hitting the brakes , turning the key in the ignition . " You sure you haven't done this before ? " I ask as I yank the bandana down from my mouth . Serena giggles , reaching up to pull her own bandana down and flashing me a bright smile . " Pretty sure . It's easy , though ! " " That

trail was easy , ” I admit . ” Figured you should get the hang of it before we take on one that’s more challenging . You up for it ? ” ” Definitely ! ” she grins , reaching to turn the key and fire up the engine of her ATV again . I grab for her arm , chuckling . ” Not so fast , Red . I stopped here for a reason . ” 11 Serena looks up at me , equally itchy to keep going and curious as to what I have to say . I turn , gesturing to the treeline . ” This is the border of the territory ,

” I point out . Even if you wander off one of the trails , you can tell where the borders are by natural markers , like the dropoff beyond this treeline or the stream on the opposite end of the territory . ” She nods , eyes scanning the treeline . ” Got it . ” She reaches for the key again , clearly eager to continue on , so I pull up my bandana and fire up the engine of my ATV , pulling ahead . Serena follows suit , tailing me as I continue on down the trail . If she wants something more difficult , then I have another trail in mind that’s sure to excite her . It takes some time to reach it , but when we near the border of Riverton , I veer off onto a narrower trail and watch in my mirror as Serena follows . This trail is bumpy and winding as compared to the last , but even as we start out onto it , Serena’s whipping around tight corners like a pro , fearlessly cruising down sharp inclines at full speed . After a while , I’m checking on her in my mirror less and less , confident that she’s got this as I navigate the trail .

As the trail leads to lower ground , the dirt underneath our tires starts to get looser and it’s a bit muddy in spots from an overnight rainstorm a couple nights ago . There’s one spot in particular where the mud looks particularly thick across the trail and I slow to carefully navigate around it , figuring Serena will follow suit . Of course , that wild redhead either misses or ignores my cue , plowing right into the mud . I hit the brakes , watching over my shoulder as her ATV grinds to a halt , tires spinning and unable to find traction . Great . I heave a sigh , cutting the engine of my own ATV and climbing off , watching as Serena keeps trying to hit the throttle , digging the tires of her four – wheeler deeper into the mud .

” Stop ! ” I call out , waving an arm while I the strap of the helmet with the unsnap other , pulling it off overhead . I leave it on the seat of my ATV and yank my bandana down to my neck , striding in Serena’s direction as she keeps hitting the gas and digging herself into a deeper hole . ” Serena ! ” I call , cupping my hands around my mouth . She finally looks up at me , her shoulders slumping . I continue toward her as she pulls off her own helmet and tugs her bandana down , her lips drawn into a frown . ” I didn’t mean to ... ” she starts . defensively , but I just shake my head , holding up a hand . ”

Hey , it happens . No big deal . Let’s just get you un – stuck , huh ? ” Serena sinks her teeth into her lower lip , nodding . I walk around the mud pit she’s driven into , surveying the situation as I come up behind the ATV . She got it stuck pretty good- the tires are halfway sunk in . ” Alright , ” I exhale , my eyes returning to Serena’s . ” I’m gonna push you out . Give it a little gas , but not until I say so . ” 33 She nods , dangling her helmet off of one of the handlebars and placing her hands securely on them , looking over her shoulder and waiting for my signal . I step forward , placing my hands on the back of the ATV , rocking it forward a few times .

I look up at Serena , ready to give it a good shove , when she must take my eye contact for a signal to hit the gas – the engine revs , the tires spin , and sticky mud sprays All . Over . Me . I stumble back , gritting my teeth in frustration as I hear Serena draw a gasp . She cuts the engine of the ATV and hops off quickly , bounding toward me . ” Oh my gosh , I’m so sorry ! ” ” Thought I told you to wait to hit the gas until I said so , ” I grumble , wiping a clod my cheek . of dirt from : Serena stares at me , her own cheeks reddening . ” I ... ” Shit , I should be more gentle with her . It clearly wasn’t intentional ; I don’t want to make her feel like ... I freeze as I hear her burst into laughter , watching as she clutches her stomach and bends at the waist . Unbelievable . ” What’s so funny ? ” I demand , folding my arms across my chest . ” I’m sorry , ” she gasps , looking up at me , her eyes trailing over my form . ” You just look so ... you’re covered ! “

I furrow my brow as she loses herself in another fit of giggles . ” It’s not funny , ” I grumble , glancing down at my mud – flecked clothing , ” It’s a little funny , ” she teases , advancing toward me . It’s hard to be mad when she’s smiling like that , and by the time she’s right in front of me and I’m breathing in her light vanilla and tangerine scent , my frustration over the situation has completely dissipated , replaced with raw , lustful attraction . Her chest bounces as she giggles softly , pulling one of her sleeves down over her hand . ” Here , ” she laughs , wiping the mud from my face with the end of her sleeve . Serena’s eyes roam my face as she cleans me up , but mine are completely fixated on hers . When she’s finished , they flicker to lock with my gaze . ” That’s better , ” she breathes , and I’m not sure whether the hammering heartbeat I hear is hers or my own . ” Thanks , ” I rasp , my hands roaming to settle on her hips .

Her eyes drop to my lips and she licks her own , and I’m not sure if she means to or not but her body angles closer to mine , her breathing shallow . I lean toward her slowly , my intentions clear . I’m giving her one last chance to back out if she wants to . She has before , but this time ... she doesn’t . Mine . Serena’s eyes slide closed as I cover her mouth with my own , pleasurable sparks igniting as I press a kiss to her lips . At first it’s tentative , chaste , but as soon as her lips pout to return it I deepen the kiss , sweeping my tongue along the seam of her soft lips . She parts them to allow me entry , my tongue exploring her hot little mouth and stroking against her own . I wrap my arms around Serena , pulling her in , and she melts against me , mewling into my mouth as she returns my kiss with equal fervor .

Suddenly things kick up a notch and it’s frantic her arms snake around my neck , her chest presses against mine . One of her legs kicks up to my waist as I palm her ass , giving it a hard squeeze as she grinds herself against me . The taste of her lips is even better than I imagined- and trust me , I’ve spent a lot of time over the past few days imagining . The feeling of her body in my arms ? Euphoria . Our hands explore , our tongues tangle . A growl rumbles in my chest as her fingernails score the backs of my shoulders through my shirt . My dick’s hard , ready , and she’s grinding her body against it like she’s in heat , driving me fucking wild .

I’m ready to take her right here , right now . Claim what’s mine . Serena drags my lower lip between her teeth as she pulls back , chest heaving as she stares at me with wide ,

lust – filled eyes . I can see the storm of conflict raging within them- I know she wants this just as badly as I do , yet for some reason , she's holding back . She won't let go . She slides her palms over my shoulders and down to my hard pecs , pushing away to put a few inches of space between our bodies . We just stare at one another wordlessly as we try to catch our breath , try to make sense of this inescapable pull between us forged by the mate bond . I start to drift toward her again to get another taste , but Serena takes a shaky step back , yanking her bandana back up over her nose and mouth .

" I'll , uh ... wait for you to say the word this time , " she stammers , backing away slowly . It takes a minute for me to even comprehend what the hell she's talking about- I feel like I'm intoxicated on Serena fucking Harper . I watch her amble back to the ATV , throwing a long leg over and settling onto the seat . The fog slowly starts to clear from my brain as I step forward , leaning over to grab onto the back of the four – wheeler . Serena fires up the engine and glances at me over her shoulder , waiting for my signal . This time , she hits the gas when I tell her to , and we're able to get the ATV unstuck . Though when it comes to the two of us , I feel like our wheels are still spinning .