

BLUEBELL

Jace appears by my side with an apologetic look as I grab a stack of dinner plates from my mama's armoire.

"Hey Bloob? Can I grab you for a minute? I'm working on today's invoices but I think I screwed something up. The send button is grayed out and I'm sure I'm just missing something."

Chuckling, I hand him the plates, then climb carefully off the stepstool.

"I'm sorry," he says. "I was trying to take things *off* your plate and not make you still hafta do Tucker Greens business stuff."

I shake my head and clap him on the shoulder. "You gotta learn somehow, Jace. I'm happy to help. Honestly, everything you've done so far has taken *such* a mental load off for me. I really appreciate it."

He follows me through the dining room and down the back hall toward the tiny office beneath the stairs. Petra sits on the chair, thwapping the side with her spade as she stares at the computer screen. When we halt in the doorway she smiles up at me.

"Hey Bluebell! Jace and I were trying to figure this out because I want to learn to help with Tucker Greens. Green magic is soooo fascinating, don't you think?"

Jasper appears out of nowhere and tosses an air plant at her. The moment it connects with her skin, green magic swirls and it grows huge, tendrils wrapping around her until she's locked up tight. Next to me, Jace sighs.

"All I wanted to do was send a couple of invoices."

I offer him a commiserating look. "Welcome to my life."

Petra screeches and leaps out of the chair. Shoving her way between us, she shouts for Jasper as she chases him up the hallway.

I pick bits of oversized air plant off the chair and chuck them on the floor as I take a seat. It only takes me a moment to see Jace's mistake and show him how to correct it. Actually, two moments because the first moment I almost correct it for him. Then I remember how Mama keeps telling me to *teach* the guys not just do it for them.

I'll admit to that being a struggle, but we're figuring it out. My to-do list is only like, half a page long these days and I am one hundred percent fine with that.

“Thanks, Bloob,” Jace says softly. “I’ll keep picking this up.”

“Just don’t let them make you do it all,” I offer by way of advice. “I made that mistake.”

He shakes his head. “The twins have been surprisingly helpful. Mama was right—they rose to the occasion. I’m just sorry I didn’t push that harder when it was obvious you were stressed over it.”

“All good.” I pull him in for a quick hug just as Mama starts shouting for us both.

In my chest, heat tugs and pulls, seemingly dragging me away from Jace and toward the kitchen. The mating bond is amazing. As a human I didn’t think I’d ever get to experience any sort of connection like most monsters have. But with Hadrian? I’ve got that and more. Finally. It’s honestly the best thing in the world.

Jace and I head toward the kitchen, but my mind’s on the thing at the top of my to-do list right now.

Not so much a thing as a *who*.

HADRIAN

I tug at Bluebell again even though I sense her coming. When she appears in the kitchen doorway behind her brother, I grin at her. Every time I see her feels like the first time, my heart thumping in time with hers. **It's only been a month since the Mead Cute Festival but I barely remember a time before Bluebell and Petra.**

We bounce back and forth between my apartment and Bluebell's and neither of them even remotely fit our needs at this point. But the ranch renovations are coming along quickly. A few finishing touches and we should be able to move in in a few weeks.

"What are you thinking about?" Bluebell slides into my arms and shoves her cold hands up my shirt to rest on my pecs. I freaking love that she can just touch me and we don't have to hide it.

Out of the corner of my eye, I note Jasper paused in the doorway, looking at us. Just as quickly, he turns to go. He's still not entirely comfortable but he's supportive and that's all I care about at this point. We still do lunch dates and hang out together. I've tried not to let his friendship feel like a distant second.

"Thinking about the ranch." I slide my hands down her back, looping my thumbs into her waistband. "I can't wait to move. Coming out to Tucker Ranch feels like a breath of fresh air because there's so much space."

"I'm jealous you and Petra will get to fly in and out," Bluebell says with a laugh. "I mean, obviously you'll carry me but it would be so damn cool to have wings. I'm so envious of you both."

"Don't worry!" Petra shouts as she barrels into the room, cheeks ruddy from chasing Jasper around. "I'll carry you like a purse!"

Bluebell snorts out a laugh. "Appealing as that sounds, I think I'll pass, girl."

"You could ride on my back," Petra offers.

"Rather ride on my mate," Bluebell says, which has Petra groaning and slapping a hand over her face—a move she picked up from the twins.

Elena storms into the kitchen wiping her hands on her apron. "Everybody out! The guests are going to start arriving any minute and I need my space! Git! Go! You too, Bluebell. This is your party and I won't have you working during it!"

We all know better than to get in Elena's way when she's on a tear.

"I suppose it is our party," I say softly to my gorgeous mate. "Should we go get a drink? Bill's done setting up the bar on the back patio."

Bluebell takes my hand and leads me through the living room toward the back. Outside on the patio, Bill dumps a bag of ice into one of five giant coolers. Jack and Jasper are doing the same to several more, and Jace stands at the grill, arranging grill tools.

Bill stands and smiles at us. "You two ready for the engagement party?" His eyes soften at the edges. "Hay, I'm sure sorry your folks aren't here for it but hard as I tried to get ahold of 'em, I never could get through."

I shrug. "Truly, it doesn't bother me anymore. They'll show up eventually. I'm right where I want to be with your family."

"*Our* family," he corrects. He waggles a pointer finger at me. "Although have I told you about the human tradition of asking the woman's father before you ask the woman if you can marry, or mate?"

Bluebell's brothers all laugh and she chuckles, shaking her head as she wraps both arms around my waist. I cock my head to the side.

"That's nonsensical. I've read it in some of your books but is that really a thing?" Sudden worry fills me and I run a hand through my hair. "Should I have asked you, Bill? I mean... it only occurred to me to ask my *mate*."

Bluebell's laughter rises and she rubs my stomach playfully, smiling up at me. "Don't mind him. It is a human thing for sure, but we're not human, not really."

Bill chuckles. "I mean, I wouldn't mind if he had asked me that's all I'm sayin'."

"You're in trouble, Hay," Jaspers says as he throws away the empty bag of ice. "If you'd have asked me about it I'd have told you to ask Dad!"

"Har har," Bluebell says. "Y'all need to calm down. You're gonna stress him out over something that's not even a thing. He asked me and I said yes and here we are."

"And here *we* are!" A voice singsongs from somewhere behind us.

Oz saunters through the back door holding two bottles of champagne, Lemon and Furyon right behind him. Our first guests of the evening, although I'm pretty sure Elena invited the entire haven to this shindig.

I'm excited to celebrate, but a part of me just wants to steal my sweet little mate away and do naughty, delicious things.

BLUEBELL

Half an hour later, the back patio and yard are filled with monsters. A band plays and the Jays cook steak and corn on the cob. Mama is putting the finishing touches on a baked potato and tater tot bar. It's absolutely perfect. Lowkey, nothing fussy—just the way we like it.

Lemon's several drinks in and mounting a stage to sing with the band. Furyon stands with Hadrian, watching his mate get up to her usual singing shenanigans. She's got her new boots on, the ones with the giant turquoise buckle. I've gotta admit...they look absolutely incredible.

Oz is by my side, his arm around my neck. He nudges me with his wing tip and I look up.

"Did you notice Lem and I *both* have on our buckle boots? Guess this makes us buckle bunnies."

I chortle as I look down at the purple ones he's wearing. Glancing back up, I tickle his side. "That's not what buckle bunny means."

He shrugs, pushing his slutty little glasses up the bridge of his nose. "It's not like I'm ever gonna be a *real* buckle bunny so this is my second best option."

Something hot unfurls in my chest as Hadrian joins us, slinging his big arm around Oz and I both.

"Oh I don't know, Oz. Lemon keeps saying there's something in the water and when we gave the Gulch Gossip girls their interview they did remark on just how much love there is in Pine Gulch these days. Why couldn't you be next?"

Oz barks out a hoarse laugh. "Me? Most definitely not." He points to Ginger who sits quietly at his feet, staring lovingly up at him. "Ginger is all the love I need. I'm focusing on my dreams, remember? That salon I want to build up on Main? That's what I need to spend time on, not romantic nonsense."

"Okay," Hadrian says, but I can tell he doesn't believe Oz.

I believe Oz wants to follow his dreams. But if he could fall in love at the same time? I know he'd do it. You'd have to be crazy not to want love. Admittedly it wasn't that long ago I wasn't so sure about it myself. That was before I ever thought I'd get to

have the person I wanted. But now he's mine, and I know I'd walk through any number of hells to get to him.

"Bluebell Delia get on up here!" Lemon shouts from the band area, announcing my entire middle name for the whole haven to hear.

"Uh oh, Bloob," Oz says, poking me with his tail spade, "the secret's out!"

"How did she even find out," I mutter, thinking about when she dropped that bomb on me in the Bodice storeroom. I'm entirely certain I never told her. But sometimes Lemon just seems to *know* things.

"Hide me," I hiss at Hadrian. "No way no how am I goin' up there to sing. It's my party and I don't hafta!"

"C'mon, Bluebell," sings Lemon again.

Hadrian chuckles and gathers me up into his arms. Pushing off the ground, he bullets up into the sky. Understanding laughter follows us, but I bury my face in his neck just to *feel* him. Between us, the bond is tense and tight and full of gratitude.

"Thanks for saving me," I whisper against his cool skin, peppering light kisses up to his ear.

"I always will, little witch," he says into my ear. "Always."

HADRIAN

Bluebell snuggles tighter against me as I nuzzle the shell of her delicate ear.

“Where shall I take you, little human?”

She shudders when I call her that. “Treehouse, down by the river. It’s still there, you know. I just want to be alone with you for a little while, mate.”

Alone sounds perfect and I know exactly where the treehouse is. I haven’t stepped foot in it since she was sixteen or seventeen and we snuck out of the house to go try cigarettes. They’re gross, it turns out, but we had fun anyways. And of course, that’s the place we exchanged our promise bracelets years before. Mine is still around my ankle.

Dropping out of the sky, I alight carefully on the porch. I’m so big now I have to hang off the edge as I deposit Bluebell on the worn wooden surface. It’s got a few holes in it which makes me want to come fix it up for old times’ sake.

That all changes as she pulls me inside. The interior’s lit with string lights that criss cross the ceiling. A huge nest of blankets on the floor reminds me a whole lot of our nest at home. Someone’s even put a tray of snacks and mead in the corner.

I turn to my mate with a shocked look. “Baby, did you plan this all out and make us a treehouse nest?”

She waggles blue brows. “You bet I did. Because I knew there’d come a time when I had to sneak away from all the peopling and just be with my man. Plus,” she waves at a small box next to the snacks. I hadn’t initially noticed it. “I’ve got a gift for you.”

My world’s already centered around her, but that sensation of being completely hers amps until all I can do is pull her into my arms. We fall into the nest with her lithe body on top of mine. My mouth is on hers before either of us can say a thing. I just need her, so damn bad.

We part just long enough for me to moan her name against those sinful blue lips. “Baby I missed you during the party,” I admit. “If I could get all day every day in our nest to snuggle, that’d be perfect.”

She strokes her fingers down the bridge of my nose. “Can you imagine if you were the only thing on my to do list. That would be incredible.”

That pulls a laugh from deep in my chest. “Only one thing on your list? Never gonna happen, baby. I know you well enough to know you can’t sit still and even if we

had twenty-four hours to linger around, you'd find some adventure to take me on. I'm not sure relaxation is ever gonna be for you."

"Facts." She rolls her hips against mine. "You ready for your gift?"

I grip her ass and rock my hard cock against her body. "If by gift you mean that sweet, wet pussy on my mouth, then yeah. I could smell your need during the party, little witch."

"Oh I'm gonna let you do that," she says with a sultry look. "But this is an actual gift. Nothing crazy, it's more sentimental than anything."

I roll us onto our sides. "I got you something too."

She reaches behind us and grabs the small box from before. It's tiny, about the size of a ring box (ask me how I know) and it weighs almost nothing in my palm.

"Go on, open it." She rubs my chest in soft circles as the bond between us tightens with need.

Flipping the lid open, my brows lift at what's inside.

It's a bracelet. A woven bracelet just like the ones we used to make our wedding promise when we were kids. But this one's got three strands that interconnect at the ends.

"A strand for each person in our immediate family," she whispers. "You, me, and Petra. Because we aren't us without her, right?"

My heart's so fucking full I swear I might start crying, and I'm not a crier.

"This is breathtaking, little mate." I pull the multicolored bracelet from the box and hand it to her. "Will you put it on for me?"

She takes it and slides down my body. "You bet I will, Mister Alkazar."

I roll onto my back and put my hands behind my head. This view is perfect. She's perfect. And she's all mine.

BLUEBELL

My handsome mate smiles as I slide down his huge body. Leaning forward, I open my mouth and scrape my teeth down his erection. The way he hisses and rocks his hips for more always turns me on like crazy. If I've learned anything in the last month, it's that my mate loves it when I'm rough with him, especially after skyball games. There's something about all that roughhousing on the field that gets him so amped.

I'm sure it doesn't hurt that I'm on the sidelines for every game, screaming our last name like a banshee and being a general menace.

Hadrian groans, a sound that rumbles from deep within his massive chest when I hover over his cock. My bites grow rough and hard as a wet spot appears at the front of his pants.

Chuckling, I slide further down and away from that gorgeous length. The sound he lets out is so plaintive and disappointed I can't help but burst out laughing. Shaking my head, I sit up and pull his giant foot into my lap.

"Don't think I could ever forget about that, mate." I unhook the bracelet and place it around his ankle right alongside the other one. Clipping it, I rock back and admire my handiwork. I lift his foot so he can see, and he grins huge at the delicate thing.

"It's perfect," he says. "Perfect that I have *both* of them."

"Oh, about that." I waggle my brows as I shuck my cowboy boots and socks off and show him my foot. Around my ankle are two bracelets—one that matches his new one and my original one from all those years ago.

He sputters. "Wait...how? Did you remake it?"

Shaking my head, I laugh. "Turns out my mama always knew you were the one for me. She found it in my room at some point, when I lost it, and it's been in a box in the armoire all these years, just waiting for us to go public with the news."

He sits up and fingers the bracelet, staring at it in obvious admiration. His smile's soft, tender, and I can't wait to kiss the corners of it.

Letting out a playful yowl, I tackle him to the nest. We've barely hit the fuzzy fabric before he flips us over and bites my mating scar. The move yanks on the bond

between us and it's like a hook connecting our souls together in the most pleasurable of ways.

"Give me this," I demand, reaching down and rubbing his cock through his jeans.

"So demanding, Mrs. Alkazar," he murmurs as he kisses his way slowly down the side of my neck to my shoulder.

I *am* demanding. I'm loud and brash. I'm a Tucker.

"Hadrian," I growl. "Give it to me."

Chuckling, he sits up and pulls his shirt apart, pearl buttons popping as he tosses it aside. He stands next so he can remove the pants, and I've never been more thankful to see that soda-can dick standing at attention for me. It's still unbelievable that we fit together. But fit we do. I blame the piercings and that wicked tongue.

He smirks down at me as he drops to his knees. "You're thinking about my mouth, aren't you, baby?"

I shuffle up against the edge of the makeshift nest. "How the hells can you tell? 'Cause yeah, I most definitely am."

He bends low and grabs the front of my waistband, hauling me higher up on his body.

"I can smell it, Bluebell." His mouth hovers over mine, his dark tongue poking out to run along his plump lower lip. "I can smell how wet your pussy is right now, and if I don't get a taste, I'm gonna lose my mind."

Damn. Who could deny a man who's in such desperate need?

Not this girl, that's for darn sure.

HADRIAN

Bluebell moans softly as I pull her shirt over her head. Her jeans go next and I toss them in a pile with my clothing. Then it's just hot skin all over mine, warming me and reminding me just how different we are. I love to stare at our bodies together. Threading my huge fingers through hers, I marvel at how little she is in comparison to me.

You wouldn't think we'd ever fit. But damn, our fit is perfect.

She's seated on my chest and she's wet, slick honey dripping on my pecs. My mate's needy, and it's my job to take care of that.

Growling, I flip us and push her back against the nest headboard. The wood creaks and groans when she reaches up and grabs ahold of the window sill behind her.

I dip down low, tucking my wings tight at my back as I bury my face between her thighs and nudge them wide. She throws one leg over my shoulder and lets the other fall out wide. That thatch of dark hair highlights swollen lips. She's antsy, rolling her hips to get closer to me.

"How did we ever keep our hands off one another," I muse as I run my fingers up both sides of her pussy to her clit. When I press that delightful little button that unleashes her, she lets out another angry wowl and snarls at me. I love her feral, so I don't give her what she wants quite yet.

"I masturbated a lot," she admits. "With gargoyle shaped dicks."

"How very perverse," I tease, slipping two fingers inside her. When I curl them and rub slow circles over her G-spot, she moans and falls back against the soft nest.

"So did I," I admit. "Every sex toy I had was shaped like a human pussy and you're the only one I ever thought of. Nothing compares to this, though." Leaning forward, I lick a cool, flat path up her core, then swirl my tongue over her clit. Her taste explodes across my tongue, her citrus scent filling my senses until I'm lost in it. When she's on edge like this it takes on a burnt edge like spiced rum.

Moaning, I do it again. And again. And my mate's cries grow louder and more desperate as she thrusts her pussy against my mouth. Her demand is clear.

Get me there!

But I don't feel the need to rush despite the fact that the partygoers probably wonder where we are. No, there's something deliciously naughty about taking my time and edging the hot little human beneath me.

When I suck her clit between my lips, she mewls and tightens. Oh fuck, she's even closer than I thought. Before I can stop it, she arches and wails. Sweet cream drips from her to cover my mouth and tongue, and her orgasm has me nearly coming all over the nest.

"Hay—Hadrian!" she screams. "Oh fuuuuuck!!!!"

I can't help but go wild at the way she cries out for me, and I lap and suck and pull at her clit, demanding one orgasm turn into two or three or however damn many I can drag from her writhing body.

She's practically sobbing by the time pleasure begins to recede, sweat dripping down her soft belly as she falls limp against the fabric. When she throws an arm over her eyes and groans, I rise high and flare my wings, gripping the low ceiling beams.

Bluebell moves her arm and looks up at my wings, and that burnt edge reappears in her scent.

"Mate," she says with a sexy little growl. "You're gonna stop teasing me. You're gonna stop it right now."

I point to my erect, leaking cock as I lift a brow. "Who's teasing who, baby? And who just came too many times for me to count?"

"Just one huge long one," she says with a playful little pout. "I need you, Alk."

"Big boy," I correct. "The best nickname ever."

"Give it to me, big boy," she says in a sultry tone.

And just like that, I know I will. Because I cannot deny her *anything* when she calls me that.

BLUEBELL

The treehouse groans as Hadrian shifts forward and parts my legs around his waist. He's way too damn big to be inside here, but I love that. We have space at the ranch. It's kinda nice to be tucked in here where he has nowhere to go but on top of me.

Reaching down, I rub the tip of his cock, gathering precum from his slit. He moans when I bring it to my mouth and lick it from my finger.

"Godsdamn, Mrs. Alkazar, you're gonna be the death of me."

"You taste good," I say, reaching down for more. But he dips low before I can touch him, notching his cock between my thighs. When he slides slowly but carefully in, my eyes roll into my head. Like always it's a damn stretch, but those piercings on the underside of his cock rub me in the most perfect of ways.

Not to mention that tiny nubbin that he vibrates when he gets close enough to my clit. There's not a gargoyle shaped vibrator in the world that can compare to having a real male between one's thighs.

Not any male. Mine. The only one I've ever really wanted.

He's cool and huge against my skin, rolling his body rhythmically as he eases his way in and out, helping me adjust. I might have just come, but watching him fuck me like a porn star is so hot, orgasm's already building again. Another sentiment fills me right along with it—gratitude. Or maybe it's still disbelief.

Disbelief that Hadrian Alkazar is really mine. That he wanted to be mine his whole life and I just didn't realize it. That he kept a bracelet we exchanged as children AROUND HIS ANKLE FOR DECADES because our promise meant something to him.

And just like that, our love overwhelms me. He sends utter adoration through the bond and it wraps me up tight like a hug from the inside.

"I love you so much," I manage as he bends low, bringing his mouth to mine.

His kiss is searing, possessive as he dips his tongue into my mouth, coaxing mine to tangle with his. I'm lost in him, in the way he guides my body so deliciously to open for him. Every throbbing pound of his hips jolts me against the wall, and even *that* has me ready to explode. He's so powerful, so all-consuming.

"You're close again," he says with a deep, deadly sounding growl. That predatory edge to his tone makes me clench, and his eyes roll back in his head.

“Come with me,” I beg. “I need to feel you, baby. I need you.”

“You have me,” he growls out. “You have me, little witch.” His abs contract and clench and his mouth drops open. “Fuck, Bluebell, I’m so close.” With a desperate sounding groan, he reaches down and pinches my clit, and that’s it.

Game over. I roar at the mix of pain and pleasure as orgasm shatters through me. His soft growls tumble into a gigantic roar of his own, teeth gnashing as his tail lashes behind us. Cool seed lashes my womb and spills out of my pussy. The deviant sound of him fucking into me with all that slick seed would probably make me come again if I hadn’t already done that so many times tonight.

He falls forward as his orgasm recedes, pressing his forehead to mine. His lips brush against my chin, his breath coasting cool over my face.

“That was incredible,” he murmurs, nuzzling the tip of my nose. “You ready for your present, baby?”

Chuckling, I reach up and stroke one of his horns, loving the way it goes ramrod straight at the pleasure.

“You didn’t have to get me anything.”

“Oh but I did,” he whispers. “Now get dressed ‘cause we’ve got a previous engagement.”

“Aww,” I whine as he rolls off me and hands me my clothes. “We’ve gotta leave the treehouse?!”

I’m not ready for the fun to be over.

HADRIAN

Grabbing my comm watch, I shoot Jace a quick message as Bluebell dresses. Nerves have butterflies racketing around my belly, but I'm absolutely certain Bluebell's going to love my gift.

Once we're both dressed, I reach into my back pocket and take out a small box with the first part of my gift in it.

She gasps at seeing the tiny velvet ring box.

"We mated following gargoyle traditions," I say with all the confidence and love I feel. "But I wanted us to do it the human way, too, to honor you and your family. You've talked about wanting to elope or do something small. Why not now?"

Her blue eyes spring wide. "*Now* now? Like...right now?!"

I open the ring box and remove the beautiful oval-shaped ring I designed for her with Jace, Lemon, and Oz's help. My friends at Sembin Jewelers knocked it out of the damn park. Taking her hand, I slip it onto her finger, marveling at how it shines in the low light.

"Bluebell of House Alkazar," I say as I stare deeply into tear-filled eyes. "Would you do me the honor of marrying me? Right here and right now?"

"Yes," she whispers almost before I've gotten the question out. "Of course, yes!" She hops up into my arms and throws hers around my neck, sobbing against my skin as I hold her tightly. Right now, there's nothing more I'd like to do than fly away with her, lavish love on her, but this is just part one of my plan.

"Wait." She pulls slightly away and scans my face. "How are we getting married right here and now?"

Grinning, I hold her tight as I tuck out of the door and pop up into the sky. Flapping lazily, I move over the treehouse and toward the river. The sun's nearly set at this point and when I twitch my ears, I hear voices.

This is going perfectly to plan.

Bluebell nuzzles against my neck with a soft little chuckle. "You're up to something, Mister Alkazar. A sudden proposal and wedding? How'd you even manage that?"

I laugh but don't answer, because I want to see the look on her face in just a few moments. Swooping over the small river that runs through the northernmost corner of their property, I dip beneath the trees with her tucked to my chest. When I alight on the ground and set her down, turning her, she gasps and throws a hand over her mouth.

In front of us stand Bill and Elena, Petra and all three Jays. Jasper's wearing a dark suit and he's got a rolled sheet of paper in his hand. Next to Bill stand Lemon and Oz, smiling as they hold each other.

"Hey, baby sister," he says softly, stepping forward. A blush tints his cheeks red. "I, well, when Hay told me he wanted to plan this for you, I got ordained as a minister online. So, I'm here to marry you, if you'll allow it."

She spins and looks at me, blue lips in a huge 'o'. Then she rushes to Jasper and throws herself in his arms. "I would fucking love that," she whispers.

He holds her tight, closing his eyes as he leans into the hug.

"I didn't protect you the right way before," he says quietly. "But I'm bound and determined to be a better brother now. I can and will grow, Bloob. I love you so much."

She's sobbing by the time they finally part. Behind them, Elena wipes at her eyes.

Jasper puts her down and Petra hops into the air, flapping toward me with her hair in the cutest little space buns. "It's time to get marrrieddddd!"

BLUEBELL

I'm in shock. That must be what this feeling is. My ears are ringing and I'm staring at Jasper and my family standing right here. In my bond with Hadrian, there's an overwhelming sense of love, of connection, of rightness that I can't believe I missed out on for so long.

Turning, I reach a hand out for him. He curls those huge fingers around mine, grinning like crazy. Jasper grabs my other hand and smiles down at me, and together we make our way over the rocky riverbank to the rest of our family.

It's hugs all around and more than a handful of tears, mostly from me and Mama. Jack surprises me by sobbing a little bit, too. Who'd have thought?!

And then it's time for the vows. We do those right there on the riverbank. Jasper's the perfect chaplain, or whatever his official internet title is. It's not a fancy ceremony, but as we Tuckers and Alkazars stand there under the fading light, I can't think of any other way I'd want this to happen.

The ceremony doesn't take us long, and when it's time to kiss my husband, I put my all into it. Kiss done, we raise our hands in victory as we look at our family. Petra zooms over and alights on top of Hadrian's head, hanging onto his horns. Jasper pulls us both in for a hug.

Damn, it feels good to have his support, even though we didn't technically *need* it. Is this bliss? I think it must be, because I'm having the literal time of my life.

"Well," Dad says with a little chuckle. "Shall we rejoin the party? And when do I get to announce my new son-in-law to the world?"

"How about now?" I say with a playful shrug. "Folks are gonna notice the ring."

"Now's good," Hadrian confirms, smiling down at me as he tugs happily on the bond.

The Jays whoop it up as they turn and head back toward the house. Oz and Lemon shout with glee as he lifts her into his arms and bullets back toward the house. Petra takes off of Hadrian's head and swoops after them, shouting with apparent glee. Mom and Dad walk together with their arms around one another's waists.

As for me? My husband pulls me up into his arms like the bride I am and follows them.

“I’m carrying you all the way back,” he says softly. “Don’t even ask me to put you down, little witch.”

“I’d never even think of it,” I confirm, slinging an arm around his neck as I nuzzle his big chest. “Love you, Hadrian Alkazar.”

“I love you, too, Mrs. Alkazar.” He rubs a horn against my shoulder. “That sounds pretty nice, hmm?”

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