

ALO

“Dad! Watch this!” Iggy shouts across the water, swooping low with his tiny wings flared wide. His tail is wrapped around his ankle, arms held lightly by his side. His form is perfect, and the wind over the mermaid lake is always a tad unpredictable.

“He’s doing so great,” Miriam chirps, her voice pure excitement.

I look down, but her bright eyes are glued to my child—our child—and she doesn’t glance up at me. Every morning I wake up with her in my arms, I marvel that the gods graced me with a woman who loves my son as much as I do.

She hops up and down in place, throwing her arms victoriously in the air. “Go Ig!”

He flashes us a cheesy grin, bringing two thumbs up. Just as he does, a dark shadow leaps out of the water, wraps two thin arms around his waist, and yanks him under.

Miriam chuckles. “Guess he got the mermaid minnows to come up, huh?”

I beam at my beautiful mate, admiring her silver wing tips as they flash in the fading light.

Wren and Ohken appear on the forest path and step onto the rocky beach, strolling hand in hand. Wren scours the now-still water. “Pretty sure I just saw Iggy get snatched by a beast from the deep. Do you need to like, save him or something? I mean, neither of you look worried but...”

I playfully lash my tail side to side, pretending to scowl at our friend. “Gargoyles are prodigious swimmers, I’ll have you know. I can hold my breath for almost two hours.”

Wren’s green eyes widen as she gives me an impressed-looking smile. “Well shit, Alo. Color me surprised. Can Shepherd do that?”

I snort. “Of course.”

The surface of the lake ripples, and Iggy bursts upward with a playful screech. He flits twenty feet into the air and shakes the water off before blowing a raspberry at the lake. “I bet you thought you had me!” he shouts at the roiling water below.

Our group on the shore laughs as he darts over to join us, alighting on Miriam's shoulder. When she dips under his increasingly heavy weight, I pull him onto my shoulder instead. Iggy's tail goes around my neck as he reaches for one of my horns, looping his arm over it.

"Well, don't you look relaxed..." Wren says as she lays a towel down on the rocky shore.

Iggy yanks his tail from around my neck and leaps off my shoulder, darting toward her. Wren's eyes go wide and she shoots upright, but Ig slams to a halt in the air just in front of her face, flapping his wings slowly so he hovers.

Miriam leans in, sliding her hand up the back of my shirt. "Damn, he's getting really good with the spins and stops, huh?"

I run my fingers up the back of her neck and grip it, turning her to look at me.

"That practice is coming in handy. Nine more years to go until he's off to the Protector Academy."

Her smile goes a little softer, a little more tender. She nibbles at the edge of her lip. "I can't imagine him in some hardcore training. What if he doesn't want to be a protector?" She blinks rapidly, like she's trying to stave off tears.

"He will," I assure her. "It's such a deep instinct for us. But if for some reason he doesn't want that, then he'll go do something else. I'm happy if he's happy."

Miriam laughs. "Know who won't be happy, though? Your *father*."

"Ugh. Right." I lean down and press my lips to my mate's pink bow of a mouth. "Good thing you have Noctis wrapped around your little finger, mate. I do believe he would bow down before you if you told him to."

She laughs and reaches up to stroke my horn playfully, running her elegant fingers down the length to the tip. I hold back a grunt as pleasure streaks down my back muscles, drawing goosebumps to the surface of my skin. "I can't help that I'm supremely likable."

Behind us, Iggy and Wren laugh as the sound of their footsteps rings out over the water.

"Incredibly likable," I agree, sliding my hands down the curve of her ass to grip both cheeks. "I'm ready for date night, mate."

Bringing my head further down, I nip insistently just below her ear. Like always, she arcs her body into mine, both arms coming around my neck with a pleased sigh.

“Aloitious. We promised Iggy we’d do dinner together,” she warns, canting her head to the side to give me better access.

I lick and bite a path to her shoulder, sucking at the faint scar from my mating bite. She shudders when I play with it, a fact that brings me never ending satisfaction. It curls hot and hard through my chest, my heartbeat speeding up as I imagine chasing her.

“Ugh!” Iggy shouts from somewhere behind us. “Stop making out, it’s so gross!”

I rip my mouth from Miriam’s neck and spin her around so we both face him.

“Making out?” I roar. “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet, kid!”

I pull Miriam into my arms and bend her backward, taking her mouth forcefully. Her tongue tangles with mine as Iggy groans and complains to Wren and Ohken about how Mir and I are always kissing, and it’s so irksome, and he’s really tired of having to knock before surprising us in the nest.

I part from my gorgeous mate, giving her a playful smile.

“Mine,” I whisper into her mouth, unable to resist the urge to kiss her again. “You’re mine, Mir. I hope we embarrass him like this every day until he goes to the academy.”

MIRIAM

Dinner passes at the speed of molasses, and it's not that I don't enjoy spending time with our friends. It's more that as Alo eats, he teases me. Iggy tackles Ohken, who dutifully falls to the ground under the onslaught. Wren pretends to attack Iggy with a stick to save her mate, which leads to an epic "sword" battle.

And I can't pull my eyes from my mate, who slips his long tongue around the curve of a peach, licking the juices from its skin. He smirks as his tongue swipes over the fuzzy fruit. When he bites, juice trails down his chin, dripping into the hollow of his throat.

"Miriam," he growls.

"Gods, is it time for date night yet?" I fan myself as he sets the peach down and reaches for me. He pulls me on top of him, flopping onto his back with one hand slung casually behind his head.

Iggy, Wren and Ohken wrestle on the beach a short distance away.

Alo reaches up and trails his fingers along my lips, eyes darkening. I love it when he gets like this—possessed, focused, predatory. In our violent past, pixies were often prey for more dangerous monsters. Every deep-seated instinct I have tells me to run when Alo looks at me the way he is right now.

Black pupils widen, eating up the chocolate of his iris. His tail lashes softly by his side, the spade slapping the beach's flat black stones. He brushes my lip, but his muscles are tense, poised, as if he's ready to spring into action at any moment. Beautiful pouty lips curl into a devious smile. "Mir, what are you thinking about?" He drags his claws softly down my throat, yanking me out of my stupor and back into the moment.

"How predatory you are," I admit.

His smirk grows bigger. "You like it."

My big self-satisfied male.

"I love it," I admit. "It's terrifying and thrilling and—"

He shifts up onto one elbow. "And it makes that pretty pussy wet, doesn't it?"

My mouth falls open as heat flushes my cheeks. I'll never get over Alo's dirty talk.

"I bet you're wet right now, aren't you, mate?"

I nod as he slides his hand up my back to grip the base of my neck.

He turns his head and shouts up the beach. “You two got Iggy for a few minutes?” Wren gives us a soldier salute just as Iggy drops out of the sky onto her head. Ohken grabs him by the horns and fake wrestles him off, but he wraps his tail around her neck and cackles hysterically.

Go, Ohken mouths at us. *Have fun.*

Alo doesn't need any further encouragement. He shifts forward with me in his arms and crouches down. When he presses off the ground and bullets up into the sky, I let out a little scream. Big muscles move under my hands as he flaps his giant leathery wings and grabs a mid-air current, swooping away from our group.

His tail is wrapped firmly around my ankles, both arms around my waist.

I bury my face in his neck, soaking in his clean, masculine scent.

“I love flying with you,” I whisper into his skin. “It's the best thing ever.”

His chest rumbles as he purrs, his grip on the back of my neck tightening.

The need to touch more of him rises up and I wiggle in his arms. When I bury my small teeth in his shoulder muscle, he grunts and drops through the air. Big wings flap faster as he climbs back through the air, soaring over the glittering lake beneath us.

“You're going to cause a wreck, woman,” he teases.

Ignoring his comment, I bite again, and again, pulling at his skin. If I've learned anything about him since we mated, it's that he loves it when I get violent. The more I fight, the hotter he gets and the wilder the sex is. My mate might be a born protector—and a really fucking good one—but he's built for war in the bedroom.

Wriggling in his arms, I rock my hips against his. He's hard. He's always hard for me, and knowing he was hard for me for years before we ever got together does something to my heart.

Even now it speeds up to match his. Tension vibrates between us, his arms going tighter around my waist. His fingers dig into my hips, his chest rumbling with a deep growl that tightens my nipples.

He arches and swoops sharply down toward the water. I can't see it, but I'm too focused on him anyhow.

My devious mate chuckles and flips me in one deft move, his tail still locked tight around my ankles and both arms holding my body to his. One hand slides up my stomach to pinch my nipple.

The lake's blue-green water ripples in the late afternoon light. I rub my ass against Alo's hips as I reach down to trail my fingers in the warm water.

"You're an absolute menace," he growls into my ear. "I love you for that."

I don't bother to hold back a grin as I rub all up on him, as much as I can while caught and held in his arms. Being crushed against him like this puts pressure on my wings, heat streaking along them to my spine.

I shout when something warm and wet trails along the outer edge of my wing bone.

That damn tongue.

The steady swoop of Alo's wings goes rocky before evening out again. He chuckles, low and devious, then bites his way along my bone, shifting me forward so he can lick the skin at the base of my wings.

A shudder wracks my frame as I jolt in his arms. We fly over the lake and into the forest on the opposite side. Alo spins through the trees, narrowly avoiding branches as I cling tightly to him.

Yippy screams rip from my throat as we barely avoid several large pines.

He's messing with me, I know he is. Damn mischievous gargoyle male. Alo loves getting me all riled up before date night.

"Shepherd wouldn't do this to Thea!" I shout as he angles away from a tree at the very last second. My biting comment ends on a shrill shriek as pine needles brush my face when we whir by.

A deep chuckle is Alo's only answer.

He turns sharply, clawing up through the trees until we're in the sky, the bubble green ward thrumming faintly far above us. Flipping over, he puts both hands behind his head like he's lying down. He flaps steadily through the sky, smiling up at me where I straddle him.

"I'd never crash you, mate," he says with a wink. "Unless you want a little crash?"

"Hells no!" I shout, lying forward so I can rest my chin on my forearms and stare at how beautiful he is.

The wind tickles my cheeks, blowing my hair all around, but all I can do is marvel at the giant male flying so easily beneath me. He holds me steady, keeps me safe. I don't think there's anything in the world as sexy as that.

“I love you, Alo,” I whisper, knowing he can hear me despite the wind.
He grins down at me. “You ready to show me just how much, Miriam?”

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ALO

My father once told me there was nothing better than flying with one's mate. I never got that the first time around, so I took joy from flying with Iggy. Being in the air with my son is one of the happiest things I've done—it reconnects us, brings us closer together. It's freedom and everything being a gargoyle stands for.

But as I glide through the sky with Miriam laid out on my body like I'm a lounge, I know what my father meant. Her body's warm and soft against mine, pert breasts pressed to my chest as she stares lovingly at me.

"What did you have in mind?" she teases. "I'd love to prove to you how very much I adore you...but I'd love for you to tell me what would mean the most to you."

"Let me take you up in the trees," I say with a growl. "Like the predator I am. Let me press you to the rough bark and take you from behind, Mir. Let me take that sweet pussy at the same time I'm taking your ass. Give me a half dozen orgasms and then let me take you back and feed you. Nothing could make me happier than doing that with you."

She quirks a brow. "My goodness, Aloitious. That sounds like quite the adventure."

"Is that a yes?" I angle myself so we're headed slightly down toward the forest at Ever's far western corner. We should have plenty of peace and quiet there. The odd shifter patrol runs through, but as long as nothing's wrong, they'll ignore us if they happen by. And what I want to do with Miriam is so deliciously filthy.

She bites a spot on my pec, staring seductively at me. Lifting her lips from my chest, she grins. "Yes, mate."

Executing an efficient spin, I push her up off me then dart beneath her, grabbing her as she falls. She lets out a loud squeal—she'd have started flying in a moment, it's not like she'd fall, but I've learned just how much she loves being manhandled.

Wrapping one hand under her arms, I grab her left thigh and hold it to mine. With my tail I bind her right leg to mine, leaving enough of it that I can take her ass with my spade. Fingers trailing down her belly, I slip them into the waistband of her skirt until I find the sweet treasure of her pussy. She's already soaked, and when I bury my

face in the crook of her neck and breathe in, she sighs and brushes her cheek against my nose.

“Mir,” I snarl, “how are you this soaked already, pretty mate?”

“It’s all of this teasing,” she whines. “Too much teasing!”

Chuckling, I dip my fingers into her channel, touching and dragging them over her wet folds. The silia lining her pussy tickle my fingertips, trying their best to drag me further inside her. Knowing what they feel like along my length has my cock throbbing against my thigh.

“Unfasten my jeans,” I command her, releasing her just enough to create some space between us.

She reaches behind her back and unbuttons my pants, then shoves them down just a bit. Wriggling my hips, I slide them further down, far enough for my cock to spring free.

“I’m dripping for you,” I say against her neck. “Just *thinking* about what I’m gonna do to you, pixie girl.”

She waggles her ass against my hips, nestling my cock against her ass cheeks, naughty little minx that she is. Reaching down, I guide myself between her thighs and thrust lightly, just enough for an inch or two of my length to tantalize her. Her channel grasps onto me, the silia sucking at my skin as we let out matching groans.

Glancing down, I find a tree with a big enough high branch for me to perch and take her.

Spinning through the air, I dart down toward the trees as I tease my length slowly in and out of her. Every time I pull away, the silia pop off like a thousand tiny mouths. Beads of sweat break out on my forehead as I hold back orgasm. It never fails that two minutes inside my mate is enough to send me over the fucking edge.

I examine the available trees as we fly over, finding one I like. When I alight on the branch, Miriam arches against me and rocks her hips harder into mine. She reaches down between us and grips my cock, pulling at me as she moans around the pleasure. Stepping forward, I press her hands to the tree trunk.

“Don’t move from there,” I growl. With a single snap of the hips, I thrust all the way into her, loving the way her head falls back against my chest. “Don’t fucking move, Miriam.”

MIRIAM

When Alo thrusts, it forces my body up against the tree's rough bark. The ragged texture is slightly painful but that only amps the sensations rushing through me. He's a giant, cool presence at my back, fangs dragging down my neck and shoulder as he pulls slowly out then thrusts again. His hips crash against mine, that huge cock demanding entrance, almost more than I can take.

He uses his tail to spread me wider, tickling at my back hole with the spade shaped tip. The sound of a bottle clicking open snaps my focus to his left hand on the trunk above mine. Smart mate, thinking to bring lube for this. Which means he planned to take me like this. Even knowing *that* has me ready to explode all over him.

"Not yet," he growls into my ear. "I can feel you sucking and pulling me deep, pixie girl, but you're not allowed to come yet. Not until I can come with you. Tell me you understand."

"I...fine," I manage as my eyes roll to the back of my head. Pixies are natural prey and gargoyles are natural predators. Even though it's Alo and I *know* his soul as well as my own, the sentiment of being caught and helpless lends a prickly edge to the pleasure. It occurs to me that next time he slips out, I should pop into small form and make him chase me.

But then he drips chilly lube all over my back hole. Using his spade, he coats my entire crack even as he thrusts in and out of my pussy. Anticipation builds until I'm clawing at the bark, shoving myself harder against that cool, hard body. He's silent behind me, teasing with that punishingly slow pace.

His tail slides up my inner thigh and I grunt when it teases at the edges of my pussy. He chuckles with satisfaction as he curls the spade around his cock and fucks me with both at the same time.

"Too full," I cry out. "Gods, Alo!"

"Relax, mate," he whispers as he trails a line of kisses from my ear to my shoulder.

My pussy is stretched tight around him like this, his cock touching every part of my channel. Still, I don't relax at being this full until his tongue traces a path along the top of my wingbone. Heat follows the soft, wet touch until he gets to my sensitive wing

tips. They're covered by his mating gift, but that doesn't stop him from stroking them while he carefully bites the delicate, translucent skin around the caps.

My body pulses like a livewire and he thrusts deeper, letting out a desperate sounding grunt.

"That's it, pixie girl," he murmurs against my skin as he moves his attention to the back of my neck, licking a stripe from the base up to my hair. I clench around him, my silia dragging him as hard as they can, desperate not to let go.

"Stop," he growls, his voice ragged with need. "Give me a second, baby."

"Nooooo," I moan, placing my left hand over his on the tree trunk.

He slips his spade carefully out and nudges at my back hole, thrusting just partly in and out. Everything's so slippery that we make obscene noises as he takes me in both places. He's careful, though, not to push too fast, too deep, which is a good thing considering how completely his huge body dwarfs mine.

I lose track of space and time as he slips all the way into my ass with a pop, my body holding him tight. When he pulls back, his groan of pleasure has me crying out and begging.

"Alo, mate, more. Give me everything, please!" I use my hands on the tree trunk to shove myself backward, opening wide around his dick and tail.

Still, he never speeds up, not as we both barrel toward a mind altering orgasm.

"Almost," he says with a deep growl. "Almost there, baby. You're almost there and I'm right there with you. Hang on and I'll count us down."

Orgasm on command? I don't know if I can do that.

"Fuck," I bark as he counts from ten down to eight.

He picks up the pace when he gets to seven and six. Then he's fucking with deep, fast strokes.

"Four, pixie girl."

Thrust. Spank. Bite.

"Three. Two." His right wing tip snakes down my belly to my clit, rubbing gently.

"One, Mir," he growls.

Everything unfurls at that magic countdown but when he commands me with a guttural "now" I lose control of my body. Alo splits me around himself, demanding a

neverending orgasm that sends my vision black, muffling sound and space as heat streaks through me and blasts like an explosion out from my core.

Pussy and ass clenching around him, I muffle a scream with my free hand as he takes me with hard, deep thrusts.

I can't tell if it's the longest orgasm in the history of orgasms or if he just drags one after another from my well used body. All I know is the sun is fucking setting by the time he pulls carefully out of my body and cradles me in his arms.

When he takes off into the darkening sky, wakefulness eludes me and I bury my face in his powerful neck as we flap off into the night.

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ALO

I'll forever be grateful for friends I trust enough to watch our child while I lavish attention on my mate. And I'll forever be irked by the years I held her at arm's length, knowing we were both so incredibly drawn together. I'm just lucky she didn't move on and give up on me entirely.

Those thoughts fill my mind as I fly low through the forest with Miriam asleep in my arms. She's covered in our combined scents, my seed dripping from her and trickling down my arm.

If she didn't need the rest, I'd wake her and do what we just did all over again. But we've been so busy lately, if she can get the sleep, I want her to have it. Flapping toward downtown, I move quietly through the dusk sky until I get to our place. Swinging the window to our new bedroom open, I dip inside until I can drop her carefully in our nest.

She rolls over and throws a leg over the edge, nuzzling into the soft fabric. Grabbing a blanket, I lay it over her, tucking it around her tiny feet. She hates for them to be uncovered.

Wren and Ohken have Iggy for the night, but I think I'll call and see how they're doing in case he's...a lot for them. Before I had kids they often overwhelmed me with their exuberance and the way they're always *on*. But now, mayhem seems like pleasant background noise. I'm painfully aware, though, that for those who don't have kids it's not the same.

Heading downstairs, I move to the kitchen and grab a mead out of the fridge. I lift my comm watch and call Ohken, who answers on the first ring. The moment he does, the sound of Iggy's shrieking echoes loudly through the watch.

Wincing, I suck at my teeth.

"How you doing, friend? Want to send him back home to me?"

"Hells no," Ohken says with a chuckle. "Wren is having the time of her life. They're playing hide and seek but she's grabbing him with the plant tendrils and you'd think we're massacring him. He cannot hide to save his damn life, if I'm honest. He's too loud for it."

"It's his favorite game," I offer. "But you're right, he can't stop snickering."

“We’re good, I promise,” Ohken says. “I’m gonna hang up now and remind you not to call me again until tomorrow. Enjoy your night and we’ll return him when we feel like it.”

“Thank you, friend.” My thankfulness knows no bounds, actually. Mir and I don’t get a lot of nights alone and honestly, she and Iggy love one another so much I don’t think she’d even *let* me get a lot of nights alone with her. But occasionally we both need it and it’s up to me to make sure we get it.

Preparing a tray of snacks, I head back upstairs. I set them on the bedside table and roll carefully into the nest, pulling her lithe body against mine. I don’t need covers, don’t even like them. But she hisses like an angry cat if I steal hers.

Burying my nose in the back of her short hair, I breathe her in, knowing she’ll wake soon. Then we’ll shower. Maybe fuck a few more times. Snuggle some more. And in the morning when she gets up, the first thing we’ll want to do is go get our son and take him to breakfast.

I never thought life could be this good, I really didn’t. All I know now is that I will protect this bliss at all costs.

IGGY

“Got you!” I battle cry as I pounce on Wren in the bed she shares with her big green mate.

She screams and shoots upright, eyes springing wide open as her heart pounds in her chest.

I let out a pleased snicker as I waggle my brows at her. “That’s what you get for last night, Wren. Hard to beat me when you’re not even awake.”

She flops back onto her pillow with a groan, rubbing her hands over her eyes. “Iggy, did you sleep at all? Or were you literally just waiting for this very moment.”

I shrug. “That’s for me to know and you to never find out. Isn’t that what the humans say?”

“Something like that.” She swings her legs out of the covers and stands. She’s wearing some kind of tight but soft looking dress. Behind her, Ohken mumbles in his sleep.

“Some mate he is,” I say with a snort as I cross my arms. “I attacked you and he’s still sleeping! You sure you want to keep him?” I flap through the air and poke at Ohken’s cheek with my tail spade.

From out of nowhere, a huge hand grabs my leg and yanks me upside down. Ohken rises from the bed and holds me upside down in front of his face.

“Thought I didn’t hear you, hmm? When it comes to my Wren, I will *always* be ready to protect her, little one.”

“I’m not little, I’m six,” I bark, yanking my ankle from his warm fingers. “I’m ready for breakfast. Are you supposed to feed me or should I walk home? Although to be honest I don’t want to just show up if Dad and Miriam aren’t ready because they might be naked. That happened to me once and ugh, so gross.”

Ohken chuckles. “You won’t think so, one day.”

I shake my head and flap toward the bedroom door. “I’ll give you guys thirty seconds to change and then I’m going to the diner or something.”

Wren’s eyes go wide again. “Ignatius Zion do not leave this house without one of us or I’m calling your dad.”

“Pfft.” I blow a raspberry at her as I zip out of the bedroom and into the kitchen. “I’m leaving!” I shout as I flit toward the door. I really hope she’ll chase me. She’s so good at it even though using her green magic feels super duper unfair.

Just as I think about it, a plant tendril appears out of nowhere and wraps around my neck, then snakes down until it’s got me wound up tight. It’s like having forty snakes wrapped around my body. Nightmares incoming.

I hiss and screech, but the harder I wiggle the tighter the plant gets. Stabbing at it with my claws, I try to free myself, but Wren comes in, smirking as she ties a dress at her thick waist.

“I warned ya,” she says with a laugh. “You’re toast, now, kid.”

Snapping her fingers, she uses her magic to drag me closer to her until she can stick her fingers beneath my neck.

“No!” I shout. “Not tickles! Don’t do it, Wren! I’m telling my daaaaaaaa—!” I wail as she tickles me like she’s trying to kill me. Time slows as everything reduces to that horrible feeling of her fingers beneath my neck. I can’t move, can’t save myself, can’t *nothin’* until she decides to let me go.

“You win!” I shriek. “Let me go! Oh my gods, Wren, let me go just stoppppp!”

She snaps her fingers again and the tendril unfurls, giving me just enough space to zip out of it, fast as lightning.

Wren points a warning finger at me. “That’s what you get for messing with a green witch, Iggy. Now, are we going to breakfast or what because I am ready for pancakes.”

“I’m ready,” I mutter as I flap carefully away from her until I can hang from the chandelier in the middle of their living room.

Just you wait. I think to myself. *I’ve got a whoopie cushion in my back pocket and I’m gonna put it under your butt at the diner. When it makes that horrible noise everyone’s gonna think you farted.*

I chuckle to myself as I think about how mortified Wren will be when everyone stares at her for farting in the restaurant. Oh yeah, I’m gonna get her back.

“C’mon, Ig,” Wren says from the doorway as she grabs a sweater.

Ohken looks up at me. “Iggy, what are you planning?”

I shrug as I drop off the chandelier and flap toward the exit hallway. “Absolutely nothing,” I lie.

“Iggyyyyy,” he says in a warning tone.

“I’m not!” I shout.

“Okay,” Wren says. “We believe you, Ig. Right, Ohken?”

“Mhm.” That’s all the big troll says, so I shoot him my most innocent look.

So long, suckers.

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