

Hated By My Mate: The Finale | Chapter 3

Aurora

“Don’t say that,” I pleaded with Eleanor. “I can’t do this without you.”

“No, pup.” She chuckled. “I’m not leaving you or going anywhere. What I’m saying is: before we can get back to training the elements, we need to train you to forgive yourself.”

What?

How was that supposed to work?

I scrunched my eyebrows. “I don’t understand. Why do I need to forgive myself?”

“I want you to pause and think for a bit. You’ve done so much. Achieved so much. Have you taken a moment to show some love to yourself?”

Her words got me thinking.

I’d honestly never had the time.

After what Klaus had done to me, I hadn’t given myself a moment. Nothing that would make me stop to consider my own feelings.

Losing Montana.

Enduring Wolfgang’s repeated hurt.

Sitting in that dungeon, waiting for Klaus to come inflict his torture on me, to break my heart, take me without my consent, and leave me shattered.

I’d despised myself.

The realization hit me hard, leaving me slightly dizzy.

There was so much anger in me, and it wasn’t directed at anything or anyone outside my immediate world. It was aimed at myself.

Eleanor placed a comforting hand on my shoulder, giving it a gentle squeeze. "It's time to let go of that anger, Aurora. You need to forgive yourself for the things you blame yourself for."

I nodded, feeling a heavy weight on my chest. "I don't even know where to start."

Eleanor took my hand and led me to a nearby tree, where we sat down on the soft grass. "Let's start with something simple. What is one thing you're proud of yourself for achieving?"

I thought for a moment before answering. "I'm proud that I stood up to Klaus and killed him. He deserved to die."

Eleanor nodded. "Good, that's a start. Now, tell me something you love about yourself."

I hesitated, struggling to come up with an answer. "I don't know."

Eleanor smiled softly. "That's okay. We'll work on it. But for now, just know that you are worthy of love, especially from yourself."

We spent the rest of the night talking about my feelings and experiences.

Slowly, I began to open up and release some of the pent-up emotions I had been carrying for so long.

Eleanor listened patiently, offering words of encouragement and understanding.

As the sun began to rise, Eleanor stood up and stretched.

"Time for our first exercise for the day, pup."

I rose, unsure of what she'd have me do.

Suddenly, she lunged at me.

Caught off guard, I deflected a series of quick blows she aimed, turning and using my hands any which way I could.

She moved like the wind, and soon, I was completely out of breath.

"That's it." She smiled. "Show me how you can protect yourself."

And I did. I fought back, tooth for tooth, until at the end, we broke off, panting heavily.

Eleanor suddenly conjured a gust of hot air and aimed it at me. By sheer instinct, I lunged out of the way.

She followed with another, then another.

It was as if the elements were all in her hands, and she could control them at free will. She suddenly turned and disappeared into thin air.

“Eleanor!” I cried out, my breathing labored.

A spray of water came from nowhere and smacked me in the face.

I spluttered and coughed, stumbling back into what felt like a hard block of earth.

“Damn you,” I shouted, scattering my limbs out of the way. “What’re you playing at?”

“Focus, Aurora. What are you feeling right now?” The vacant air spoke to me.

“I feel nothing,” I retorted. In truth, part of me wanted to snap the witch’s neck. “Come out!”

“Not while we’re having so much fun.” She laughed. “Truly, though. What are you feeling?”

I delved within myself.

“Anger. You’re trying to get out of this by cheating. I can’t attack you if I can’t see you.”

“Why are you angry?”

Another spray of ice-cold water hit my face. I coughed and gagged and raised my hands.

“For heaven’s sake,” I cried out, exasperated. “I’m angry because you’re not giving me a fair chance at defending myself!”

Then, she appeared in front of me, an all-knowing smile on her face.

“And why is that important, Aurora?”

Surprised at her question, I stopped in my tracks for a second and moved too late. She hit me with a ball of wind straight to the chest, and I fell back.

“It’s important—” I lunged at her from down below, using my force to call upon a slash of wind that made her jump. “—Because I care about a fair fight.”

“No,” she roared. “There’s more! Focus, focus! Think! Why must you have a fair fight? What does it mean for you?”

It meant I was trying to defend myself.

It meant I wanted to have a fair chance at winning this match.

It meant I cared about myself.

I smiled victoriously.

“It means—” I raised my hands and furnished a glowing ball of ember which I targeted at her, only warm enough to singe her brows. “—I’m trying to help myself.”

“Good girl!” She stood at ease, filling the warm air on her brows, her smile wan. “I had to let my brows burn for this, but it was worth it.”

I breathed heavily. The sun was overcast on our faces, its light warm and kind.

Eleanor sat down beside me and pulled out a slab of chocolate. “Have a bite.”

I took a piece and felt the decadent notes of cocoa and something sweet and tart settle on my tongue. “It’s delicious.”

“Back when your mom was your age, she had a lot of unresolved anger too.” She nibbled on her own piece.

“She had to learn the same thing, you know.” She gave me a warm smile. “How to channel her anger, how to forgive herself.”

“Was it tough?”

She let out a sigh. “It was worth it. Your mom was an empath, just like you. You carry the world’s burdens on your shoulders and forget to save some love for yourself.”

That hit close to home.

“But when empaths learn to balance it all out, to stand their ground, they become an unstoppable force.” She stood up, her smile still in place.

“That’s your first lesson, Aurora.”

I stared at the sunset, its hues of tangerine painting the sky. Could I really do it? Could I learn to let go of all the pain?

Life had been so harsh. It had stripped me of so much.

It forced me to live with only my stepmother for company, and then it ripped her away from me.

It subjected me to unimaginable horrors in a dungeon, at the mercy of a vile creature.

It stole the love of my mate from me, and put me through the wringer. I felt like a character from a myth, constantly walking through fire.

And each time I emerged, I was slightly altered.

The Aurora who first met Wolfgang was a timid girl, someone who couldn’t stand up for herself. Someone who could only weep as calamity struck.

The Aurora I had become was nothing short of a warrior queen.

And this transformation was a gift from life itself, nothing more, nothing less.

I wouldn’t have made it this far without enduring what I had.

Selene was right, this was more than just a battle against others.

Above all, it was a journey to discover myself.