

Prompt: Auguste & Holding Hands

Notes: from a timeline in which the MC ended up in the mines and turned Lady Renaldt in

Male Auguste

When Auguste returns from the courthouse, his shoulders slumped and his eyes bruised and swollen, he doesn't speak at first. Instead he prowls around the drawing room restlessly, brushing invisible lint or some other imperfection off the back of the couch as he goes.

"It's all there," he says eventually. His voice sounds rusty. "I don't..."

He sinks down abruptly on the puffy leather armchair, face in his hands.

The two of you have stayed with Auguste's Aunt Sidonie since graduation, since Lady Renaldt was taken away from the school, since you upended Auguste's life. Since then Auguste's frosty, elegant exterior has been steadily cracking apart, but even so, you've rarely seen him cry. Now, he's sobbing. Shoulders hunched, he looks so very small and vulnerable.

You rise from your seat and take his hands, revealing his face. The frost outside has made his fingers cold; Auguste didn't wear gloves out today: another sign that he's not himself. Six months ago, he wouldn't have dreamed of going out like that. Six months ago, he was the most polished student at Archambault.

Things change.

"I hoped there'd been some mistake," he says through the tears. "That there was some terrible misunderstanding."

Your face heats. The memory of the hot confines of the mine has remained with you since it happened, far clearer than you'd like. "I don't see how anything could have been misunderstood."

"No. No, I didn't mean it like that," Auguste says. He swallows and snatches his hand back, scrubbing his eyes. "She asked me to speak for her."

An uncomfortable churning in your stomach. For a moment you're not sure whether to release Auguste's other hand. You'd like to think that Auguste wouldn't consider—that he wouldn't be on his mother's side in any way—but then he's always been the absolute model son, the perfect student—

You realise you've not spoken, and Auguste is still staring at you wordlessly. Carefully, you say, "So what are you going to do?"

Auguste's fingers twitch, then tighten around yours. "I told her not to contact me again other than through the court," he says, almost too quietly for you to hear. "I'm not going to help her. Not in any way. She doesn't deserve it."

Relief floods through you, and you cannot keep it from your expression. Auguste's dark gaze tracks over your face and he nods unhappily.

"I hoped it would feel more momentous," he says. "As though I was being heroic. She cried and I just...didn't feel anything at all."

You pull him into a hug. His arms come up to hold you tight. "What do you feel now?" you murmur.

"That I'm glad you're here," Auguste says. He rests his forehead on your shoulder, all the poise drained out of him. Then, insistently, as though worried you don't believe him, he says, "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Female Auguste

When Auguste returns from the courthouse, her shoulders slumped and her eyes bruised and swollen, she doesn't speak at first. Instead she prowls around the drawing room restlessly, brushing invisible lint or some other imperfection off the back of the couch as she goes.

"It's all there," she says eventually. Her voice sounds rusty. "I don't..."

She sinks down abruptly on the puffy leather armchair, face in her hands.

The two of you have stayed with Auguste's Aunt Sidonie since graduation, since Lady Renaldt was taken away from the school, since you upended Auguste's life. Since then Auguste's frosty, elegant exterior has been steadily cracking apart, but even so, you've rarely seen her cry. Now, she's sobbing. Shoulders hunched, she looks so very small and vulnerable.

You rise from your seat and take her hands, revealing her face. The frost outside has made her fingers cold; Auguste didn't wear gloves out today: another sign that she's not herself. Six months ago, she wouldn't have dreamed of going out like that. Six months ago, she was the most polished student at Archambault.

Things change.

"I hoped there'd been some mistake," she says through the tears. "That there was some terrible misunderstanding."

Your face heats. The memory of the hot confines of the mine has remained with you since it happened, far clearer than you'd like. "I don't see how anything could have been misunderstood."

"No. No, I didn't mean it like that," Auguste says. She swallows and snatches her hand back, scrubbing her eyes. "She asked me to speak for her."

An uncomfortable churning in your stomach. For a moment you're not sure whether to release Auguste's other hand. You'd like to think that Auguste wouldn't consider—that she wouldn't be on her mother's side in any way—but then she's always been the absolute model daughter, the perfect student—

You realise you've not spoken, and Auguste is still staring at you wordlessly. Carefully, you say, "So what are you going to do?"

Auguste's fingers twitch, then tighten around yours. "I told her not to contact me again other than through the court," she says, almost too quietly for you to hear. "I'm not going to help her. Not in any way. She doesn't deserve it."

Relief floods through you, and you cannot keep it from your expression. Auguste's dark gaze tracks over your face and she nods unhappily.

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You pull her into a hug. Her arms come up to hold you tight. "What do you feel now?" you murmur.

"That I'm glad you're here," Auguste says. She rests her forehead on your shoulder, all the poise drained out of her. Then, insistently, as though worried you don't believe her, she says, "I don't know what I'd do without you."

Nonbinary Auguste

When Auguste returns from the courthouse, their shoulders slumped and their eyes bruised and swollen, they don't speak at first. Instead they prowling around the drawing room restlessly, brushing invisible lint or some other imperfection off the back of the couch as they go.

"It's all there," they say eventually. Their voice sounds rusty. "I don't..."

They sink down abruptly on the puffy leather armchair, face in their hands.

The two of you have stayed with Auguste's Aunt Sidonie since graduation, since Lady Renaltd was taken away from the school, since you upended Auguste's life. Since then Auguste's frosty, elegant exterior has been steadily cracking apart, but even so, you've rarely seen them cry. Now, they're sobbing. Shoulders hunched, they look so very small and vulnerable.

You rise from your seat and take their hands, revealing their face. The frost outside has made their fingers cold; Auguste didn't wear gloves out today: another sign that they're not themselves. Six months ago, they wouldn't have dreamed of going out like that. Six months ago, they were the most polished student at Archambault.

Things change.

"I hoped there'd been some mistake," they say through the tears. "That there was some terrible misunderstanding."

Your face heats. The memory of the hot confines of the mine has remained with you since it happened, far clearer than you'd like. "I don't see how anything could have been misunderstood."

"No. No, I didn't mean it like that," Auguste says. They swallow and snatch their hand back, scrubbing their eyes. "She asked me to speak for her."

An uncomfortable churning in your stomach. For a moment you're not sure whether to release Auguste's other hand. You'd like to think that Auguste wouldn't consider—that they wouldn't be on their mother's side in any way—but then they've always been the absolute model child, the perfect student—

You realise you've not spoken, and Auguste is still staring at you wordlessly. Carefully, you say, "So what are you going to do?"

Auguste's fingers twitch, then tighten around yours. "I told her not to contact me again other than through the court," they say, almost too quietly for you to hear. "I'm not going to help her. Not in any way. She doesn't deserve it."

Relief floods through you, and you cannot keep it from your expression. Auguste's dark gaze tracks over your face and they nod unhappily.

"I hoped it would feel more momentous," they say. "As though I was being heroic. She cried and I just...didn't feel anything at all."

You pull them into a hug. Their arms come up to hold you tight. "What do you feel now?" you murmur.

"That I'm glad you're here," Auguste says. They rest their forehead on your shoulder, all the poise drained out of them. Then, insistently, as though worried you don't believe them, they say, "I don't know what I'd do without you."