

LOVE'S UNYIELDING TOUCH

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

An ancient TREE sits alone in an expansive field of tall grass, surrounded by mountains and bubbling creeks. A red EGG rests in one of the trees many hollows, shafts of sunlight turning the falling leaves to a bright green.

A group of DRAGONS surrounds the tree, their shapes and sizes and scales varied and vibrant. Two dragons sit closer to the tree than others - one bulky and tall with muted brown and green scales, EMBER'S FATHER. The other, AURORA, is a dragoness with scales that shimmer like light shining through a prism.

The egg shakes, and the collected dragons watch as a hatchling cracks open the shell and flops onto the soft moss in the tree hollow. The hatchling, EMBER is a fire dragon, coated in lava red scales. He opens his eyes, a golden yellow that seem to have an inner glow.

Ember's Father and Aurora smile as Ember hiccups and lets out a tiny jet of fire. Aurora nuzzles Ember and picks him up in her mouth. She shows him to the other dragons, who cheer.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Ember, now a year old, swims with Aurora in a lake with crystal-clear water as Ember's father watches on the shore. Ember splashes water onto his mother, who giggles and splashes him back.

Ember looks over to his father, who smiles at him. Ember is splashed again and goes back to playing with his mother. After a few more splashes, Ember looks back to where his father was, but doesn't see him on the beach.

INT. CAVE - DAY

A bright red and yellow ring of fire impacts the wall of a walls of a cave, silhouetting a pair of dragons on the wall.

Two dragons sit opposite a three-year-old Ember: a dragoness with dark orange scales, his AUNT, and a dragon with light yellow and black scales, his UNCLE. The dragoness breathes out another ring of fire the impacts the ceiling, and Ember laughs at the sight.

Ember attempts to create a ring of fire as well, but a jet of flame comes out instead. He pouts and slumps his shoulders and wings, but an encouraging coo and another fire ring from his Aunt brings a smile to Ember's face.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

Ember sits in a forest as leaves gently fall around him, watching birds flit to-and-fro between the trees. His ears flick as the birdsong and sounds of the forest fill them.

He looks over to an elderly dragoness with cracked and worn white scales, his GRANDMOTHER. She gives him a warm smile and nuzzles him, then begins to sing. The birdsong quiets as birds turn their attention to Ember's Grandmother. A few birds fly onto the grandmother's horns and sing along.

The song soon ends, the birds fly away, and Ember's Grandmother nods at Ember. Ember attempts to sing, but it comes out strained and off-key. Ember looks to his grandmother, who giggles sweetly and begins to sing again.

Ember gives a weak smile, then looks at the ground and frowns.

EXT. CAVE - DAY

Aurora lands on a grassy field outside the cave and Ember jumps off her back. A few colorful butterflies draw Ember's attention and he starts playing with them.

Aurora walks into the cave but hears Ember laughing behind her. She pauses and turns to watch Ember chase the butterflies. A smile creeps across her muzzle at the sight.

AURORA

Ember! Come inside now. It's time for lunch.

Ember stops playing and turns to his mother.

EMBER

But mommy, I was having fun
playing with the butterflies!

AURORA

I know, little one, but there will
be time to play once you've filled
your belly. Would you like to make
fire rings with your aunt and
uncle after lunch?

Ember nods and grins. He runs to his mother and enters the
cave.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Glowing crystals fill the cave with a soft white light.
Ember sits on the mossy floor and practices blowing fire
rings.

Aurora enters the room carrying a small bag in her mouth.
She sets it down on a stone slab in the middle of the room,
revealing a few large, cooked mushrooms.

AURORA

I made your favorite lunch:
roasted mushrooms! The perfect
food for a growing dragon like
yourself.

Ember hurries over to the slab and takes a bite of one. As
he starts chewing, he looks up at his mom.

EMBER

(chewing)

Mommy, where is daddy? How come
he's never here with us?

Aurora blinks and fixes Ember with a curious frown and
arches an eyebrow. She's silent for a few moments while
Ember chews and swallows.

AURORA

Why do you ask, my little one?

EMBER

All my friends were flying during playtime, but nobody would play with me because I can't fly yet.

AURORA

Flying isn't easy, Ember. It takes time and skill to learn, but you'll get it soon.

EMBER

But some of the other dragons told me I'll never learn to fly because I don't have a daddy.

AURORA

Well, you're learning to fly with me, aren't you?

EMBER

Yeah, but all their daddies taught them how to fly! Some of them laughed at me when I told them you were teaching me!

Aurora snorts and wisps of smoke emanate from her nostrils.

AURORA

There is nothing wrong with me teaching you to fly, Ember. As a light dragon I pride myself for my agility. With my teachings, I predict you'll be an even better flier than they are.

Aurora smiles and nuzzles Ember.

AURORA

And just wait until you get to fire breathing classes; you'll outshine all the other dragons.

(beat)

Now finish eating your mushrooms. You want to be a big strong dragon, don't you?

Ember meekly nods. He takes another bite, stares at his food, then looks back up to his mother.

EMBER

(chewing)

But what happened to Daddy? You've never talked about him before.

Aurora frowns, looks at Ember, and lets out a heavy sigh.

AURORA

He went back from which he came.
The earth called him, so he returned.

Ember's gaze falls to the stone floor, and tears form around his eyes.

EMBER

(sniffling)

Did... did he not love me enough to stay? Did he not want to be around us anymore?

Aurora coos to Ember, and ushers her crying son close. Ember snuggles close to his mother's chest as tears start to fall down his muzzle.

AURORA

Of course he loved you, Ember! He still does, and he always will. What makes you think he doesn't?

EMBER

He's not here! Why didn't he stay with us? Why is he gone?

Aurora looks up to the ceiling, then back down to Ember. She remains silent for a moment then sighs.

AURORA

Come with me, Ember.

Aurora picks Ember up with her mouth and places him on her back, then exits the cave. Ember's food sits half-eaten on the slab, and the crystals dim as the two leave.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE - AFTERNOON

Aurora lands at the base of a mountain. Each flap of her wings sends leaves flying and small animals scurrying for

cover. She picks Ember off her back and puts him on the ground. Ember stares up at the mountain in awe and takes few steps towards it.

EMBER

Where are we, Mommy?

Aurora flaps her wings and lifts into the air again. Ember turns around and watches her.

EMBER

Mommy? What are you doing?

AURORA

If you wish to learn about your father, meet me at the meadow atop this mountain.

Ember looks back at the mountain. His eyes widen as he takes in the sight of the towering monument of stone. Ember takes a few steps backward and looks back to Aurora.

EMBER

The top? How am I supposed to get to the top, mommy? I can't fly!

Aurora looks back at Ember and smiles gently, a warm glow filling her eyes.

AURORA

You will be fine, little one. I know you can make it.

Aurora flaps again and flies away, out of Ember's sight. Tears form again in his eyes and he starts to cry.

EMBER

(sobbing)

Mommy! Mommy come back! Please!
How am I supposed to get to the top?

Ember continues to watch the sky, but his mother never appears. He curls into a ball on the ground and cries, tears rolling down his cheeks and falling onto the soil as his body shudders with each sob.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE - LATE AFTERNOON

Ember opens reddened eyes and sees the sun has set lower in the sky. He raises his head and looks around, his eyes quivering as he does.

EMBER

Mommy?

The only response is the tweeting of birds and the wind as it rustles branches and tree leaves. Ember frowns and stands. He looks up at the towering mountain once more. Tears form at the corner of his eyes again, but he blinks them back.

EMBER

I'm coming, Mommy.

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. MOUNTAIN - LATE AFTERNOON

- Ember walks past a creek with clear flowing water and takes a deep drink. He looks at the trees above him, and the corners of his mouth curve into a small smile.

EMBER

Like home.

- Ember walks through tall wild grasses and wild flowers that bloom in a dazzling array of colors. He stops and takes a deep whiff of the flowers, smiles, and continues walking.

- Ember scrambles up cracked boulders and pock-marked rocks. His chest heaves as he struggles to get his tiny body up the stone, his claws leaving scratches on the stone. He looks up to the top of the mountain as the wind whistles.

- Ember jumps between branches of trees that dot the side of the mountain. A harsh wind blows and bends the trees, raining leaves around the young dragon. Ember's claws dig into the bark and leave marks as the young dragon hops to another branch.

- Ember leaps between ledges on the mountain side. He flaps his wings to assist him between jumps. He stops for a break on a ledge side and watches his breath come out as steam.

EMBER

It's not that cold up here.

A few moments pass as Ember takes a break and closes his eyes as the wind rushes past his ears. He opens his eyes again and continues to jump to another ledge.

- Ember comes out of the brush, tail and wings dragging along the floor, to find a wide trail on the ground. He stops and takes deep, heavy breaths. He follows the trail up to the mountain top with his eyes and grins. He grunts as he starts out along the path.

END MONTAGE

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - EVENING

Ember finally reaches the top of the mountain. His chest heaves with every breath, and he lifts his head to look around.

A meadow filled with flowers and soft grasses that bow gently in the night wind stretches across the mountain top. Ember lets out a gasp as he takes in the wondrous sight and lets the cool air blow across his scales. His gaze roams the meadow from side to side.

Ember spots his mother lying in the grass and flowers. Her scales practically glow in the moonlight, matching the colors of the flora surrounding her.

Aurora lifts her head and smiles at Ember. Tear streaks mar her stunning face, and in between snuffles she beckons Ember to him.

Ember feels his own tears well up, and he rushes to Aurora.

EMBER

Mommy!

Ember snuggles into his mother's chest, and she nuzzles him.

EMBER

Don't do that again, Mommy!

Aurora chuckles.

AURORA

I won't, little one. But I needed you to understand your roots.

Aurora gazes up at the night sky, and Ember follows her gaze.

EMBER

My... my roots?

Aurora nods and sighs. She gestures at the meadow that surrounds the pair.

AURORA

This beautiful meadow is where I first met your father - where the light meets the earth.

Aurora smiles longingly and softly laughs.

AURORA

He was a mighty earth dragon in tune with everything around him. He was strong as a mountain, yet soft and gentle as the flowers that grew upon it. We fell in love, and from that love you emerged.

Aurora nuzzles Ember, and Ember leans into the touch.

AURORA

My little fire dragon, you are a wondrous gift, and we were happy. Sadly, tragedies seem to befall those who are the happiest, and in an instant your father was gone.

Aurora stands and walks to the edge of the mountain. Ember follows close behind, and gazes out at the land far below. He looks up at his mother, who watches the horizon.

AURORA

I soon learned, however, that even though he's gone, he's always with me. With you.

EMBER

With me?

Aurora smiles and looks down at Ember.

AURORA

Do you remember your journey up here? The sounds, the sights, the feel of the earth around you?

Ember nods and looks down at his feet, examining the worn paw pads and scuffed scales.

AURORA

The trees, the rocks, and the very Earth itself hold your father's spirit within them. He is the warmth of the ground, the sturdiness of the rocks, and the steadiness of the trees.

(beat)

Even though he is no longer with us, his spirit will always be beside us.

Ember sits on his haunches and looks down at the earth far below him. A smile creeps onto his muzzle and he looks up at Aurora.

EMBER

When I was climbing, it felt like the earth was helping me along. The dirt was soft on my feet, the branches I climbed were sturdy, and the ledges that I had to jump to called me forward.

Aurora's tail curls around Ember, who leans on her.

AURORA

Do you still think daddy doesn't love you?

Ember shakes his head and gazes down to the valley below. He stares for a few seconds and listens to the whistling wind as it rushes past his head.

EMBER

No, because Daddy will always be
with us. Always.

Ember looks up to Aurora and smiles. She smiles back and the pair gaze up at the moon as it crawls across the night.

FADE OUT.

END