

PRT 347- "Time After Time"

"RJ, can you open this?" I asked.

RJ nodded and took the pizza sauce jar from me and opened the lid.

"Thanks." I said as I handed it back to him.

"No problem." He said as he wrapped his arms around me from behind as I put the sauce on the pizza.

It was a Friday night and we'd decided to stay in and make pizza on our own. I'd been working on promoting my new book, "What I Cannot Change", all week, and I needed a break. Luckily Nemesis had also been quiet, except for one small attack that didn't do much damage. That one attack is also the only place I'd seen the other Sailors all week. I wasn't really upset with Mina anymore but I still felt like I needed some space. I figured I'd talk things out with her eventually.

In the meantime I was content to enjoy a nice, peaceful night at home with my wonderful husband.

We finished making the pizza and cuddled up on the sofa.

"I love you so much." I said as I leaned back into RJ's arm.

"I love you to MJ. I'm so glad you're feeling better." He said as he kissed my head.

"Me too. I'm not sure what happened, but I'm ok now."

"So what do you want to do this weekend?"

"Well, Holly invited us over for dinner tomorrow, if that's ok with you. I told her I'd talk to you about it."

"Why wouldn't I be ok with it?"

"Vince? He stole Holly from you."

"Yeah, in high school. I have you now. Vince can have Holly."

"So you want to accept their invitation?"

RJ nodded, "Yeah, that's fine."

"Ok. Then we're doing that tomorrow night."

"Did the DNA tests come back on Mindy yet?"

"No, should be back by Monday or Tuesday."

"You nervous?"

"No. Honestly I'm not really thinking about it. I'll deal with it when the tests come back. Until then I'm not counting on anything."

"Fair enough."

"I'm more concerned with getting rid of Nemesis, getting Hotaru back, and then going back to our normal lives."

RJ laughed, "MJ, since when have our lives ever been normal?"

"Point. But you know what I mean."

"I do. And I don't think normal is in the cards for us. Sooner you accept that the happier you'll be."

"Maybe. But it doesn't mean I can't hope."

Trista

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"What do you think?" I asked as I showed Michele the sketch I'd been working on.

"I love it. It's perfect for my next photo shoot." She said.

I smiled. Michele was preparing to do a photo shoot for the cover art of her next CD and she wanted me to design her outfit.

"I bet Amara will like it too." Michele said softly as she handed me back the sketch.

"She'll be home in a couple of days." I said as I put my hand on her shoulder. Amara was in North Carolina for a race so it was just Michele and I at the apartment.

"I know, I just miss her when she's gone. I wish I could travel with her sometimes."

"I know, but you have your own career."

Michele smiled, "Yeah, and a fabulous career it is. I guess I should focus on that."

"Yes, you should. And the last thing you should do is sit around here and mope. Get dressed, we're going out."

“Going where?”

“I don’t know. We live in LA. There’s a million things to do.”

Michele nodded, “OK, let’s do it.”

We got dressed and headed out for dinner. We ended up at the restaurant at the Beverly Hills Hotel, which was right on Sunset Blvd. We were eating when we noticed Mindy and Valerie walk in. I recognized Mindy from the press articles and Valerie owned a popular bakery in town, it was Lita’s main competition.

“Mindy?” I asked.

“Yes?” she replied.

I smiled, “Hi, I’m Trista Mills. I’m a friend of Michelle Morris.”

Mindy shook my hand, “Hi, it’s really nice to meet you. This is my publicist, Val Meladeo.”

“And you, you’re Michele Waters, right?” Val asked.

Michele nodded, “Yes.”

“I’m a huge fan. Your music is simply breathtaking.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re a singer too?” Mindy asked.

“Sort of. I do some vocalizing but most of my music is instrumental. I’m what they call a New Age musician.”

Mindy nodded.

“We should go get a table, but it was very nice to meet you both.” Valerie said.

“Likewise. I’m sure we’ll see you guys around.” I said as they headed off.

“Michelle’s sister...hmm...I kinda see a family resemblance.” Michele said.

I nodded, “Yeah, me too.”

“And I have fans. I forget sometimes. People do like my work.”

“You have a lot of fan Michele. You’re extremely famous in your field.”

“Yeah, I am. I guess with all the mainstream attention the others get I forget sometimes.”

“You’re not mainstream, but you are a success.”

“It’s nice to be reminded.”

“You ready to check out the clubs?”

“Are you sure we want to go to Sunset?”

“Michele, don’t let the escapades of Michelle scare you. That kind of craziness only happens if you let it. We’re going to go find a club and hang out like normal people...not like rock stars.”

“Fair enough.”

We headed down Sunset and ended up at Viper Room, a club we found. We went in and made our way to the dance floor. As we danced it was obvious Michele was having a blast.

“I so needed this!” she cried as we moved to the music.

“I know...I figured you’d...” I froze in mid-sentence and stumbled backward.

Michele grabbed my arm, “Trista, what’s wrong?”

“There’s something wrong. It’s the Gates. Someone is manipulating time.”

Michelle

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The next night we went to Holly and Vince’s apartment for dinner. We got there and I knocked on the door. Holly answered.

“Michelle, RJ, come on in.” she said, “Make yourselves at home. This is my fiancé Vince. Vince, this is Michelle, and of course you know RJ.”

“Of course. Hey RJ, how’s it going?” Vince asked.

“Hi Vince. Nice to see you again.” RJ said.

“And Michelle, it’s such a pleasure to finally meet you. Holly has told me so much about you.”

“It’s nice to meet you too Vince.”

“What can you get you to drink?” Holly asked.

“Tea would be fine, thanks.” I said as RJ and I sat down. I could feel the tension between the guys. Even if Holly and I were ok with this, it was clear that Vince and RJ were not.

“Guys, you know you were friends once.” Holly said.

“That was a long time ago.” Vince said.

“A lifetime ago. A lot has happened since then. Besides, we weren’t exactly friends. We got along because of you.” RJ said.

“He’s right.”

“Well now that Holly and I are working together you two need to cut the tension and get along.” I said.

“MJ is right.” RJ said.

Vince nodded, “OK, fine.”

“So, Holly, MJ tells me you got a show for her to do.”

Holly nodded, “Yes. It’s not a huge thing but it’ll be a great way for her to get her face out there. The public forgets she’s an actress sometimes and I want to remind them.”

“But I thought you wanted to be a singer MJ.”

“Well I do...and I am...I’m a singer first and foremost and I wanted people to see that...I think they have now, but they’ve forgotten I can also act. I always wanted to be a singer that acts, not an actress that sings. I think I’m at a point in my music where people will see that.” I said.

“I agree. Mich has established herself as a singer. She doesn’t need to shy away from acting anymore to get across she’s a musician.” Holly said.

“And I think the role that Holly got me is perfect. After reading over the first script I really like the character. I think she’ll be fun to play.”

“That’s great.” RJ said.

“So, Vince, what is it you do?” I asked.

“I’m in real estate.” Vince said.

“Oh, wow. That’s gotta be hard right now...with the economy and all.” RJ said.

“It’s been a challenge, but I’m doing alright.”

“Thank goodness for Holly’s steady, high profile career, right?”

“I’m sure it’s the same for you. Your pizza place must be suffering in this economy as well. Good thing Michelle is a high profile entertainer huh?”

Holly and I sighed. This peacock contest was just going to get worse.

Trista

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“Ok, let’s go.” Michele said when we got to the ally behind the club.

“Um...no. I’ll go. You can’t go with me to the Gates of Time.” I said.

“I can and I am. Trista, if there is something disturbing them I’m not letting you handle it alone.”

“But you can’t go through the Gates.”

“I won’t. But I can go to the Gates to check it out.”

“Fine. I don’t have time to argue all the reasons this is a bad idea.”

“Good. Then let’s transform.”

I nodded, “Pluto Spirit Power!”

“Neptune Spirit Power!”

After we transformed I used the orb on my staff to open a portal to the Gates of Time. Neptune and I stepped into the portal and I closed it behind us.

“Something is off here. I can feel it.” I said as I looked around my realm.

“How would someone even get here?” Neptune asked.

“They wouldn’t have to. If they somehow went through time another way I’d know. This Gateway is the main way but not the only.”

“Maybe...but I think they did take the Gateway.”

“What makes you say that Neptune?”

“The door isn’t closed.”

“What? I always make sure the door is sealed before I leave this realm.”

“Exactly.”

I approached the door and sure enough, it was open a crack, “Someone used the Gateway unsanctioned. This is bad.”

“Only certain people even know the Gate is here.” Neptune said.

I nodded, “Mainly Soldiers and Rangers.”

“And a few evil beings.”

“The only evil beings I know right now are Soldiers...so unless there’s a Ranger mission we don’t know about, Nemesis is up to something.”

“Oh god. Well, there’s one way to find out quickly if there’s a Ranger mission.”

I nodded, “Call Tommy.”

I sealed up the Gate and opened a portal back to Earth. We went straight back to the apartment, un-transformed by this point. I pressed ‘speaker’ on the phone and dialed Tommy’s number.

“Hello?” he answered after a few rings.

“Tommy, hi, this is Trista Mills and Michele Waters, we’re sorry to bother you but we have a question.” I said.

“Trista, Michele, hey...what’s up?” he asked.

“Are there any Ranger missions going on right now that involve time travel that you forgot to mention to us?” Michele asked.

“No, there’s not even an active team of Rangers that I’m aware of.” Tommy said.

“Then I have a major problem.” I said.

“What’s going on?”

“Someone went through the Gates of Time. It wasn’t anyone on my team so if it wasn’t a Ranger team then that just leaves Nemesis.”

“And that would be bad.”

“That would be very bad.”

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“No, but thank you Tommy. If that changes I’ll let you know.”

“I do have a question.”

“What is it?”

“I realize I’m one of the go-tos for Ranger business...but so is my sister and she’s on your team. Why didn’t you just ask her?”

“Because she’s not exactly helpful these days.” I said.

“She has her own stuff going on.” Michele added.

“She’s not still skipping battles is she?” Tommy asked.

“No, she’s showing up when called.” I said.

“She just doesn’t really say much or hang around after the battles.” Michele said.

“She seems a little better than she has been...she said something about needing space.”

“I worry about her.” Tommy said.

“Don’t, I think she’ll be fine...we just didn’t feel we could go to her.” Michele said.

“You don’t mind us calling you, do you?” I asked.

“Not at all. If you need anything you can always call me. I just am a bit worried about my sister.” Tommy said.

“OK, thanks.”

“Seriously, if you need anything from the Rangers just let me know and we’ll be there.”

“Thanks Tommy. We’ll talk to you later.”

“Bye guys.”

“Bye Tommy.” Both Michele and I said.

“OK, so what now?” Michele asked when we hung up.

“Now I go back and guard the Gates of Time and you get the others together and try to figure out what Nemesis is up to.” I said.

“Should I call Amara back?”

“Not yet. We don’t know what’s going on yet. Just go fill the Inners in on this and go from there. When we get something solid we can call Amara.”

Michele nodded and I transformed and used my portal to get back to the Gates of Time.

One thing about the Gates of Time...of course they were powerful and needed a guardian...namely me. The problem with this is that guarding them was extremely lonely and being as my realm was a place where time had no meaning

even a second seemed like forever...alternately forever could seem like a second. It really depended on perspective. Either way it all boiled down to one thing...as long as the Gates needed constant guarding, I was alone.