

PRT 341- "Sinking"

"Dad, I don't know what to do." I sighed.

"Follow your heart RJ. I think you do know what to do." Dad said.

"Everything is just so crazy."

"You don't love her or this wouldn't be a problem."

"I do love her."

"You're not 'in love' with her. If you were you'd be ready to face any storm head on."

"Ok, I don't love her like a husband should love his wife...but you should see how she looks at me Dad. The look in her eyes is so intense. She loves me so much."

"So you don't believe she cheated on you?"

"No, I don't. At all."

"That horrible website just released a security tape of supposed evidence."

"Yeah, it showed some blonde woman with a man wearing a baseball cap. It was grainy and you couldn't see their faces. It could have been anyone. And even if it was MJ with Eddie or some other guy it was heavily edited. You can't really tell what was going on. I honestly don't believe MJ cheated on me."

"It would make it easier if you did believe it wouldn't it?"

I sighed, "Yeah, I guess so."

"You want to believe it."

"That isn't fair."

"It's true isn't it?"

I sighed again, "I guess. I mean, it would justify an annulment. But MJ has just been through so much recently. I can't hurt her like that. Dad, no woman has ever loved me as deeply as she does. How can I just walk away from that?"

"Is it fair to her if you don't? You don't love her in return."

"I do love her a lot. Just not the way she loves me."

"You don't want to be married to her."

"Maybe not, but I'm not leaving her."

"I know son...I know." Dad sighed as there was a knock on the door.

Dad answered the door.

"You..." he grumbled.

"Nice to see you too Mr. James. RJ, I'm glad I found you." Holly said as she pushed past my dad and came inside.

"Hi Holly. How did you find me?" I asked.

"Flit. I stopped by JKP and he told me where I could find you." She said.

"He truly is a pest." Dad mumbled.

"Dad, be nice. Holly, what's going on?" I asked.

"I just left the set where Mich was filming a duet video for a song she did with Marc..." Holly said.

"Right, right. She wrote a song for his album and agreed to sing with him since he sang on her album." I said.

"Yeah, it's his new single. Anyway, they were filming the video today and...she looked great on screen. It's gonna be an amazing video...but that's not the point here."

"Ok so what is the point?"

"Michelle wasn't herself. The second the camera was off she looked like a zombie. I know she's dealing with a lot because of Aubrey and everything, but I'm worried that she's just about to crack. This media circus is getting beyond my control. I'm struggling to do my job and I think she's struggling to just stay a float. I'm not sure what to do." Holly said.

"Oh man. I guess it hasn't helped that I've been at JKP 24/7 since this mess started."

"What? Why?"

"The press is hounding my business! I've had to have Theo at the door making sure our customers are real customers and not press...and even then a few still sneak in."

"I think you need to let your employees run JKP for a bit and go home to your wife. She needs your support right now." I nodded, "Ok."

"I'm sorry this is happening. I'm doing what I can to do damage control. I even enlisted my sister to work on some PR strategies."

“Oh yeah, Val used to run a Public Relations firm.” I said.

Holly nodded, “Yeah. And while she loves her bakery I know she misses the rush of PR now and then. Giving her one client to focus on will be good for her...and I seriously need the help.”

“You’re doing a great job Hol. I know MJ really likes you.”

“She’s a good person and she doesn’t deserve everything that’s happening. I’m doing what I can to make this circus die down.”

I nodded, “Thank you.”

Chad

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I had a month before my new album was out but I also had a single to promote so Mina had booked me as a guest on KTLA’s morning show. I went in the studio and got ready for the interview.

“You’re listening to Bob and Kandi in the morning on LA’s hottest country, KTLA.” Bob said.

“And right now we’re lucky enough to be joined by rising star Chad Holdenford. Chad, thank you so much for joining us.” Kandi said.

“Thank you for having me. It’s a pleasure to be here.” I said.

“So your first single from your upcoming second album is doing pretty well on the charts. Not bad for a new artist.” Bob said.

“Except you’re not really a new artist are you? You’ve been at this awhile?” Kandi asked.

“Oh yeah, definitely. I started playing when I was a young teenager. I played in a couple of rock bands...nothing that really took off. When I was 18 I had a record deal that fell through and decided to retire from music.” I explained.

“Obviously that didn’t stick. What brought you back? And specifically what made you try country instead of rock?” Bob asked.

“During my ‘retirement’ I ended up at a temple to find myself. It was at that temple I met a wonderful girl named Raye Hino. You may have heard of her.” I laughed, “Raye completely changed my life.”

“What did Raye do for you?”

“She helped me find myself, she helped me find love, and most of all she helped me realize that being from a small town didn’t mean I couldn’t do big things. I was actually raised on country but I was trying to hard to escape that small town that I shunned anything that reminded me of it. When I finally embraced my country roots I was much happier with my music and obviously it helped me find success I’d never had.”

“And you’ve recently become Raye’s label mate by signing a deal with Starlight Records.”

“Yeah, I did. It’s a great environment to work in because everyone at Starlight is part of the same group really. We’re a family and there’s this total trust. I’m really happy to be part of the label.”

“Recently one of the label’s CEO’s and singer/actress in her own right, Michelle Morris, has been in the press. You mentioned you are all a family. How has this media coverage affected that?”

I tried not to sigh. This wasn’t fair and I’d hoped the interview wouldn’t go there, but I guess I did know better, “Well, we certainly are a family and as a family we support her without question.”

“Did she cheat on RJ?”

“I haven’t asked her. I don’t feel the need to. Honestly, none of us really care. She’s a friend and whatever happened is between her and RJ. They will determine the truth between them and how they wanna handle it. It’s not any of our business. Frankly, I wish the media would back off of her. She doesn’t need all of this. She doesn’t deserve it.”

“Fair enough. Any truth to the rumors about you and Raye getting married?” Kandi asked.

“No. Not right now. I love Raye very much and I know she loves me but right now we like what we have. We’re in love but we also both have high stress careers. The stress of a marriage would be a bit much at this point in our lives.” I said.

“Do you ever worry about Raye cheating on you?”

“No. I trust her completely.”

“It seems like you’ve come through a lot but that you’re in a good place.”

“I totally am. I was this immature surfer dude rocker wannabe with no direction and I completely turned my life around. Mostly thanks to Raye and her support. I’m in a great place right now and I’m so thankful.”

“And we’re thankful you joined us today. Thank you so much Chad.”

“Thank you for having me.”

“And now let’s take a listen to Chad’s new song, “Where I’m From” right here on KTLA.” Bob said.

After the interview I headed back to the apartment Raye and I shared. She was in the kitchen making food.

"Nice interview." She said.

"Thanks." I said as I went in the kitchen and kissed her.

"You handled the Michelle questions VERY well. I can't believe they brought that up."

"I know. I kinda expected it...but still."

"I know. So, what's your schedule the rest of the day?" she asked.

"Actually, I'm off the rest of the day. That was it."

"I'm off too. Mina is setting up a press tour but it's still in the works."

"Wow, we're both off...we should so take advantage of this." I said as I pulled Raye backwards towards me and kissed her neck.

Raye giggled, "I like the way you think Mr. Holdenford."

I turned Raye so she was facing me then I picked her up. She wrapped her legs around my waist.

"I love you." I whispered.

"I love you too." She said as I headed for the bedroom.

Just then her cell rang.

"I should get that." She said.

"Ignore it." I said as I held on to her.

"No, I have to get it. It could be important." She said as she wiggled away from me and ran to grab her phone.

"Hello?.....On my way." She hung up. "Sorry Chad, hold that thought. I'll be back."

"What? Where are you going?"

"Something I forgot to do. Sorry." She said as she ran out the door.

I sighed. She did this from time to time. She'd just vanish without explanation. Sometimes it made me wonder if there was someone else...

Raye

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Ok, so I know it wasn't right to leave Chad hanging like that...but Amy called and informed me Nemesis was attacking and they needed Sailor Mars. Chad didn't know I was Sailor Mars so...ok maybe I should tell him...but I liked having a private life that had nothing to do with my alter ego...it worked for me.

"Mars Spirit Power!" I cried as I got close to the battle. I saw Nemesis attacking Sailor Moon. "I don't think so Nemesis. Mars Fire Ignite!" I cried as I sent a fireball at Nemesis. She dodged.

"You all are so pathetic." Nemesis hissed.

"Where's the Outers?" I asked.

"Uranus and Neptune are on their way. Pluto is occupied and we can't reach Saturn." Venus said.

"What do you mean we can't reach Saturn?" I asked.

"World Shaking!" Uranus yelled as she joined the battle, "She means Saturn isn't answering the call. We tried too."

"Perfect."

"You're outnumbered Nemesis. Give it up." Jupiter said.

"I have a way to even the odds. Mistress 9, appear!" Nemesis commanded.

"You rang?" Mistress 9 said as she appeared.

"Just what we needed." I mumbled.

"I'm over this. Supreme Thunder!" Jupiter cried.

"I hear that. Venus Love Chain Encircle!" Venus echoed.

Nemesis dodged.

"You losers couldn't hit a bull's eye on an elephant." Nemesis mocked.

"Try this one. Mars Celestial Fire Surround!" I called.

My fire hit Nemesis hard and she flew back.

"You'll pay for that." Mistress 9 said.

"Shine Aqua Illusion!" Mercury called. Her attack got Mistress 9.

"We will be back." Nemesis said as she and Mistress 9 retreated.

We all gathered around.

“What’s Pluto doing?” I asked.

“There was a disturbance at the Gates of Time. She needed to check it out.” Neptune said.

I nodded.

“And Saturn. Where could she be?” Moon asked.

“Think about it. She might have been surrounded and unable to transform.” Venus said.

“Oh wow. You’re right. I never consider that. If she’s hounded she can’t become Sailor Saturn.” Uranus said.

“We did ok without her but it would have been nice to have the help. What do we do?” Mercury asked.

“I’m not sure that we can do anything. The vultures are relentless.” I said.

“This isn’t right.” Jupiter said.

“I need to get home. I kinda left Chad hanging. Venus, will you check on Saturn?”

Venus nodded, “Yeah, of course.”

I headed back to the apartment and Chad was on the sofa watching TV.

“Hey babe. Sorry about that.” I said as I walked over to him, “Now where were we?” I asked as I straddled his lap.

“Where were you?” he asked.

“Oh, Mina called. There was a problem with some files and she couldn’t reach Michelle. I went and helped her figure it out but it’s all taken care of.”

“You took off like that for files?”

“It was important. But it’s done. Now this is important.” I said as I kissed his neck.

“I’m not really in the mood. I think I’m gonna take a nap.” He said as he picked me up and set me on the sofa. He got up and went to the bedroom alone.

I sighed, “Maybe I did need to tell him the truth...this sucked.”

RJ

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I went back to JKP to finish up a couple of things then I went home. I found MJ laying on the sofa watching ‘South Park’...but she may as well have been watching the Golf Channel for all the expression she was showing. She did look like a zombie.

“MJ?” I asked.

“Hey RJ.” She replied, monotone.

“Are you ok?”

“Yeah.”

“Where’s your security?”

“Checking the perimeter of the apartments. Making sure no stray media is lurking.”

“Your phone is beeping.”

“I missed some calls.”

I picked up her phone and checked her call log, “MJ, these calls are from the girls. Nemesis could have been attacking.”

“Probably.”

“Why didn’t you answer?”

“Didn’t want to.”

“You’re Sailor Saturn.”

“They have a big team without me.”

“MJ, what is going on with you?”

“Nothing.”

Holly was right, this was really bad. I grabbed the remote and turned the TV off. MJ didn’t react. I grabbed her hands and forced her into a sitting position. I noticed her make up was smeared on her face. She obviously hadn’t taken a shower when she got home from her video shoot.

“OK, enough of this. You need to snap out of this.” I said as I picked her up.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“We’re going to take a shower and you’re going to snap out of this.” I said as I carried her into the bathroom and turned the shower on. I didn’t know what else to do. Turns out this idea didn’t work either. We did take a shower together and even had sex, but she was like a ragdoll. I’d never been with Michelle when she was so lifeless. It was not her at all. I had to do something but I was at a loss. There was only one person I could think of that never failed to light a fire under MJ...for better or worse...but I really didn’t wanna call him. On the other hand this was my wife’s well being and I was out of ideas.

I picked up the phone and dialed. I so didn’t want to do this.

“Hello?” he answered.

“Hunter? It’s RJ. I need your help.” I said.

“RJ? What’s going on?” Hunter asked.

“It’s MJ. I’m worried about her.”

“So you called me?”

“Believe me, you’re the last person in the world I want near my wife after what you did, but I am completely at a loss. You and MJ shared very intense passion. I’m hoping you can talk to her and bring her out of this funk.”

Hunter didn’t say anything.

“Hunter?” I finally asked.

“I’m here.”

“Will you help?”

“I’m sorry. I can’t.”

“What? What do you mean you can’t? You owe MJ after what you did!”

“I’ve done quite enough for ‘MJ’. She’s better off without me in her life. Besides, I have Ronny to consider and she doesn’t like it when I have anything to do with Mich.”

“I should have known she couldn’t count on you. You only loved her at your convenience anyway.”

“I hope she gets better RJ, I really do.” Hunter said as he hung up.

I slammed the phone down. I wasn’t one to ‘hate’ anyone...but I really, really disliked that man.

But now I was back where I started. At a complete loss. I noticed MJ’s phone ringing so I answered it. I knew she wouldn’t come get it.

“MJ’s phone.” I answered.

“RJ, is that you?” Mina asked.

“Yeah, hey Mina.”

“Where’s Mich?”

“Bedroom.”

“Is she ok? We had a battle earlier and she didn’t answer the call.”

I sighed, “She knows. She heard the phone. She just chose not to answer it.”

“What? Why?”

“She’s not herself. She’s like a zombie. She’s just sorta laying there like a ragdoll and speaking in short monotone phrases. I’m worried about her and I don’t know what to do.”

“Oh wow. This isn’t good. We have to do something.”

“I know, but what? I already called Hunter and he refuses to help her.”

“He refused?”

“Yeah, he refused.”

“Ass.” Mina sighed, “I’m not sure what to do either.”

“Mina, if we don’t do something I’m going to lose my wife.”

“I know RJ...we’ll think of something to bring her out of this. Somehow...”