

Episode 19- "Peyton's Problem"

I guess it's my turn to tell my story. I'll start with the basics. My name is Peyton Reed and I'm 17 years old. I'm the star quarterback at Angel Grove High and I'm secretly the Silver Sonic Ranger. Also, I'm gay. I don't know why I feel the need to say it as part of my introduction about myself. You wouldn't see Brielle say "I'm Brielle Price, star of the Angel Grove Theater, front woman of my band, secretly the Yellow Ranger. Also, I'm straight". When you're gay it's almost like you feel the need to warn people to avoid a random 'coming out' moment. Everyone assumes you're straight until otherwise told so it's awkward if you don't share it in an introduction. Especially when you're the star quarterback. Everyone naturally assumes I'm dating a cheerleader or something. I'm not, although I am friends with most of them. Actually, I'm dating the captain of the AGHS hockey team, Rory. Rory is still in the process of coming out and I know it's stressful for him. It's compounded by the fact he's the Red Sonic Ranger and under a lot of pressure to stop Balassario from stealing more gems and SPD for what they did to our trainer, Michelle. I don't envy Rory's position but I am trying to help him as much as I can. Between you and me, I'm starting to fall in love with Rory. I wouldn't call it love just yet. Don't get me wrong...I care very deeply for him as a friend and leader, I think he's hot as hell, I'm beyond attracted to him, and I definitely feel romantic attraction that is starting to develop into what I'd call love. It's a new relationship and I'm not the kind that likes to rush in. I've had my heart broken too many times, mostly by straight guys that I liked only to find out they were straight as an arrow. I was scared to actually fall in love...but Rory made me want to try.

Anyway, you don't care about that. You care about Balassario and what we're doing to stop him. To be honest we didn't have a plan yet. What we did have was a lot of Rangers and knowledge about where the gems were that SPD didn't have. Now we needed to decide what to do with it.

We had all gathered (both Sonic and Ninja Storm Rangers) at the Ninja Ops Cam had set up. We were trying to figure out our next move.

"While I agree that SPD needs to go down...we also can't fight a 2 front war. It's not practical. We should focus on Balassario and once he's eliminated we take out SPD." Kapri said.

"We have the advantage of 2 teams. We can fight a two front war." Rory said.

"Maybe, but is that the best course of action? 2 teams gives us an advantage taking on Ballasario we can't ignore." Tori said.

Brielle nodded, "You're right...but SPD is also getting in our way. If we neutralize them we are clear to focus on Balassario."

"Except SPD doesn't know where the gems are. We do. We can take out Balassario without SPD ever knowing about." Marah pointed out.

"She makes a point. SPD can't get in our way if they don't know where we are." I chimed in.

Rory shot me a look.

"But both sides make good points." I added.

"Sensei. What do you think?" Rory asked.

Sensei thought for a minute, "SPD is a nominal threat in comparison to Balassario. We do have an advantage in having intel that SPD doesn't and having two teams does help us gain an edge on Balassario. As pissed as I am at SPD, I agree with Kapri...we should focus on Balassario first."

Rory nodded, "Yes sir."

"We do have another issue to address." Blake said.

"It's not an issue. I'm fine." Dustin said. He had joined us after a stint in the hospital. There had been an attack that left him injured and killed his teammate, Shane.

"I don't like this. I can keep fighting in your place." Marah said.

"Mr. Brooks, with all due respect, are you sure you're up for battle?" Brielle asked. Dustin was a teacher at our high school so we had a different relationship with him than the other Ninja Storm Rangers.

"I appreciate the concern Brielle. Really, I'm fine." Dustin said.

Marah frowned, "I have been in the battle...you can't ask me to step down now."

"We aren't. Michelle and I have actually been working on something for the last couple of days." Cam said.

"You and Michelle have been working together?" Hunter asked.

"Yes. As it turns out when we don't talk about you we get along quite well." Cam said.

Michelle nodded, "True story."

I tried not to snicker. Michelle was Hunter's ex-girlfriend and Cam was his ex-boyfriend. This could have gotten awkward but Michelle and Cam didn't let it, which made it funnier.

Hunter made a face and didn't speak.

"What have you guys been working on?" Marah asked.

"Well, you and Kapri aren't technically Earth or Air ninjas. You came to the academy and studied various forms." Cam said.

"Which is why we made our own uniforms." Marah nodded.

"And so we tapped into the Morphing Grid and tried to pull out the secondary elements." Michelle said.

"Secondary elements?" Kapri asked.

Michelle nodded, "Like me. I'm Spirit. That's a secondary element. The primary ones are Air, Water, Earth, and Fire...Red, Blue, Yellow, and Green. Spirit...or Purple, is a secondary element...and there are others."

Cam nodded, "Using Michelle's Power of Spirit we were able to tap into the other secondary elements...specifically the ones Marah and Kapri actually use."

"Meaning?" Marah asked.

"We created two new Wind Morphers. The Pink Wind Ranger, Power of Ice..." Michelle started.

"...and the Orange Wind Ranger, Power of Lava." Cam finished.

"Ice and Lava?" Marah asked.

Cam nodded, "Ice combines Air and Water...the two elements Kapri studied closest. Lava combines Earth and

Fire...the two elements you studied closest.”

“So I’m the Orange Ranger and Kapri is Pink?” Marah asked.

“Exactly.” Michelle said.

“I’m Red.” Kapri said.

“No you aren’t Kapri...you’re Pink...you know that’s the power that’s yours.” Michelle said.

“OK, so who’s Red then?” Kapri asked.

“We have someone in mind but that’s in the works.” Cam said.

Kapri nodded, “OK. Pink it is. Shane would have liked that...”

Michelle put her hand on Kapri’s shoulder, “I think so too.”

“Let’s make him proud. We can finish Balassario.” Tori said.

“Do we have a layout of the ship?” Finn asked.

“I’m working on that.” Cam said.

“I know there has to be more rooms with gems. Only some were in the room I found.” Hunter said.

“I’m sure there’s other room identical to the one you found.” Blake said.

“I’ve been on several ships. If we can get the model I might be able to give you a rough layout.” Kapri said.

Cam nodded, “I’m running a scan. Hopefully it will tell us the ship’s model.”

“Until then just stand by. We made it to the ship once. Balassario knows we’re close which means he’ll bring the fight to us soon enough.” Sensei said.

“We’ll all be ready for the call.” Rory said.

We departed. On the way out I grabbed Rory’s hand. “Are you ok?”

Rory pulled away. “Fine.”

I looked at him, “What’s wrong?”

“You could have backed me up in there.” he snapped.

I looked at him, “I was sharing my honest assessment.”

“You should have had my back.” he said.

“I always have your back Rory! Being your boyfriend...hell, being your friend, doesn’t mean I follow you blindly. We’re a team and that was a team discussion.” I said.

Rory looked at me and stormed off.

I looked down.

Brielle put her hand on my shoulder, "He'll come around. He was wrong and he'll realize that."

I nodded. I hoped she was right...if not...I guess it's good I guard my heart.

I got home and went inside.

"Hey Peyton!" Regan, my 10 year old brother, called from the living room. He was watching TV.

"Hey Reg." I said as I headed to my room. I threw my backpack in the corner and fell on my bed.

"Oh, hey Peyton, how was school?" my mom asked as she passed my door.

"Fine." I said.

"Hmm..." Mom said as she came in and sat on my bed, "You said fine, but your tone wasn't fine. What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Rory and I had an argument, that's all." I said.

Mom nodded, "I'm sorry. What about?"

"We were discussing something with a group of friends and I disagreed with him. He got pissed and said I should have had his back. I told him being his boyfriend didn't mean I had to agree with him all the time." I said.

"You're right. You're still your own man. And I'm sure Rory will realize that and come around. It can be embarrassing when your partner disagrees with you publically, but I'm sure he's not mad so much as his pride is hurt." Mom said.

I nodded, "I hope you're right. Thanks Mom."

"Anytime. Now, get cleaned up. We're meeting your dad for dinner." she said as she walked out.

I washed my hands and face and brushed my hair then I went downstairs. Regan and I went out to the car with Mom and she drove us to the restaurant we were meeting Dad at. He was already there and had gotten us a table. I was really lucky. My parents didn't care about me being gay at all...even Dad, which was different than most of the football dads that were very uncomfortable and only tolerated me because they liked the team to win. We found Dad and sat down.

"How was school Pey?" Dad asked as I opened my menu.

"Good." I said.

"Ready for the game against Mariner Bay Friday?" he asked.

I nodded, "Absolutely. No question. Their QB is a joke."

"Yeah. That's my boy. You got this." Dad said patting my shoulder.

I smiled.

"Brandon, now isn't the time to push Peyton. He and Rory had a fight." Mom said.

I sighed. "Really Mom?"

"Kelli, that's all the more reason he needs to focus on football." Dad said.

"Or you could ask Peyton what he wants." I said.

Mom and Dad both looked at me.

"I'm sorry Peyton. What do you want?" Mom asked.

"To focus on the game. Rory will either apologize or he won't. I can't control that. I can control beating the crap out of Mariner Bay." I said.

Dad slapped my shoulder again, "That's the spirit Son!"

Mom sighed. "Fine."

I was in the middle of eating dinner when my phone vibrated with the special pattern I set up for Ranger business. I sighed. "Excuse me, I need to use the restroom." I said as I left the table. I went to the restroom. Thankfully no one else was in there. I answered the call.

"Go for Peyton." I said.

"Peyton, Stefano is at the residence of Tess Anderson trying to steal her priceless Green Ruby." Sensei said. Tess Anderson was a very wealthy local socialite that was a collector of rare items, including gems.

"Of course he is. OK. On my way." I said ending the call. I sighed and reached for my Morpher. "Sonic Boom!" I called as I morphed and teleported to the location Sensei provided.

I arrived and found the rest of the Sonic Rangers had gotten Stefano outside.

"This is so not a good time man. Some of us gotta eat." I said as I took a fighting stance.

"Sorry to inconvenience you Silver Ranger...actually...I'm not. You all have been a thorn in my side for months. That ends now." Stefano said.

"Dream on." Michelle said as she pulled her staff and attacked.

"Back off! He's ours!" a voice called. We turned around and saw it was SPD Red. And of course she had her team.

Rory grabbed his communicator, "Cam, we have SPD issues...we could use some back up."

"On our way!" Cam replied. Seconds later the Ninja Storm team arrived, complete with their new Orange and Pink Wind Rangers.

"You guys handle SPD. We got Stefano." Kapri said.

Rory nodded, "My pleasure."

We turned our focus to SPD while the Ninja Storm team battled Stefano.

"If you think we're going to let you anywhere near this after what you did you're sadly mistaken." Rory said.

"I am so sick of civilian Rangers. It's time to end this! SPD are the only Rangers that are legitimate anymore." Charlie said.

"You are so wrong." Brielle said.

"And I'm tired of talking. Let's do this." Finn said.

"Bring it." Cliff said.

We all pulled our weapons and attacked. I fought the Gold SPD Ranger...and while he was a good fighter I quickly realized there was no thought to his attacks. He fought very impulsive and once I figured that out I was able to use purposeful fighting to land hits. I swung my weapon and hit his arm hard. He fell back in pain. I think I actually hurt him pretty badly. It was bad enough that it got Charlie's attention and she forced them to retreat. We turned to the Ninja Storm team. They had forced Stefano to retreat as well.

"That was awesome Peyton!" Brielle said.

"Yeah. Good work." Rory said.

"Thanks. Now I have to get back to the restaurant. My parents have to be wondering where I am." I said.

I teleported back to the restaurant and demorphed. I rushed back out to the table.

"Peyton. Where were you? We went Regan to check on you and you weren't in the restroom." Mom said.

I nodded, "Sorry. I just needed some fresh air. I'm ok now." I said as I started to eat quickly.

My answer seemed to satisfy my parents.

When I got home from dinner I went to my room and took a shower. When I got out I checked my phone and I had a text. It was from Rory. "Pey, I'm sorry. I messed up. You have your opinions and that's ok." it said.

I smiled and texted back. "We're good. You have your pride and I hurt it...I'll always be honest though. I hope that's ok."

"It's more than ok. Goodnight gorgeous." he replied.

"Good night Captain." I sent back.

I got in bed and smiled. I was so falling hard. I just hoped I didn't crash.