

Day 7-Charlotte, NC

After finding out I had two days off after the Charlotte show, Jonny decided to follow us to North Carolina and spend more time with me. We both knew we had to be discreet as the tour was gaining a lot of media attention, but we decided it was worth it to be together. Zack was less than thrilled about this...and I heard about it. The whole bus ride to Charlotte I heard about it.

"You know he's only using you." Zack said.

I rolled my eyes, "You just can't stand the fact that Jon makes me happy."

"What? I want you to be happy. That's all I want for you. You're my sister. Jon might make you happy for now but in the end it's always a disaster. Do I have to remind you about all the times he beat you up?"

"Do I have to remind you that I'm an uber powerful princess now? He wouldn't dare touch me again."

"Michelle, you were an uber powerful princess when you married him and he still beat you up."

"I hadn't fully tapped into or developed my powers at that time. I have now."

"Powers or not I don't like this. I don't like the power he has over you."

"I love him, I've always loved him, and I always will love him. You need to deal with it."

"You expect me to deal with watching my baby sister make a huge mistake? One that she's made time and time again with the same results..."

"This time is different."

"You know, doing the same thing repeatedly with the expectation of a different outcome is one of the signs of insanity."

"Same could be said for you. You continue to try to talk me out of seeing Jon...when has that ever worked?"

Zack sighed, "Fine. I just don't want to see him hurt you again."

"He won't."

"He already has."

"I can handle Jon so back off."

"Fine. I give up."

"Thank you!"

We arrived in Charlotte and got to the hotel. We had just enough time to get ready before the show. I did make time to call Jon and let him know what hotel we were at and my room number so he could go wait for me. He wanted to come to the show but I convinced him that was a really bad idea.

The show itself went off without a hitch. It really did amaze me how much the fans still loved us. Our show had been off the air for years but it continued to draw in new fans and keep old fans entertained. I'm not sure if it was a testament to us or to the concept...whatever it was, it was something magical.

After the show I went back to the hotel room. Jon was waiting for me.

"Great show." He said when I walked in.

I closed and locked the door behind me, "How do you know?"

Jon smiled, "I was there."

"You were? Where?"

"In the crowd. I had on a hat and sunglasses. No one noticed me. I think they were all too focused on you anyway."

"You shouldn't have done that. Someone could have seen you." I said as I fell in bed next to him.

He pulled me into his arms, "I wanted to see my girl perform."

"Your girl doesn't much like performing those songs."

"I know, but you were still great. Besides, the whole event was like a flashback. It took me back to when we were younger...back to when I fell in love with you."

"You remember the first night we met?"

"Yeah, backstage at one of my shows. I remember the moment I saw you...I just knew we needed to be together."

"I felt the same way."

"It hasn't always been an easy ride, but I want you to know I don't regret a moment of it. I love you so much Michi."

I smiled, "I don't regret a moment either and I will always love you."

Jon smiled and kissed my head.

"So you do realize we're confined to this hotel room for the next two days, right?" I asked.

"Why?"

"Because we can't be seen together. If anyone spots us you'll have a whole new mess to clean up."

Jon pursed his lips, "Hmm...you're right about that."

"And the press is lurking, just looking for me to do something to report on. There is no hiding."

"Unless we get disguises. They'll be looking for a blonde pop star, not a brunette working class chick."

I laughed, "Um, ever see Hannah Montana? Don't think a wig will work baby."

"Of course I've seen Hannah Montana. I have a teenage daughter that's just about Miley's age...and they actually do pretty good at making Miley and Hannah look like two different people. I think we could do the same with you."

"You really think so?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I guess it's worth a shot. What about you though? You're famous too."

"They do make wigs for men you know."

I laughed, "OK, I'll get my wardrobe ladies in here in the morning."

Day 7- Charlotte, NC (Day Off)

Karen and Lydia came in with their carts of clothes, wigs, and make up.

"OK ladies, make us over. We need to fool the paparazzi." I said.

"Oh, a challenge. Sounds fun." Karen said as she pulled out a brown wig.

The wig Karen used on me was a really pretty long brown wig with curls. She also fixed my make up different than I normally wore it. Lydia gave me a pair of jeans and a pink shirt to wear. She said me not wearing purple was somewhat a disguise in and of itself. That's probably true.

For Jon, they put a black wig on him. It was short, but not too short...the style actually kinda reminded me of Conner's hair. Lydia found some simple earth tones that didn't stand out much for him to wear.

"OK, this is as good as it gets." Karen said.

"You guys did good. Very nice. Thank you." I said.

"You kids have fun now." Lydia teased.

"Thanks guys." I said as they left.

"We probably shouldn't use our real names either...people may hear us." Jon said.

I nodded, "OK. Who do you wanna be?"

"You pick the names."

I smiled, "OK, I'll be Carrie Ann and you be Joey."

Jon laughed, "Characters from our songs."

I nodded.

"Cute."

"I thought so."

"You ready?" Jon asked.

"Yeah...this is kinda fun. I feel like a spy on a covert mission or something."

"Mission for freedom." Jon laughed.

"Where do we wanna go first?"

"Hmm, not much to do in Charlotte...what do you say we bail?"

"Bail?"

"Your next date is in Chicago. It's such a fun city and you're only scheduled for one day there. Let's go now and enjoy it."

I smiled, "OK!"

"Should you tell anyone?"

"Before we leave? No way. Better to gain forgiveness than ask permission. They'll fight me if I tell them now. If I'm already there there's nothing they can do."

“Ok, works for me. Let’s hit it.”

Jon and I grabbed our bags and walked out of the hotel using the front door. I recognized some of the paparazzi but they didn’t recognize me. It was amazing. We went to the airport and took the next flight Chicago. The flight itself was pretty nice because Jonny and I got to talk and catch up and just enjoy each other’s company. It’d been awhile since we’d had that chance.

When we got to Chicago we went to the hotel that I knew we were booked for. Once we checked in and got settled we decided to go out and enjoy ourselves. Jon took me to Navy Pier, which is this huge pier with shops, restaurants, and a giant Ferris wheel. It was absolutely beautiful. There was a maze we went in, which was a blast, we went to see a movie at the IMAX, ate at some amazing restaurants, and after it was dark we even went on the Ferris wheel, which has to be the most romantic thing ever. The lights over the city were amazing and I sat there, hand in hand with a man I deeply loved. It was the type of moment that is perfect. You can’t plan it or recreate it, it just is. We had a wonderful day together, which was amazing considering that Navy Pier was a top tourist spot. We really didn’t get recognized once. We did get a couple of “You look familiar. I swear I know you from somewhere” but no one could actually place us.

When we got back to the hotel room Jon pulled me to the bed.

“Come here Carrie Ann.” Jon said as he kissed my neck.

I laughed, “Hmm, good idea Joey, but first I need to call Michelle’s brother before he gets the FBI involved.”

“Ok, ok.” He said letting me go.

I smiled and picked up the phone then I dialed Zack’s cell number.

“Hello?” he answered.

“Hello brother dear.” I said.

“Michelle?! Oh thank god. You’ve had us worried sick.”

“Yeah, sorry about that.”

“Where the hell are you?”

“Chicago.”

“Chi...Chicago?!”

“Yep.”

“Why?”

“Nothing to do in Charlotte. Decided to enjoy my days off here.”

“You’re with Jon?”

“Yup.”

“Of course you are. Are you ok?”

“Just fine. We had a great day. No paparazzi, just me and my man.”

Zack sighed, “You could have said something.”

“Didn’t want to fight with you.”

“Are you going to stay there?”

“Yeah. I’m already at the hotel you’ll be at tomorrow night anyway. I’ll be here when you get here.”

“Ok, fine. I’m just glad you’re safe.”

“I’m fine.”

“Ok. See you tomorrow.”

“Bye.” I hung up.

“Everything ok?” Jon asked.

“He’s pissed, but what’s new? Now then, Carrie Ann wants her Joey.” I said as I pushed him back on the bed.

Day 8- ~~Charlotte, NC~~ Chicago, IL (Day Off)

The next day Jon and I posed as Carrie Ann and Joey again. We were in bed a good part of the morning and were ready to go out by lunch. We went to a Chicago Pizzeria, which really did have the best pizza I’d ever tasted. JKP had nothing on Chicago Pizza.

“This is so nice.” I said as I held Jon’s arm as we walked down the street.

“What is Carrie Ann?” he asked.

“Just walking down the street without fear. This is the most normal we’ve ever had the chance to be. I like it.”

“I’m glad. It’s nice to see you so happy.”

“You make me happy Joey.”

“Good.” He said as he kissed me.

“Sometimes I wish it could always be like this.”

“You mean be different people and just start a new life?”

“Yeah, exactly.”

“Sometimes I wish that too.”

“You do?”

“Of course. Our lives are very overwhelming. I don’t know about you, but I certainly never expected the circus this life became when I got my record deal.”

I shook my head, “I didn’t expect it either. Not like this anyway. I do miss anonymity sometimes.”

“I know. Me too.”

“This is nice though. I love this.”

“Good. You want to go check out Millennium Park? They have a beautiful rooftop garden.”

I smiled, “Sounds great.”

So Jon and I went to the park. It was so beautiful and breathtaking. We spent the rest of the day wandering around the park. For dinner we went to the ‘Little Italy’ district of the city and had amazing Italian food. After dinner we went back to the hotel. When we went in the room I found Zack sitting in our bed watching TV.

“What the...” I started.

Zack looked at us and did a double take, “This is how you’ve been getting around without being recognized?”

“Yes. It’s worked wonderfully. What are you doing in our room?”

“I figured it was unlikely you’d call me when you got in so I figured I’d hang around and wait.”

“My god...I’m not a kid Zachary, lay off.”

“Then stop acting like one.”

“Ugh! I’m here, I’m safe, you see me, so get out!” I cried.

“Fine.” Zack said as he stormed out of the room.

“I’m sorry about that.” I said.

Jon shook his head, “Don’t worry about it. Come here.” He pulled me into his arms and kissed me. He always had a way of making everything better.

Day 9- Chicago, IL

The next day Jon had to head home. He wanted to spend as much time with his kids as possible before the tour. I was ok with it though. We’d see each other in a couple of weeks at the Grammy’s anyway. He was performing and I was going as Rich’s date. We said our goodbyes then he left. I decided to get a little relaxation in before the show. I was glad I did because Zack had plenty to say as we were headed to the mall.

“It’s happening again.” He said.

I sighed, “What is?”

“You...Jon...history is repeating. He changes who you are Mich.”

“Oh my god, not this crap again.”

“You seriously don’t see what he does to you?”

“He makes me happy! You’re the one pissing me off.”

“Do you not remember what you were like at 12? This is that all over again.”

“It is not! I’m so sick of everyone telling me I need to be ‘saved’ or that I’m reverting. You know what? I’m not! I’m a woman in her 20s that is enjoying life. Why is that such a problem?!” I cried.

“Because you’re being self destructive!”

“Back off Zachary! Back off!”

We pulled up to the mall and had to turn on the public personas so the fighting ceased...for the moment anyway.

The show was fine and Zack and I didn't speak the rest of the night. After the show everyone in the cast went to dinner but I had already had enough of Zachary for one night. I went to my room and decided to have a nice quiet night alone.

Alone. Yes. Me. Michelle Morris. Alone. I know, not something that is known to happen frequently, but something I sorely needed. I really was sick of everyone trying to 'save me from myself'. As if I was some sort of problem to be remedied. Ugh! Zack was right about one thing, this was 1991 all over again, but not because of me, because he didn't know how to back the hell off and let me live my own life. As a kid I always assumed he treated me that way because I was just a kid...but now...I was an adult and he still wouldn't let me live my own life my way. Sometimes I don't know why I even bother trying to explain my point of view to him. He never gets it...I don't think he even tries sometimes.

I eventually got lost in my thoughts and fell fast asleep.