

PRT 376- "Tangled Webs"

Life was such a mess. I had just left my apartment, where I'd spent the night with Ryan. He was awesome and I really liked him, but there just wasn't passion between us like I had with other men...not that I didn't enjoy being with him, because I totally did...but we were definitely more friends with benefits than anything else.

Anyway, when I'd gone to make breakfast I realized how empty my kitchen was and how long it'd been since I'd actually gone grocery shopping. After Ryan left I got dressed and headed out to the store.

I saw the photogs when I pulled into the parking lot. I tried to ignore them as I grabbed a shopping cart and went inside. They wouldn't bother me inside. I was pushing my cart down the aisle trying to figure out what I wanted to buy. As I turned down the chip aisle I saw Dot, Steph, and Romeo. (Yes, Jon seriously named his youngest son 'Romeo'. Poor kid. He was only 5 now...when he started school that would be a nightmare...anyway.) I had a bad feeling about this. "Michelle, hi." Stephanie said. I think she was happier to see me than she wanted to be. Steph and I had gotten really close when I was her step mom, much to the chagrin of Dot.

"Hey Steph...Dot." I said politely.

I could tell Dot was less than thrilled to see me, "Hello Michelle."

"You're dating Uncle Rich?" Steph asked me.

"Sorta. We're seeing each other." I replied.

"That's why you were spending time with Dad? To make sure he was ok with it?"

"Yeah, your father and I are still friends. I didn't want to upset him."

"And he was ok with it?" she asked carefully.

"Yeah, or I wouldn't have done it."

"Hmm, it's still weird."

"Steph, can you take your brother to pick a cereal? I'd like to have a moment with Michelle." Dot said.

"I'm not a child you know. I can handle an adult conversation."

"Yes, but your brother is a child. Now please just do it."

"Yeah, I'm going." Steph said as she took her brother and walked away.

I looked at Dot, "What?"

"You're seriously seeing Rich?" she asked.

"Among other men, yes."

"And you're seriously going to tell me one of those other men isn't Jon?"

"Yeah, because he's not. Jon and I are just friends."

"I'm not stupid. You've always been after my husband...ever since you were a teenager. You really expect me to believe you just up and moved on to Rich?"

"Believe what you want, I really don't care."

"Come on Michelle, you and Jon have never been able to be 'just friends'."

"People grow up. I'm not a kid anymore. Why would I want Jon back anyway? He beat me, remember? You're the one he loves enough not to hit. It's a miracle we're even friends after what he did to me."

"He hit you when you dated too."

"Yeah, I also presumed you were different because you were his wife. Evidently he just loves you enough to not beat you."

"Can you honestly tell me you don't still love him?"

"Dot, listen, I do love him and always will. I never have denied that. Jon is a very special part of my past. That being said, he is my past. I don't want him back. He made his choice and he chose you."

"So you really aren't seeing Jon?"

"I'm really not."

"So this Rich thing isn't just a stunt to get the press off the trail of you and Jon?"

"No, I really like Rich."

Dot raised an eyebrow, "Fine. If you're going to date Rich I guess I should learn to tolerate you. Rich is a big part of our lives...he's practically Jon's brother you know."

"I'm well aware of that."

"OK, then you understand that we'll have to learn to co-exist. How would you and Rich like to join Jon and I for dinner

tomorrow night?" Dot asked.

I felt a knot form in the pit of my stomach. I did not want to agree. I knew it was a bad idea. I didn't want to go and I knew Jon would be furious if I agreed. But if I said no then it would stir up something else entirely I didn't want to deal with. "Sure, sounds great."

"Awesome. I'll have Jon get with Rich and pick a time and place."

"Great! I should get back to shopping. I guess I'll see you tomorrow."

Dot nodded, "See you tomorrow."

Oh. My. God.

What had I just done?

Mina

~~~~~

Adam had brought Prince Diamond back to my apartment and was trying to tend to his wounds. Prince Diamond had yet to wake up.

"Do you think he'll be ok?" I asked.

"I'm not sure. I'm doing everything I can...but he really needs a proper hospital." Adam said.

"We can't do that. Nemesis will be after him."

"And you think you're in a position to protect him?"

"Well, no...but you are. You have your Morpher, right?"

Adam sighed, "You didn't mention you wanted me to play body guard too."

"Please?"

"Fine. I'll protect him."

"Thank you."

"I wish he'd wake up. I'd really like to know how he's even here."

"Yeah, me too."

"You should call Serena. She would want to know about this."

"Not until we know if he's ok. Serena cares about Prince Diamond. When she thought he died it hurt her. I'm not going to call her and say 'oh he's alive...but maybe not for long'. That would just be mean."

"OK, point. You should at least call Amy. I could use some help from a real doctor."

"Fine. I'll call Amy."

I picked up the phone and dialed Amy's number.

"Hello?" she answered.

"Amy, hey, it's Mina. I need your help." I said.

"What's going on?"

"I have...an old friend here. He's hurt and we can't take him to a hospital because Nemesis will find him. Adam is doing everything he can but he said he needs a real doctor to help."

"Adam? I...I'm sure he's capable of handling this on his own."

"He said he's not. Please Aims, we need you."

"Who is your old friend anyway?"

"I'll tell you, but you have to promise not to tell the other girls. Not until we know if he'll be ok."

"Fine. Who is it?"

"Prince Diamond."

"What?!"

"I know. He's alive...for now anyway. Nemesis really did a number on him."

"Oh boy. OK, fine. I'm on my way."

"Thanks! You're the best." I said hanging up.

Amy

~~~~~

I hung up the phone and sighed. I really didn't want to see Adam, especially not with Mina around, but Prince Diamond was alive and needed help. He'd saved Serena's life before. This was the least I could do for him now. I still felt horribly guilty about sleeping with Adam, but I had to push that aside. I grabbed some things I thought I may need to help Prince Diamond and then I headed to Mina's quick as I could.

I got to the door and she let me in.

"Thanks for coming so quickly." She said as she pulled me to where she had Diamond. Adam was tending to him.

"Hi." I said softly.

"Amy, hi...um...I think he may have internal bleeding and he has several contusions." Adam said.

I nodded, "I'll examine him."

I set to work, trying really hard to focus on the task at hand, and not Adam.

Michelle

~~~~~

I paid for my things and headed home. I put everything away and I decided I needed to try to warn Jon before Dot told him. This was going to suck. I still had that knot in my stomach but there was no way out of this. I sat down and logged into MySpace and typed a message:

*Jon,*

*Let me start off by apologizing in advance. I was cornered and had no choice.*

*I ran into Dot at the store today and she was drilling me about seeing Rich. I was trying to handle it as casually as possible then she mentioned wanting the four of us to go out to dinner tomorrow. I couldn't very well say no so I told her yes. I know this is going to be very uncomfortable for both of us, but I also think if we pull this off then it may make Dot believe we're just friends. She doesn't believe you right now, I don't know what she said, but it was clear to me she doesn't buy whatever you told her.*

*Anyway, I had another idea. If we can just make it through dinner, then when you get Dot home you can tell her you need to go to Rich's to work on some press releases or writing or whatever. He said we can stay in his guest house so we can be together when it's all over.*

*Please, please don't be angry with me. Dot is just testing us. I don't like this either, but I think, in the long run, this will help us be together.*

*Love,*

*Mich*

I clicked 'send' and sighed. I really hoped he'd understand. Now I needed to warn Rich. I picked up the phone and dialed his number.

"Hello?"

"Rich, hey, it's me."

"Hey, what's up?"

"You have plans tomorrow?"

"No. Why?"

"Well...I ran into Dot at the store."

"Oh no..."

"Yeah. She wants the four of us to go to dinner together tomorrow."

"As it you, me, her, and Jon?"

"Yeah."

"Oh boy."

"I know. I don't like the idea either, but what could I say?"

"You're right. Ok, I'm in."

"Great. And afterwards...does your offer to let Jon and I use the guest house still stand?"

"Of course."

"Ok, thanks."

"I take it you'll be making this up to him after dinner."

"If he lets me, yeah."

"Man, I hope he doesn't kill me."

"It'll be fine. I think he understands why I'm doing this now and that I really love him."

"He's the only one of the men you're seeing that you do love isn't he?"

"No. I love Rocky also."

"Oh, right."

"But it's a different love. I can't explain it. But I need to be with him and I think this is the only way. I appreciate your help."

"Hey, it's not like I'm seeing anyone else and you're cute enough."

I laughed, "Thanks."

"I'll see you tomorrow."

"OK, bye." I hung up.

This was not good...at all. What had I gotten myself in to? I was falling madly in love with Jon again. How had this happened? It was just supposed to be casual and fun.

I sat down and sighed.

I was never going to be over Jon. I thought back to the first time I saw him. We were just kids...ok I was just a kid, he was in his 20s, whatever. The point is that I knew the moment I met him that he was something special. I never dreamed that 18 years later we would still be playing these same games. And it was the same. We were still hiding and hoping the press wouldn't find out about us. We were still lying to Dot. We were still sneaking around. And I was still in over my head. The only difference now was that no laws were being broken by our seeing each other. And yes, yes...I know. I was his wife at one point. I had actually won. I had managed to get him to leave her and marry me. Then Hunter came along and you know the rest. Maybe I should have stuck it out. The abuse would have stopped anyway. After becoming a Ranger again and coming into my powers he wouldn't have touched me. Granted, I don't think he takes seriously just how powerful I am...but if he ever touched me again he'd quickly learn to respect my power.

It was kind of funny to look back at all those people who told me that I didn't love Jon and a kid was too young to know what love was. I knew it and I felt it for him. In spite of everyone's objections and my family's best efforts to break us up, we always found our way back together. I loved Jon. He was a beautiful man...inside and out. His eyes could make me melt...but so could his kind heart. And, yeah, he didn't understand the super heroine thing. He'd been trying to get me to give it up since he found out about it, but I couldn't entirely fault him for that. I hid my identity from him for nearly 10 years. Besides, he wasn't a super hero. He didn't know the sense of obligation that one develops from that type of responsibility. Honestly, I felt only other Rangers and Sailor Soldiers could understand it. That was the benefit to dating another Ranger. But Jon wasn't a Ranger and never would be. He'd never understand that you don't just walk away from the power or that once a Ranger, always a Ranger. It wasn't like I could just take off my transformation bracelet and be done with it...although it would be nice if that were the case.

But in the end, in spite of Jon not understanding that one part of my life, he did know me well and we did love each other very much.

I decided to check to see if I had a reply from Jon. I really, really hoped he wasn't too angry at me. I logged in. He had replied. I opened it, fearful of the worst:

*Mich,*

*I am mad, but not at you. She just got home and told me about this. She was grinning from ear to ear like she had finally*

*caught me in something. I agree with you. If we can just get through dinner, then maybe it will be easier for us to be together. Dinner can't last more than a couple of hours, right? I don't like this either, but I think it's the only way. Tell Rich I said thank you for his offer. I really do appreciate it, regardless of circumstances.*  
*See you then,*  
*Jon*

*P.S. I can't wait to hold you in my arms again*

I let out a sigh of relief. One dinner and it would all be ok.