

PRT 358- “Things Are Not Always What They Seem”

The bus pulled up to the hotel in Florida and I stood up to stretch. Traveling was my least favorite part of this job, but it came with the territory. I grabbed my backpack and got off the bus.

We weren't actually in Florida to race, for once. There was a series of schools we were going to go talk to. What they thought a small group of NASCAR racers could offer to kids, I didn't know, but I certainly didn't mind doing it. I liked telling kids to follow their dreams...partly because Michele telling me that is how I got to where I was.

I went inside to hotel and met up with the other three racers and the event coordinator.

“Ok, I know you guys are accustomed to your own rooms, but given the budget for this event we could only afford two rooms. That means you will each be sharing a room.” The event coordinator said.

‘Oh no, I know how this is gonna be separated.’ I thought to myself.

“We have one room for the boys and one for the girls.” He finished.

I sighed.

“What? You mean I have to share a room with Amara?” Ronny asked.

“Yes ma’am.” He said.

“Hey, I’m not thrilled about it either but I don’t think we have a choice. Let’s just get this over with.” I said as I took my room key and headed to find it.

Ronny and I found our room and went inside. I picked my bed and fell back on to it.

“Um, I like the bed closest to the window.” Ronny said.

“Too bad.” I said, not moving.

“Ooook, fine. I’ll just take this one.” Ronny said as she put her stuff down and sat on her bed.

“Good.” I replied as I closed my eyes to rest. I was just starting to doze off when the TV suddenly started blaring. I sat straight up, shocked, “What the...”

“What?” Ronny asked.

“Could that be much louder?”

“Probably, but it’s loud enough.”

“Are you deaf?”

“What?”

I rolled my eyes, “Very funny.”

“Fine, I’ll turn it down.” She said as she turned it to a reasonable volume. I sighed and laid back down.

“OH! The new Britney video! I love this song!” Ronny cried as she started to sing, “Love me/Hate me/Say what you want about me/All of the boys and all of the girls/Are begging to/If you seek Amy”

I grabbed a pillow and put it over my head. “Someone please kill me now.” I mumbled to myself.

“Amara? Are you alright?” Ronny asked.

“Peachy.” I mumbled.

“Oh, you’re trying to take a cat nap aren’t you? I’m sorry.” She said as she turned the TV off.

I took the pillow off my face, “Thank you.”

“No problem.” She said, “So, I take it Michelle survived her brush with Nemesis?”

“Yes. She’s fine. Didn’t Hunter tell you?”

“Yeah, he mentioned it.”

“Then you know what happened.”

“Not really. He just said everything was ok.”

“Why does it matter what happened? Are you upset your boyfriend went to Michelle’s rescue again?”

“Of course not. This wasn’t personal. It was for the sake of the world.”

“Ok then, let it go.”

“I just hope Michelle didn’t get the wrong idea.”

“Oh. My. God. Shut up Ronny. Seriously. Shut. Up.”

RJ

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I was at Dad's helping him move in a new sofa he just bought.

"Right there is fine. Thanks for your help RJ." Dad said.

"No problem." I said as I sat on the new sofa.

"You seem out of it today Son, what's wrong?"

"I made a decision and it's not going to be easy."

"What decision?"

"I'm breaking it off with MJ."

"What? You're asking for an annulment? Why?"

"I can't pretend anymore. It's not fair to her. I love her but I'm not in love with her and she deserves more."

"She loves you so much. This will break her heart."

"I know. It's not easy for me either, but it's the right thing. I realized the other day that she needs someone to be there for her in a way I can't be. I tried to make myself fall in love with her, but I just can't and I can't keep pretending."

"Are you really that unhappy?"

"No. Not at all. I mean, I'm just not in love with her like she is with me. Everytime she tells me she loves me I know she wants to hear it back, so I say it, and I feel like a fraud."

"But you do love her."

"Yeah, not like I should love the woman I call my wife."

Dad nodded, "I understand. If you feel this is the right thing then I'm sure it is."

"Now I just have to figure out how I'm telling MJ."

Amara

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"So then Hunter pushed me in the pool but I had a hold of him and he fell in the water with me!" Ronny laughed as she finished her story. She'd been going on for an hour about how amazing Hunter was and telling stories about things they'd done.

"Ok, Ronny, enough. I really don't care about what you and Hunter do." I snapped.

"Why do you hate me being with Hunter so much?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yeah, I kinda do."

"Fine, I will tell you. Because it's not the way it's meant to be!"

"What do you mean?"

I sighed, "Hotaru is the Soldier of Destruction. She was not supposed to be born. Neptune and I were supposed to prevent the King and Queen's consummation, but we failed...and now we have a Soldier so dark she could destroy the whole galaxy."

"And what does that have to do with Hunter and me?"

"According to a prophesy, there will be a child with a power unlike any other. She will be an amazing force of good and restore balance within the universe. Basically, she'll off set the evil in Hotaru."

"Still not getting what this has to do with Hunter and me."

"This child is said to be the child of Lightning and Thunder."

"Lightning and Thunder? Michelle and Hunter?"

"Bingo."

"So you want to break me and Hunter up so that he can procreate with Michelle and have this foretold child?"

"Exactly."

"You have any idea how lame that sounds? Hunter and I are happy. And even if we did break up there is no guarantee he'd go back to Michelle. She's married...and I thought you guys liked RJ."

"Oh RJ is a great guy. Like him a lot. He's not the man Michelle is supposed to be with."

"You seriously expect Michelle and Hunter to have a kid just because some prophesy says they should?"

"Well, it would be nice."

"Amara, we can't live our lives based on what some prophesy says. None of us can. Hunter and Michelle don't want to be together, you really need to accept that."

“That’s not the way it works. That child has to be born.”

“Amara, if Hotaru wanted she could have destroyed everything already. She hasn’t. You know why? Because she’s not evil. Powerful, perhaps...not evil.”

“She is evil. Mistress 9 lives within her and I don’t want to kill her, but I will if I have to.”

“Hotaru isn’t Mistress 9. She’s under a spell. No, Nemesis just drew out Mistress 9. She is always there.”

“You love Hotaru don’t you?”

“She’s my daughter.”

“It’ll work out, I’m sure...but trying to break Hunter and I up isn’t the way to handle it.”

“Maybe you’re right.”

Ronny nodded, “Listen, I know we’re not the best of friends, but I hate eating alone. I saw a Chili’s down the road. You want to go grab a bite?”

“Eh, why not? We all gotta eat.”

RJ

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I left my dad’s and stopped at my lawyer’s office. I’d had the papers drawn up. I picked them up and headed to the apartment. MJ was there watching TV.

“Hey baby. I’m glad you’re home. Come here.” She said.

This wasn’t going to be easy, “MJ, no...we need to talk.”

She turned the TV off, “You look serious. What’s wrong?”

“There really isn’t any easy way to say this so I guess I better just say it. MJ, this...us...this isn’t working out.”

She cocked her head and looked confused, “What do you mean?”

“Our marriage MJ...it’s not working.” I took a deep breath, “I want an annulment.”

Her face dropped. It looked like someone had just punched her in the stomach.

“Annulment?” she finally got out.

I nodded, “I’m sorry. This just isn’t working.”

“But...I love you.”

“I know you do. I have no doubt about that and I’m so sorry.”

“What did I do? I’ll fix it.”

“Oh sweetheart, it’s nothing you did. Really. This really isn’t about you.”

“Don you dare say ‘it’s not you, it’s me’.”

“I know that’s lame, but it’s true.”

“What happened? I thought we were happy.”

“To be honest with you, you deserve someone who will be in love with you...the way a husband should love a wife. I’m not that someone.”

She took a deep breath, “You don’t love me?”

“I do love you...but I’m not in love with you.”

“Wow, one bad cliché after the next.”

“I know. I’m sorry. I wish there were better words.”

“Please don’t leave me.”

“This is for the best. Believe me.”

“RJ, I love you so much. I don’t care if you don’t love me as much.”

“It’s not fair to you.”

“I don’t care. I can love you enough for the both of us.”

“It doesn’t work that way MJ and you know it.”

She started to cry, “RJ, I’m begging you.”

I hugged her, “I’m so sorry. I don’t want to hurt you but this is the right thing. Please, let’s just sign the annulment papers and be done with it. I don’t want to hurt you any more than I have.”

“You have the papers already?”

“Yes. I wanted this to be as quick and painless as possible. I realize the painless thing didn’t really work but...”

“Fine. Give me a pen.”

I handed her a pen.

She signed, “Here, you’re free.”

I signed the papers as well.

“There, no go. Just go.”

“MJ...”

“It’s Michelle. There isn’t a ‘J’ in my name anymore.”

I nodded, “Ok, Michelle... I do love you.”

“Yeah right.”

“I do. And I’m sorry.”

“Whatever. You don’t want to be with me so just go.”

I sighed and headed out to my car. This was not easy but it needed to be done.

Michelle

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After RJ left I sat there in shock. I couldn’t believe that seriously just happened. I took my wedding ring off and threw it across the room, then I broke down into tears. My marriage was over just like that. One second I was happily married and next...not. I needed to call Min...oh...we’re not talking. Ok...Mia. I needed to call Mia.

I picked up the phone and dialed her number.

“Hello?” she answered.

“Mia, it’s me.” I said.

“Mich? Hun, what’s wrong? You’re crying.”

“RJ left me.”

“What?”

“RJ left me. He had annulment papers and he wanted me to sign them, so I did.”

“Oh my god. I’m so sorry. I’ll be right over.”

“Thanks.”

I hung up and sighed. Mia really was the only friend I really had left.

Amara

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Ronny and I sat at Chili’s eating ribs and drinking margaritas.

“I never thought I’d say this, but I’m actually having fun with you.” Ronny said.

“Alcohol makes everything better.” I said as I took another sip of mine.

“How long have you and Michele been together?”

“Um...like...14 years.”

“And you aren’t married?”

“What state do you live in? In case you didn’t hear, Prop 8 passed. I can’t get married.”

“Oh pish posh, you can marry in other states...and it’s only a matter of time before Prop 8 is over turned. Why didn’t you get married before Prop 8, when it was legal?”

“Why does it matter? Michele and I are happy and we’ll be together whether we’re married or not.”

“Because it’s the ultimate commitment.”

“Yeah, something you can do in about 5 minutes in Vegas and have it annulled 52 hours later...ultimate commitment. Have you seen the divorce rate?”

“Well, ok, it’s supposed to be the ultimate commitment. I’d marry Hunter if he asked.”

“You would?”

“Yeah...he won’t ask...but I’d say yes if he did.”

“Why won’t he ask?”

“Because he’s not ready for that kind of commitment yet. Which is the same problem you have I think.”

“What make you say that?”

“After 14 years you should be ready to commit.”

“I am committed! I’m faithful and I love Michele.”

“Yeah, so propose.”

“I don’t need to propose to prove my love. Michele knows I love her.”

“Amara, I know you’re the guy in the relationship, so listen up...Michele is a girly girl and girls like her dream of their fairy tale weddings and prince...or in this case princess charming. Something tells me you haven’t discussed marriage with Michele and I think you really should.”

“You think so?”

“Yeah, just find out her feelings on it.”

“Hmm, maybe you’re right. Have you discussed marriage with Hunter?”

Ronny laughed, “Oh no. Our relationship isn’t solid enough to take that talk. Yours is...or it better be. If it isn’t solid enough for marriage discussion after 14 years then you have bigger problems.”

“You’re right. I should talk to Michele about marriage.” I said pulling out my cell phone.

“Yes you should...but not right now.”

“Why not?”

“We’re both drunk. Not the time for marriage talk...that’s how Vegas weddings happen.”

“That’s how Michelle married RJ.”

“She loves him.” Ronny said.

“Yeah, she does.”

“As long as she is with RJ I don’t have to worry about Hunter cheating. Michelle would never cheat on RJ.”

“You’re probably right about that.”

“Oh, look at the time. We should get back. We have a busy day tomorrow.”

I nodded and we paid then headed back for the room. We picked up a 6-pack on the way back and sat in bed and drank and talked a while more before we both passed out.

All in all it was a fun night...maybe Ronny wasn’t such a bad person after all...maybe.