

## PRT 366- “Raye, Reiko, and Mars”

“Raye, are you ready?” Chad asked as he waited at the door.

“Yes, yes. I’m coming.” I said as I grabbed my purse and followed him out.

“You realize we’re going shopping, not clubbing, right? You didn’t need to dress up.”

“I just put some make up on. Michelle is being hounded by the press, that makes all of us targets by association. I just wanted to look nice.”

“OK, point. And you always look beautiful.”

“You’re sweet.”

We got to the mall and started walking.

“OK, we need to find something to wear to the London premiere of Mina’s movie.” I said.

“You don’t think we have enough clothes to choose from?” Chad asked.

“Nothing we haven’t been seen in.”

“I can wear a polo shirt and pants. Do I really need a new outfit?”

“Yes, you do, but we have to find me a dress first. You have to coordinate with me.”

Chad sighed, “Lead on.”

We went to several stores and I tried on several dresses. I finally found a spaghetti strapped red dress that I loved. It was fitted at the top but pretty and flowy at the bottom and came to my knees.

“What do you think?” I asked as I spun around, making the dress twirl.

“You look amazing.” Chad said.

I smiled, “I love it.”

We paid for my dress and went to find something for Chad. He convinced me to let him wear a nice pair of jeans, but I decided he needed to wear a black button up shirt. He looked good in black. I found a shirt I approved of that he agreed to wear and we headed for the food court. We were nearly there when my phone rang.

“Hello?” I answered.

“Raye?”

“Yeah. Who is this?”

“Your father.”

I stopped in my tracks and nearly dropped the phone, “What do you want?”

“To talk.”

“Who is it?” Chad asked, he looked worried.

“I have nothing to say to you.” I said into the phone.

“Raye, like it or not I’m still your father.” he said.

“Only by blood.”

“Please, just hear me out.”

“I’m not interested in anything you have to say. I don’t know how you got this number, but don’t use it again.” I said as I hung up. I felt like I’d been punched in the gut.

“Raye, who was that?” Chad asked again.

“My father.”

“Your father?”

“Yeah, Takashi Hino, my father.”

“I didn’t even know he talked to you.”

“He normally doesn’t. In all the years you’ve known me have you ever known him to contact me?”

“No actually.”

“There you go.”

“Are you ok?”

“I’m fine. Takashi is just the guy to slept with my mom. He means nothing to me.”

“Then why do you look like you’ve seen a ghost?”

“It just caught me off guard, that’s all.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Really. Let’s go eat.”

“OK, sure.”

We sat down to eat and as we ate Chad tried to pry and make me talk about feelings...again.

“You never really told me much about your dad.” Chad said.

“There isn’t much to tell. Takashi runs Hino Inc and has deep political ties. That was always more important than his family. When my mother died I became an inconvenience to his career so I was sent to the temple to live with Grandpa. That’s it. There’s nothing else to tell.” I explained.

“I’m sorry. It must have been hard growing up without a father.”

“Not really. I miss my mom, but I never missed Takashi. He made his choice and it wasn’t me.”

“So what do you think he wants now?”

“I have no idea...nor do I really care.”

Chad nodded, “I understand.”

After we ate we headed home. Much to my shock and dismay, Takashi was standing our front door, waiting for me.

“Raye...” he said when he saw me.

“Ah hell no. How did you find me?” I asked.

“I have ways. Please, hear me out.”

I looked at him. I hadn’t seen him in years...he looked exactly how I remembered him, just older. “I told you, I’m not interested in anything you have to say.”

“Reiko, please.”

I cringed at my childhood nickname. My father was ½ Japanese and never much liked that Mom named me something so American so he called me his Reiko. “My name is Raye.”

“I’m sorry. 5 minutes. That’s all I ask.”

I sighed, “Fine, come in.”

We went inside.

“Who is this?” Takashi asked, looking at Chad.

“This is my boyfriend, Chad Holdenford.” I said.

“Oh right. The singer. I’ve read about him. Nice to meet you.”

“Likewise.” Chad said, “I’ll be in the bedroom if you need me.”

I nodded. Chad went to the bedroom and closed the door. Takashi and I sat on the sofa.

“What do you want?” I asked.

“I know I haven’t been much of a father since your mother died and I’m sorry for that.” He said.

“You weren’t much of a father before Mom died.”

“But I tried.”

“I’ll give you that. When we lost Mom you just stopped trying.”

“Reik...Raye, I didn’t know how to raise a little girl. I was terrified.”

“No, you wanted to work and I took up time.”

“Perhaps, but I wouldn’t have known what to do anyway.”

“And you think Grandpa did?”

“He raised your mother. I trusted him to raise you as well...and clearly he did a great job.”

“You could have come around...at least to check in.”

“I know, and I’m sorry. It was hard to see you...it still is honestly.”

“Oh really?”

“Yes. You look so much like your mother. I loved Marissa so much.”

“That’s why you never visited her as she lay dying in the hospital. Guess you didn’t love her more than your job.”

“I wanted to be there but someone had to make money to pay for the medical care. It wasn’t free.”

“You still could have shown her you cared. She needed you. We both did...but you just didn’t care.”

“You think I didn’t care? The hardest thing in my life was losing her.”

“You think it was easy on anyone else? She was my mom...Grandpa’s daughter...we were all hurting. I was just a little girl and so confused. Not only did I lose my mother but I lost my father too.”

“I know. I messed up. I’ve recently realized how messed up my priorities were and I want to make amends.”

I looked at him, “Oh really? What happened?”

“I realized business should never outrank family.”

“Oh? And how is the business doing?”

“The economy has been hard on everyone.”

“Ah-ha!” I cried.

“What?”

“Your business is failing. That’s why you’re here. What do you want? Money? Or are you trying to help your public image and be the good father? Or do you just want your relation to me known to boost sales?”

“None of the above. Reiko, you’re my daughter. I just want to know you.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“What can I do to prove myself?”

“Absolutely nothing. I’m better off without you in my life.”

“You don’t mean that.”

“The last time I saw you was when I was 12...that was 15 years ago. I’ve been doing just fine without you.”

“I know, but...”

“No. I don’t want you in my life Takashi.”

“Risa would be so sad to hear you speak to me like that.”

“Don’t bring Mom into this. Mom would be proud of the woman I’ve become.”

“She would...but she would want us to be a family.”

“Yeah, probably...but you ruined that when you dumped me so don’t blame me. You’re the only one at fault.”

“Reiko, I hope someday you change your mind. I do love you and you really do look like your mother.”

“Goodbye Takashi.” I said as I walked him out. I closed the door behind him and sat back on the sofa and cried.

A few minutes later Chad came out of the room and sat next to me. He put his arm around me and I leaned into him and cried and cried.

“It’s ok Raye.” He whispered as he held me.

“He doesn’t give a damn about me. He just wanted to use me, again. It’s always about him.”

“You don’t need him. You have people that love you and care about you. You have me. I love you so much Raye.”

“I love you too.” I whispered as I hid my face against his neck.

“He’s gone. You don’t need to worry about him anymore.”

“I have a bad feeling it isn’t over Chad. I don’t think he is gone.”

“Then we’ll face him together.”

“Thank you.”

“For what?”

“Putting up with me. I know I can be mean and push you away, but you still stay by my side and love me. I couldn’t ask for a better man.”

“I love you Raye and that will never change. I’ve always loved you.”

“I know.”

“Come on, we need to pack for London.”

I nodded and followed Chad to our room.

I pulled out my suitcase and started packing.

“Do you think Michelle will go to the premiere?” Chad asked.

“Not if she knows what’s good for her. Besides, since those pictures leaked she’ll probably want to keep a low profile.” I said.

“Any idea how those pictures got out?”

“No. To be honest I’m kinda surprised. Michelle is normally more careful.”

“I wouldn’t want to be Jon right now. His family can’t be happy.”

“Dot is probably used to it.”

“That’s sad.”

I nodded, “Yeah, it is.”

“You know I’d never cheat on you, right?”

“I know. I trust you completely. Cheating is so wrong. I’d never cheat on you either.”

“I know. I trust you too...but you did just lie to me.”

I looked at him, “I did?”

“Yeah. You said you trust me completely. You don’t. I know you’re hiding something from me. I don’t know what it is, but you have a secret.”

“What would make you say that?”

“You take off suddenly at odd times, you always have a very thin excuse for where you’ve been, and when I ask you about it you snap at me. If you’re not cheating then you’re hiding something else.”

I sighed, “Chad, I promise you I’m not cheating on you...and I do trust you. Anything I may or may not be keeping a secret has nothing to do with my trust for you...but I hope you trust me enough to know there is a reason for everything I do.”

“Why do you think I haven’t pushed it? I do trust you.”

I nodded. I felt horrible. I did want to tell Chad my secret, but I just couldn’t. It was for the best that he not know. He’d be safer and I could keep one part of my life separate from the battlefield. Besides, how do you explain that you’re the Princess of Mars and a super heroine? How could I expect him to understand that? Moreover, how could I expect him to understand why I’d lied to him since the day we met about it? It was better he never, ever know...and as long as I could help it, he never would.