

PRT 345- "Blame"

I sighed as I shut down my computer. I'd just finished working out next month's budget and I was beyond ready to go upstairs to my apartment and relax. It had been a very long day. I was just about to lock the dojo up and go to my apartment above when Adam came in.

"Hey dude." I said to my business partner, "What's up?"

"I just needed to get out of the apartment. I needed a break from the drama." He said.

"What's going on?" I asked.

"Mina is worried about Mich, and I certainly don't blame her. I'm worried too...but Mich had a break down earlier and RJ called Mina about it. They are both at a loss and I don't know how to help either."

I sighed.

"I'm sorry man...you're worried too I'm sure."

"Yeah." I mumbled.

"You should call her. Maybe you can help."

"I can't."

"It could help."

"No."

"Why not?"

"It doesn't matter." I snapped.

"Rocky, man, what's wrong?"

I sighed again.

"Rocky, talk to me."

"I can't."

"We're best friends, since when can't you talk to me?"

"Since it involves Mina."

"What? Rocky, you better start talking."

"Fine. I can't call Mich because Mina told me to stay away."

"She what? Why would she do that?"

"Because all these rumors and gossip are my fault!" I cried.

"What? What are you talking about?"

"It wasn't Eddie she was with on that video. It was me."

"You?" Adam asked.

"Me. Remember, you couldn't see the faces? It was me. I had on a baseball cap. The tabloid couldn't tell who it was but they wanted to have a scandal and Mich with her co-star worked for them I guess."

"OK, that makes sense...what doesn't make sense is...what were you doing with Michelle? I saw the video and you may not have been able to see the faces clearly, but you could clearly make out the kissing...it looked like a date."

"It was a date...sorta."

"Rocky, why were you with Mich?"

I sighed, "After she lost Aubrey she was devastated and then she got sucked into the Sailor thing and Hotaru was taken and she felt like RJ was slipping away...she was a mess. She called me and invited me to dinner. I had no idea it was a date at first. I thought she just needed a friend so I met her. She was waiting in front of the restaurant when I got there and she grabbed my arm. We walked in and I started to get the idea from the way she held my arm as we went to our table. I figured out pretty quickly what she wanted."

"And you didn't stop her?"

"Why would I? I love her! Adam, when Michelle and I dated last year I fell in love with her again. When she suddenly married RJ I felt like I was losing her all over again."

"You weren't exclusive."

"Doesn't matter. I still fell in love with her and so when she acted like she wanted me I just got blinded by love. So yes, we had a romantic dinner."

"Ok...and the hotel?"

"We did get a hotel. We didn't have sex. She tried but I did stop that. I asked her if she was going to leave RJ. She said no but that she was scared he would leave her. She started crying and I realized that if I slept with her I would just be taking advantage. I couldn't do that to her. We sat in the hotel for hours and I just held her and offered her comfort. That's all I did."

Adam nodded, "And Mina knows this?"

"Michelle told her."

“So in turn Mina told you to stay away from Mich?”

“Right.”

“God. Who else knows about this? Does Jason know?”

“No, and you can’t tell him Adam.”

“Jason is our best friend, how can you not tell him?”

“Because he’s also like a big brother to Mich. It would be like telling Tommy and I happen to value my life way too much.”

Adam sighed, “Fine. I won’t say anything.”

“Thank you.”

“So what are you going to do? Stay away from Michelle forever?”

“No, just for now.”

“Has she called you?”

“Yeah.”

“And?”

“I told her she had other friends to talk to and we couldn’t talk right now.”

“Rocky...don’t you think turning your back on her will make it worse?”

“I don’t know what to do Adam. The last thing I wanna do is hurt Michelle...I don’t know what to do right now.”

“I think Michelle needs all the support she can get. She thinks everyone is turning on her...she’s beyond paranoid...but with you she’s right. You are turning on her.”

“I am not turning on her Adam. I’m trying to help her.”

“By turning on her?”

“I am NOT turning on her.”

“You refuse to be there for her.”

“It’s my fault this is happening to her!”

“It’s not your fault.”

“Oh?”

“Rock, she needs every friend she can get.”

“Not me. Mina is right. I need to stay away. Now drop it.”

Adam sighed, “Fine. I should go home anyway.”

“Ok, see ya.”

After Adam left I locked up and headed upstairs to my apartment. I sat down in the living room and sighed. What a mess.

Hunter

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Ronny had left for a race in Fort Worth, Texas and so I was at the apartment alone. I was lying on the sofa trying to take a nap. I had the GAC Top 20 on as background noise. I was half asleep when I hear the VJ say:

“Joining the countdown this week at number 17 is Marc Broussard featuring Michelle Morris with a song co-penned by Michelle called “When It’s Good”.”

I rolled over and looked at the screen. This was the song she’d written about us. I had heard about it but hadn’t actually heard the song. I knew I should change the channel. Ronny would be mad if I laid her and watched the video. But Ronny wasn’t here and I was curious. I decided to listen to the song just this once.

*Got to apologize*

*Never meant to hurt you so*

*If I could go back in time, I'd make things right, baby don't you know*

*Let's stop wasting time, honey*

*'Cause there's only one way to go*

*We both know we can't deny, we only get one ride, down that road*

*When it's good it's good*

*And when it's bad it ain't that bad*

*Even when the hurt is all that you can feel*

*Then you know the love is real*

*Just a young man, I can't lie  
This is all so new to me  
I'm just trying do things right, 'cause I'm in it for life, and honey I'm in deep  
Now baby take my hand  
I won't you slip away  
Just try the best you can, to be a better man, each and every day*

*When it's good it's good  
And when it's bad it ain't that bad  
Even when the hurt is all that you can feel  
Then you know the love is real  
When it's good it's good  
And when it's bad it ain't that bad  
Even when the hurt is all that you can feel  
Then you know the love is real*

OK...wow...I knew from the lyrics when she wrote that...at least I thought I did. Best I could figure it was sometime in 2006 when we lived in Briarwood. From what I could tell she'd written a lot of songs about our relationship during that time. I'd heard 'Fight' and 'One Day Too Long' from her last album. This song though...it was obvious she tried to get inside my head here...and she succeeded. Then again that made sense. Some of the lyrics in this song were obviously taken from actual conversations. "I'm just a young man/I can't lie/This is all so new to me/I'm just trying to do thing right/Cause I'm in it for life/And honey I'm in deep"...ok so I hadn't said those exact words, but something pretty damn close.

It was somewhat creepy. Not to mention emotional. Why did I watch that video?

She sure was beautiful. God I still loved her.

I went to my room and sat on the bed. I reached in the drawer of my nightstand and pulled out a picture of Michelle and I that I'd put away in there. I looked at it. It was taken at the track back in 2003 when we were living in Blue Bay Harbor and were both still Rangers. Those days were so simple. We loved each other and that was it. That was all that mattered. I knew from the moment I saw her that I loved her.

I promised I'd always be there for her and protect her. And she needed me now. Even her husband who hated me more than anyone else said she needed me. But I still blamed myself for Aubrey's death...which is what started this mess for her. I was to blame for this. The last thing she needed was the man that caused the loss of her child to try to fix it. If I had left well enough alone and not tried to get Michelle back then she might not have lose Aubrey.

"I'm so sorry Mich." I mumbled to myself as I let a tear fall on my picture I held. I felt horrible for Michelle and RJ. They lost their daughter. How did you move past that? How did you even start to forgive the man that was the catalyst for it? Michelle would have made such an amazing mother too. I knew she didn't think so but I knew better. We'd discussed having kids a couple of times but the timing was never right. I think we could have made an amazing set of parents though. One thing is for sure, if we had a daughter that little girl would have had all the love in the world.

Not that it mattered now. Michelle and I were over and I'd lost her for good. We'd never had kids. If she had kids now it would be with RJ. I had to accept that. I really did need to just stay out of her life. She was better off without me.

Why had I let her go anyway? That was a good question. I had no idea what happened. I knew I was tired of her triple life but I knew all along that it wouldn't last forever. I'd been a Ranger before. I knew what it entailed. I should have been more understanding. Then idiot I am...instead of actually telling her how I felt at Kyle and Derrick's wedding and trying to get her back, I jumped her and hurt her worse. Same thing on her birthday last year. Instead of telling her I wanted her back I pinned her to a wall and kissed her. Why did I think these physical showings would be better than just telling her I wanted her back?

I was an idiot.

I needed to accept it was over.

Besides, I had Ronny now. And I cared about Ronny so much. If not for her I would have never made it through this. I didn't love her yet...but it could still happen. I could see myself falling in love with her. I needed to let any Michelle emotions go before I lost Ronny too. It wasn't fair to Ronny...and we did deserve to be happy.

That was it. I had to let this go.

Jon

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"Dad, I'm going out." Stephanie said.

"With who?" I asked.

"Friends."

"What friends?"

"Oh geez. Monica and Amber. We're just gonna go to a movie then we're going back to Monica's."

"Ok. Any boys?"

"No."

"OK. You can go but make sure you have your phone in case your mom or I need you."

"Yes sir. Bye!"

I sighed and went into the kitchen to get a soda. Having a teenager was not easy work. I had a whole new appreciation for what I put Michelle's parents through when she was that age. Steph didn't do anything near what Mich did back then...which was goo because if my teenage daughter was out with men twice her age getting drunk and dancing naked on tables I'd have to kill someone...maybe myself.

I opened my soda and stood by the counter thinking. Michelle was in trouble again. She'd lost the baby...which was horrible. Granted, I wasn't thrilled about Michi being pregnant with that pizza man's baby but I'd never wish a miscarriage on anyone...especially someone I loved as much as I loved Michelle. And I knew if it was bad enough that Mina, of all people, was asking me to help Michelle. It had to be serious.

My thoughts were interrupted by my wife walking in.

"Hey hun." She said as she walked over and kissed me.

"Hey Dot. You got the boys?"

"Yeah, they are all upstairs cleaning up." She said referring to our three sons.

"OK."

"Hey, are you ok Jon?"

"Yeah."

"You don't look ok." She sighed, "I'm gonna regret asking this I'm sure. I've seen the press. Does your sudden melancholy mood have to do with Michelle Morris?"

I sighed, "Do you really wanna talk about Mich?"

"If something about her is bothering you, yeah."

"Ok, fine. Yes. I'm worried about her. Mina Gordon called me and told me Mich is on the edge of a meltdown. Mina wants me to talk to her."

"And of course you said yes. You're going to run to her aid like always."

"I did say yes. She is my friend. You know that."

"She's also your ex-wife and...girlfriend?"

"Mich is not my girlfriend. We're divorced and we haven't been anything more than friends since."

"Right."

"She's married too."

"So? Never stopped you. And if that's the case why can't her husband help her?"

"He's trying. He's at a loss too. Dumbass pizza boy doesn't know how to handle stardom."

"Jon, I'm a normal, non-famous person too."

“You’re different. I’ve known you since before I was famous. You learned the ins and outs of fame with me. RJ just jumped on the train and now he’s finding it’s a bumpier ride than he expected.”

“I guess I can see that. This circus can get overwhelming if you’re not used to it.”

“Which he isn’t and he doesn’t know how to help her with it.”

“And Mina can’t help her?”

“She’s tried.”

“Of course.”

“But it didn’t work. Do I get a say in this?”

“You don’t want me to talk to her do you?”

“Not really. But I know it doesn’t matter. You’ve always been there for her. I know the kids and I will always be second to her.”

“That isn’t true.”

“She fucking kidnapped Stephanie and you wouldn’t even press charges.”

“She didn’t kidnap Stephanie. She actually probably saved Stephanie from running away and you know it. You refuse to give her credit for anything. She isn’t a bad person.”

“Just a slutty person that I don’t want around my children.”

“Dot...”

“Jon, what the hell do you expect?! She stole my husband and continued to sleep with him when I got him back. You expect me to be her best friend?”

“Of course not...but she’s a person and she needs help. Have some compassion for her as a human.”

“Jon, that isn’t fair.”

“It’s true.”

“I just don’t want her anywhere near my family.”

I sighed, “Fine. If you feel that strongly about it I won’t call her.”

“Seriously?”

“Yes. Dot, you have to believe no one means more to me than you and the kids.”

“Thank you.” She said as she hugged me tight.

“I love you.” I said as I held her.

“I love you too.”

After she went upstairs to check on the boys I sat down in the living room. I didn’t like not being able to help Michelle but I couldn’t lose Dot again...and I knew her patience with Mich was wearing thin. I didn’t know what to do now. I didn’t want Michelle to think I abandoned her...but I needed to stay away. What a mess.

Rocky

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I sat in my apartment looking at a picture of Michelle and I that I had out. What had I done? I knew she was married. I never should have gone on a date with her. I knew she was hurting. I took advantage of that. I hadn’t meant to but it happened anyway. I let my love for her blind me to what was really happening.

All I wanted was to make Michelle feel better. I loved her so much and I always had. Honestly, I knew breaking up with her after high school was a mistake. It seemed right at the time. For like a second. And eventually I did start to get over her. I’d dated a few girls since her. Nothing very notable or lasting. But when Michelle moved in with me after Jon kicked her out I started to fall for her again. I fought it because I saw her falling for Hunter. Then after Hunter I fought it because I didn’t want to take advantage of her...which is probably why nothing too much came out of my visit to Reefsides when I stayed with her...other than a few really amazing dates. Then she got back with Hunter. Then after Hunter...again, she was too vulnerable. Hunter was so poisonous to her. When she finally said she wanted to date again...even if it wasn’t exclusive...I finally started to let myself feel for her again...and I had fallen in love with her again...but then came RJ.

It was like whenever I thought there might be a chance someone else entered her life. So when she told me she needed me I guess I let myself get carried away. I knew I didn’t have a chance with her but...it felt good to be needed by her. And then look at the mess I made. I’d known Michelle Morris long enough to know the games the vultures played. I

should have been smarter. If they had never gotten those pictures then none of this would be happening. The press wouldn't have a story and the network couldn't use the rumors to promote their movie...which was sick in and of itself if you asked me.

Then again it maybe it wasn't completely my fault. If I understood correctly things started going downhill when she lost Aubrey and that was Hunter's fault. I always knew he was poison. Hunter Bradley had hurt Michelle in more ways more times than I cared to count. I didn't make a habit of 'hating' people because it was not very...zen...that being said, I disliked Hunter probably more than anyone else. For some completely insane reason that I would never understand Michelle loved him. Hunter totally used that to his advantage and broke Michelle's heart more than I ever could. And if I understood correctly he refused to help her now. Some great guy huh?

Then there was me. Adam thought Michelle needed me but Mina told me to stay away. I didn't want Mich to think I abandoned her but I also didn't wanna make things worse. I didn't know what to do. I did know I was worried that if someone didn't do something soon Michelle would do something...Michelle-like...which was the scariest thought of all.