

## PRT 334- “Vultures, Rivalries, and a Birthday”

It was the day before my birthday and I knew everyone was trying to plan something to make it special. I was still mourning the loss of Aubrey, it was the hardest thing I’d ever faced, but I also knew life wouldn’t stop...so after taking a couple of weeks off with RJ I decided to get back to work.

I was sitting in the studio listening to Serena’s album, which she’d just finished, making sure it was ready for release. I wanted to get a single out and start promotion. I was liking what I was hearing. It was good stuff. I was just starting the last song on the album when I heard something outside. I ran outside and looked around. The wind was slamming and the sky was overcast. This didn’t feel natural. Something was up.

I went inside and picked up my cell phone. I dialed Mina’s number.

“Hello?” Mina answered.

“Mina...go outside.” I said.

“I did. It’s weird isn’t it?”

“Yeah...it doesn’t feel natural.”

“I know. It feels like something is awakening.”

“Another evil? A new team of Rangers?”

“I’m not sure, but be on the alert.”

“I am...but...I don’t think I can train another team.”

“We don’t know that it will come to that. Just keep an eye out.”

“OK. Thanks Mina.”

I finished up my work and left the studio. I went home. RJ was in the living room watching TV.

“Hey babe.” I said.

“Hey MJ. Are you ok?” he asked.

“Yeah. Why?”

“Something seemed off with that wind storm today. I thought it might be connected to a new Ranger team.”

“Yeah, it was weird...but so far no new team.”

“You realize that it’s possible that...”

“I know. But we’ll deal with training when and if it happens.”

“OK. Fair enough. Besides, tomorrow is your birthday and you still haven’t told me what you want to do.”

I groaned, “I don’t want to do anything.”

“MJ, come on, we have to do something.”

“No.”

“How about I make reservations for us and your friends at that Japanese Steakhouse you love?”

“Well...if you think you can get a reservation for that many on such sort notice. They will want to bring their boyfriends.”

“OK, good. That covers dinner. What about during the day?”

“I don’t know RJ. Whatever.”

“You love shopping. We could all go shopping on Robertson.”

“Eh, ok. Sure, why not.”

“OK good, it’s settled.”

“Right now I’m just really tired. Can we go to bed?”

“Sure. Come on.” RJ said as he stood up and took my hand. We went to the bedroom and went to sleep.

The next morning I woke up because I felt someone hovering over me. I opened my eyes and saw RJ holding himself over me. It startled me and I jumped.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Waiting for you to wake up so I can do this.” He said as he lowered himself and kissed me.

“Mmm...ok...not a bad way to wake up.”

“Happy Birthday MJ”

I smiled, “Thanks.”

“So, what do you want for breakfast?”

“You.” I said as I wrapped my arms around RJ and kissed him. I tried to run my fingers through his hair, but there wasn’t much hair left, “Why did you have to cut your hair?” I whined.

“Seemed like the things to do? I just wanted a change.” He said.

“Hmm...” I kissed him and slid my hands under his shirt and...well, it’s my birthday and by now surely you know what I like...you know what happened next.

After we were finally up and dressed we went and got breakfast for real. After we ate we met Mina and Adam on Robertson for some shopping.

“Happy birthday girl!” Mina said hugging me.

“Thanks.” I said.

“Yeah, happy birthday...getting’ old.” Adam teased hugging me next.

I smiled, “Not as old as you.”

“She’s got you there babe.” Mina said.

“So, where to first?” RJ asked.

“Starbucks. I need some coffee before we do anything else.”

“Let’s do it.”

We went to Starbucks then headed out to shop. Along the way the paparazzi hovered and took pictures.

“Happy birthday Michelle.” One of them said.

“Thanks guys.” I said.

“What do you want for your birthday?” another one asked.

“You know what would be a really great gift? Some privacy. Come on guys. I just want some time with my husband and friends. Lay off, ok?”

“Sorry Michelle, we need jobs too.”

I sighed, “You vultures are so irking me.”

“Come on guys, back off. Give us some space.” Mina said.

“You guys are really pushing it.” Adam added.

“Just back off. Take your shots from...over there.” Mina said pointing.

“MJ, come on.” RJ said pulling me into a store. It was a store used to celebrity customers and the staff was good at keeping photogs out.

“Oh man, now I remember why I hate shopping over here.” I said

“No kidding, they are intense today.” Mina agreed.

“You wanna go somewhere else?” RJ asked.

“There’s a low key mall in town. If we can sneak out of here we can go there.” I said.

“How do we sneak out?” Mina asked.

“RJ and I can go out the back and pull the car to the backdoor so you two can get in.” Adam said.

“Good idea. Let’s do it.”

Our plan worked and our shopping trip to the mall was much quieter. It was actually fun. After shopping we headed home to get ready for dinner. I put on a purple sweater and jeans. RJ had on jeans and a violet button up shirt. He always looks so great when he dressed up.

We met up with everyone at the restaurant...it was a large group. Mina, Adam, Serena, Darien, Lita, Andrew, Raye, Chad, Lacey, and Xander. Everyone wished me a happy birthday and we went to go sit down.

“So, we hear you had a run in with the press today.” Raye said.

I rolled my eyes, “Yes, the vultures were loose. It was a pain!”

“They so need to get a life.” Lita said.

“No kidding. Darien and I went to a movie the other night and couldn’t even enjoy it because the vultures kept trying to ask us questions.” Serena said.

“We ended up leaving because it was too much.” Darien agreed.

“You think that’s bad? They were hovering outside our restaurant the other day chasing off customers.” Andrew said.

“I feel for you guys. You didn’t ask for this. At least both Raye and I chose this life.” Chad said.

“So did we when we started dating our girls.” Adam said.

“Comes with the territory.” RJ agreed.

“Oh, Mich, did you hear Amara got signed to a NASCAR team?” Lita asked.

“No, I didn’t. That’s awesome! Wait...it’s not the same team as Ronny is it?” I asked.

“No. Thank goodness. Amara is already talking about how she’s gonna blow Ronny out of the water. She doesn’t like her at all.”

“Oh boy...this should be interesting.”

“No kidding. No one is as competitive on the track as Amara.” Raye said.

“Except Ronny. That girl is one of the most competitive women I’ve ever met.” I said.

“This could really get ugly.” Lita said.

“Very.”

“Lacey, how’s the baby?” Serena asked.

“SERENA!” Raye cried.

“What?! Oh...sorry Mich...”

I forced a smile, “It’s ok. I’m happy for my cousin. After all that will be my little niece for nephew.”

Lacey smiled, “That’s right. And the baby is fine.”

“How are the plans for the move coming?”

“Good. And the sooner the better. Jarrod is determined to play daddy with this baby.”

“Yeah...and RJ said something about Camille being pregnant too.” I said.

Lacey nodded, “Yeah, she is.”

“Jarrod gets around.” Serena said.

“We don’t even know if this baby is his.”

“But he’s demanding a DNA test.” Xander said.

“It doesn’t matter, Xander is the father no matter what.”

“That’s right. This is our family.”

“Sounds like you guys are in for quite a ride.” Lita said.

“To say the very least.” Lacey agreed.

“Have you listened to my album yet?” Serena asked.

“Yeah, it’s great. Any ideas on the first single?” I asked.

“Yeah. ‘Boy Like Me’.”

“Ok, good choice. We’ll get it to radio.”

“You really like the album?”

“I do. You did some good work.”

“Snap!”

“You say that now but only because you have yet to hear my album.” Raye said.

“Oh no.” Chad sighed.

“What? My album is a million times better than yours.” Serena said.

“As if! We all know our album was a hit because of me. I’m the one with talent.” Raye countered.

“Whatever! You know I boosted your sagging career. My fresh ideas and amazing talent saved your stale album last time.”

“Stale? I’ll show you who’s stale...”

“You think so?”

“Serena, stop...” Darien begged.

“Raye, that’s enough.” Chad said.

Serena and Raye glared at each other.

“Here we go again...” Mina and Lita sighed.

“You two cut it out. We’re a team...a band...friendly competition is one thing but this is getting out of hand.” I said.

“Sorry.” Serena and Raye mumbled.

“Like kids, I swear...”

After dinner RJ and I went home. All and all it’d been a great birthday. I changed into my pajamas and climbed in bed next to RJ.

“Did you have a good day?” he asked as he pulled me into his arms.

“Yeah, I did. Thank you.” I said as I cuddled next to him.

“You’re welcome.” He said as he kissed my head.

“I love you so much RJ. I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

“I’m here MJ. I’m here.”

“I know and I’m so glad.”

I fell asleep in RJ’s arms happy and content. Life was shaking right now...and I had a feeling something big was about to go down...but for now I was happy and that was all that mattered.