

PRT 360- "The More Things Change..."

Wow...just...WOW. Michael Jackson had passed away and it was on the cover of every major paper and tabloid. This meant two things. 1) Of course everyone was in mourning. Jackson was a music video icon and, while I can't specifically say he influenced me, his contribution to the realm of music video was undeniable. 2) In spite of the tragic reason, the fact remained, this breaking news means *I* was not breaking news for the moment. This incident had given myself (and pretty much every other tabloid 'friendly' celebrity) a free pass...a reprieve if you will. This isn't to say I was happy about the news, because of course I wasn't...but I was somewhat relieved to have a break from consistent scrutiny. Regardless of the reason behind it, I decided I may as well enjoy it.

I decided my first order of enjoyment would be to go to Starbucks for a Venti White Chocolate Mocha...and I wouldn't take Ty or any other security with me. The unthinkable!

I walked into Starbucks and placed my order then I found a table and sat down while I waited. As I was waiting I heard a familiar voice behind me say my name. I turned around and saw Rocky.

"Rock? Hey!" I said as I stood up and hugged him.

"Hey Mich." He said as he hugged me back.

"What are you doing in LA?" I asked.

"I'm consulting on some martial art stunt work on a TV show."

"Oh wow. Nice."

"Yeah. It's just a couple of days but its extra income."

"Always a good thing." I nodded.

"How are you doing?"

"Eh, I'm ok I guess...I've been better but I've been worse too."

"I'm sorry...about everything."

"I know. It's life. It happens I guess."

"Yeah, but you've gotten your unfair share lately."

"Sure seems that way doesn't it?"

"Yeah. Listen, I'm staying in town tonight, how would you like to go get some dinner...just have some fun and get your mind off things?"

I nodded, "Rocky, I would absolutely love that."

"Great. We'll go anywhere you want."

"Can it just be something simple? Please? Nothing ritzy or fancy."

He laughed, "If you want simple we'll do simple."

"Awesome. How about Chili's?"

"Works for me."

I smiled, "Great. Meet you there around 6?"

"OK, sounds good. I need to head back to work but I'll see you tonight."

I nodded. "OK, see you tonight."

After I finished my coffee I headed home to take a nap then I got dressed for dinner. I was looking forward to hanging out with Rock. He had always been one of my most loyal friends and I really needed that right now. I slipped on some jeans and a purple halter top with spaghetti straps. I wanted to keep it casual. I slipped my flip-flops on and grabbed my purse then headed out.

I got to Chili's and went inside. I knew I may still get recognized, but I could handle fans if the press was otherwise occupied. When I walked in I was greeted by the hostess.

"Welcome to Chili's, how many will it be? Oh, you're Michelle Morris."

I nodded, "Yeah. Nice to meet you. I'm actually meeting a gentleman here. Has he arrived?"

"Hispanic male in a blue polo shirt?"

"Sounds like him."

"Yes ma'am, he's here. This way." She said as she led me to the table.

"Hey Rock." I said as I sat down.

“Hey Mich. How was your day?”

“Fine. I had the day off so I pretty much relaxed.”

“I’m sure it was much needed.”

“You have no idea. How was work?”

“Not bad. I couldn’t be a consultant full time, but it’s a fun change of pace for a little while.”

“You enjoy teaching too much don’t you?”

Rock nodded, “Yeah, I do. It’s like you and acting. You enjoy it, but singing is where your heart is.”

I nodded, “Absolutely. Acting is fun but I would much rather sing if I had to pick one.”

“So I have to admit, I’m surprised you picked this place. No VIP area...it’s out in the open.”

“Yeah, I have a reprieve from the vultures. They are busy circling the Jackson family and other related parties right now. It’s sad but it does take the heat off me.”

“Oh, right. I heard about that. The set was buzzing about it. So sad.”

I nodded, “Agreed. What is even sadder is this is the time the family should be allowed more privacy to handle everything but instead they will be given less.”

“This is the reason you call them vultures.”

I made a face, “Yes...this is exactly the reason. I wish my reprieve from scrutiny didn’t have to come from a tragedy suffered by another family.”

“Part of the gig.”

“This is true. But it wasn’t always this way. Remember when we were teenagers? A stray photographer would snap a picture of us sometimes, but for the most part we just went about our lives.”

Rocky nodded, “Yeah, I remember. You mostly got to be a normal teenager.”

“Yeah...it was almost like I was protected by Angel Grove.”

“Yet you came back to LA.”

“And sometimes I seriously wonder why.”

“Your job.”

“Oh...right.”

I sighed, “I left LA for Blue Bay. I got to sorta be normal there too. Even Reefside, Lakeview, and Briarwood weren’t that bad. Yet I still ended up back here. LA. The city of Angels...yeah right.”

“Not that you’re bitter or anything.”

I laughed, “Of course not.”

“So, I hope you don’t mind me asking...what is the deal with you and Mina?”

I sighed, “Oh lord. She has a low opinion of me and I’m sick of being looked down on.”

“She was your best friend.”

“Yeah, ‘was’ being the operative word there.”

“Whatever it is I figured was bad. She isn’t even speaking to me.”

“What? What do you have to do with anything?”

“Adam said she feels I’m always going to take your side and I’m too blinded by you to be impartial about the situation and she doesn’t want to speak to anyone that, and I quote, ‘may as well be the president of the Michelle fan club’.”

“Oh for Pete’s sake. What a baby.”

“Yeah, I know. It’s insane.”

“She isn’t keeping Adam from talking to you though, right?”

“Nah. She doesn’t like it but she can’t well stop it. We’re best friends and business partners.”

I nodded, “Well that’s something anyway.”

After dinner Rocky walked me to my car.

“Thanks for dinner.” I said.

“Anytime. I guess I’ll be seeing you.”

“Well...it seems silly for you to stay in a stuffy hotel room when I live so close. Would you like to stay at my place tonight?” I asked.

Rocky looked at me, “Are you sure that’s a good idea?”

I nodded, “I’d like it if you stayed.”

“You know what will happen if I do.”

I nodded, “I’m well aware of that.”

“And you’re ok with it?”

"I wouldn't have asked you if I wasn't."

Rocky nodded, "OK. I'll follow you back to your place."

I smiled, "See you there."

We got back to my apartment and went inside. I closed the door behind us.

"Rock." I said.

"Yeah?" he asked as he turned to face me.

I walked over to him and wrapped my arms around him, "Hold me." I whispered.

"For as long as you need." He said as he put his arms around me, pulling me close to him. I rested my head against his shoulder and closed my eyes. I always felt so safe and secure in Rocky's arms and I really needed that feeling right now. We stayed just like that for several minutes, neither of us moving. I finally moved my head and looked at him. I leaned forward and kissed him. He returned the kiss and it started to deepen. When the kiss finally broke I reached for his hand and led him to the bedroom. He laid on the bed and grabbed my hand to pull me on top of him. We kissed for a bit then I pulled away and rested my head on his chest and he held me.

"Are you ok?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I just want to savor every moment of this." I replied.

"I've missed this." He whispered as he kissed the top of my head.

"Me too. So much. Rocky, being with you...in your arms...this feels so right. How did I ever let you go?"

"I'm the one that let you go Mich, it was my fault."

"You have no idea how many times I've thought about what a mistake that was."

"Me too."

"This is so right...I belong with you."

"What? What are you saying?"

"I guess I'm saying I still love you."

"I love you too Mich, you know that."

"I know."

"Are you trying to tell me you want to try again?"

"I do, but not right now. I mean...I don't think I'm ready for anything committed. I do love you but I still need time to get over RJ."

"So you want to date around again for awhile?"

"Yeah...but I do want to be with you."

"So you want me to wait for you...again."

I sighed, "I know I ask a lot."

"Michelle, last time you asked me to wait for you I lost you to RJ...the time before that it was Hunter. I can't wait forever."

"I know that...and I understand. If you don't want to wait that's fine. I don't have a problem with you dating other girls...I mean I do, but you know what I mean. Fair is fair. We can both see other people...but I want to see what happens with us too."

Rocky sighed, "You know I can't tell you no."

I smiled, "One of the many things I love about you. Rock, I promise, I will give us a fair chance this time and if and when I'm ready to commit I will let you know."

Rocky nodded, "OK. I do have a proposition."

"Oh?"

"You should come back to Angel Grove."

"You mean, like, to live?"

"Yes."

"Rock, I actually would love that, but I can't right now. I have a show I'm filming right now, not to mention Starlight Records is in high gear and I have my own album I'm working on."

"What about after Serena and Raye's albums come out? You could finish yours in Angel Grove. You recorded 'Sittin' on Top of the World' in an Angel Grove studio."

"Yeah, but I didn't have the band to consider then. Maybe when I finish up the album."

"Good, I would like to spend more time with you."

I smiled, "I'd like that too." I tilted my head up and kissed him again. I sat up, "I'll be right back."

"Where are you going?"

“The restroom? Is that ok with you?” I asked as I looked back.

Rocky laughed, “Yes, you have my permission.”

“Thank you.” I said as I went in the restroom and closed the door. While I was in there I changed into my pajamas.

When I came out Rocky had stripped to his boxers.

“Mmm, nice.” I smirked.

Needless to say Rocky and I ended up making love...and my god was it awesome. It was familiar, safe, and everything I needed. I fell asleep that night in Rocky’s arms and felt happier than I had in a really long time.

The next morning I was woken up by Rocky moving his arm. I opened my eyes.

“Morning.” I mumbled.

“Hey, sorry. I didn’t mean to wake you, but I have to get to work.” He said.

I nodded and sat up, “Ok. I really enjoyed last night.”

Rocky smiled, “So did I.”

“Are you going back to Angel Grove tonight?”

“Yeah, I need to get back...but you can come visit.”

I nodded, “I’ll try. Oh god, look at the time. I should get ready for work too. I have filming today.”

“We could save time by taking a shower together.”

I laughed, “Somehow I think that would take more time, but I’m game if you are.”

“You really have to ask?”

After both Rock and I were ready for work he walked me to my car and pulled me into his arms.

“I love you Michelle. If you need anything you call me.” He said.

“I promise. I love you too Rock. See you soon.” I said as he opened my door and I got in my car.

I headed to the studio and went to make up to get ready. I had a big day today. JoAnn was going to accuse Damien of cheating on her with her Aunt Meg. It was bound to be emotional but I was ready.

The scene went something like this:

Joey: Did you really think I wouldn’t figure it out? Sending me on a wild goose chase wasn’t while you stayed in town with Aunt Meg wasn’t your smartest move.

Damien: JoAnn, I promise you, there is nothing between me and Meg. I’m just being a friend.

Joey [clearly disgusted]: Right, you expect me to believe that?

Damien: It’s the truth. JoAnn, you’re the one I’m with. You know that.

Joey: Damien, I love you [Pause] you know I love you [Pause] but I can’t say I know you love me [Pause] and you’ve been spending more and more time with Aunt Meg.

Damien: You should know how I feel about you by now. As for Meg, I’m her friend. I’ve been helping her find her daughter [Pause] your cousin. I would think you’d be grateful.

Joey: You promise me that’s all it is? You’re not cheating on me?

Damien: JoAnn, I would never cheat on you [Pause] especially not with your family. I am only her friend. I swear.

[Damien opens his arms to hug Joey]

Joey [hesitates, but then accepts Damien’s embrace]: OK, I trust you. I love you.

[Camera zooms in on Damien’s face. He is clearly distraught in such a way the audience questions his honesty to Joey.

Scene fades.]

I had a few other scenes to film then I went to my dressing room to unwind. I was sitting in a chair with my eyes closed when I heard a knock on my door.

“Come in.” I said.

Paolo walked in, “Nice work today.”

I smiled, “Thanks Paolo. You were good too.”

“It’s been a long day. You want to go get something to eat and relax?”

“I would love that.”

“OK, meet me out front in about...10 minutes?”

“Great. Meet you then.”

I met up with Paolo and we decided to go to a small Mexican restaurant near the studio. We got a table and ordered.

“So, we know JoAnn believes Damien. Does Michelle?” Paolo asked.

I laughed, “No, Michelle does not believe Damien and she thinks that Joey is being an idiot.”

He laughed, “Paolo thinks Damien is being a moron to hurt someone so amazing.”

I blushed, “Are we still talking about Joey?”

Paolo smirked, “Of course.”

I grabbed a chip and some salsa and took a bite.

“So, how have you been holding up Bella? I know you’ve been going through a lot.” Paolo said.

I nodded, “Yeah, but life goes on, right?”

“Si, but it is ok to take time to breath and feel.”

“Believe me, I feel plenty.”

“Well, if you ever want to talk about...anything, I’m a great listener.”

I smiled, “Thanks Paolo, that means a lot.”

“I’m here for you Bella.” He said as he reached for my hand. I didn’t know if it was just the friendly Italian culture, or if he was hitting on me, but when he touched my hand it felt more than friendly.

After dinner he walked me to my car.

“Thanks for dinner Paolo.” I said as I reached for the handle of my car door.

“Anytime.” He said.

It was at this point I noticed he was staring into my eyes. He really was a beautiful man. But he was married...but his eyes just drew me in...I wanted to kiss him so bad, but again, he was married and in all likelihood, he was just being a friend...he wasn’t interested.

“Well, good night.” I finally said as I opened my door and started to get in. It was at this point that Paolo grabbed my hand and pulled me to him, he kissed me passionately and intently. Everything in my head told me to pull away...quickly...but my body promptly told my head to stuff it. I wanted this so much. Working with Paolo...doing love scenes...being close...there was an undeniable sexual tension between us and I wanted this so much. We kissed for a bit before it finally hit me...reprieve from the vultures or not, if I got caught kissing a married man for real then I’d never have peace. I broke the kiss, “We can’t do this in the open.” I said.

Paolo nodded, “I’m sorry.”

“No, I mean...I liked that. We just can’t do it in the open. Someone might see.”

“I know. I wasn’t thinking. I just want you so much. You have no idea what you do to me Michelle.”

“I want you too. But...your wife...are you sure this is what you want?”

“Nobody needs to know.”

“It’s wrong.”

“Bella, I want this so much.”

I sighed, I knew it was wrong but I wanted it too, “Meet me at my apartment.” I said as I explained where it was.

And so yes, we met at my apartment and slept together. It wasn’t anything like what I had with Rock the night before. With Paolo it was just pure passion...not so much emotion...but it felt good...even if it was wrong. And so that night we started, what seemed would be, an on-going affair. Things in my life were about to get a whole lot more complicated.