

"NO, NO, NO!" I cried as my mage fell to the ground in death. I was playing World of Warcraft and I'd just been killed by a Troll Rogue. I hated rogues so much. So much. I released my spirit and started the graveyard run when I saw Lacey's warrior sign on.

I messaged her.

Aztrid (me): Hey!

Kalen (Lace): HEY!

Aztrid: How have you been?

Kalen: Tired, but Mac is finally sleeping through the night.

Let me recap...to fill you in on what happened with Lacey after we defeated Dai Shi...Lacey and Xander got married. Lacey gave birth to a beautiful baby girl a few months later that they named Mackenzie Bly. Yes, after my alter ego Mackenzie. It was an honor. Anyway, soon as Mac was old enough for air travel they moved to Australia. Jarrod was still pushing for a paternity test last time I talked to Lace and she was still refusing. Oh, Jarrod is a whole other thing. He and Camille actually got married as well and had a baby boy a few months after Mac was born. I think they named their son Phoenix or something. Anyway, Jarrod and Camille had followed Lace and Xander to Australia and were still pushing for that test. Anyway...

Aztrid: That's great! How is everything else?

Kalen: Jarrod you mean??? I finally gave him his stupid test.

Aztrid: You did?!?! Ok, and?

Kalen: He's Mac's biological father. But it doesn't matter. Her last name is still Bly, much to Jarrod's chagrin, and Xander is still her dad.

Aztrid: Wow. What does Xan think?

Kalen: That Jarrod is a creep and Mac is his daughter no matter what DNA says.

Aztrid: That's good. Is Jarrod getting visitation?

Kalen: Very limited. I don't want him around Mac more than he has to be.

Aztrid: Are you ok?

Kalen: Yeah, I have a great husband and beautiful daughter. Jarrod is just a smudge on my perfect life.

Aztrid: LOL! So how is work?

Kalen: I have some clients. Not a lot. I'm still limiting my work. I like staying home with Mac...and Xan has a great job so I don't really need to work.

Aztrid: Awesome!!! What job?

Kalen: He's a junior manager at an Australian record label. Right now he's basically an assistant but it's a place to start and it's pretty good money.

Aztrid: That's amazing! Congratulate him for me.

Kalen: I will. How are thing back in LA?

Aztrid: Crazy as always. Mia is a pest, my life is screwy, and all in all it's pure insanity.

Kalen: Wow. Yeah. I don't miss LA...I do miss you though Mich.

Aztrid: I miss you too Lace...but I'm glad you're so happy.

Kalen: I really am...and Australia is so amazing.

Aztrid: I know it is. If things ever calm down here I want to go spend some time there.

Kalen: We'd love to see you.

Aztrid: I've love to see you guys too.

Kalen: Well, I don't have much time and I want to run some dailies so I'll talk to you later?

Aztrid: Ok. Take care. Love you cuz.

Kalen: Love you too. Bye.

I was about to rez my character but I noticed that stupid rogue was camping my corpse. I decided to give it up and log out. I had better things to do than rez all night. I opened up the internet and started to look at the news sites. I was still

getting press but it was dying down some ever since I stopped seeing Jon. My plan was working. No Jon, no scandal. It was nice to see my name on the news feed less. Maybe people would start focusing on my music again...maybe *I* could start focusing on my music again.

Speaking of music...I really needed to re-think the release of Raye's album. I knew she was upset that it was coming out the same day as Jon's album. I could pull back some of the promotion and set a new date. I never wanted to be the type of record exec that pushed release dates back...but Raye wanted this pushed back but felt so guilty about Serena pushing hers back that she'd never do it on her own. I needed to step up and make an executive decision. Raye was right...Jon's album could easily hurt her sales. It was good business to push the album back. I logged into the Starlight Records database and made some changes, sent out some e-mail, and changed Raye's release date from November 10th to TBD (to be determined). This way there was no pressure and Raye could select her own release date when she was comfortable doing so. Besides, I knew she was still stressing about Chad. She didn't need the pressure of promoting an album right now anyway.

I stood up and out of the corner of my eye I saw someone. I spun around in an attack stance, ready to slaughter the intruder. Just before I punched him I saw it was Hunter.

"OH MY GOD! YOU KNOW BETTER!" I screamed.

"Relax, it's just me." Hunter said as he released the defensive stance he'd taken.

"What are you doing here? How did you get in?"

"I'm a ninja, not hard to get into a locked door...and I'm here to talk."

"Nothing to talk about. Please leave."

"Everything to talk about. We belong together Mich."

"No, we don't!"

"Michelle, look me in the eye and tell me you don't love me at all anymore."

I looked in his eyes and saw, in those beautiful blue eyes, the man I had wanted to spend my life with. In his eyes I saw every dream and hope I ever had and I wanted him. Lord knows how much I wanted him...but it was too late. "Love isn't always enough."

"You do love me." Hunter said.

"Hunter, you know that a part of me will always love you. I have since the very first moment I saw you at the track... but too much has happened and I'm not the woman I used to be. It's too late for us."

"What are you talking about? You're still the beautiful, kind, amazing woman I fell in love with."

I fought back tears, "No, I'm really not."

"You've fallen back into the LA life...that scares you. I know it does because I know you. I can help you. I pulled you from that life before and your life was so much better when you left it behind...and it can be again. You can be the woman you were...the woman I know you want to be."

"You don't know me anymore. Just please, go."

Hunter shook his head, "Not until I do this." In one fluid motion he grabbed me, pushed me against the wall, and kissed me with more passion than I had felt in a very, very long time.

I tried to pull away, "Hunter, stop..."

"Is that really what you want?" Hunter asked as he pulled me back into the kiss.

I couldn't help but kiss him back. It felt so right. I finally pushed him away again.

"Tell me you didn't feel what I felt." Hunter said.

"I'm going to the restroom to change for bed. Please be gone when I get out." I said as I went into the restroom. I changed into my pajamas and then I looked in the mirror. I really didn't like what I was seeing...but it's who I was. I sighed and went to my bedroom. Hunter was sitting on the edge of my bed.

I sighed, "Hunter, please leave."

"No." he said

I walked over to the bed and looked down at him, "I'm tired and I don't feel like fighting with you. Just please go."

"Then don't fight." He replied as he grabbed my arms and pulled me down on the bed and rolled on top of me. He kissed me and we made out for awhile before I pushed him off me. He laid back on a pillow.

"Hunter..." I sighed.

"Tell me you didn't love that...that you don't want me."

I sighed again, "Please just..."

"Michelle..." he grabbed my hand and pulled me on top of him. I looked in his eyes. I couldn't deny how much I wanted him.

I kissed him again, "Just for tonight." I whispered between kisses.

"Just for tonight." He agreed.

The next thing I knew clothes were flying every which way and Hunter and I were having the most passionate sex I had had in a VERY long time. Don't get me wrong, Jon was amazing...Ryan, Jesse, and Rocky were awesome too...but there was something about Hunter...everytime he touched me it was like the strongest electrical pulse you could imagine. Being with him was, quite simply, the most intoxicating experience I had ever known.

Words can't properly convey exactly how amazing it was to be with him. Feeling his skin on mine...smelling his wonderful scent...the feel of his hair beneath my fingers...the sensation of having him inside me...it was like my own personal heaven on Earth. It was everything I wanted...and most important everything I needed.

After we finished I rolled over so that I was laying on Hunter as if he were my bed. He wrapped one of his arms tightly around me and brushed my hair gently with his other hand. He was right about one thing...this felt like home. How did this feel so right? I didn't want Hunter back. I knew it couldn't work. Being with Jon and Rock felt right too. Jon was familiar and Rock was...my rock...but nothing like this. Hunter really did feel like home. Ironically I had written a song about Rocky called 'Feels Like Home' back in high school. Anyway, the point was being with Hunter felt safe...right...for a moment I felt like maybe he could save me from myself...but that implied I needed saving and I wasn't convinced I did...everyone else was convinced I did...not me.

I decided to stop over thinking it and enjoy the night. I closed my eyes and started to fall asleep. I kept waking up throughout the night. I did get off him at one point but I still hung on to him like my own personal teddy bear. Anytime I rolled to the other side of the bed and couldn't feel him anymore it woke me up and I cuddled back against him. It was like I couldn't be close enough.

The next morning I was woken up by my phone. I had a text message. I reached over and looked at it. Raye had clearly just found out I moved her release date.

"Everything ok?" Hunter asked.

"I don't know." I mumbled, "I should get ready for work." I started to get up.

"No...not yet." Hunter said pulling me back into his arms. I didn't fight him this time. I just rested in his arms and closed my eyes. I enjoyed the feeling for several more minutes before I finally got up.

"I really do need to get to the office. I have work to do." I said as I stood up and went to pick out some clothes.

"I enjoyed last night." Hunter said sitting up.

I took a deep breath, "It was one night. It's not happening again...and if you ever break into my apartment again I'm calling the cops."

"I will get you back...somehow. We need each other and you know it. I felt it in your kiss...in your touch...in the way you held me last night. This isn't over."

I nodded, "Yes Hunter, it is." I went into the bathroom and got dressed for work then I headed out, leaving Hunter behind.

I walked into my office at Starlight Records and found Raye sitting there waiting for me.

"Were you going to fill me in on my own release date?" Raye asked, clearly upset.

"Yes, today as a matter of fact. I did it last night from home." I said.

"Why?"

"Because Jon's album is due on the same day. I decided it was very bad business to release yours on that day. You're right, his sales would KILL yours. This is your debut solo country album. We need it to do well. You have to gain some creditability as a country artist or else you'll just be another pop star that had a failed crossover album."

"Like Jessica Simpson?"

"Pretty much."

Raye sighed, "You're right. I know you are. It just caught me off guard."

"Now don't worry, all the promotion we scheduled, you'll still do. It will help build up hype for when we do release it. I

didn't give it a new date because I want it to be your call. When you find a date you're happy with let me know and I'll publicize it."

Raye nodded, "OK. Thank you."

"I know work is hard right now. Nemesis is causing us several delays. Serena delayed her album and I delayed mine as well and now you. But don't worry. Once we put Mia in her place all of our albums will come out and it'll be fine."

"I know...and honestly, between my personal life and Nemesis I don't really have the energy to properly promote an album."

"Chad still not talking to you?"

"No, he's not."

"I'm sorry hun...I really didn't think he'd be so mad when he found out about you being Sailor Mars."

"Well...that's not the only reason he's mad."

"What do you mean?"

"I...I feel so guilty and I've been wanting to tell you..."

"What?" I asked.

"Well...Chad is also mad because I kissed another man."

"You what? Wow...I never figured you to...but why did you want to tell me?"

Raye took a deep breath, "The man was Hunter."

I felt my eyes grow very wide, "Hunter? Hunter Bradley?"

Raye nodded.

"I slept with him last night and he kissed my friend?" I paused, "Are you my friend? You kissed Hunter...you had to know how that would make me feel."

"You slept with him...are you guy back together?" Raye asked. She was pale now.

"No, and if I ever considered it we certainly won't be now."

"Michelle, I'm so sorry."

I glared, "Get out of my office."

"Mich, please...I lost Chad, I can't lose you too."

"I said get out."

"I'm sorry..."

"GET OUT!" I cried.

Raye sighed and left.

I went and closed my office door then sat at my desk and fought back tears. I didn't know why this was upsetting me so much. It's not like Hunter and I were back together...and I hadn't even entertained the idea of getting back together...but he was where I felt at home and he claimed to love me...but kissing my friend did not lend itself to loving me. That's when I realized he didn't love me. He wanted me back because he couldn't have me and he couldn't stand that. Well it was too bad for him because he would never have me again. I reached into my desk drawer and pulled out a bottle of Vicodin I had been hiding from Amy and the others. I popped a couple to take the edge off then got back to work. Even with all the delays in album releases there was still a lot of work to be done.