

Episode 8- "To the Duchy"

It had been a month since Dean's passing. In that time I had thrown myself into figuring out Balassario's next move and researching which gemstones on Earth he may be after. I had compiled a list of several rare gems. Some were considered 'lost'. Others were on display in collections. A few were privately owned, and that is where I was focusing. Ballassario hadn't had much luck at the museum and my guess was that he would be trying to target a private collector next to attempt to avoid security, thus not alerting us or SPD. I was trying to gage which gem would be the first target when Rocky walked into the Command Center.

"Mich...you need to get some rest." he said.

"I'm fine." I said.

"You've been working almost 24/7 for a month. Between recording and Rangering you have hardly been home." Rocky said.

"I have to find Ballassario. He's still on Earth. I know he is." I said.

Rocky sighed, "I agree but...ok I didn't think you'd listen to me. I brought a friend. Come on in!"

I looked up and saw Dustin walk in. "Dusty! Hey!" I said as I got up and ran to hug him.

Dustin hugged me back. "Haven't seen you since the memorial." he said.

Dustin had moved to Angel Grove with Marah and they had come to Dean's memorial service to support me but then I'd kinda gone off the radar.

I nodded. "Sorry. Ranger business. You know how it gets. How's your new job coming?"

"Good. I like Angel Grove High. You wanna take a break and catch up?" Dustin asked.

"Sorry Dusty. I can't. I think I am on to something." I said as I sat back down at the computer and got back to work.

Dustin sighed, "OK...mind if I help then?"

"Sure." I said.

"OK. What do you have?" he asked.

"Well, Balassario wants rare gems and I'm figuring he's going to target an individual. The most rare gem in the possession of an individual is the Blood Diamond of Bali and it's owned by Duchess Coleen Samson of Leinster in Ireland." I said.

“OK...so you’re going to Ireland?” Dustin asked.

“Yeah. I think going using my celebrity is the best way to get to the Duchess. Hopefully she’s a fan.” I said.

“That’s risky...you could be seen Morphing.” Rocky chimed in.

“I’ll be careful. It’s a calculated risk but I think it’s my best bet.” I said.

“You are taking the team with you to Ireland?” Dusty asked.

“I don’t see a way to do that. I will have to go in alone.” I said.

“Mich, I...” Rocky started.

“I got this.” I said as I stood up, “I have to go pack.” I added as I walked out.

I headed home and started packing some things when my cell rang. I looked at my caller ID. It was Jon.

I smiled, “Hey baby.” I said as I answered the call.

“Hey babe...I miss you.” he said.

“I miss you. So much.” I said as I kept packing.

“I was hoping you’d say that. Want to accompany me to Russia for some shows I have?” he asked.

I laughed, “I remember what happened last time I went with you to Russia.”

Jon laughed at the memory, “Fair enough...but this time it’s just us, not a laundry list of rock bands with egos.”

“We have to be careful about being seen together.” I said.

“I know. We will be. I really want you to come.” he said.

I sighed. “I would love to but I have a mission. I’m actually headed to Ireland.”

“That’s great! Do what you need to do then fly to Russia.” Jon said.

I thought about it. “I’ll consider it. Depends how long this mission takes me.”

“Ok. I guess I’ll take that. I just miss you so much Michi.” he said.

His voice still sent tingles down my spine. "I miss you too Jonny. I promise I'll do my best to make it to Russia. And if not then I'll meet up with you soon." I said.

"OK. I have to run, but I love you so much." he said.

"I love you too baby. Bye." I said as I hung up. I zipped up my duffel bag and headed to the airport. I was taking my private jet. I had to do this right if I wanted to get in with the Duchess.

Once I was on my jet and safely in the air I got settled and decided to call the Duchess. Holly had gotten me the number to the Duchy and texted it to me. I called the number.

"Duchy Leinster." a voice said.

"Hello, this is Michelle Morris. My manager spoke with you earlier. I'd like to speak to Duchess Colleen if possible." I said.

"Oh, Ms. Morris, yes of course. We've been expecting your call. Please hold for the Duchess please." the voice said.

A couple of minutes later a female voice spoke. "Ms. Morris, this is Duchess Colleen. It is a pleasure to hear from you. I am a big fan of your work."

"I've heard as much and I am quite a fan of yours as well. Your fashion sense is second to none. I am on my way to Ireland and I was hoping that perhaps I might stop by your Duchy and pick your brain on some fashion ideas for my upcoming tour." I said.

"Oh, I would be simply honored. I will give you a tour of the Duchy. You must stay the night." the Duchess said.

"How can I resist an offer like that? I will absolutely stay. I should be arriving in Ireland in about 10 hours. I can call you when I land and give you an estimate on my arrival at the Duchy." I said.

"That would be wonderful. Let me give you my personal number so you don't have to jump through hoops to get me on the phone again." she said as she gave me her cell phone number.

"Got it. Thank you so much Duchess. I can't wait to meet you." I said.

"Likewise. I promise you will have a wonderful time at my Duchy. See you soon!" she said.

"See you soon!" I replied as I hung up. I knew this was a work trip...a mission really, but I was actually excited to meet the Duchess. She sounded wonderful.

I still had quite the long flight ahead of me so I went to the bedroom and decided to take a

nap. I needed to be rested and on top of my game if I was going to get to the gemstone undetected.

Once I landed in Ireland I got word the Duchess had actually sent a car to pick me up. It was very kind of her and I truly couldn't wait to meet her.

I arrived at the Duchy and was in awe of it's beauty as we drove up to her estate. It was breathtaking. When we pulled up to her home she was standing in the front with some of her staff.

"Ms. Morris, what a pleasure to meet you. I'm Duchess Colleen. Welcome to my Duchy." she said shaking my hand.

"Duchess Colleen, the pleasure is all mine. And please, call me Michelle." I said shaking her hand.

"Only if you call me Colleen. I am sure we will be great friends. No need for formalities." she said.

I smiled, "Deal."

"Well then Michelle, my staff will carry your bags to your room. I hope you will indulge me in allowing me to give you a tour of my estate." Colleen said.

I nodded, "I would love nothing more."

I honestly was interested in seeing her estate, but I had to remember that I was here to find the Blood Diamond and ensure Balassario didn't get his grubby hands on it. If I was a duchess with a super valuable gemstone where would I keep it? On display? Or in a safe hidden from view? Surely I would keep it at my primary estate. Right?

Colleen showed me to ballroom, dining room, throne room, and about 12 other rooms. I saw no sign of the Blood Diamond. I didn't want to ask about it because it would put it on her radar and I didn't want her to think I was specifically interested in it.

Finally, we made it to her study and there, in, what looked to be a very secure glass case, sat the Blood Diamond.

"And this is the prize of my gemstone collection. It's called the Blood Diamond of Bali. I keep it in my office so I can admire it. It is simply the most beautiful stone I've ever seen in my life. The moment I saw it I knew I had to have it." Colleen said.

"It is truly beautiful. I can tell it means a lot to you. It's clearly well protected." I said.

Colleen nodded. "Yes. To display such an expensive gem requires top notch security. It might be safer locked in the safe but I just enjoy looking at it so much. Besides, it is just too beautiful to lock away. Something is pretty deserves to be admired at every opportunity. It's

worth the extra security to have the chance to admire it on a daily basis.”

“I completely understand. It is certainly gorgeous.” I agreed. I felt a little bit better. She had very tight security. I wasn’t sure if it would be enough to keep Balassierio out. I did hope I could find out sooner rather than later. The longer it took to deter him the greater the risk my true purpose for being here would be discovered and the last thing I needed was a duchess figuring out I was the Purple Ranger.

After the tour Colleen showed me to my room, which was more of a suite than a room. It was very nice and I was truly enjoying this mission. I just needed to get it done before Colleen was aware that her precious diamond was a target of a space mobster.