

Episode 7- "In a Flash"

I was sitting in the studio with Mina working on mixing a special edition live album I was releasing soon when my cell rang. "Take 5 Min." I said as I muted all the tracks and took out my phone. I looked and saw "Dusty" along with his picture on my caller ID. "Hello?" I answered.

"Mich, hey!" Dustin's friendly voice said.

I smiled. "Dusty! It's so good to hear from you. It's been awhile. What's been going on?"

"I'm sorry it's been so long. But I am calling with, what I hope, is good news." he said.

"OK, what's up?" I asked.

"Well, as you know I've been teaching high school English for a few years now." he said.

I laughed. "I know, which is still hilarious to me given your lack of proper English in high school."

"I know, I know. Anyway, I've been offered a really good position at Angel Grove High. Marah and I will be moving to Angel Grove next week." he said.

"Are you serious?!" Oh wow! That is awesome!" I cried.

"I figured you'd be excited. I know I am. We'll be in town this weekend to find a house. I hope we can meet up at some point." he said.

"Of course we can! I will always make time for you." I said.

"Great! I'll text you when I'm in town. I have to go but I wanted to tell you the news." he said.

I smiled, "I'm glad you did! Can't wait to see you!"

"Same. Talk to you this weekend. Bye!" he said.

"Bye." I said hanging up.

"That sounded happy." Mina said.

I nodded. "Dusty is moving to Angel Grove. He got a job at AGH."

"That's awesome! I know he's a really close friend of yours. It will be nice having him here." Mina said.

"You have no idea. Dusty is, next to you, my best friend. He has seen the worst of me and is still there. Having him in town will be amazing." I said.

Mina hugged me. "I'm happy for you."

I was about to head into the studio when my phone rang again. This time caller ID said "Mom".

"Hello?" I answered.

"Mich, I need you to get to Angel Grove General Hospital." she said.

“What? Why?” I asked.

“It’s Dean. He is very sick.” Mom took a breath, “He’s dying. Please get here.”

I felt my body go numb. “I’m on my way.” I hung up.

“What happened?” Mina asked.

“Mom said Dean is in the hospital. He’s dying.” I said, still in shock.

“Oh my god. I’ll drive you. We’ll call Rocky on the way.” Mina said putting her hand on my shoulder. I just nodded.

I arrived at the hospital and found my mom. Dean’s son Charlie was there already as well.

“Momma.” I said as I hugged her. “What’s happening?”

“Dean has a blood infection. The antibiotics aren’t working and they aren’t sure they can treat it.” Mom said.

I looked at her confused. “Are you saying we’re going to lose him?”

“It’s a likely possibility.” Mom said. I could tell she was holding back tears.

“Have you called Zachary and Tommy?” I asked.

Mom nodded. “They are on their way.”

Just then Rocky walked in. I hugged him and explained what was happening.

“Mom, is there anything I can do?” I asked.

“He’s awake right now if you want to see him.” Mom said.

I nodded and looked at Rock.

“Do you want me to come with you?” he asked.

I nodded and took his hand.

We walked into Dean’s hospital room and he was watching TV. “Hey!” I said.

Dean smiled. “Hey little girl.”

“How are you feeling?” I asked.

“I’ve been better.” he replied.

I nodded and sat next to his bed. Rocky sat next to me.

“Hi Rocky.” Dean said.

Rocky smiled at him. “Hi.”

I sat there in silence for a second. If Dean was dying I needed to talk but I didn’t know what to say. This could be my last chance. This was so awkward. I finally took a breath. “I love you.”

Dean nodded. "I love you too."

"And...I'm glad I had you growing up. I know I didn't make it easy for you but I am so glad you stuck with me. You are really the only dad I ever had. Derek wasn't a father...you were. So, thank you for being my dad." I said.

"Thank you for being my daughter." he said, "I'm proud of the woman you've become. You did good kiddo."

I smiled. "In great part because of you."

I heard the door open and looked up. Zachary walked in.

"Hey old man." Zachary smiled.

"Hi Zack. Well, this is one way to get my whole family together." Dean said.

"You didn't have to go to all this trouble. You just had to ask." Zachary replied.

The door opened again and Tommy came in with Charlie.

"Hi Dean." Tommy said.

"All my kids...thanks for coming guys." Dean said.

"Where else would we be?" I asked.

We all stayed there for several hours visiting with Dean and watching movies. Finally it was time to go. I knew I might not see Dean again. I hugged him. "I love you." I said.

"I love you too." he said as he weakly hugged me.

The next morning I called my mom and found out Dean had fallen into a coma overnight and his body was already shutting down. I rushed back to the hospital. My brothers and mom were there. I held Dean's hand for awhile. It was clear he was leaving us. A few hours later he took his last breath with all of us surrounding his bed. When he was pronounced dead we all broke down. I don't remember the last time I felt such loss and despair. You always know you will have to say goodbye to your parents someday. You never are prepared for it. My brothers and I all hugged and then I hugged my mom for the longest time.

"I don't know what to do without him." she said.

I nodded. "I know. But you have me Mommy. I'm here. Anything you need."

"Anything." Zachary said.

Mom hugged us both. "My babies...I love you both so much."

"We love you Momma. And Mich is right. You have us for whatever you need." Zachary said.

That night Rocky and I went home. I laid in bed and started sobbing. I sobbed so much I was shaking. Rocky got in bed and pulled me into his arms.

"I am so sorry baby." he said as he held me close.

"This isn't fair...Dean was a good man...Derek deserved this. God took the wrong dad." I said through my tears.

"I know baby...it's not fair...not at all." Rocky said as he stroked my hair.

I eventually cried myself to sleep. In my sleep I started to dream.

I looked around. It was kinda foggy. I looked and saw Dean.

"Dean?! Dad! Daddy!" I cried.

"Hey little girl." he smiled.

"Why did you have to go? Why you and not Derek?" I asked.

Dean smiled, "Because it was time."

"NO! It wasn't. Please don't go." I begged.

"I have to...but you are the heart of this family and they need you now more than ever." he said.

"Me? The heart? The heartbreak maybe." I said.

Dean chuckled, "Nah. Michelle, you have always been the heart of this family. You have always shown us the way to heal through love and they all need that now. Your brothers do, Harley will, and your mom definitely does."

"Mommy needs you." I said.

"She's a strong woman...but she will need support. She needs you little girl." he said.

"Are you ok?" I asked.

Dean smiled, "Oh I'm fantastic. I am not in pain anymore. I'm just worried about your mother. Take care of her...until she gets to me. Until then I'm gonna go find a bench and wait for her. I'll always be with you all."

I nodded. "I love you."

"I love you too little girl."

I woke up feeling a sense of peace. That had been a dream right? No...it was more than that...so much more.

I may have felt peace but the hardest part was still to come. Harley had been with Mina and Adam overnight and I still had to tell her that grandpa was gone.

Mina walked in the house with Harley in tow.

"Mommy!" Harley cried.

"Hi baby," I said as I hugged her close.

"Thanks for watching her Mina." Rocky said.

Mina nodded. "If there's anything you need let us know."

I nodded. "Thanks."

Mina left and Harley looked at me.

“Mommy, what’s wrong?” she asked.

“Sit down baby.” I said.

Harley sat and Rocky sat next to her.

“What’s wrong?” Harley asked.

I sat on the other side of Harley and took her hand.

“Honey, Grandpa got really sick.” I said.

“Oh no...but the doctors and fix him right?” she asked.

I shook my head and tried to hold back tears.

“No honey, they couldn’t. Grandpa...he went to the heavens.” I said.

Harley’s eyes went wide. “Grandpa died?” she asked.

Rocky nodded. “Yes Princess.”

Harley started to cry. “No. He needs to come back. The doctors need to bring him back.”

“They tried honey...but they can’t. I know it is hard to understand but we have to just remember how much Grandpa loved us and hang on to that.” I said as I pulled my daughter into my arms.

Harley held on to me and cried. I knew she was too young to fully understand but she understood enough and it broke my heart. I wasn’t sure exactly where my family was going to go from here, but I knew that if I was the heart of the family then I needed to be stronger than ever. I needed a strength that didn’t come from being a Power Ranger, Sailor Solider, or even a Queen. I needed a strength that could only come from within and I just had to hope that was a strength I was capable of.