

Episode 24- "Crimson Fear"

I was SO damn happy to get a text from Cam saying I could wrap things up at SPD.

"We are clearly not going to get anywhere. This was a mistake. Officer Lopez refuses to compromise on any level. Let it be known I tried." I said standing up.

"Mich, wait." Tommy said.

"No. I'm done spinning my wheels. I tried to come to an agreement but that is impossible." I said.

"Officer Lopez will follow orders on any agreement we come to." Cruger said.

I made a face, "So you've said but give her words in here I am not sure I believe that."

"Sir, you can't expect me to allow regulations to be violated so flagrantly." Charlie said.

"That is not what is happening here Officer Lopez, and you will follow orders." Cruger said.

"I do not want to work with a team that hates SPD." Charlie said.

"See...this is pointless. I'm done here." I grabbed my purse and walked out. Tommy was right behind me.

"Mich, we can work this out." Tommy said.

"You're barking up the wrong tree Tom. I tried. Talk to Charlie." I said as I got in my Jeep. "See ya bro."

I drove home to Angel Grove.

I got home and Rocky was sitting in the living room looking very somber.

"Hey babe...um, this doesn't look like the face of victory. What happened?" I asked.

"We destroyed the ship. We got the gems back...most of them anyway." Rocky said.

I looked at him, "OK, that's good...right?" I asked.

"Yes...but not everyone got off the ship before it self destructed." Rocky said.

"What? Are you saying we lost another Ranger?" I asked.

Rocky nodded.

"Oh god..." I froze. I felt the blood rush to my head as I tried to process the fact I'd just lost another friend. "Who?"

Rocky took a deep breath. "Hunter."

I felt like I'd just been stabbed in the heart. "What? Hunter is dead?"

"I am so sorry Mich...I know how much he meant to you." Rocky said wrapping his arms around me.

I was in shock. This couldn't be happening. "No...it's not possible...how...how?" I said.

"He went back for Rory and got him off the ship. Kapri and Finn were about to get caught. He told them to start self-destruct. Cam couldn't get him off in time." Rocky explained.

"This can't be real...oh god...Hunter..." I started to cry.

"I know baby. I know." Rocky said holding me close as he stroked my hair. I cried into his chest.

I ended up crying myself to sleep that night.

The next morning I woke up feeling like I had a hangover. It took me a minute to realize what had happened. It all hit me suddenly like a ton of bricks. Hunter was gone.

I pulled myself out of bed and went to the living room. Rocky was sitting in there with my brother Zachary.

"Zack? What are you doing here?" I asked.

"Rocky called me and told me what happened. I came right away. I knew you needed me." he replied.

I went and sat on his lap and hugged him, curling up in his arms like I did when I was a little girl. I started to cry again.

"Shh, it's ok Michi. I'm here." Zachary said holding me tight.

"I can't handle anymore loss Zack. We lost Dean and then I lost Shane...now Hunter...I can't take much more." I said through my tears.

"It's a lot. I know it is." Zachary said.

"Mich, we still have to tell Harley." Rocky said.

I shook my head, "Not yet. Take her to school. Let her have one more day before we tell her. I'm not ready."

Rocky nodded. "Ok...then Zack, take Mich to the bedroom and stay in there with her while I get Harley off to school. If she sees you like this she will know something is very wrong."

I nodded and went to my bedroom with Zack. I laid in bed and my brother held me while I cried.

Rocky got Harley off to school and not long after Mina and Adam came over.

"I am so sorry Mich." Mina said as she hugged me.

I had a great support system around me. I had a lot of love. Even still, I couldn't do anything but cry. But even in my grief something didn't feel right. I felt he wasn't gone. Maybe wishful thinking, but this feeling in my gut just told me he was coming back. Logic said otherwise. That made everything all the more difficult. Logic and my heart were conflicted and that made it hard to process any of this.

Mina finally convinced me I needed to be with the others. She and Rocky made me get dressed and took me to the dojo. Rocky had closed for the day and made it a place Rangers could gather to grieve. I went in with Mina and all the Ninja Storm Rangers were there along with the Sonic Rangers and some of DinoThunder.

Conner and Kira walked over to me. I did not need this now.

"Michelle, I truly am sorry. I know Hunter meant a lot to you and he really was an amazing guy." Kira said hugging me.

I hugged her back. "Thank you."

"If you need anything please let us know." Conner said.

"I appreciate that Conehead." I said.

"Anytime Shellfish." Conner hugged me.

It was nice to know we really could be civil in times of crisis.

Kapri walked over to me. "Hey...I know there's no words but I am sorry."

If anyone got it, she did. "Thank you."

Kapri and I hugged and cried.

"I know you still loved him very much." Kapri whispered to me.

I nodded.

"Mich..." Dusty pulled me into a hug next.

"This isn't fair Dusty." I whispered as we cried together too.

There was a lot of mourning and tears when we heard the door of the dojo. We presumed it was another Ranger mourner. We looked up and saw...

"...Hunter?!" I said in shock.

Hunter staggered through the doorway. He was beat up and worse for wear, but alive.

Blake ran to him. "Hunter, oh my god, you're alive..."

I blinked and took a beat to process then I ran to him too. "What happened? We thought you were dead."

"I should be. It's a long story...but I need help." Hunter said weakly as he fell into Blake's arms.

"Get him to the Sonic lab, quickly. Adam...you're a doctor...I think he needs your help." Rocky said.

Rocky, Cam, and Blake helped Hunter to the table in the Sonic lab. I grabbed a pillow so he could lay down. He did so. Adam got to work examining him.

"He has a lot of superficial abrasions but I need to make sure there's no internal bleeding." Adam said.

"We have the equipment for those scans." Rocky said.

Adam chuckled, "I know. I'm the one that told you what to get."

"While Adam works, Hunter, can you tell us what happened?" Tori asked.

"I told Kapri to set self destruct. I knew Cam would get her and Finn off. I was fighting Stefano but once he heard the self destruct start he started rushing to escape. I went after him. He made it to one of the on ship teleporters and just as he was teleporting out I grabbed him which teleported me off too. As far as I know we're the only survivors of the

blast. We fought but my Morpher was busted from the previous battle and explosions. Stefano managed to get away. I had no way to contact anyone so I started walking and eventually made it back here.” Hunter explained.

“We thought you were dead.” I said.

“You have no idea how happy we are to see you.” Cam said.

“I’m happy to be seen. I thought I was dead too.” Hunter said.

“Good news, no internal bleeding. Bad news, a couple of cracked ribs and severe bruising.” Adam said.

“So I’ll be sore awhile but I’ll be ok?” Hunter asked.

“Exactly.” Adam nodded.

“That’s wonderful news.” Blake said.

“Hunter, while you’re recovering I’d love it if you would come stay with us.” Mina said.

Adam nodded, “That’s an excellent idea. I can keep an eye on you. Cracked ribs heal but if not cared for properly can lead to punctured lungs.”

“That’s very generous.” Hunter said.

“He accepts.” Blake answered for him.

“Blake, I’m fine.” Hunter said.

“And you’re going to stay that way. I know you won’t go to the hospital so this is the next best thing. You’re staying with Mina and Adam.” Blake said.

Hunter sighed, “Fine. I accept. Thank you.”

Once Hunter was checked out and everyone started to leave to give him some space I decided I needed a minute. “Hey, can I have a minute alone with Hunter?” I asked.

Everyone nodded and left. Rocky hesitated but finally left too.

I sat on the table next to Hunter, “You scared the shit out of me.” I said.

“I’m sorry. I would have contacted someone if I could have.” he said.

I nodded, “I know. I also knew you weren’t dead.”

“But you said you did.” he said.

“Well I mean I did...logically...but my heart told me you weren’t. I told myself it was wishful thinking.” I said.

He nodded. “I know what you mean. When Balassario had you captive I knew you were alive. I couldn’t explain how. I just knew. We still have that connection.”

“I guess we always will.” I said taking his hand.

“Lightning and Thunder...” he said softly.

"I shouldn't say this but when I thought you were gone I realized I might never get the chance. I love you...I always have and always will. I know things have been tense with us and I know we can never be together again but I need you to know that even still I will always love you." I said.

Hunter nodded. "I will always love you too. I would never try to break up Harley's family but I will always love you."

I leaned in and kissed him. I needed to just once more. He kissed me back. "I should go...I'm really glad you're ok." I said.

Hunter forced a smile, "Me too. See you soon."

I stood up and went back out to the main area of the dojo. "Come on Rock, let's go pick up our daughter and do something as a family. I think we need some family time."

Rocky took my hand and nodded, "I think that's a wonderful idea."

This had been the scariest day of my life. Thinking Hunter was dead had shaken me to the core. No words could describe my relief that he was ok. That said, I could never break up my family. Harley was my world. Maybe I should have told Hunter that she was really his daughter...but I never would. I made my bed, now I had to lie in it. I knew Hunter would be ok. Now I just really wanted to spend the afternoon with my daughter. In the end she was what mattered most of all.