

*"I've got my hands at redemption's side
Whose scars are bigger than these doubts of mine
I'll fit all of these monstrosities inside
It'll come alive, come alive"
~ "Redemption" Switchfoot*

"April, phone." Julia said.

I stood up and walked to the phone. "Hello?"

"April, I just wanted to let you know I'll be there tomorrow to come pick you up. It's time to come home." Mom said.

"What? No...why are you doing this to me?" I asked.

"We can't afford Starlight anymore."

"Oh yeah? I guess alcohol is getting expensive huh?"

"April Snyder, that's enough. Now this is your home and you belong here anyway, not at some wilderness school.

Besides, Ed misses you."

"I bet he does."

"Not that I understand why after all the lies you told about him."

"They weren't lies mother, it's the truth."

"Ed loves you, he's a good man. He'd never do what you claim."

"Mom, he would come in my room and force me to have sex with him. Obviously he wasn't satisfied with just you cause he had to have me too."

"If he ever touched you it's cause you're a slut who probably seduced him."

"Oh yeah, I forced him to pull my night gown up and rip off my panties. Yeah, the tears that fell down my face as he forced himself into me were tears of pleasure...sure."

"Stop it, stop the lies April. You know Ed would never do that."

"Whatever, nice to know you still love that monster more than your own daughter."

"Yes I do, how can I possibly love you when you are so impossible?"

"Oh wow, you admit it, big shocker."

"You're coming home tomorrow. I'll see you then. Goodbye April."

"But...no!" I screamed, she had already hung up. I slammed the phone down. This was bad, Derek's trial started tomorrow.

Stacy

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I was working on some paperwork on the deal I had with Krista. It was a lot to get done in a short time. I was so involved in it that I didn't hear Noah come in until he called my name. I looked up.

"Oh...Noah, hey." I said.

"You have time for lunch?" he asked.

"I can't. I have a lot of work to get done."

"You're proving Anna right."

"What?"

"You're becoming too involved...just like your father."

"No I'm not."

"Take it from an outsider, you are." He said.

I sighed, "Well, ok...I guess I can take a lunch break."

"Good, let's go." Noah said. We went across the street to a deli.

"Thanks." I said.

"Anytime, just make me a promise." He said.

"OK."

"Trust me when I tell you that you need a break. I won't bother you unless I feel you're too involved."

I smiled, "OK, I can do that."

"Promise? When I tell you that you need a break you'll drop whatever you're doing and take a break?"

I nodded, "Unless I'm in a meeting I promise."

"Fair enough." He said, "So I hear you got your dad off with only 6 months of time."

"Yeah, which means I have to run the company for 6 months before I can give it back to him."

"Just remember how much you love your graphic designing. Don't give that up."

I nodded, "I won't."

"And don't forget to go out and have fun...like on Saturdays for example...how about this Saturday we go out and have some fun?" Noah asked.

I smiled, "You asking me on a date?"

"Yes, I believe I am. You saying yes?"

"I believe I am." I said.

"Great, pick you up at 7?"

I nodded, "Sounds great."

Harley

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I finished my last lap around the track when I saw Josh was there. I stopped the bike and took off my helmet.

"Hey you." I said.

"Hey, looking good out there." Josh said.

"Good, I have to. DJ is determined to beat me at preliminaries and I'm not about to let him. I have two weeks to make sure I'm on top of my game." I said.

"And you have a week to get ready for the Cyberspace competition, you ready to go practice?" Josh asked.

"In a bit. Noah said he'd meet us at 2, he's having lunch with Stacy right now." I said.

"I'll never get used to Noah and Stacy dating." Josh said.

I laughed, "Be happy for them."

"I am, it's just weird."

"I know, but it's good for both of them." I said

"Yeah, it is."

"So...have you heard from Arissa lately?" I asked.

"No, I think she gave up on trying to get me to forgive her...which is just as well. I don't care if I never see her again."

"I'm sorry you had to go through that."

"It's ok...I mean in all honesty I was never really into her in the first place."

"Really? Someone else on your mind?"

"You could say that. Anyway, I'm sorry about DJ."

"Nah, I wasn't really into him either. He was just a fun way to pass time."

"Yeah..." Josh said.

"Yeah..." I repeated. I noticed we were moving closer and closer. "Josh...I..." I was cut off by Josh pulling my body to his and kissing me. I wrapped my arms around his neck and we kissed for the longest time. It was the most intense kiss I ever shared with anyone and it felt so wonderful.

The kiss finally broke, "Har...I'm sorry."

I focused on trying to catch my breath, "It's ok..."

"We should go to practice."

"Um...yeah, let me put my bike up and we'll go." I said taking off. I couldn't believe that just happened.

Arissa

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Aunt Aria and I had managed to find two of the Gem shards, the best I could figure the Gem had been split into five pieces. Aunt Aria said that it had been said three of the shards ended up in the ocean, but no one knew where the other two had ended up. While Aunt Aria was down in the sub looking for the third shard it was my job to ask around and try to find out what happened to the last two shards.

While I had some alone time I decided to go peek in on Hunter. I was kinda curious what he was up to. I went to the Academy and hid myself in the air vent. I could see and hear Hunter without him seeing me. He was talking to Michelle. "I think it's for the best." Michelle said.

"You really think she'll be safer in Florida?" Hunter asked.

"Yes I do. James is here, not in Florida, and Tony and Mel still have their Ranger powers just in case anything does happen." Michelle said.

"Damn it! I could kill James for this!" Hunter cried.

I listened closer, what had James done?

"I know sweetie, but there's nothing we can do. He already threatened me and Felicity. I can defend myself but Felicity can't. If James did anything to her I could never forgive myself." Michelle said.

"I'll go take him out then our problems will be solved." Hunter said.

"No sweetheart, James is out to kill you, it's too risky. The best thing to do is send Felicity to Florida, where she will be safe, and let the Rangers deal with James. He's not just an ordinary human anymore." Michelle said.

I heard enough. James was obviously after Felicity and Hunter, this was unacceptable. I snuck out of my hiding place and went to track down James, it was time for a heart to heart chat with Aunt Aria's new recruit.

Derek

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I went and knocked on the office door.

"Just a second!" Hunter called. I waited for a second until he opened the door, "Oh Derek, come on in."

I went inside. "Is everything ok?"

"Yeah, just discussing if Felicity would be safer if we sent her to stay with her cousin for awhile." Michelle said.

I nodded, "Maybe it would be for the best." I still though Felicity was a brat but she had kinda grown on my. I really would hate for anything to happen to her.

"That's not your problem though. I assume you're here to discuss the trial?" Hunter asked.

I nodded. "Yeah, exactly."

"Ok...well do you have any questions?" Hunter asked.

"What can I expect? You've been through this before, what's going to happen?" I asked.

"Every trial is different, there is no set formula but after going through my own trial and sitting through Melody Grayson's I can tell you a couple of things to expect. First of all they will try to discredit you anyway way the can, try to make your mother into the victim. They will also try to say that she never raped you, they will do this by either saying the sexual encounter never happened or that it was consensual. It depends on if they are trying to clear her or get the charges lowered to statutory and that depends on how good they think the DA's case is. The important thing to remember is to keep your cool, stay honest, and don't let the defense doubt yourself." Hunter explained.

"So basically it comes down to my word against her's?" I asked.

"I'm afraid so." Hunter said.

"It'll be ok though, we'll all be with you through the whole thing." Michelle said.

"Yeah, and my own father will be supporting the rapist." I said bitterly.

Hunter put his hand on my shoulder, "I know that hurts, but try not to let it get to you too much. We're your second family and you just have to focus on that."

I laughed resentfully, "You guys are my only family now. My dad wouldn't care if I changed my last name to Bradley at this point."

Michelle hugged me. "It'll be ok Derek."

"Thanks. Just for being here." I said hugging Michelle then Hunter. There was a knock on the office door.

"Derek, you have a phone call" Tamara said.

"I do? Who is it?" I asked.

"I don't know, I didn't ask. Julia sent me to get you." Tamara said.

"Oh ok. I'll be right there." I said.

"It'll be ok Derek. Just remember to trust yourself." Hunter said.

"I'll walk with you, I have to talk to April." Michelle said.

I nodded and headed back to the lodge to get the phone. Michelle followed and went looking for April when we got there.

April

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I was sitting on the sofa in the center of the lodge with my knees to my chin when Michelle came and sat next to me.

“I heard your mom called.” She said.

“Yeah.” I replied.

“What did she say?” Michelle asked.

“I’m going back to that house tomorrow.” I said.

“You’re going home?”

“No. I’m leaving home. I’m going back to hell.”

“You consider Starlight your home?”

“It’s the closest thing I’ve ever had to a home. I feel safer here than anywhere. I’m not safe at home.”

“Because of your step father?”

“Yeah. It’ll just happen again. He’ll rape me...I can’t stop him. He’ll beat me into submission if I try to resist.”

“You’re stronger now than you were then.”

“Why? Cause I’m a Ranger? Funny thing is that doesn’t matter. I can’t fight back. He’s too strong. I can kick the shit out of Bots and whatever Arissa throws at me but the biggest monster of them all is too strong for me. God, what were you thinking letting me be a Ranger? Look at what I am? Look who you made the Yellow Ranger.”

“You talk like you’re not worthy and you are. You’ve made an amazing Ranger.”

“Right. All it did was give me a false sense of strength.” I said.

“Maybe we can talk to your mom, give you a scholarship...whatever it takes, maybe we can find a way to keep you here.”

“Stop it! Stop trying to give me hope! There is no more hope for me! It’s over...I lost, I’m going back to that hell hole where Ed can have his way with me anytime he gets a little horny! There’s nothing I can do to stop it. It’s my fate!” I screamed.

“No, you’re wrong, we can change our fate.” Michelle said.

“No! I can’t! Hope is for people who have a chance! I don’t!” I screamed. Visions of Ed and the stuff he did to me and made me do to him flooded my head. “There’s no hope!” I screamed as I got up. I didn’t even know what I was doing at that point. I pushed over the coffee table and knocked over a coat rack and anything else standing. It was like I had totally lost control. I hit and punched anything around.

“April!” Michelle cried pulling at my arm. I pulled away and she reached for me again.

“Let me go!” I screamed as she pulled me into a hug.

“No...no I won’t.” she hugged me tighter and I finally broke down. I started crying and couldn’t stop. “Shh...” she whispered as she hugged me and brushed my hair with her hand. “Destiny, Tiff, clean this up. April let’s go to the dorm.” Michelle said. Tiff and Destiny were staring wide-eyed, they nodded as Michelle guided me to the dorm.

Stacy

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Noah took me back to the office and I set back to work. I had a lot to get done. I was in the middle of something when I got a call. Nikki’s hearing would be in a couple of days. That was one hearing I planned on attending. I smiled and went back to work. Everything was going great.

“Stacy?”

I looked up and saw Krista. “Hey! Come on in.”

“Thanks, I just came to bring you some of the contracts for the deal.” She said.

“Oh, thanks. I’ll have the lawyers look over them and I’ll have them ready for you tomorrow.” I said.

“Great. So, I was thinking about it, I really would like to see your dad again...when can I visit him?”

“Well, I can get you a visitor’s schedule if you’d like.”

“Sure, sounds good.”

“Great, I know he’ll be glad to see an old friend.”

“I can’t wait to see him.” Krista said smiling.

Harley

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“Ok, let’s do it.” Noah said running in.

“About time you got here.” I said.

“Sorry, lunch with Stace went long.” He said.

“How’s that going anyway?” Josh asked.

“Fine. We’re going out Saturday. She’s a great person Josh, I really like her.” Noah said.

“Just be careful. I don’t want to have to be in between my sister and cousin if you guys break up.” Josh said.

“I know...we wouldn’t do that to you.” Noah said.

“Can we please guys? We have a lot of work to do if I’m gonna beat Anna. She has a few years of band practice on me.” I said.

“Oh...right, let’s go.” Josh said taking his place behind the drum set. Noah picked up the bass and I got my guitar and we got to work.

“Good song Har, did you write it?” Josh asked.

“Yeah.” I said.

“Who’s it about?” Noah asked.

“Partly about Jay, partly about...” my voice drifted.

“DJ?” Noah finished.

“Well yeah...sorry, I know he’s your twin...”

“But he was a jerk to you. It’s ok. I know he treated you horrible. I don’t blame you.”

“Thanks Noah.” I said.

“So what made you enter this contest anyway?” Noah asked.

“I think the reason April is being pulled out of Starlight is because of money...I haven’t mentioned this to anyone but if I win the money I’m gonna give it to April so she can stay at Starlight.” I said.

“That’s a great idea...well we’ll win.” Noah said.

“Maybe.” I said.

“We will...we’re the best.” Noah said.

“Thanks.” I said hugging Noah. I looked at Josh, he looked very distant. I started to worry that kiss might have affected our friendship some.

Arissa

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“James, you are a dead man.” I said.

“What did I do now?” James asked.

“Your mission was to go after Michelle. Not Felicity. She’s my sister therefore she’s off limits.” I said.

“Harley is your sister too and you’re trying to kill her.” James said.

I pushed James against a wall and pinned him, “Harley is a Ranger, that’s different. Felicity is a baby, she is innocent and defenseless, don’t forget that.”

“I didn’t touch Felicity.” James said.

“Not for lack of trying. I’m serious James, stay the hell away from Felicity...and Hunter.”

“Wait a second, I made it clear from the start Hunter was my target.”

“Fine, go after Hunter, but I’m warning you now, if you touch Hunter or hurt him in anyway I will kill you. He is my father and he’s done nothing to warrant an attack. Michelle and Harley are our only targets.” I said.

“Your aunt won’t like that.”

“My aunt won’t find out we had this chat, if you want to live that is. Are we clear?”

“Crystal.” James said.

“Good. I knew we could come to an agreement.” I said letting him go.

“You’re psycho.”

I nodded. “And don’t you forget it.”

Derek

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I picked up the phone, not knowing who to expect.

“Hello?” I asked.

“Derek? Hi, it’s your Uncle Derrick.”

I took a deep breath, I hadn’t heard from my uncle in awhile and I didn’t know why he was calling, my guess was to lay into me like Dad had. “Oh, hi Uncle Derrick.”

“I heard about the trial.”

“You don’t believe me do you?”

“Actually I do. That’s why I’m calling. After talking to your father I got the feeling you didn’t have a ton of family support and I just wanted to let you know I’m behind you.”

“But Mom is your sister…”

“Yeah, and you’re my nephew and godson, I trust you wouldn’t make stuff like this up.”

“Thank you Uncle Derrick. You have no idea how much I needed to hear that.” I said.

“I know what it is to need family support. When I told the family I was gay they all turned their backs on me for a very long time. In fact your mother named you after me as a way of showing she was finally willing to accept me again.” He said.

“Yeah, that must have been hard…how is Uncle Kyle anyway?” I asked.

“Fine. He’s been busy with work but we’re all doing fine here. I heard Conner McKnight is working at Starlight Academy?”

“Yeah. You know Conner?”

“Yeah, we went to high school together. Kyle is best friends with Eric and Tally McKnight too…it was the McKnight twins that introduced Kyle and I.”

“Are you serious? Wow, small world.”

“Yeah it is…anyway…stay strong and know you aren’t alone. I am on your side here…and I hope you win your case. What my sister did to you was horrible and I do hope justice is served.” Uncle Derrick said.

“Thank you so much Uncle Derrick.” I said.

“Don’t mention it. I’ll call you soon.”

“OK…love you, and give Uncle Kyle and the girls my love too.”

“Ok, I will. And we all love you too Derek. Bye.”

“Bye.” I hung up and took a deep breath…I finally felt ready to take on the trial.

April

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“I can’t leave Derek before the trial ends.” I said.

“Hold that thought.” Michelle said taking out her cell phone. She dialed a number. “Hello? Mrs. Smith?”

“Michelle? You called my mother?!” I whispered.

She put up a hand to tell me to hold on. “Hi, this is Michelle Bradley from Starlight Academy, I hear you wanted to get April tomorrow?...Right, I understand that.....right, but you see one of her friends here is about to face a major trial and April made a promise to him she’s be here for him through it.....Right, of course, it would be free of charge, consider it a gift since April has been such a joy to have here.....Well perhaps we can work out a scholarship of sorts? We love having April here.....Of course, I’m sure you do miss your daughter.....Another week is all I ask.....Thank you.....Yes of course.....OK thank you.” She hung up, “OK, you can stay through the trial.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yep.”

“Oh my god! Thank you Michelle!” I cried hugging her.

She hugged me back. “See Ape, never lose hope.”