

Episode 9- "Risk"

I dialed Hunter's number. I wasn't looking forward to it. I bit my lip as I heard him answer.

"Hello?"

I felt my breath catch in my throat at the sound of his voice. It took a second before I could speak. "Hunter, it's me. I just wanted to give you a heads up, it's possible, very possible actually, that the Empress brings over her Emperor husband and he...well, he's your counterpart."

There was a pause before Hunter spoke again. "You and I are married and ruling Saturn together in another universe?"

I sighed. Of course that's what he took from it. Then again I couldn't blame him. "Yes, we are. And we're also evil. So, be careful. Empress already went after you once. I don't put it past her to try again."

"OK. I'll warn all the Ninja Storm Rangers, both teams. They will have my back if I need it. Don't worry about me Mich." he said.

"Oh Hunter, of course I worry about you. You know I will always..." I started.

He cut me off, "Please don't finish that sentence. I can't hear you say that to me right now. Cam is already pissed that I cheated on him with, who I thought was, you."

I winced at the mention of Cam. "Sorry about that."

"It wasn't you. You're in Angel Grove just living your happy life with your happy family. I'm the one that was stupid enough to think you'd come back to me, even for a moment." Hunter said.

I opened my mouth, but didn't speak. How did I tell him that it wasn't stupid? That I wanted him every day? That that family should have been his but I was in too deep to tell the truth now? That my marriage was content but not exactly 'happy'? I wanted to say so much but I knew I couldn't. I took a breath. "Just be careful." I finally said.

"I will. Thank you for the heads up." he said, "If that's all, I should go."

"Yeah...that's it. Take care." I said.

"You too." he said hanging up.

I hung up crying. "The Empress is trying to emotionally destroy me and it's working."

Mina came over and hugged me. "I am so sorry Mich. I know how hard dealing with all of this is."

Adam glared at me. "I don't. You're married to Rocky. He is your priority. You should be past your exes and devoted to him."

I sighed. Of course he was defending his best friend. "Adam, I am devoted to Rocky. It doesn't mean I don't have a heart and still care about my exes and what happens to them. I'm not leaving Rocky if that's your concern."

"Good. You know you and Harley are his whole world. He loves you. Don't hurt him." Adam said.

"And I love him. I have no intention of hurting him. And frankly, I don't need this now. I have enough to deal with without you piling on unfounded guilt." I said.

"She's right babe." Mina said rubbing my shoulder.

"You're right. I'm sorry Mich." Adam said.

"It's ok." I said as I turned to Jon. "OK, I warned Hunter...now what's *our* next move? How do we prepare for her next attack?" I asked.

"Like I said, Hunter isn't as powerful as she is. But we should draw her somewhere else so that innocent bystanders can't get injured.... She has defeated worlds with only the two of them before. She has no reason to think she can't again. Let's prove her wrong. We're just going to have to fight. And someone needs to be here to protect the Princess" he said.

I nodded. "I know what I need to do" I said. Jon's talk of how powerful Empress was struck a cord with me. I could be that powerful...I had to be. I went outside and ninja streaked away without another word.

Mina

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I watched Michelle ninja streak away and thought about what she had said. "OH FUCK!" I cried.

"What is it? What's she doing?" Adam asked.

"The one thing she can't. She can be more powerful than Empress but..." I started.

"...she has to use the Amethyst to do it. This isn't good. Rocky is going to freak." Adam finished.

"Ya think? We have to stop her." I sighed.

"Wait, what's going on?" Jon asked.

"I don't know about your Michelle but ours has her power and lifeforce tied to her Amethyst. If she taps directly into her Amethyst it will make her very powerful, but it will also kill her." I explained.

Jon's eyes widened. "Kill her? She can't do that! She should be every bit as powerful as Empress. It's in her, right? She doesn't have to do this!"

"I believe most of the Empress's power is in her willingness to kill therefore she doesn't hold back. Michelle does. Using the Amethyst she can counter whatever the Empress and Emperor throw at her but...it will kill them all." I explained. I stepped out to find the other Soldiers. I saw Michele and Amara.

"What's going on Mina? I saw Michelle ninja streak away." Michele said.

"Yeah...about that...I think she's going to fight Empress alone...with the Amethyst..." I explained.

"Oh no, Amara, we can't let her do that." Michele said grabbing Amara's arm.

Amara wrapped her arm around Michele. "We won't let her. We need to find her fast before she does anything stupid", she said.

Michele nodded. "OK, Mina, you're her best friend, where do you think she could have gone?"

I shook my head. "I don't know."

"Well we have to start somewhere. Amara, any ideas where she might have gone to?" Michele asked.

“We should check Rocky’s Dojo” she said.

Michele nodded, “Let’s go.”

“OK, you two check there. I’ll do some checking of my own. Stay in touch.” I said as I watched them go. After they were gone I pulled out my phone and dialed Jon’s cell phone number and hoped he’d answer.

“This is Jon”, he said as he answered his phone

I cringed at his voice. I fucking hated this bastard, but he was also my best bet right now. “Hi Jon, it’s Mina.” I said

Jon chuckled. “To what could I possibly owe this dubious honor?”, he asked.

I rolled my eyes, “Can the fake pleasantries, I am looking for Michelle. It’s very, very important I find her. Have you heard from her in the last half hour or so?”

“Not since she went off on me in a text message” he said.

I laughed, “You probably deserved it, but that’s not important now. Jon, I need you to really think, hard as I know that is for you. If Michelle wanted to reflect on her life...where would she go?”

Jon chuckled again. “Reflect on her life? I dunno... Sunset?” he said.

“I was more thinking some place she could be alone...if she were in the final hours of her life and wanted to reflect while she could...where would she go?” I pressed.

“Um...”, Jon thought for a minute, “She could be at Sandy Hook overlook. I used to take her there to....nevermind. I’ve taken her there. It’s somewhat remote. Beautiful view of the City”.

I sighed. I needed his help. Crap. “OK, can you go check it out? See if she’s there? If she is, text me and I’ll head that way. I need you to convince her that she has too much to live for to do anything stupid. Just...tell her we can stop Empress without her sacrificing herself.” I said. I needed Jon to know what was at stake but he also didn’t need to know all of our Sailor business either.

Jon sighed. “Ok. But it’ll take me about half an hour to get there”.

“Just hurry. Jon, I’m not exaggerating when I said her life is on the line.” I said firmly.

“I get it. I’ll hurry” he said, “I’ll let you know if she’s there”.

“Thanks.” I hung up and sighed. I hoped someone would find her soon.

Jon (Universe A)

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I drove out to Sandy Hook as fast as I could. I remembered the days that I used to bring girls, including Michelle, up to the cliffs to fool around. I also remembered days when I just wanted to be alone. I would get a bagel and coffee and drive out to Sandy Hook to cry over a girl, or think about life, or dream about being a rock star. It had been a while since I’d been there. But, I still remembered exactly how to get there. As I drove up, I saw someone sitting at the overlook. I knew it had to be her. No one else was around. I parked, got out, and walked up to her. She didn’t look up until I sat down beside her. “I heard you might be in town. Wanna talk?” I asked.

“Nothing to talk about. I know what I have to do to save our world. I am glad you’re here though. You were my first

love...and longest. I'm glad I get to see you again." she smiled at me.

I laid a hand on her knee. "It doesn't have to be this way" I said, "your friends can help you".

"You don't understand the power or the responsibility that it brings. Maybe it's better this way. At least when this is over Earth will be safe and I...I will finally be free." she said closing her eyes.

"You're right. I don't understand. But I do understand that a world without you in it isn't worth saving. If you're gone, I'd rather be gone too", I said.

She looked at me. "You don't mean that. You'd be fine. You have Dot and the kids. I'm just the girl that was your side chick for awhile...an ex. You would be fine."

I smiled. "You're so much more than that. You should know that", I said.

She smiled at me. "Oh really? I am?"

I nodded. "You are. I know I wasn't good to you. But, you do mean a lot to me. I'll always love you, Michelle. Who do you think the song is about? Sure, I love my wife and kids. And after seeing my counterpart, I know how lucky I am to have them. But, I also know how lucky I was to have you. And I'll love you, always"

Her eyes welled up with tears. "I will always love you too Jonny. Oh I wish things could have been different. You know, sometimes I wish my mom would have just let me stay in LA and work on my career and we could have stayed together. Then I never would have gone to Angel Grove in the first place and found out about my stupid powers. We could have had such a great life. I could have lived my life free and not tied down by all this responsibility I never asked for or wanted. I could have just been a girl that had a great career and the love of her life. Oh...I wish it could have been different."

"Me too Michi. But I believe you can find a way to save the world without sacrificing yourself. There has to be another way. What does she have that you don't?", I asked.

"She's evil...she's channeled her power in a way I never have...never wanted to. As a result she's grown her power. And I have to stop her." she said

"You have a team", I argued, "This isn't the Michelle show. You have people to help you. And you have something she doesn't. More than one thing. You have love, compassion, a good heart. What happened to good always winning?" I asked.

"Good will win Jonny...but sometimes it comes at a price." she said

"This is too high a price. You have to think, Michelle. This can't be the only way" I said.

"I have thought about it. I don't know another way to stop her. Not now. Besides, everyone will be ok without me. I'm easily the most expendable on the team. I need to do this for everyone." she said softly.

I grabbed her shoulders, turned her to face me, and gave her a little shake. "You are not expendable. No one will be ok without you. What about your daughter? Rocky? What about me? I need you, Michelle"

Michelle closed her eyes so not to look at me. "Harley..." she whispered.

"What will Harley do without you?" I asked "She needs you. If you don't think about yourself, or me, or anyone else, think of her. Think of her, Michelle!"

Tears started to stream down her cheeks. "You're right. I can't leave my baby without a mom. I don't know what else

to do.”

I held her close and squeezed her. “We’ll think of something. Why don’t you stay with me tonight?” I suggested.

“Stay with you? Jon, was this a ploy to get me to bed?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“What? No. Not at all. Listen, I have an apartment in Manhattan. Come stay with me tonight. No strings attached. You can have my bedroom. I’ll sleep in one of the other rooms. You need rest. That’s all”. I said.

She smiled. “Wow, you can be sweet to me still. I missed that. OK, deal.” she said, “Lead the way.”

I looked around. I didn’t see another car. “How did you get here?” I asked.

She smiled and vanished in a purple streak before reappearing. “Ninja streaked.” she said.

I stared at her, wide eyed. “That’s....interesting. Ok... Get in the car” I said, opening the door for her.

She nodded and got in. “You act like you’re surprised by my powers still.” she said as we started to drive.

I nodded. “I am” I said as I put the car in gear, “I think I always will be”.

She nodded. “You’ll always see me as that kid on Sunset won’t you?”

I laughed, “Not exactly. But, something close to that, probably” I said.

“Yeah...you and everyone else. I’ll always be America’s Fallen Angel. The teen star that went wild. The little girl that partied too hard. The good girl turned party girl. And you and most of your contemporaries will always just see me as a sex toy.” she said.

“Hey, I don’t see you as a sex toy! I see you as the girl that captured my heart all those years ago. And here I am again, still trying my best to protect you from the big, bad world. I know you’ve grown up now, but I still feel that way. I always tried to keep you away from those other guys” I said.

“That’s true. Mostly. You remember when I went off with Baz that night to punish you during the tour we were all on together? You lost your fucking mind!” she said, laughing a little.

I smirked. “I was pissed. I couldn’t believe you went off with him” I said, “those were good days though. We were young. We didn’t have to worry about kids needing braces or bad knees.... All we cared about was how hard we could party”.

“And each other.” she said softly. “What I wouldn’t give to have that back, just for a little while...no powers, no worrying...at the risk of stealing your lyric...like when we were us.”

I smiled. “So, you’ve heard the new album”.

She laughed, “Of course I have! I am the proud owner of every album you have ever done. All of them. Although I think ‘Rollercoaster’ is my favorite one off the new album.”

“Yeah, that was a fun one. I like it too. It’s been a little bit of a rollercoaster lately” I said, “Sometimes I still can’t believe that Rich left”.

“I can’t believe he betrayed us all.” she said looking down.

I shrugged. “He’s angry. I don’t know why, but he is. I just wish he had talked to me first”.

She nodded. "Jon, do you ever wish we had stayed together?"

I sighed. "Sometimes. Sometimes I really do. But, I know I've made mistakes. I don't know if it would have worked anyway. We're different people now though", I shrugged, "I don't know..." I trailed off as we made our way to the city.