

Episode 5- "A Different Kind of Rangers"

"Are you excited?" I asked.

"Uh, yeah! Duh! It's Madison Square Garden!" Harley said.

Jon had invited me to bring Harley and go to see a NY Rangers hockey game with him and Harley was too excited for words. Rocky knew I was taking her. He didn't know who was taking us. I needed to get away from California and I knew Rocky and the team could handle SPD while I took a weekend away.

"I know you're excited, but remember what we talked about. We're going with one of Mommy's friends and Daddy doesn't like this friend so we can't tell him we saw him, ok?" I said.

"Why doesn't Daddy like him? Is he jealous?" Harley asked.

I laughed, "Yeah. You could say that. So this is just going to be our secret, ok?"

"OK Mommy. I won't tell Daddy. I don't want him to be mad." Harley said.

"Good girl." I smiled as the plane landed. I felt a little guilty about making my daughter hide something from her dad but not guilty enough to stop me.

We got off the plane and went to baggage claim and got our bags then went out to the car Jon had waiting for us.

"Have I been to New York City before?" Harley asked.

I nodded, "You have, but it's been awhile. You probably don't remember."

"It's big." she said as she looked out the window while we drove. "It's different than LA."

"Very. You'll like it I'm sure. We're going to spend a few days here so we can check it out." I said.

"Awesome!" Harley said, excited.

The car pulled up to Jon's apartment building and we went up. I had a key to his apartment so I let myself in. "This is my friend's apartment. He's letting us stay with him."

Harley nodded, "I won't tell Daddy."

I smiled, "'Good girl." I said as I showed her to the room she'd be staying in. "You can put your things in here."

"It's pretty." she said as she put her things down and sat on the bed.

She stopped and looked behind me. I turned around. "Hey ba...Jon." I smiled.

"Hi. I'm glad you made it safely." Jon said. I could tell he was dying to kiss me, but wouldn't in front of Harley.

"We did. Harley, this is Mommy's friend Jon. He's the one nice enough to take us to the game and let us stay here. Jon, this is my daughter, Harley." I said.

Jon smiled and went up to Harley. He got on one knee so that he was almost eye level with her as she sat on the bed. "Hi Harley! Your mom has told me a lot about you. What do you think of New York so far?" he asked.

Harley smiled. "It's pretty. Don't worry. I won't tell my Daddy we saw you."

I put my hand on my head. "Oy..."

Jon just kept smiling. "Ok, then" he said. He got up and walked back across the room to me. "She's something else" he said quietly.

"Heh...yeah." I sighed.

"I like your apartment. It's pretty. Do you know any hockey players? Do you know Lundqvist? He's an awesome goalie. Do you play hockey?" Harley fired off questions.

"Um, Har, slow down." I said.

"Sorry." Harley said.

Jon laughed. "It's ok. Um, yeah... I know Henrick. I mean, Lundqvist. He's a good guy" he said.

"That is so cool! Who's your favorite hockey player?" Harley asked.

"Um... I have several. Of course, Gretzky is the GOAT. Lundqvist is on the list for sure. But right now I really like Andy Greene. He's the captain of the New Jersey Devils" he said.

Harley nodded. "Gretzky was a King! He is the best! I like Drew Doughty best. But Jack Campbell is awesome too. He'll be a great replacement when we lose Quick."

Jon nodded. "Yeah, I've seen him in a few games. He's a great up and comer. So, you like a lot of Goaltenders" he said.

Harley nodded. "I'm a d-man. It's my job to protect the goalies. But good goalies are easier to protect."

Jon smiled. "I bet you're a great d-man" he said.

"I am. I'd be better if they let me check...and fight. I have a killer right hook." Harley said proudly.

Jon laughed. "I bet you do, Slugger. They don't let you check until you're older. You'll get there. And by then, you'll know all of the other important skills too".

Harley shrugged. "I guess. So what are we going to do now? I'm hungry. They only gave me pretzels on the plane. Can we eat?"

I sighed. "Harley, relax. I'm sure Jon isn't going to let you starve."

"Well, there are literally thousands of restaurants in the City. Any kind of food you want from all over the world. Plus, our famous hot dogs and pizza. What are you two in the mood for?" he asked.

"I love pizza!" Harley said.

"I know Harley, but I think I'd like to have something else. Jon, do you know of a good Chinese place?" I asked.

Jon smiled. "How authentic do you want it?" he asked.

I laughed, "Surprise me."

Jon grinned. "We're going to Chinatown then. And to give you the full New York City treatment, we're taking the subway" he said.

"Are you sure that's safe given who we are?" I asked.

"This is New York. Of course it's safe. Everyone rides the subway.... Oh, wait... You mean safe in a different way. I guess we could drive..." he said.

I nodded. "I think that's a good idea."

"I don't care. I'm just hungry!" Harley said.

"Ok. Let's go" he said, "I'm ready if you are"

We went out to Jon's car.

"Oh wow...this car is awesome!" Harley cried.

Jon shrugged as he unlocked the car and opened the door for Harley to get in the back and Michelle to get in. "It's ok" he said, grinning, "It's actually one of my favorites".

Harley nodded as she got in. "Well, yeah!"

I laughed as I got in the front seat. "I think you just made a new best friend." I smiled at Jon

He smiled as he got in and started up the car. "I love having you here" he said to Michelle, "I'm glad you came".

I smiled. "So am I. I'm glad you and Har are getting along so well."

"Yeah, me too. She's a great kid" he said.

"Thanks." I smiled as we drove. As we drove Harley was glued to the window like a Garfield plush. "I think she likes it here."

"It's a great city. Very different vibe from L.A. I think she likes it too. You two should come during the Christmas season. Has the kid ever seen snow? There's nothing like NYC at Christmas. We could go to Macy's, FAO Schwarz, ice skating at Rockefeller Center. It's magical" he said.

"Unless you count the ice rink after the ice has been shredded, no she's never seen snow. And I would love that. I really would." I smiled.

"I would love to take her skating. Outdoor skating is the best" he said as he turned into a parking garage, "I don't park on the street in Chinatown, or anywhere in the City for that matter..."

"Don't blame you. And I would love for you to do that." I smiled. "You'd make a great stepdad." I whispered to him with a wink.

His face fell momentarily, then he flashed a grin again and gave a little shrug. "Yeah, if only" he said.

"If only." I said as we got out of the car. Harley grabbed my hand with one of her hands and Jon's hand with the other.

"OK, let's go. I'm starved." Harley said.

Jon looked down at her, then smiled at me. "This is nice" he said as we walked.

I nodded. "It is. I'm really happy." I said as we walked. I found myself wishing it could always be this way. I shook it off. I knew it could never happen. I couldn't break up my family and I knew Jon couldn't either. This would just have to be enough.

We walked a few blocks down Bowery street and arrived at a two story building with red Chinese writing on the outside. It was also in English. Jing Fong Restaurant. "This is it" Jon said, "It doesn't look like much, but trust me, it's amazing". He led us into the restaurant and we were seated. "So, what do you think?" he asked.

"It's cute." I smiled as I looked at the menu.

"It smells funny." Harley said.

My eyes widened, "Harlyn Nicole, shush!"

"Sorry....but it does." Harley mumbled.

Jon laughed. "Well, she doesn't mind giving her opinion, does she!? It does smell a little funny. That's how you know it's real Chinese food" he said.

"She does speak her mind." I sighed.

"It's not a bad thing. You should always be honest. But sometimes you have to change the way that you say something to make people feel better. So, instead of saying it smells funny, you could say, it smells like fish. Or, it smells like garlic and ginger. If you aren't sure what you're smelling, say it smells different.... I don't know... I'm not really good at that. I would say it smells funny too..." Jon shrugged.

Harley laughed. "See!"

I laughed too. "Don't encourage her!"

"I always speak my mind, but I try to be kind. I think that's what I was trying to say" he said.

"I'm not good at that. My best friend Melody is always kind but she also never says what she really thinks." Harley said.

"Mel is a sweet girl." I said.

"Yeah...she's also a wimp. Logan was making fun of her and she just let him. I hit him with a hockey stick and he stopped." Harley said.

I sighed.

"You've got a tough girl on your hands" Jon said.

"No kidding. You want her?" I joked.

"As long as it's a package deal" Jon said.

I blushed. "Of course. We'll come see you anytime."

Jon smiled, taking my meaning. "I already can't wait until next time" he said. We ordered drinks and food and waited for it to come out.

"I'm so excited about the game tomorrow!" Harley said, "Thank you for taking me Jon."

"You're welcome. I'm excited too. I love hockey and The Garden is a great venue" he said.

"Have you ever done a concert there?" Harley asked. She knew his band and she actually liked his music.

"Oh, yeah. I love playing there. It's great" he said.

"Mommy said she played there too." Harley said.

"I did, but I don't think she believes me." I said.

Jon laughed. "She did" he said.

"Why would that many people come see my mommy. She's just...mommy." Harley said.

Jon shrugged. "I'm just Jon" he said.

"But you are a rockstar." Harley said.

He rolled his eyes. "So is your mommy" he said.

Harley shrugged. "I guess. Your music is better."

I laughed. "Thanks Har."

"Sorry Mommy! It is!" Harley said defensively.

Jon laughed. "Thanks for the compliment... But, I happen to really like your mommy's music too" he said.

We finally arrived at the venue and Jon drove up to the valet and we got out. We went inside and Harley was in awe.

"This is awesome!" Harley said. She looked up at Jon. "Jon, can you carry me? I'm so short! I can't see past the adult people."

"Harlyn Nicole you are a big girl. I'm sure Jon doesn't want to carry you through the arena." I said.

"It's no problem" he said. He scooped Harley up and put her on his shoulders so that she could see everything.

I couldn't help but smile. Seeing Jon taking care of Harley really gave me a warm, happy feeling.

"Wow Jon. This is amazing! Thank you so much for letting me come with you." Harley said happily.

Jon smiled. "Anytime kiddo", he said. They got to his box and sat down. "There's food and drinks if the two of you want anything" he said as he grabbed a beer from a large bin of ice with drinks stuck in it.

I got Harley a soda and plate of food and got her settled then I grabbed a beer for myself. Honestly, I didn't care nearly as much about hockey as Harley so I didn't really know everything that was happening in the game. I knew the home team was in blue jerseys and we were playing a team in green jerseys. Aside from that I just enjoyed seeing Harley get excited.

"Jamie Benn is such a great player. If he would put 100% into all his games Dallas would be doing much better." Harley said to Jon as she watched the game.

Jon nodded thoughtfully as he watched the game. "If the whole Dallas team put 100% into all of their games, they could win a cup. They have the talent. They just need to get it together" he said.

"They sure have a better shot than LA. We suck so bad this year they fired our coach midseason. It's so sad. But we got Campbell from Dallas so we won there. He's been a solid backup for Quickie." Harley smiled proudly.

"Yeah, I've been following Campbell for a while. He turned out to be really good after he got some proper development." he said.

"That's Dallas' biggest issue. No goalie coach at the AHL level. We have that in Ontario and it made a huge difference. It's why Dallas can't develop a young goalie properly. I don't know what they will do when Bishop's contract is up." Harley paused. "It would be so cool to be the first girl in the AHL...or even NHL."

"What about the NWHL?" he asked.

"Ugh. I don't wanna play with other girls. You can't check in women's hockey. It's lame." Harley scoffed.

Jon laughed. "That is kind of lame. Well, I think you can do anything you put your mind to" he said.

"I either want to play in the NHL or race pro moto like Mommy's friend Hunter. He's so awesome!" Harley said.

I internally cringed at the mention of Hunter's name. He was kind of what led to the end of my marriage with Jon and Jon was well aware of that.

Jon glanced at Michelle, then smiled at Harley. "That sounds great! I bet you're even more awesome than he is" he said.

Harley smiled. "Not yet. Maybe someday. He's the best moto racer I've ever seen. He coaches me when he's in town for a race and he always gets me passes to watch his races. He's really amazing."

"Yeeeah...um. So what's happening...with this game?" I asked, trying desperately to get the subject off Hunter.

"Well, Lindell just got a penalty for goalie interference. You can't mess with a goalie or stop them from doing their job." Harley explained.

I nodded. "Oh, ok."

"It's not a smart penalty to take. He messed up. So now the Rangers get to have one more person on the ice than the Stars while Lindell sits in the box for two minutes" Jon explained.

"I know about the box. Harley spends a good amount of time in the box." I teased.

Harley rolled her eyes. "Yeah...I have the most penalty minutes in my league."

Jon laughed. "That's something to aspire to... What are most of your penalties for?" he asked.

Harley shrugged. "Roughing and checking."

"I bet you learned that from your mom" Jon teased.

Harley shook her head. "Nah. Mommy doesn't play hockey."

Jon rolled his eyes. "Ok... Anyway. You're a defenseman, right? What do you think of Lindell?" Jon asked.

Harley shook her head. "Overrated. He gets a lot of hype and I don't get it. He's out of position like 90% of the time, takes dumb penalties, and anything he contributes is either an accident or because he's paired with Klingberg, who is very good. He lucked into an amazing partner."

Jon nodded. "You really do know this game. I'm impressed" he said.

"Of course I do. Hockey, moto, and karate are my life." Harley nodded.

Jon nodded. "I'll be right back" he said. He got up to get some food and a soda. He motioned for me to come over.

I nodded and stood up. Harley was too involved in the game to notice. I walked over to Jon. "What's up babe?"

"I just wanted to make sure that you're ok. I saw your face when she mentioned Hunter. I'm fine. I mean, I don't like him obviously, but whatever. Are you ok?" he asked.

I sighed. "I don't like that she's so close to Hunter. She idolizes him and I wish she didn't. I really wish she didn't. But she does. I'm ok. I do wish I wouldn't have let Hunter ruin our marriage but what's done is done."

"Hey, we're leaving the past in the past, right? It's ok" he made a plate and grabbed a soda. "I'm glad she's having a good time".

I nodded. "Past in the past. Yup." I took a breath. "She is having a blast. Thank you for bringing us. It means a lot. Truly. Once she goes to sleep tonight I'll thank you properly." I smirked.

He smiled. "I'm looking forward to it".

"I wish I could kiss you right now." I whispered with a smile.

"Kiss me later" he whispered back, grinning. "We should go back...."

I nodded. We went and sat back down. After the game Jon picked Harley up and we headed back to the car. It was like we were a family and I loved it. On the drive back to the apartment Harley crashed out in the backseat.

"I think you wore her out." I smiled.

He grinned. "Good. Hopefully she'll stay asleep and we can spend some time together".

"I think she's down for the count. If you can carry her to bed when we get back we should have the rest of the night to ourselves." I smiled as I reached for his hand.