CHAPTER 7

*My Unexpected Time to Shine*

“ARIA! What happened?” “I slipped and landed on my ankle. I think I sprained it.” I ran to get help and called 911. I told Janet what happened. She and I both ran back to the ladies room and helped Aria to a chair near the set stage. Michael saw us and came running. Janet was kind enough to let Aria sit on her name chair.

The paramedics came and told us it was just a minor sprain with some bruising. Luckily, she didn’t do anything worse wearing such high heels. The paramedic told her she could have broken her foot. They wrapped her foot in a bandage and told her to stay off her feet for a week. Once the paramedics left, we were all concerned about the shoot. “She can’t do it now.” I said to Janet and Michael. “What are you going to do?” “We should wait until she recovers, Mike.”

“That’s the best idea. I’ll tell Joe we need to re-schedule in two weeks. That should give her plenty of time to heal and enough time for everyone here to set up again.” “I feel horrible.” Aria said as she held back tears. “It’s my fault. If I had just been a little more patient this never would have happened.” “Janet hugged her and told her to stay calm. “I’ll understand if you find someone to replace me. I deserve it.”

Michael assured her that he would do no such thing. “That role has your name written all over it. It’s yours.” “I don’t want to delay your film and cause more problems. I really think you should just replace me and continue.” “Arabella, we are NOT replacing you.” Janet said. “We’d rather wait until you get better and do it the way Mike wants it done. Besides, where are we going to find another girl who can walk in heels the way you do?”

Just then, Aria came up with a light bulb idea. “MICHELLE CAN DO IT!” My eyes popped out of my head. “ARE YOU CRAZY?! NO WAY!” “She can do this like a pro. She used to dance when she was younger.” “Aria, NO!” “Did you really?” Michael asked. “For a short time. I’m not nearly as experienced as Aria. I only did it for about five years.” “She even did runway modeling in high school. She can walk in heels!” “ARIA, I AM GOING TO KILL YOU!” “Michelle, we could really use your help.” Janet said.

“No way. I can’t be in the film. I don’t have the experience, the look or the confidence. I’ve never done anything like that. I will mess up badly and embarrass myself and everyone else. I’m sorry but I won’t do it.” “Not even for me?” Michael asked. “I CAN’T. What is your mother going to think? I work for her.” “I can morph the footage after we get it on film.” Michael said. “THAT’S A GREAT IDEA!!” Janet yelled. “What are you two talking about?”

“It’s a special camera trick. Mike has experience with it. It’s time consuming, but I think we can definitely pull it off.” “Pull WHAT off?” “You act out the scenes with Mike on camera and when the footage is done your face will be morphed.” “Into what?” “Into Arabella.” They both said. “WHAT? How is that possible?” “It’s a really neat technique. Mike has been experimenting with it for months and was planning to do something like that down the road. We needed to test it out first and now we can.”

“Wait, wait, wait! I’m totally confused. WHAT exactly are you planning to do?” “You’ll see what I mean after we tape you.” “I’m NOT doing it!” “Sis, PLEASE! It’s better than delaying the whole film until I can walk.” “I’m not stealing your spotlight. This is your thing, NOT MINE. I can’t take her job. It just wouldn’t feel right.”

“Michelle, please? We need you.” Janet said. “Sis, you can do this!” “I need to get some air. I’ll be back.” I left them all and walked towards the parking lot. Michael followed me and took me to his dressing room. “I know you can do this. Why don’t you want to?” “Because this is Aria’s big break. If I do this, she won’t get the exposure she has been waiting for her entire life. And what is your mother going to think of me?” “She won’t know it’s you, no one will. I promise.” “How is that even possible?” “It’s animation. I can show it to you after we’re done.”

“I can’t. I don’t have the talent Aria has. I had dreams of being a model and dancer too but when my parents died those dreams went down the drain. I had to think like an adult and get a real job to support both of us.” “You’re saying being an entertainer isn’t a real job?” “I didn’t mean it like that. I’m sorry.” “I’m just teasing you, girl. It’s ok. I believe in you and I know you can do this with me.”

“You don’t get it. Aria is a different kind of girl. She’s been dreaming of having an opportunity like this ever since she came into the world. She has worked so hard to be here and I would feel so guilty replacing her in something that I didn’t even earn. She did all the work and I will take all the credit and that’s not something I could do to her. If I do this, I know it will break her heart.”

“Michelle, you’re living for her again.” “I have to in this case.” “No, you don’t. I can tell she wants you to do this. That’s why I am not replacing her. It will still be her in the film. She’ll just be placed on you.” “I don’t even have the stamina that she has. I can’t walk in high heels, Michael. Honestly, I REALLY can’t do it. I will embarrass the both of us as soon as I walk on that stage. I will look so incredibly stupid—“

“SHH!” He covered my mouth with his hand. “Listen to me, please.” He lowered his voice and came closer to me. “I know you can do this. You won’t make any mistakes if I’m next to you helping you along the way. This happened for a reason, Michelle. I was meant to do this with you instead.” “Michael, I’m scared. All my life, I lived outside the spotlight. I don’t know what it’s like to be in it.” “Michelle, if you are brave enough to raise your sister alone and be alone with me in the back of a stage car, I know you can walk beside me in a dress and high heels.”

“Michael, I really don’t want to. I’m not comfortable with it at all.” He then tried to charm me into doing it by kissing me. “That’s not going to work.” “You’re right, it won’t.” He took his hands and started feeling his way into my shirt. “STOP!” “I think it’s starting to work now…” “Someone might see us.” “Are you going to do it?” “No!” “I’m not giving up just yet.” He reached for my pants. “Don’t even think about it.”

“Please, Michelle. Do this film with me.” “No.” “Please?” “No!” “You want me to beg?” “Yes!” “I didn’t have to beg in the car!” “HEY! What does that mean?” He laughed. “I’m kidding. Seriously – I want you to do this with me. I swear you will be ok. I won’t let anything bad happen to you. No one will know it’s you and I promise I won’t let you out of my sight the entire time we’re on that stage. Please?” “NO!” “Girl, I will get on my knees and beg for real.”

I felt bad. I knew he really needed my help but there was no way I was going to let him have his way that easily. At least, not for the second time. “If I do this, what’s in it for me?” “You want to go back to the car?” “MICHAEL!!” He giggled. “If you do this for me, you can have anything you want.” “Anything?” “Yes.”

“Can I keep one of your sparkly gloves?”

“Sure.”

“Will you teach me how to dance?”

“Yes.”

“Including the moonwalk?”
“Ok.”

“You will eat and drink whatever I give you so that I can help you get better.”

“Ok.”

“When Aria’s foot recovers, she gets the lead role in another one of your short films.”

“Of course.”

“There’s just one more thing and you can’t say no.”

“What is it?”

“You have to look at yourself in the mirror.”

“Forget it.”

“MICHAEL!” “That’s not going to happen.” “WHY?” “I’d rather wait until Arabella is healed.” “You’re actually going to wait two weeks just to avoid looking at yourself in the mirror?” “I’ve avoided it for the past ten years. Two weeks is not a big deal to me at all.” “I can’t believe you. What could possibly have happened to you—“ “STOP!” Michael actually raised his voice at me. “I WON’T DO IT. I’m sorry if I was pressuring you into this, but you don’t have to do it anymore.”

He walked towards the door. I followed him. “Michael, I’ll do it. I don’t want to see you hurt. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you. Yours and Aria’s happiness means everything to me. I hope I never hear you raise your voice at me like that again. I’m sorry for making you angry.” “I shouldn’t have yelled at you like that. I just don’t like talking about my appearance.” “I promise I won’t bring it up again.”

He hugged me and I held him as tight as I could and whispered in his ear. “I have faith in you that one day, you will see yourself the way I see you, Michael Jackson.” He didn’t say a word, just gave me a kiss and lead me back to the set. I noticed Aria hopping around on one foot trying to walk.

“What are you doing? You shouldn’t be walking!” “I don’t want to sit, Elle. I’m bored.” “You’re asking to get hurt again. Sit your butt down in that chair and DON’T MOVE!!” She knew I was dead serious and quickly sat down. “Sorry, sis.” “You really ARE her parent, aren’t you?” “I raised that girl on my own. She needs to be put in line sometimes. She’s young and thinks she can get away with not listening to me.”

“Will you discipline me if I don’t listen to you?” “YOU ARE SUCH A BRAT!” I started to chase him around the set knocking down a few props along the way. He was quick but couldn’t outrun me. “MICHELLE, COME BACK! You have to get fitted for wardrobe and get your hair and makeup done!” Janet yelled. “I’ll be back as soon as I get this boy for being such a pain!” Michael made me run after him all the way across the set to another stage. When he realized he couldn’t run anymore, Michael stopped and I caught him by his shirt. “You love making me run, don’t you?” He laughed. “It’s just for fun.” He kissed me and walked with me back to the main set area. “My artists will help you with your dress, hair and makeup. Take all the time you need.” “I’m nervous.” “Please don’t be. I’ll be right there with you.”

Janet and Aria came to the dressing room after I put my dress on to give me some suggestions on accessories. “Wear these bangles, Elle. They will look nice on you.” “There’s no way I can wear heels that high. I’ll fall right onto my face.” “We’ll work that part out for you too.” Janet said. “Can you wear smaller heels?” “It shouldn’t be a problem.” “Perfect. You can wear these smaller wedge heels and when we do the editing, we’ll morph your face and shoes.” “Does this morphing thing really work?” “YES. It’s really cool. I’ll show you when you’re done.”

While the stylists and makeup artists were busy grooming me, my heart was racing. I didn’t want anything to go wrong from my end. I was hoping everyone would keep an open mind since I had no idea what I was getting myself into. “Sis, you look fabulous! I’ve never seen you so glamorous!” “I think my brother is going to faint.” “Stop. I’m just helping him out.” “I’m sure he’ll have NO problem returning the favor.” Janet said.

“Ok, really. That’s enough.” After much poking and fussing around about my appearance, I was finally ready. Janet brought in a full length mirror and blindfolded me as she walked me towards it. “Mike said he wants to see you before you see yourself.” “NO! I have to see myself first.” “He’s the singer. He has to like what he sees.” “He didn’t do that with Aria,” “He doesn’t love her the way he loves you, Michelle.” Janet whispered. “Please? Let him see you first? He’ll be so happy.” “You know, you’re just as bad as he is when it comes to convincing me to do something.” She laughed. “I love Michael. Seeing him smile makes me happy.” “Me too. He can see me first.”

Aria was seated on the couch with her foot elevated on the table. I heard Michael’s voice as he came in the dressing room. Janet told me he was also blindfolded. “I’ll take this off now.” She said as she removed it from his face. I heard him gasp deeply when he saw me. Janet told me he was so shocked he almost fell over. “She looks like a goddess. Oh my god, she’s beautiful. I can’t even stand up straight.” “I want to see myself now!” She sent Michael over to me to remove the blindfold from my face.

He came behind me and sang in my ear. “*You knock me off of my feet now, baby*.” I couldn’t help but giggle like a little girl again. He removed the blindfold. I took one look at myself and thought I was dreaming. “OH MY GOD! Is this really me?” “Oh, it’s you alright!” Aria said. I had never worn anything so extravagant and for the first time in my life, my hair was curled. My face looked like something out of a magazine. “You look beautiful, Michelle.” Janet said as she came over and stood next to Michael and I. “I think you two make a lovely couple.”

“I AGREE!” Aria said. “Stop bugging her, please.” Michael said. “YES, PLEASE!” “Ok, we’re sorry. But it’s all out of love.” “I know. I don’t mind but it makes me feel embarrassed.” Once I was ready, Michael said he’d be ready to start in a few minutes as he needed time to get into dance mode. We left the room and Janet helped Aria off the couch and back to the set. She also helped me practice my steps and how to walk with sass.

“Girl, you have to work it like Arabella.” She said. I couldn’t help but laugh when she showed me how to walk with an attitude. “You have to walk like every man on the block would sell their mama just for one night with you.” I burst out laughing. “Ok, I can do that.” I walked around as much as I could but wasn’t used to wearing heels. Being in the medical field constantly wearing flats made my feet accustomed to not wearing anything else. I ended up slipping a few times with Janet behind me helping me stay up.

“This is tougher than I thought. How do girls do this every day?” “It gets easier with practice.” Time was beginning to slip away from us as it was starting to get very late. Joe was getting angry for falling behind schedule. Fortunately, Michael had finished his screen test with Aria so it was just a matter of filming the actual scenes with me. Everything was put into place and the backup dancers were ready to go. One of them being Michael’s other sister, La Toya.

I didn’t speak to her. Janet told me she is really into her work and doesn’t discuss personal things or anything else that’s ‘out of character’. “She’s different from the rest of us.” Janet explained. “She’s more the serious type but when she’s not working she can be very nice.” The words ‘can be’ stuck out in my mind for some reason. My goal wasn’t to gain her attention anyway. It was to be the best I could be on screen with her brother.

In a short matter of time, Michael somehow arranged a teleprompter to stand in front of me so I knew where to walk and when to stop. He even had flash cards to give me tips on how I should walk, turn, flip my hair and make certain gestures. I did a quick walk through with the teleprompter and felt a lot more confident. Michael stood behind me and I thanked him for his help. “Don’t worry about a thing. When I come in front of you, keep your eyes on me. Just pretend that there’s no one else in the room watching us, ok?” “I will. Thank you.”

“By the way, I think that car really misses us.” He laughed out loud. “I think so too.” “I’d love to finish what we started there when this is done.” “Really?” “Yes, I enjoyed it. Didn’t you?” “Did you not notice how fast I went?” We both then started laughing. “LIGHTS! CAMERA! LET’S GO PEOPLE! TIME IS RUNNING OUT!” Joe yelled. “We have to start now.” Michael said. “Good luck and remember, I got you, girl.” “I love you, Michael.” “I love you more.”

“ACTION!!” I suddenly felt nervous and froze. I couldn’t get myself to move. I heard Michael whispering to me in the background telling me to go but I was hit by stage fright. “Michelle, it’s ok. Don’t worry. I’m right here behind you.” I took a deep breath and went to center stage strutting my walk and curly hair. I could hear Janet and Aria cheering me on and hollering at me from across the room. At that moment, I had never felt so alive.

Michael then joined me and the two of us walked around laughing at each other like no one was watching. He came close to me asking if I was alright. I told him I felt stupid at times but he kept saying I looked beautiful and was doing a great job. He followed me everywhere I went and Janet and Aria wouldn’t stop screaming at us. Poor Aria wanted to get up and dance. Janet was taking care of her while I was being filmed. The concept of Michael’s film was about a damsel in distress played by myself being chased by a guy I had no interest in.

Eventually, the two of us ended up where we were earlier. I was laughing so hard. Michael tried to get me to stop but being in the moment and remembering what happened made the two of us feel extremely sensual. Michael was so into it that he actually picked me up and put me right on top of the hood of the car and placed himself on top of me. For a few minutes, we had completely blocked everything and everyone out of our minds and just focused on each other. I pulled him towards me and we almost kissed when suddenly I realized we were being taped. “Oh my god, we have to stop.” I whispered. “We’re being filmed.” “We’ll finish this later.” Michael said as he winked at me and helped me get down from the car. “KEEP GOING!” Joe yelled.

I jumped inside the car and Michael followed. “This is so much fun!” I said. “I’m glad you’re enjoying it.” We shared a brief kiss then I ran out and closed the door locking him inside. He slid out quickly while Joe was still filming asking us not to stop. Michael’s back up dancers had an amazing scene with him in the dark with an open fire hydrant behind them. At the end, Michael and I hugged each other to show that he finally won my heart.

Just then, Joe yelled “CUT” and it was over. We had so much fun that the entire video was filmed in one take. “Oh my god, that was amazing!” I said to Michael as he held me. “Do you feel ok?” “Yeah, do you?” “Yes. You were great. I knew you could do it. We were only supposed to do the first two parts but we taped the whole thing because you were so amazing on screen.” “Thank you for believing in me. I was nervous but tried to stay calm the whole time.”

“You were beautiful. I can’t wait to see what it looks like.” We were just about to kiss each other when Janet ran over to us and said we were both incredible. “Where is Aria?” “Getting a foot massage.” “From WHO?” “A massage therapist Mike called.” “When did you do that?!” “I have my ways of getting things done.” I thanked them both and the three of us shared a group hug. My feet were killing me and I wanted to get out of the dress I was wearing. I thought if I wore it long enough, people would say Aria and I looked like twins.

“I should take Aria home and get her to bed. Poor girl can’t even walk.” “She’s already gone.” Michael said. “WHERE?” “My driver took her to Havenhurt. She’ll be fine. I knew you would be there tomorrow and I felt bad for what happened to her. I called mother and she said to bring her there so she could keep an eye on her while you were busy filming with me.” “Did she see the whole thing before she left?” “Yes, I made sure she did.” My eyes were starting to fill as I thanked him. “How can I ever repay you both?” “Just start living for yourself and we’ll both be happy.”

“I’ll try. Are we done for today?” “We’re done forever. Joe taped the whole thing and said it was brilliant.” “When can I see it?” “Mike has a screening room at Havenhurst.” Janet said. Since we’ll all be there tomorrow we can view the tape together.” “Is it possible to save my footage before changing it to Aria?” “Of course. We’ll keep copies of both so you can have one of each.”

“I should call Aria to see if she made it safely.” Michael told me he asked Aria to call me when she arrived at the house. “I’m heading home now. I’m exhausted and need to sleep.” Janet said as she hugged and kissed her brother and me. “You two get home safely and get some rest. We have a long day of editing ahead of us tomorrow.”

“Mike, you’re not rehearsing or working overtime. You’re going straight to bed when you get home.” “I can’t. I have to start putting things together for Man in the Mirror.” “MIKE!” “I’m kidding. I’ll go to bed.” “Goodnight, you two.” I said bye as she left. “But I won’t be going alone.” Michael whispered in my ear as he grabbed me from behind. “Stop! People might see us.” “Everyone is leaving. No one is paying attention to us.” “Michael, do the same people who set up all of these stages and equipment take everything down for you too?” “Yes, that’s their job.”

“You have so many hard working people on your team.” “My tasks are never easy for me which means they won’t ever be for them.” “It’s nice to know that you have such loyal employees.” “I love them. I reward them too as my way of showing how much I appreciate what they do for me.” “They’re lucky to have such a great boss.” “Thank you.”

I looked at the time and noticed it was already past midnight. “I’m going to change and head home.” Michael said. “My driver should be here soon.” “I’ll leave when you do if that’s ok.” “Sure.” Suddenly, Michael started clinging to me very strongly. “Michael, what’s wrong?” “My stomach. It hurts.” I quickly helped him to his dressing room and put him on the couch. I also made sure I locked the door so no one would walk in and see him that way.

I held his hand and sat on the floor next to him. I noticed he was flinching excessively. “Michael, I’m here with you. Whatever it is, it will pass. Just breathe, baby. You’ll be ok.” I could see he was in agony. I wanted to call 911 but he forced me not to. He curled up his legs and continued holding onto his himself. I kissed his cheek and tried to get him to relax but seeing him in so much discomfort was difficult for me to witness.

After a few minutes, the pain subsided and he felt ok again. I didn’t know how much longer I could see him like that. “I’m sorry that happened to you again.” “I’m used to it.” “Can you stand up?” “Yes. I’ll go change and come right back.” “Are you sure you don’t need my help?” “I’ll be fine, thank you.” He slowly got up and left the room. I wanted to wait until he returned before I went to change just in case he needed my help with something.

He came back to the couch looking very casual and comfortable. “Do you feel ok?” “I think so.” He came and sat next to me and I held him. “I promise I’ll help you get better so this doesn’t keep happening to you.” He put his hand on the back of my head and kissed my shoulder. “Michelle, I can feel your energy going through me.” “Really?” “Yes, it’s beautiful and very strong.” “Just like my feelings for you.” We let go of each other and I gently kissed his nose.

“I’ll go change now.” He grabbed my hand and pulled me down on the couch. “I’d love to help you.” I didn’t clue in to what he was referring to. “It’s ok. I can do it.” He then made his way closer to me making me fall back completely on the couch. “Michelle, I’d REALLY love to help you undress.” He winked at me again which made me giggle. “I see where you’re going with this. I don’t mind if you do.” He lifted my legs, removed my shoes and ran his fingers up and down my feet. “Are your feet sore?” “Not anymore. You have magic in your hands.” He rubbed them gently making me feel stimulated. He then worked his way up with his lips kissing every inch of me.

“Come here.” He said as he pushed my body towards him. At the same time, I felt him pulling down the zipper at the back of my dress. I was so excited that I wanted to join in. I pulled his shirt up to his head and he removed it. He did the same for my dress and I watched as it fell to the floor. We started to kiss and I could tell Michael wanted to go further very quickly. His hands were moving around me. As tired as we both were from filming, I felt his energy level rise as he continued exploring me.

Just as we were about to go all the way, Michael stopped what he was doing, grabbed the edge of the coffee table that was near us and pushed it with one hand all the way across the room. “How did you do that without looking?” I asked. “Who cares?” He pulled me up and lay me on the floor with himself on top of me. “We have more room this way.” He said. He continued what he was doing and within seconds, we ended up making love on the floor of his dressing room.

As it went on, we were playfully bouncing around and didn’t even know at first. Hearing him scream my name made me want him more. He pulled my arms up above my head and held them down firmly so I wouldn’t resist him. His body was moving fiercely inside of me giving me such incredible pleasure. As he continued, it seemed like hours had gone by and neither one of us wanted to stop.

I could feel my body reaching its climax but didn’t want Michael to know. I tried to hide my reaction from him so that he wouldn’t stop. After much satisfaction, Michael was also reaching his climax but was relentless and didn’t want things to end either. I was constantly screaming and trying to be still as he kept pushing inside of me. Michael’s energy was so unbelievably infinite that it made me feel like I could fly.

He asked me if I was uncomfortable or hurt and told I was ok. He let go of my arms and I wrapped them around his masculine back as he tirelessly continued. The two of us had so much passion to give each other that it took the both of us to a whole new level of excitement. He kept repeating that he loved me and kissed my lips endlessly. It was unbelievable to see his lustful side.

After a while, I could feel him slowing down. He told me he was reaching his peak. I wanted him to feel as satisfied as me so I held him close as he was going in and out and gently pulled his hair. As he came to an end, he breathed deeply and sighed against my back. I held him for the longest time telling trying to show him how much he meant to me at that moment.

He then looked up and kissed me. “I feel so euphoric with you.” He said as he pulled my hair away from my face and put his lips against mine. I saw a black tear coming out of the corner of his eye and wiped it for him. “Don’t cry, baby. Your eye makeup is smudging.” He then told me he loved me more than anything else. “Michelle, stay close to me.” “Where would I go without you?” We then held each other one more time then helped each other up.

I went to the back of the room where my clothes were and put them on after getting myself together again. Michael did the same only this time he wore another set of clothes. “You love to change, don’t you?” He laughed. “I like wearing different things.” When we were ready to leave, Michael and I gathered our things and left the dressing room. As I opened the door, I noticed the coffee table was still across the room.

“Shouldn’t we move that table back to where it was?” “Why? It will just end up there again.” “You mean we’re coming back here?” “If we need to. It depends how we looked on camera today.” “And what makes you think that you and I will be here again?” “You think we won’t be?” “I like to explore new places. I don’t do repeats.” “Unless it’s me.” I chased after him again all the way to the main entrance gate. He knew how to keep me on my toes.

Michael saw his driver waiting for him outside the set. He also had guards waiting for him at the gate. “I’d walk you to your car but I can’t leave the set alone.” “It’s ok. I’ll see you tomorrow.” We hugged and he kissed my cheek. “Sleep well.” “You too.” We then said goodnight and I watched him leave with his guards then as he got into the backseat.

When I got in my car, I noticed a dozen missed calls from Katherine’s number. I had completely forgotten that Aria was going to call. It was already 4 in the morning and I knew she’d be asleep. Luckily, she left a message telling me she was ok and in good hands at Havenhurst and would see me tomorrow. I then left the set and drove home.

I was too tired to change my clothes but knew I had to wash off my makeup and wear something else to bed. While changing my clothes, I noticed several marks on my back. *Michael likes to scratch*! I said to myself. At the time, I hadn’t felt a thing. I assumed that was his way of telling me he was pleased.

It was 5 in the morning by the time I went to bed. My phone rang just as I was dozing off and I could hear someone singing on the other end…..