CHAPTER 9

The Disturbed Prowler

**\*\*\* MICHELLE’S POINT OF VIEW \*\*\***

I saw Michael from a distance running towards the house. “He’s right there! Thank God he’s ok!” I said to Janet as I ran and hugged him. “I was so worried about you. I couldn’t find you anywhere.” “I’m ok.” He whispered as he put his arms around me. “Someone was at the gate. I just went to see who it was.” “We looked there but didn’t see you.” Janet said as she walked over to us. “Not the house gate, the security gate.” “How did you get that far so fast?” She asked. “I saw an unmarked car arriving from one of the overhead cameras and ran there.”

“You have overhead cameras here?” I asked. “Yeah, they’re everywhere.” Janet explained. “We have them hidden in trees and all over the roof. We need them to make sure we know who’s coming and going near the property.” “That’s amazing. I never would have thought of that.” “It’s a safety precaution.” “I’m glad he’s ok and we can start editing now. But first, you have to drink something, mister!”

“Mike, did you bring the film reel with you? “Yes, it’s in the screening room.” “I’ll go set it up and check on Arabella while you have your drink. I’ll meet you both there?” “Sure.” He said as he sat down next to me near the fountain. Janet went inside the house and I handed Michael his protein shake. “When did you make this?” He asked after taking a small sip. “This afternoon before I left my house. Don’t worry, it’s not expired.” He laughed. “By the way, I saw your cartoon collection in the fridge.” He tried not to laugh while drinking. “I had no idea you were so organized when it came to food.” “I have to be. I have a very sensitive body.” “I know and I love it.” “You can have it later.” He replied as he winked at me.

“Is that all you think about?” “With you, yes.” I couldn’t help but laugh. “Don’t you?” “It’s not the ONLY thing. I want to help you get better too.” “That’s one thing that would definitely help.” “You are so bad.” “You love it.” “You are so right.” After he finished, Michael asked me to walk with him around the house to allow the drink to flow through his system. “Come with me. I’ll show you the rose garden.” “Ok. I’ll just quickly check on Aria first if you don’t mind.” He stood up and told me we could both check on her together. He then took my hand and led me inside the house. I grabbed the drinking jar and put it on the kitchen table to wash later.

As we made our way upstairs, I remembered seeing his book on the table. “Michael, I didn’t know you wrote an autobiography.” He giggled. “It was just released a few days ago. I thought you knew.” “No, but I’d love to read it.” “I’ll give you one.” “Will you autograph it for me please?” “What do I get if I do?” “That’s for me to know and you to find out.” He smiled adorably. “It almost didn’t get published.” “Really? How come?” “I was having second thoughts about it. I wrote so many different versions of it and they were all getting rejected because the publisher thought there wasn’t enough detail about my personal life to sell it.” “So you changed the material?” “Yes. But I feel like I’ve revealed too much about myself in it.” I didn’t want him to know I had already seen some of what he wrote, so I kept quiet about the content.

“I’m sure you were just expressing your feelings at the time. Your fans will love it and I don’t think they will judge you about it. Even if they do, it’s only because they don’t understand the price you’ve paid to be where you are today.” Michael seemed happy as I told him my thoughts. “You seem to know me so well.” “Why wouldn’t I? We’ve both lived similar lives.” He kissed my forehead and we continued going upstairs. He grabbed my hand as he led me inside the bedroom Aria was sleeping in. He opened the door quietly and we both saw her fast asleep. “She looks so peaceful.” Michael whispered. “That’s because she’s asleep! She’s a little devil when she’s awake.”

He laughed as he closed the door. We were then on our way to the film screening room. We walked past another long hallway then Michael suddenly got an idea. He took me to a large bedroom away from the rest of the main rooms of the home. “This is one of my favorite rooms.” He said as he locked the door behind me. “Why is that?” “Because it’s far from everything else and no one ever comes in here.” His suddenly shifted his eyes at me as if he were signaling me to lie on the bed. “I know what you’re thinking and it’s not going to happen.” “Please?”

“We have work to do!” “That’s why we’re here.” “Not THAT kind of work!” “No one will see us.” “You love to live dangerously, don’t you?” “Always. That’s what makes me who I am.” “Well, I don’t live that way.” “You should start. It’s really fun.” “Only if you get away with it.” He slowly put his hands around my waist and whispered “There’s only one way to find out, my pretty baby with high heels on.” “I know where this is going.” He giggled. “Come here.” He pressed his lips to mine and pulled me closer to him.

“Michael, we have to start editing. What if Janet starts to wonder where we are?” “Trust me, she won’t. “How do you know?” “Michelle, you worry too much.” “I can’t help it. I’ve always had to look out for others.” “You don’t have to be that way around me. I never do things I know I can’t get away with.” “Does that include me?” He burst out laughing. “You’re a different story.” He then gave me a hug and said he’d take me to the editing room. As he opened the door, I pulled him back inside and closed the door.

“Come here.” I said as I grabbed his sensuous body and kissed his lips with my hands on his angelic face. I had no real intention of starting anything, but he was so loveable to me that I just couldn’t resist him. Without realizing it, we both made our way to the bed and fell down on it. As my back hit the sheets, my conscience suddenly kicked in and I knew we couldn’t do what was on our minds. “We have to stop.” I said as I tried getting up from the bed. “Michelle, don’t stop now. Please?” “It’s not a good time.” “Please?” “We can’t.” “Please?” “MICHAEL!”

The more he begged, the more I resisted. When he figured out I wasn’t going to give in, he then took a different approach to the situation. “You know you want me.” He said as he grabbed my hand and placed it underneath his shirt. “I do, but not now.” He then tried to put my hand inside his pants. “No, Michael!” “You know you want to.” “Yes, but we REALLY can’t do this now.” He smiled as he kissed my hand and told me he was only teasing me. “Come on, let’s go.” He said as he helped me off the bed.

“Michael, there’s one thing you have to know – you are definitely NOT easy to resist.” “Really?” “YES. Had you kept begging, I know I would have given in eventually.” “I knew I should have kept going.” He said as he laughed. “Trust me, after we’re done editing, you won’t have to beg or even ask.” I then winked at him as we made our way to the door. He kissed my shoulder as I opened it. “I love you.” He whispered in my ear. “I love you too.”

We went to another section of the house where the rooms were surrounded by glass doors. “This is the studio section of the house.” Michael explained. “This is where me and my family record our vocals and edit films.” I was amazed at how everything looked. There were all kinds of musical instruments, headphones, and several different computers. “Michael, is this were you bring your craft to life?” “Sometimes, yes. My brothers and I edited a lot of Jackson 5 songs here.” “Really?” He laughed as he saw me looking around completely astonished. Janet was sitting in a booth with headphones on looking at a large computer screen. “She’s looking at us on film.” Michael said as he tapped the window to let her know we were there. She let us in and said she was just getting started.

“I just turned it on. Come sit down.” She said as she gave me a chair. I sat next to the screen and she gave me a pair of headphone to put on. “You can hear the sound a lot better with these.” Michael sat next to me as the three of us watched the film together. I was completely blown away looking at myself on the screen. “I still can’t believe that’s me.” “Believe it!” Michael said. When the scenes near the stage car appeared, I couldn’t help but look away as I turned my head and covered my face.

Michael put his arm around me and kissed the top of my head. “That was so beautiful.” He said to me in my ear. Janet had her headphones on and wasn’t paying attention to us. “I told my stage crew to leave it there just in case we had to go back to re shoot those scenes.” “Do you think we need to?” He smiled and looked down as if he were shy. “Only if you want to.” I tilted his head towards me. “I’d love to. I just hope I don’t mess up your hair or clothing again.” We both laughed so hard Janet heard us.

“Are you two paying attention?” “Yes. We were just saying how much we loved that car scene.” I said. “Oh yeah, that was hot. You two really looked like you were enjoying each other.” “You have no idea.” Michael said under his breath. “Mike, show her how it works.” “Watch this, Michelle.” He said as he typed a few combinations on the keyboard. All of a sudden, my face turned into Aria’s. “WHOA! That’s COOL!” I was stunned. “Isn’t that amazing?” Janet asked. “YES!” How did you do that?!” “It’s magic.” Michael said as he winked at me. “Mike, I think you need an eye exam.” Janet said as I cracked up laughing.

“I told him the same thing.” “My eyes are fine. They see things normal eyes don’t.” “Such as?” “It’s a secret.” Janet and I looked at each other confused. “Please don’t tell me you can see us naked underneath our clothes.” “MICHELLE! He’s my brother!” I couldn’t help but laugh as Michael started to tickle me. “I’m going to get you for that one.” He said as I grabbed his hands.

“GUYS! We need to focus.” “Tell HIM that!” “Mike, seriously. We need to cover all of this footage and figure out what you want to keep and what to get rid of.” “Ok, no more fooling around. We have to work.” He said putting on his serious face. The two of them showed me the entire music video and asked if there was anything I’d like to re-shoot. “There is one part I wouldn’t mind doing again…” I looked directly at Michael who shook his head and blushed like a little boy.

“What is it?” Janet asked. “The scene where Michael and I…” “Oh my god.” He said as he looked down. “What is wrong with you?” Janet asked him. I had to cover my hand to stop myself from laughing hysterically. “I told you I’d get you back.” I whispered in his ear. “Girl, I swear I will get you back for this.” He said as he covered his face. “You two are acting really strange.” “Ok, all jokes aside. There really isn’t anything that I would change. What I was going to say was maybe there’s something Michael doesn’t like?”

“Mike, why are you being so immature? This is YOUR film. You are always so serious when it comes to your work.” “Yeah, Mike!” I said. “Michelle is distracting me.” “ME? What am I doing?” “You’re being you.” “Guys, we’re not going to get this done if we don’t keep going.” “Yes, no more wasting time. We need to do this.” I said trying to sound professional. We continued reviewing the film. Halfway into it, Michael started kicking my feet and running his hand up and down my leg. “Stop!” I whispered. “She’s going to get mad at us again.”

“Now, what?!” Janet asked. “I didn’t do anything.” Michael said. “It was her.” “ME? He’s bugging me!” “You two are driving me nuts. You’re like a bunch of two year olds!” “I’m sorry to make you angry. How about I go check on Aria? I want to make sure she isn’t looking for us.” “I’ll go with you.” Janet said. “You won’t be able to find your way back from that section of the house.” As she left the room, I was about to follow her when Michael grabbed my arm and pulled me down towards his chair. “MICHELLE! Come on!” She yelled from outside.

“Michael, she’s waiting for me!”
“I love you.”
“I have to go!”

“Don’t you?”

“Michael!”
“Say yes!”

“Please, let go of me.”

“Say yes first!”

“Let go!”

“Don’t you feel the same way?”

“Do I have to say it?”

“Yes.”
“Why?”
“Because I need to hear it.”

“Ok, fine! I love you too.”

He kissed me then finally let go of my arm. “You are such a brat!” “You know I don’t mean any harm.” “I know that.” “I hope I don’t make you angry when I behave that way. It’s really just for fun.” “I could never get mad at you. You are just way too cute to ever see my temper.” He giggled as I left the room. “Hurry back.” He said.

The Jackson house was very confusing. I had no idea which way to turn. Janet walked me to Aria’s room where she was still sleeping. “She’s ok. Resting comfortably.” “I’m just not used to her being out of my sight for this long.” “I can tell you think of her as more of a daughter rather than a sister.” “I have to. We only had each other growing up. I changed that girl’s diapers. There were so many nights I went to bed hungry just so there would be enough food to put in her mouth.”

Janet’s eyes were filling up. “I didn’t know you had it that hard.” “No one does. That’s why it’s difficult for me to think of myself sometimes. I mean I give her space, but there’s only so much of it I can allow at once.” “I understand. She doesn’t have to go with me if you think it’s too soon.” “I still need to think about that. When are you leaving?” “In about a month.” “When she’s healed I’ll have a talk with her. I just have so much on my mind, especially now with Michael’s issues.” “What do you mean?”

My bad habit of talking too much started getting repetitive. I knew I had to stop before I got myself into trouble. “I mean with taking care of him, being in the film and working for your mother, it’s all just a bit overwhelming.” “Michelle, you don’t have to deal with any of it alone.” “I know and I appreciate that.” “Arabella seems ok here. Why don’t we let her sleep? She’ll call us when she wakes up.” “I’ll keep my cell phone with me just in case she doesn’t remember how to use the house phone.”

I went downstairs to get my phone and noticed several missed calls from an unknown number. There were no messages so I assumed whoever it was would call back if it was important. As I was going upstairs, it rang. I answered but the person on the other end didn’t say anything and hung up. *Must be a wrong number*. I thought. Janet and I went back to the editing room. Michael was still watching the film and morphing each scene as he viewed it on the screen.

“I saved the entire footage with you onto a disc.” He said. “I’ll keep the master copy just in case you lose yours or if we need to retrieve it.” “You better not show anyone!” He laughed. “Don’t worry. It will stay inside the vault that no one has access to except me.” “You have a vault?” “Of course.” “What else is in it?!” “Diamonds! Jewels! Gold bars! Money! LOTS AND LOTS of money!” Janet said making fun of me. Michael laughed. “Sounds good to me. Can I see it?” “Girl, I don’t trust you THAT much.” “MIKE!” “I’m just joking. It’s nothing against you. It’s my policy not to show anyone. I’ve said too much already by telling you I have one. Janet was the only one who knew before.”

“I won’t tell anyone, I promise.” My phone rang again and it was the same unknown number. I answered but the person hung up again. “That is so weird.” “What’s wrong?” Janet asked. “Someone keeps calling me from an unknown number and hanging up.” “How long has that been happening?” “Just today.” “That’s strange.” “It might just be a kid playing a trick on you. I’m sure it will stop.” Michael said. “How is Arabella?” “She’s fine. Still asleep.”

After what seemed like a good hour or two, we finished editing half of Michael’s short film. “This really WAS time consuming.” I said. “It is, but it’s fun. You can do all kinds of things with technology these days.” Janet said. “We’ve changed your face and shoes. Is there anything else you think we should do, Mike?” “The footage is good. I just need to adjust the lighting at the end scene with the dancers. It needs more blue.” While those two were making other edits, my phone kept ringing from that same unknown number.

“I don’t know who this is or why they keep hanging up.” I said to them both. “Let me answer it next time.” Janet said. “I’ll tell them where to go.” She made Michael burst out laughing. “Janet, you are the biggest pushover in the world!” He said. “You could never even hurt a fly.” “And YOU CAN?” “She’s got a point there.” “You’re supposed to be on MY side!” “Nope! Girls before boys!” Janet and I gave each other a high five. “You two are like high school girls.”

“Oh yeah, like you always act your age Mr. Disney cartoons on his plates?” Janet asked. I couldn’t help but laugh at their innocent and funny relationship. “At least I don’t have Minnie Mouse on my underwear.” “You’re right – you have Mickey on yours!” “Too much information!!” I yelled as I tried to change the subject.

Eventually, Aria called Janet on her phone saying she was awake and wanted to see us. “I’ll get her.” She said. “You two behave while I’m gone.” “Why didn’t she call me?” “She thought you might have left or didn’t have your phone with you.” “Are you sure you can carry her all the way here alone?” “It should be fine. I’ve been carrying her around everywhere since yesterday.” “She is Janet’s lover.” Michael said. “Shut up, Mike!” She said as she smacked him on the back of his head.

“Oh no, please don’t hit him!” I said patting the back of his head. “See, Janet? Michelle loves me.” “Give her a week. She’ll be just as sick of you as the rest of us.” “You are SO mean to him!” “He knows it’s out of love.” Janet then messed up his hair affectionately as Michael called her a big butt. Seeing their relationship made me appreciate Aria even more. I never knew all siblings acted that way, famous or not. It was enlightening to see Michael and Janet’s ‘human’ side. For a minute, they both seemed like regular people.

When Janet left, Michael pulled my chair closer to his. “Finally, she’s gone!” He said. “Michael, we have to finish what we started.” I said referring to the film. “That’s exactly what I have in mind.” “I’m not talking about THAT!” He laughed. “I know. I wasn’t thinking about that.” “Yeah, right.” “But seriously, there is something we need to talk about. It’s kind of important.” “What is it?” “Not now. After we finish here and when we’re alone.” “Is it something bad?” “No, of course not.”

We reviewed the second half of the film and Michael completed the entire morphing process. “I’m still amazed at how you can do that.” “I know. It’s fascinating. There are all kinds of things you can do. It just takes a lot of time and practice. I shortened the length of this film when you replaced Arabella so that it wouldn’t take as long to get this part done. Otherwise, it would have taken me days to do it.” As he finalized and saved the film, a sudden urge came over me.

I kissed his arm and moved up to his cheek. He smiled and thanked me as I turned his head towards me and kissed his mouth. Feeling excited, he lifted me up from my chair and put me on his lap. I wrapped my arms around him and we kissed with our hands moving around each other’s body. I was so in the moment that I wanted to go further. But instead, I was interrupted by my phone again.

Feeling irritated, I went to answer it. “No, don’t.” Michael said as he grabbed my hand. “It’s not more important than this.” We continued as the phone kept ringing. “You feel amazing.” I whispered to him. “Girl, you have no idea how hard it was for me to hold back while Janet was here.” “Really?” “Of course. I miss being with you this way.” “How much?” He stood up, placed me against the wall and started to bite and kiss my neck. “Does this answer your question?” He asked winking at me.

“There goes that eye of yours again.” “You love it.” “I do, it’s sexy.” “Just like you.” “You think so?” “You want me to show you?” “Please!” He started to undress me. I quickly stopped him. “No, Michael! Not here.” “I can’t help it. I’m crazy about you.” He continued kissing me. “The girls will be here any minute.” He turned his arm and locked the door. “They can’t get inside unless one of us lets them in.” “How do you always manage to do things without looking directly at them?” He giggled cutely. “I’m Michael. I’m special that way.” He then pulled me towards him again and kept on doing what he did best – seducing me.

My phone rang again and we ignored it. I heard a beep once it stopped ringing which meant there was a voice message this time. “Michael, we have to stop. The girls must be on their way here.” “Do I really have to?” “Believe me, if you didn’t I wouldn’t ask you to.” He smiled as we both sat down. Not even two second later, Janet knocked on the door. “See! I told you! Another second and she would have caught us!” “Trust me, she wouldn’t have seen a thing.” He let the girls inside and Aria was beginning to walk slowly on her own.

“It looks like you’re recovering, little sister.” “Yes, but I shouldn’t be putting a lot of pressure on it. I just want to get used to walking again a little.” She sat down between Janet and I and we showed her the completed edited version of the film. “So, what do you think?” I asked. “It looks incredible. You can’t even tell it’s you!” “I know! This morphing thing is super cool.” “Is there anything you’d like to change?” Janet asked. “Not really. I think it looks fabulous. What do you think?” She asked Michael. “I agree with you. I just need to fix the lighting but that will be done later. The main scenes are perfect.”

“Aria, you will be the actual lead in Michael’s next short film.” “REALLY?” “Yes, absolutely.” He said. She was so happy, she gave Janet and Michael a hug. “When will this film be on TV?” “Not for a while. Now that editing is done, we still have to work on lighting, sound quality, color effects and several other things before it can go public.” “I understand. You’ll let us know before it does?” “Of course.”

**\*\*\* LATER THAT DAY \*\*\***

I looked at the time and saw it was past 8pm. Michael had another protein shake and some fruit while we girls had pasta and cake for dessert. “Aria, it’s time to leave. I need to get you home so you can rest.” “Michelle, why doesn’t she stay here until she’s healed?” Janet asked. “I couldn’t do that. She’s not your responsibility and I don’t want you feeling like her babysitter.” “I don’t feel that way at all. We love having you two here. I will look after her and if I’m not here I know mother won’t mind taking over.”

“PLEASE, SIS?” I looked over at Janet. “You’ll let me know if she gets out of hand?” “Yes. “ “Arabella, you have to behave. Respect their parents, don’t treat anyone like your slave and listen to everything everyone here says.” “I promise, I will.” “It’s ok with me.” She tried to get up to hug me but the girl almost fell over. “Just stay where you are clumsy!” Janet said as she helped her up. “I should go now. I have a long drive home and don’t want to be too late.” “I’ll walk you out.” Michael said. I said goodnight to the girls as he and I walked outside to my car.

“What did you want to talk to me about?” “Maybe we should wait until another time. I don’t want to overload you.” “Meaning?” “Janet told me you know about her going on tour. What I have to say can wait.” “No, it’s ok. What is it?” “It’s not important.” “Are you sure?” He shook his head yes. “Ok, just know that you can talk to me anytime about anything.” “I know. Will I see you again soon?” “Would you like to?” “I think you know the answer to that.” “I know you’re really busy with the film and all. I don’t want to come between your work but can see you anytime you want.”

“Really?”
“Yes.”
“Spend the night with me?”
“Tonight?”
“Yes.”

“What about—“
“You can’t use her as an excuse. Janet’s taking care of her.” He said with a wink.

“Your eye is acting up again.”
“It really likes you.”

“You are so cute.”
“Cute enough to make you stay with me?”

“Here? Won’t they see us?”
“Not here. With me. At Neverland.”

“Michael, that’s almost two hours away.”
“Take your car home. My driver will get you in an hour.”
“You’re serious?”
He kissed my lips. “Do you believe me now?”

“I think I need one more just to be sure.”

He kissed me again, putting his tongue inside my mouth.
“Was that convincing enough for you?”
“For now, yes. I’ll go home and throw some stuff in a bag. Do you need my address?”

“I already have it.”
“You DO?”
“Arabella wrote it when she registered for my audition.”

“She wrote down MY address?”
“As her emergency contact.”
“Oh, right. That makes sense. Ok, I’ll go now.”

“I’ll come get you in an hour, ok?”

“I’ll be ready.”

“I love you, girl.”

“I love you too.”

“I love being with you.”

“Me too.”

“You make me so happy.”

“I feel the same way.”

“Marry me?”

“WHAT?”

“Will you?”

“I’ll see you later.”
“Will you?”
“Michael, Janet will see us out here.”
“The parking lot isn’t alarmed or monitored. It’s the one place no one sees you unless they actually come here.”

“Do you people always cover everything so no one will ever catch you?”
“Yes. But we don’t reveal our secrets to everyone.”

“I should go now.”

“Will you?”
“Michael, let go of me please.”
“Say yes and I’ll let you leave.”

“If I say no, will you hold me hostage?”

“If I have to.”

“You’re crazy.”

“Please say yes?”

“Yes, Michael.”

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, I’ll marry you.”

He smiled brightly and his eyes twinkled in the dark. I had never seen anyone look more beautiful. His shadow reflected on the ripples of a nearby water fountain as he held me close to him.

“You just made me the happiest man in the world.”
“I’m glad. You now owe me a ring.”

“Is my heart not enough for you?”
“Boy, you better get me a ring!”

He burst out laughing. “Of course I will. I promise.”

“I’m kidding. You don’t have to.”

“But I want to.”

“If you do, I won’t wear it yet.”

“Why? You’re afraid?”
“I don’t think now is the right time for Aria to know. It will be too much for her.”

“I think you’re right.”

“I’ll tell her when she comes back.”
“You’re letting her go on the tour?”
“Yes, she deserves it. I know Janet will take care of her. Plus, I don’t want to break their hearts by saying no.”

“Michelle, you’re very sweet. Janet will be thrilled.”

“I know I can trust her.”

“You can. Janet is amazing. She’s been raised the same way as Arabella. She’ll be in really good hands.”

“Thank you. That really helps. I should go before someone notices I’m still here.”

“I’ll see you later?”
“Yeah, I’ll be ready in an hour.”

“Ok, I’ll be there.”

We shared a kiss then I got in my car and drove home. When I got there, I screamed in shock as I had never been more terrified in my life. I parked the car and noticed someone had broken into my house. My front windows were broken, the entrance door was open and there was graffiti written everywhere. I even saw several bloodstains outside leading all the way to the inside of my living room floor….