

"FOOTPRINTS"
EPISODE #78
TIME FRAME: IMMEDIATELY
AFTER [#77](#)

TEASER

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
EVENING

A nervous DON swallows, trying to work himself up to explaining his problem to BILL.

BILL: You don't have to say anything if you're not comfortable doing it, Don.

DON: No, I have to. First of all, I know it'll be a relief once I've told someone, and hopefully you'll be able to give me some advice.

BILL: Then whenever you're ready ...

DON: (takes a deep breath) Okay. When I came out of my coma -- Helen came in pretty soon after I had woken up. She thought -- she thinks -- that she was the first person I saw.

BILL: But?

DON: But someone else was in there before her. Someone I hadn't seen in years, and someone I honestly never expected to see again.

BILL: Who?

DON: My ex-wife.

Bill's eyes nearly leap out of his head.

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
EVENING

JASON and HELEN have been discussing Courtney's mental state.

JASON: I don't know what I'd do if something really was -- is -- wrong with her. Just when we're getting over all these problems ...

HELEN: It really is a shame. I'm just wondering if maybe Shannon's actions left a more permanent scar on Courtney than she's let us know.

JASON: It's possible, I guess.

He sighs.

JASON (CONT'D): I just really hope you're wrong.

HELEN: So do I, Jason.

COURTNEY: Wrong about what?

Both Jason and Helen turn to see COURTNEY standing casually at the entrance to the kitchen.

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
EVENING

Back in the living room, MOLLY and BRENT are stunned by SARAH's angry outburst.

SARAH: What the hell are you doing, Molly?

MOLLY: What are you talking about?

Realizing how much she has just slipped, Sarah quickly tries to cover.

SARAH: I--I mean, Mom was telling me about you and Brian. She was saying how worried you've been about getting serious with him -- because of everything that happened with Craig.

MOLLY: (slightly confused) Yeah ...

BRENT: Are you sure you're just worried about Molly here, or is something a little bit more serious bothering you, Sarah?

ACT ONE

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
EVENING

JASON and HELEN make quick eye contact in trying to respond to COURTNEY's question.

JASON: Oh, nothing. Your mom was just--

HELEN: --I was just discussing your dad's recovery with Jason. The doctors said everything should be all right, but I was just hoping there's no permanent damage.

COURTNEY: Oh, okay. (pause) How much longer do you think we have until we're ready to eat?

HELEN: Not long. Ten, fifteen minutes, probably.

COURTNEY: That's all I wanted to know. And now, if you don't mind, I've got some mingling to do.

She begins to exit the kitchen.

JASON: I think I'll go with you.

He rushes to catch up with her, flashing Helen a "that-was-a-close-one" look on his way out.

Helen shakes her head, fearful about her daughter's handling of the recent events in their lives.

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
EVENING

BILL is stunned by what DON has just confessed.

BILL: Your what?!?

DON: My ex-wife.

BILL: Okay, I can see why this could be a problem. I'm presuming Helen hasn't seen her yet?

DON: Technically, no, but she knows about her. I told her all about it before we were married.

BILL: That's good, at least. How long were you married to her?

DON: It was for under a year right after college. Sally -- that's her name -- was a free spirit, a really fun girl to be with. Unfortunately, she was also totally irresponsible. After some ... circumstances came up, we got divorced.

BILL: Wow. (pause) I can't believe I never knew about this.

DON: Aside from people I knew back then, Helen is the only person who knows.

BILL: Courtney doesn't?

DON: No! We decided it would cause more trouble than it's worth to tell her.

BILL: So what's the problem, exactly?

DON: I don't want anyone to find out Sally's here. In fact, I want to get her the hell out of here. But she seems determined to stick around ...

BILL: ... and I have a feeling she wants more than to catch up with you.

DON: That's the impression I get. The thing is, the woman is a total loose cannon. She hasn't grown up at all in twenty-five years. I'm just worried that she's gonna pull something that will screw up everything I've got now. (pause) What am I gonna do?

BILL: Personally, I would say you should keep your mouth shut so Helen doesn't find out about Sally being here. Do whatever you can to get her to leave town.

DON: All right ... So I can trust you to keep quiet about this, right?

BILL: I promise, Don. I won't say a word to anyone about this -- not even Paula.

PAULA: About what?

As seems to be the trend this evening, Bill and Don find PAULA standing behind them, having just descended the stairs. They trade worried looks.

Meanwhile, tensions are high across the living room, where BRENT, MOLLY, and SARAH are squaring off.

SARAH: No, nothing's wrong. I didn't mean to sound rude or anything, Molly. I'm sorry.

MOLLY: It's fine, really.

SARAH: I'm just worried about you getting over the Craig thing. I mean, it was so many months ago. What are the chances of that happening again?

MOLLY: Not very high, I suppose.

SARAH: Exactly.

She gives her sister a hug.

SARAH (CONT'D): I just want you to be happy, okay?

Molly nods, appreciating her sister's concern.

SARAH (CONT'D): I'm gonna go see if I'm needed in the kitchen, okay? I'll be back in a jif.

Sarah heads off towards the kitchen.

MOLLY: That was really weird. For a minute there I thought she was gonna rip my head off -- and then she softened all of a sudden. It's like she did a total 180 in a split-second. (pause) Has she been acting weird lately?

BRENT: To be honest, I couldn't tell you. (pause) More and more, I'm finding that I have no idea what normal is with Sarah.

Near the kitchen, Sarah stops in her tracks. She is now out of view of her sister and her husband, though she double-checks anyway just in case.

SARAH: (to herself) Okay, you've got to calm down. Just because they're talking doesn't mean anything. They've always been close and they always will be ... you just can't do anything stupid that would drive them any closer.

ACT TWO

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
EVENING

A questioning PAULA stands before BILL and DON.

PAULA: What is it that you're not even going to tell me about, Bill?

BILL: Nothing -- really.

DON: It's fine, Bill. Let me tell her.

Bill shoots Don a puzzled glance, but Don simply takes Paula by the hand and draws her nearer. He begins to speak at a low volume.

DON (CONT'D): I was just telling Don about a surprise I have planned for Helen. I really can't say anymore than that, but I wanted to run the idea by him and see what he thought.

PAULA: That's so sweet of you. And you asked the right man -- my husband has pulled his share of cute little romantic stunts in the past.

BILL: Right you are.

PAULA: Anyway, you two, why don't we get a move on and head into the dining room? I just have to check in the kitchen real quick, but I think the food should be ready.

DON: Oh, good. I'm starving.

Paula begins to lead the way. Before they begin to follow her, Bill and Don exchange looks of relief.

At the same time, BRIAN approaches MOLLY and BRENT, who are now engaged in much more casual conversation.

BRIAN: Hey, honey.

He sidles up next to Molly.

MOLLY: Sorry for leaving you over there, but I got caught up talking to everyone.

BRIAN: It's no problem. I got to catch up with Tim -- you'd be surprised how little we get to talk, despite working in the same office.

MOLLY: I can imagine. (pause) I hear Diane's been giving them trouble again.

BRENT: Not again ... What now?

MOLLY: Apparently she got a job offer in LA, but they're not exactly thrilled about the idea of sending Samantha out to her for visits.

BRENT: I can see why.

MOLLY: Hey, Brian, do you think you can try to talk some sense into her -- somehow?

BRIAN: I'll try.

He wrinkles his brow nervously, privately recalling his past scheming with Diane and the measures they

have taken to keep it secret.

PAULA (OS): Okay, everyone -- dinner time!

BRIAN: (nodding towards the dining room) Let's go.

He and Molly head out of the room, arm-in-arm. Brent hesitates just a moment as he watches them walk away; this sight seems to make him slightly uncomfortable.

ACT THREE

INT: FISHER HOME (DINING ROOM)
EVENING

The entire gang is now seated around the table. Heaping platters of food fill the table, leaving not an inch of empty space, as plates are passed around and requests shouted out. Finally the uproar slows and everyone begins to eat.

BRENT: I cannot tell you how good this food is.

MOLLY: You really outdid yourself, Mom and Dad.

PAULA: It was worth it. An occasion like this calls for a celebration.

BILL: On that note ...

He rises to his feet.

SARAH, who is seated next to him, looks up with a smirk on her face.

SARAH: Uh-oh.

BILL: ... I'd like to propose a toast to my beautiful daughter, Sarah, and my son-in-law, Brent. (pause) We really did miss the two of you while you were gone. This family has always been so close - I guess it left a bit of a hole in the family in general.

He looks at the guests of honor with a loving twinkle in his eye.

BILL (CONT'D): I know I gave you a hard time when you got married. But I was upset because it was so spontaneous, so unexpected. As time has passed, though, I've seen how much you really do love each other. (pause) We're glad to have you back.

With that, he raises his glass.

ALL: Cheers!

Glasses clink together, signaling the joy of those assembled at simply being in the company of the others.

CLAIRE: And on a less-happy note, I'd really like to remember everyone that was involved in the tragedy in Colorado ... It terrifies me more than anything that Travis and Samantha will be in school in just a few years, with things like this going on.

PAULA: The really scary part is that there's no way to prevent it. You can name kids as dangerous and have them talk to counselors until you're blue in the face, but if they're really driven to something like that ...

BILL: There may not be any way to have a happy ending.

TIM: The whole thing really makes me heartsick. I can't imagine what the families of the kids who were killed -- or the kids who watched their friends die -- are going through.

ANDY: Not to mention the kids who did it! Their families must be torn apart.

COURTNEY: I guess it just goes to show how unpredictable life is, and that we've got to appreciate the people we've got while we're all still here.

ACT FOUR

INT: FISHER HOME (DINING ROOM)
EVENING

Everyone is now in the midst of eating dinner. A number of side conversations are going on around the large table.

DANIELLE addresses MOLLY, who is seated directly across from her.

DANIELLE: Molly, how'd that last interview go?

MOLLY: Actually, I thought it was pretty good. I ran into Courtney afterwards--

Several seats away from them, COURTNEY jumps into the conversation at the mention of her name.

COURTNEY: Oh, the job interview? It sounded like it went really well.

MOLLY: I thought so.

DANIELLE: That's really good to hear.

ANDY, seated next to his girlfriend, joins in as well.

ANDY: I'm glad you're getting your career going again, Molly. I was just telling Danielle a few days ago, she needs to get moving on that demo tape of hers.

DANIELLE: Don't worry about it. It'll get started eventually.

ANDY: The sooner, the better. Ever since we met, I could tell how much you wanted that record deal. I just can't wait for the day when you finally get it.

Having overheard this part of the conversation, BRENT looks over to his sister, who suddenly looks very uncomfortable.

ANDY (CONT'D): I know how much singing means to you. I'd just hate for you to lose your shot at making it big because we didn't act soon enough.

At this point, the burden of her inevitable decision is weighing more heavily than ever on Danielle as she lowers her eyes to her plate, unable to make eye contact with Andy.

ACT FIVE

EXT: FISHER HOME
NIGHT

Dinner is now long-finished, as are the dessert and coffee portions of the evening. The door to the Fishers' house opens, and the Chase family -- DON, HELEN, and COURTNEY -- step out into the dark night. As they descend the porch steps, each shouts final thanks and goodbyes to their hosts.

The three approach their car. Don hits the remote control to unlock the doors.

HELEN: I must say, that was an excellent dinner.

DON: Paula and Bill really killed themselves.

As he rounds the front of the car to make his way to the driver's side, Don suddenly shouts out.

COURTNEY: Dad! What's wrong?

DON: I--I stubbed my toe on the tire, that's all.

He bends down to rub his foot quickly, slipping it in and out of his shoe in pain. However, he quickly forgets the discomfort as something else catches his eye.

DON (CONT'D): Oh my gosh ...

HELEN: What?

DON: This tire is flat.

HELEN: Really?

DON: Yeah, it's completely flat.

Courtney, on the other side of the car, casually checks the tires on that side -- and is surprised by what she finds.

COURTNEY: These two too!

DON: What the hell is going on?

He checks the final tire, just to be certain.

DON (CONT'D): I can't believe this -- somebody slashed our tires!

COURTNEY: I'm gonna run inside and get Brent, okay?

HELEN: Good idea.

Don begins rubbing his temples.

HELEN (CONT'D): Honey, what's wrong?

DON: I--I don't know. I--my head hurts.

HELEN: Just try to relax. It's not that big a deal. And the last thing we need is for you to have a heart attack over something like this.

DON: No, I'm not ...

Suddenly his head jerks, first to the left and then to the right, as if he is experiencing some kind of shock. His face strains as he grits his teeth, trying to fight off the pain. Without warning, however, it all seems to explode out of him.

DON (CONT'D): (screaming) Dammit! Why did this have to happen?

HELEN: Don, it's all right--

DON: No, it's not! What the hell is going on here?!?

He pauses momentarily, his breathing rushed.

DON (CONT'D): I bet I know who's behind this ...

HELEN: Who?

As Sally's face floats through his mind, Don has another outburst.

DON: God! Why do people do stupid things like this?!?

HELEN: Don, please. Just calm down!

DON: (shouting) I can't!

He grips his head again, trying to steady himself. As quickly as this fit of anger came upon him, it subsides. His voice returns to its normal repose and the muscles in his face ease up.

DON (CONT'D): I--I don't know what that was.

HELEN: Don, are you okay?

DON: Yeah ... I'm fine.

He stares out across the neighborhood, uncertainty in his eyes as he tries to steady his quivering hands.

END OF EPISODE #78

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