

"FOOTPRINTS"
EPISODE #126
TIME FRAME: NOT LONG AFTER [#125](#)

TEASER

INT: TIM & CLAIRE'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Tim's head pops up from its sagging position on his shoulder at the sound of the opening door. He rubs his eyes once, in a vain attempt to wipe away the weariness that has taken hold of him.

Claire bustles in through the door, and only once she has shut it does she realize that Tim is sitting right in front of her. Their eyes meet, but neither speaks immediately. Finally Claire takes the initiative.

CLAIRE: I thought you'd be in bed by now.

TIM: Yeah, well ... I should be. I just thought I'd ... wait up for you.

CLAIRE: Tim, I've worked later shifts than this before. You didn't have to-

TIM: I needed to.

She tips her head to the right, taken aback somewhat by this comment. They certainly haven't been on the best of terms lately; in fact, they've hardly communicated beyond the necessary since their argument at the hospital yesterday.

CLAIRE: Tim, I'm tired. If this has to do with Ryan, I'm really not in the mood to hear it right now.

He stares up at her from his spot on the couch, trying to figure out how to best approach this subject.

INT: BROOKS HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Jason's birthday party continues to operate at full-thrust. The music is overwhelming and people are literally everywhere, but somehow, Courtney has managed to find Lauren - and get her attention.

COURTNEY: Hey.

LAUREN: Hey! I've hardly even seen you the whole night.

COURTNEY: I know!

She takes a look around, drinking in the scene her mind has captured so many times already.

LAUREN: This whole thing has turned out really well.

COURTNEY: Yeah, I know. I just wish the guest of honor would stop, um, over-executing his new privilege.

She nods over towards Jason, who has his third drink of the night in his hand.

COURTNEY: So, have we had any developments in the Alex department?

Lauren shoots her a puzzled look. She didn't hear the question.

COURTNEY: Has anything happened with you and Alex?

Her voice wavers through the whole question. She needs to scream to be heard, but on the other hand ... screaming probably isn't the best way to be discussing this.

Lauren responds with an eager nod.

COURTNEY: Ooh ... do tell.

LAUREN: You know Kelly?

Courtney nods, unsure of where this is going.

LAUREN: Well, she had him cornered. So I came over and rescued him and he said he owed me one. I told him I would settle for a dance, and so he danced with me.

COURTNEY: That's a start.

LAUREN: We did a whole song, and then a slow one came on and he didn't leave, so we kept dancing ... but then you and Jason came in and the music stopped.

COURTNEY: Well, that gives you something to work with, right?

LAUREN: Oh, yes. Mark my words: That boy will be mine by the time this night is over.

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Helen is still awaiting an answer from Don.

HELEN: Did you bring the divorce papers or not?

DON: I, uh ... no.

Helen sighs in frustration. She turns away from him.

DON: What?

HELEN: I hate this!

She whips around to face him again, and the rage in her face is unmistakable.

HELEN: Please, will you just go get them and get this over with?

DON: Why are you so insistent on this?

She throws up her hands, totally flabbergasted.

HELEN: Will you listen to yourself? Why do I want this so badly? What about you?

DON: Helen-

HELEN: Don, please! You know, it's one thing if you want to end our marriage, but would you at least just do it already? I am sick and tired of hanging on!

DON: But I-

HELEN: Please, just sign them and get this over with?

DON: I can't.

HELEN: Why not?

Don allows a pause to hang in the air, hopefully calming Helen down a bit.

DON: I don't want to.

ACT ONE

INT: TIM & CLAIRE'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

TIM: Please, just listen to me.

Claire nods softly, though tentatively. She finds herself expecting another all-out affray.

TIM: I ... I want this to stop.

He moves forward to lay his hands upon her shoulders, but something in his voice prompts her to jerk backward.

CLAIRE: Tim, I told you I didn't want to fight about this now!

TIM: And I don't either.

The ensuing silence brings the tension level down a little bit. Finally Tim speaks again.

TIM: It's just ... I'm scared. I don't want you to get mixed up in something that can only bring you pain-

Her response cuts into his sentence, fast and furious.

CLAIRE: Like being friends with Ryan?

INT: BROOKS HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Lauren pulls the cocky smile from her face as Alex and Jason approach, drinks in hand.

JASON: My, what sexy ladies we have here.

He grins a little too widely, letting out a laugh that's a little too free.

LAUREN: Hey. You having fun?

JASON: Totally. I can't thank you guys enough for putting this party together.

COURTNEY: It was our pleasure.

She smacks a quick smooch onto his cheek. The four stand, grinning, for a pleasant moment, until a retching sound from behind interrupts.

They turn around just in time to see a young man hurtling towards them, both hands cupped over his mouth. Jason yanks Courtney out of the way just as the man loses control; vomit spews all over the carpet.

LAUREN: Oh ... my ... God.

Alex can't help but giggle at her almost-frozen reaction.

ACT TWO

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
NIGHT

Paula and Bill stand at the door, huddled uncertainly as they do their best to "casually" overhear whatever it is that's going on in the living room.

PAULA: I'm not picking much up.

BILL: Me neither ... Maybe that's a good sign.

PAULA: You mean that they're not killing each other?

BILL: Exactly.

Paula sighs, dropping her shoulders as she crosses the tile floor to retrieve a bottle of water from the counter.

PAULA: I just pray they're able to sort everything out.

BILL: So do I. But a lot has happened in the last few months ...

PAULA: I know. Don really dug himself into quite a hole.

Bill shakes his head in worry.

BILL: Still, I think that if one of them breaks this thing up for good, it'll be Helen. She's hardly forgiven him at all for any of this - Why should she do a complete about-face tonight?

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)

NIGHT

The conversation Paula and Bill have been awaiting continues at last, as Helen is finally able to overcome her surprise and respond.

HELEN: You don't?

DON: No! I've been telling you that all these months-

HELEN: Then what about Sally?

DON: What about her?

He sees his wife's lips part, ready to speak, but the words never materialize.

DON: Helen, I don't love Sally. I don't want to go back to the marriage I had with her. I couldn't.

He pauses, allowing these words to sink in. A look of contempt slowly but steadily creeps across Helen's face, finally bursting a fiery rage.

HELEN: You bastard!

ACT THREE

INT: TIM & CLAIRE'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)

NIGHT

TIM: Claire, don't you understand why I'm worried?

CLAIRE: No!

TIM: Why not? I don't think it's that unusual for a man to be worried about his wife spending time around a guy who raped her!

CLAIRE: He didn't rape me!

Her shriek silences Tim.

CLAIRE: I told you that already - why won't you just accept it?

TIM: Well, what happened, then? I seem to distinctly recall you telling me that-

CLAIRE: I know. But it was ... it wasn't totally accurate.

Tim throws his hands up in the air and then drops them to his sides in total frustration.

CLAIRE: Oh, I'm sorry. Am I inconveniencing you?

The sarcasm pokes out of her voice, stabbing at Tim. He can't help but stare at her, almost in shock.

TIM: What is happening to you?

CLAIRE: What is happening to me?

A laugh, nearly maniacal in that it sends uncomfortable chills down Tim's spine, shoots out of her.

CLAIRE: Me? I'm not the one trying to control your life, Tim!

TIM: I'm not-ugh! God, why am I even bothering?

CLAIRE: That's a really good question.

She drops onto the couch, letting her exhaustion seep into the cushions as she breathes deeply.

CLAIRE: Please, can we not argue about this right now?

TIM: Well, when would you like to "argue," then? What's a better time for you?

This time, it's Claire's turn to be wounded by his sarcasm.

CLAIRE: Tim-

TIM: No! Why is it so wrong that I'm worried about you? Am I not supposed to care that you're putting yourself in danger?

She doesn't come up with an immediate reply.

INT: BROOKS HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Though several guests still linger, the crowd has thinned out considerably; the music has dulled to a background hum. Lauren stands over the stained patch of carpet, unable to move her eyes off of it. Alex comes up from behind her.

ALEX: That was certainly a surprise.

She turns, startled.

LAUREN: You can say that again.

ALEX: That was certainly a surprise.

This time, she notices the slur in his speech. He laughs at his own not-so-funny remark all too quickly.

LAUREN: Okay, I think it's time we got you to sleep, buddy.

ALEX: Where do you want me to sleep?

LAUREN: The guest room is all yours. Just promise me you won't puke all over or anything, okay?

ALEX: Aye-aye, captain.

He salutes her and immediately follows it with a loud chuckle.

LAUREN: C'mon, will ya?

She begins to lead him up the stairs. He turns to the side, just in time to see Courtney and Jason joined at the hands. Their lips lock for a brief moment, and Alex feels something inside him wanting to cry out in protest. He finds that he doesn't have the energy, however, and allows Lauren to pull him up the remaining few stairs.

ACT FOUR

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

DON: What?!?

HELEN: Listen to yourself!

DON: What, telling you that I love you and want to be with you? Yeah, I really see a problem with that-

HELEN: And what about Sally?

DON: I already told you - I don't want to be with her! I never have!

HELEN: But you said ...

Her face goes pale, and momentarily she feels an embarrassed grin tugging at the corners of her mouth. She cannot fight it.

DON: What?

HELEN: I thought ... Oh my gosh.

DON: What?

The smile on Helen's face triggers one on Don's, as well.

HELEN: I am so stupid. I thought you were saying that - that you wanted both of us.

DON: What?

He can't help but laugh. She quickly joins in.

HELEN: Just a stupid misunderstanding on my part ...

DON: We've had a lot of those lately, haven't we?

Helen suddenly feels something inside her soften as she looks into his face. The confusion, the allegations of the past few months seem unimportant as they stand here together.

HELEN: Have we?

DON: We most certainly have.

INT: BROOKS HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

The remaining guests create a buzz of their own in the background, but Jason and Courtney are standing by the staircase, generally oblivious to it all.

COURTNEY: Happy birthday.

JASON: Thank you so much. This party was such a great surprise-

He raises a drink to his lips.

JASON: And a nice way to ring in turning 21, if I say so myself.

He takes another chug from the glass as he laughs. Courtney reaches for it and pulls it away from him.

COURTNEY: You've had just about enough of this for one night.

His face suddenly fills with anger.

JASON: Who are you, my mom? I don't think so!

He snatches the glass out of her hand and finishes the drink off.

COURTNEY: Jason, please ... you are way too drunk. Believe me, it ain't sexy.

JASON: So it's sexy you want, huh?

He grabs her and pulls her tightly to him, smacking his lips on top of hers. She pushes away from him.

COURTNEY: Jason, please!

JASON: Oh, come on, Court! Have a little fun!

Courtney steps back, and he makes no further moves.

COURTNEY: How about you just spend the night here, okay?

JASON: Huh? I had some other ideas about how we should spend tonight-

He leans in, but she pushes him away.

COURTNEY: Jason, not now. Not like this.

She looks up the stairs.

COURTNEY: Lauren!

Within seconds, Lauren pokes her head around a corner upstairs.

LAUREN: Yeah?

COURTNEY: Do you think Jason could stay here for the night? I don't even wanna drive him home.

LAUREN: Yeah, sure. Let's just stick him in the guest room.

COURTNEY: Perfect.

She turns to Jason.

COURTNEY: Okay, bucko, it's bedtime. Let's go.

He lets out a fatigued yawn as she takes him by the arm to lead him upstairs.

ACT FIVE

INT: TIM & CLAIRE'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)

NIGHT

Claire softens as she observes the strain in Tim's body and the newly formed creases in his face.

CLAIRE: It's not that, Tim. You have every right to worry. But I promise you, Ryan is no threat to me.

TIM: How can you be so sure of that?

CLAIRE: Because ... he's changed. I know it. The way he risked his life in the fire to save the kids - the old Ryan never would've done that. He would've found the quickest escape route and made a beeline for it.

TIM: So because he didn't let two small children die in a fire, he's not capable of hurting you anymore?

CLAIRE: No ... yes - you know what I mean! It's been over fifteen years since ... since everything happened. God, he's even managed to not get mixed up in his father's crazy business.

TIM: I guess that's a good sign.

CLAIRE: It is. Please, Tim, you have to understand ... This friendship means a lot to me. It gives me a chance to bring some closure to that time in my life - after everything with my dad and all. It lets me remember some of the few happy times I had as a kid.

Tim feels a drive to protest, but can't bring himself to do it. He simply opens his arms, and Claire steps inside of them.

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Don delicately places a hand on Helen's cheek, staring straight into her eyes.

DON: Please, Helen ...

Helen notices that her breathing has become much heavier.

DON: Accept my apologies for everything that has happened. I am so sorry for all this confusion ... I know I didn't handle it very well, and I certainly made some stupid decisions, but please - don't even imagine that I ever stopped loving you.

She nods softly.

DON: Nothing could be further from the truth.

HELEN: I know.

No other words seem to be necessary as their lips draw together, falling into a passion that has been held at bay for so many months.

**INT: BROOKS HOME (GUEST BEDROOM)
NIGHT**

Jason rolls over, but he is so disoriented that he shoots his arm out all the way across the queen-size bed. Alex lets out a cry of pain into the dark as Jason sits up.

JASON: It is too damn hot in here ... I swear, I'm gonna suffocate or something.

Indeed, beads of sweat have been swimming down his face for some time. He fans his face for a few seconds before pulling his shirt up over his head. He struggles with it, trying to find the appropriate openings, before finally removing it.

JASON: I had waaaay too much to drink.

Alex agrees with a groan. He watches as Jason kicks his pants off, though the entire scene seems to be taking place behind a fuzzy screen.

JASON: I just need some sleep, I think.

His head collapses onto the pillow - but the wrong one. His head lays just a few inches from Alex's, and Jason's arm remains on top of Alex's shirtless chest.

Alex swallows hard as the painful impulse rises inside of him. He tries to push it down, kill it off for the time being ... but tonight, he finds that he can't exactly remember what's so bad about it to begin with. He waits in silence, his breathing increasing with the tightening in his groin.

A surreal tingle darts through his body as he takes Jason's hand and places it on top of his own boxers.

END OF EPISODE #126

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