

"FOOTPRINTS"
EPISODE #129
TIME FRAME: AN HOUR AFTER [#128](#)

TEASER

INT: BAR
NIGHT

Roberta Owens slams her martini glass down on the bar, sending a sharp clink out into the din surrounding her. She looks around squinting through the cloud of dullness imposed by the dim lighting, and notes the sparse sprinkling of bar patrons tonight. Well, duh, she tells herself - it's Thanksgiving. Everyone's got someplace better to be.

ROBERTA: Everyone but me.

The words slip out, spontaneous and low. They hit her before she even knew they were coming ... But it's true, she thinks. Why don't I have anyplace better to be than this hellhole?

She lingers over the martini glass, breathing a heavy sigh into its depths. She watches as a single drop of liquor dangling on the side of the glass wiggles loose and plummets to the bottom.

Suddenly she realizes that there is someplace she can be.

INT: FISHER HOME (DINING ROOM)
NIGHT

Bill reaches over Courtney's shoulder as she turns to her left, causing him to nearly bump her in the chin with the plate he has removed from the table.

BILL: Sorry there, Court.

COURTNEY: No problem.

He carts off her plate and a stack of others as she focuses her attention upon Jason.

COURTNEY: Are you sure you're alright? You hardly said a word through the whole meal.

His glazed eyes don't even move from the empty spot of tablecloth upon which they are fixed.

COURTNEY: Jason?

Only once she waves a hand in front of his face does he react, shaking his head quickly as he snaps out of his daze.

JASON: Yeah?

COURTNEY: God, you looked like you were a million miles away.

He bites his lower lip, working it nervously as the image of Alex lying beside him in bed, stroking his hair, replays itself on the screen of his mind.

JASON: I'm fine, really.

With that, he stands and makes an abrupt exit. She just watches him walk away in confusion.

TIM: You noticed it, too?

Courtney flips her head around to the other side in surprise. Tim is standing over her, watching Jason enter the kitchen.

TIM: I can tell something's wrong with him.

COURTNEY: I know ... I just wish I had some idea what it is.

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
NIGHT

Sarah hands Paula a dish to add to the stack on the counter. Paula places it there, but quickly realizes that this latest addition is going to send the entire pile of dishes sliding off the counter. With fast hands, Sarah grabs hold of them and divides the stack in two.

PAULA: Thanks, honey. That could've been a mess.

Something I know plenty about, Sarah thinks sarcastically. Paula, glancing up, catches the ever-so-slight roll of the eyes her daughter does.

PAULA: What is it?

SARAH: What?

PAULA: That look - what's wrong?

SARAH: Oh, uh, nothing. I was just thinking-

About how I cheated on my husband, who I'm not sure even loves me anymore. Her mind completes the sentence, much to her dismay; she is nearly prompted by some strange impulse to blurt the words out.

SARAH: Nothing. Nothing at all.

She begins to step away, but Paula restrains her by placing a hand on her shoulder.

PAULA: Sarah, don't give me that.

SARAH: Huh?

PAULA: Don't just dodge me like that. It doesn't take a genius to see what's going on with you.

Sarah stares at her mother in uncertain shock.

ACT ONE

INT: ANDY'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)

NIGHT

A beep sounds as Andy presses the button to turn off the telephone for what could very well be the millionth time this evening. He places the phone back on the receiver and settles down onto the creme-colored leather sofa.

ANDY: Where could she be?

Probably out at dinner with her road crew, he realizes. He feels a desperation welling up within him - an urge, a need, to speak to Danielle already. So far, though, his efforts to do so have been unsuccessful.

The chime of the doorbell yanks him from his trance. He pauses a moment, contemplating whether he should even bother to open it; after all, chances are good that trouble could come calling, this being a holiday and all - particularly in the form of his mother. Still, something within propels him off of the sofa and over to the door.

He pulls it open and does a double-take upon seeing the face standing on the other side.

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
NIGHT

Sarah is oblivious to the clattering going on behind her and Paula as her mother's words hang in the air.

SARAH: W-what do you mean?

PAULA: I'm not an idiot, Sarah. I can tell exactly what's got you so on-edge.

SARAH: You can?

PAULA: Yes.

She pulls her daughter more into a corner, away from the ears of others.

PAULA: Things are still rough with Brent, aren't they?

Relief almost bursts out of Sarah in one massive breath as she speaks.

SARAH: No, Mom, that's-

PAULA: There's no reason to try to cover in front of me, Sarah. I know you may not want everyone else to know about it - especially seeing how happy Tim is with Claire and Jason is with Courtney - but you can talk to me about it.

SARAH: There's nothing to talk about!

Paula's eyebrow hooks upward.

PAULA: Are you sure?

SARAH: Yes.

Her response comes forcefully, bearing a tinge of annoyance - just enough to make Paula certain that it was not the truth. Before she has a chance to ask any more questions, though, Sarah has stomped off.

All of a sudden, Paula feels a cloud settle over her. Her eyes roam upward, as if looking for answers - an

explanation, perhaps, as to why her family is constantly dealing with such trauma. My poor children, she thinks, considering each of their past and recent crises. My poor children - all of my children ...

A hand settles tenderly but firmly on her shoulder. She turns quickly, startled by the intrusion.

BILL: Is everything alright?

She looks up into his face and realizes that she can't tell him anything but the truth - especially not with the light streams of tears that have begun to dribble down her face.

INT: FISHER HOME (DINING ROOM)

NIGHT

Tim takes a seat next to Courtney as their conversation continues.

TIM: I thought I was gonna get some kind of answer out of him when I asked him about it before, but he just kind of froze.

COURTNEY: It's weird. He hardly ever gets like this.

TIM: I know.

He notices that her eyes are focused upon Don and Helen, standing closely together at the entrance to the room.

TIM: Don't let Jason get you down too much. You've got too much to be happy about right now.

She cracks a smile as she turns back to him.

COURTNEY: You can say that again. I-I'm just so glad that my parents were able to work everything out. It sounds cheesy, but it really makes me believe in the power of true love.

Tim gives an agreeable nod.

COURTNEY: It just goes to show, there's nothing that true love can't overcome, nothing worth giving up on it for.

As she says this, Tim catches sight of Claire, who has just entered the room.

ACT TWO

INT: ANDY'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

ANDY: What are you doing here?

He looks at Roberta in confusion.

ROBERTA: I just thought I'd drop by and wish you a happy Thanksgiving. God knows I've got nothing more important to be doing ...

He tries to shake off his perplexity at seeing her as he answers.

ANDY: I know the feeling.

ROBERTA: Danielle's still on the road, huh?

ANDY: Yes, she is.

Roberta chuckles, though Andy finds the noise to be just a little off in tone.

ROBERTA: Wouldn't it be nice if I could keep track of the schedules of all the performers I'm in charge of?

She shakes her head, causing her perfectly arranged mass of black hair to spring ever so slightly.

ROBERTA: Have you heard from her today?

ANDY: Uh ... no. No, I haven't, actually.

ROBERTA: Really? That's-

ANDY: I believe she's at dinner with some of the crew. I expect she'll be calling later.

ROBERTA: Ohhhh ...

The alcohol swimming in her suddenly becomes obvious, as her body swings awkwardly in accordance with her wobbling voice.

ANDY: Is everything okay, Ms. Owens?

ROBERTA: Roberta. Call me Roberta, okay?

She raises a hand in a clumsy wave.

ANDY: Sure ...

He answers uncertainly as she stumbles inside the apartment and seats herself.

ROBERTA: Ya don't mind if I hang out for a bit, do ya? It's not like either of us has anyplace wonderful to be ...

Andy watches her as she shifts around on the couch, attempting to get comfortable.

ANDY: No. No, I suppose not.

He closes the front door.

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Sarah enters and immediately makes a beeline for the couch, where Brent is seated, engaged in conversation with Molly. She lowers herself down upon the arm of the couch, within centimeters of her husband.

SARAH: Hi, honey.

BRENT: Hey.

He turns back to his discussion with Molly. Sarah, seeing this, begins to slowly rub his back.

MOLLY: So, Sarah, is everything finished with Matt?

The sheer ... irony of the question nearly forces a sarcastic smirk onto Sarah's face, but she thinks better of it. It's just like Molly to ask a question like this, though, she notes mentally.

SARAH: The case is officially closed. All the charges against Matt have been dropped.

MOLLY: That's good to hear. I guess I owe you an apology, then - you did him a great favor by helping

him clear his name.

Sarah uncomfortably dismounts from the side of the couch, dropping her weight back down onto her feet.

SARAH: I'm just glad I was able to find the truth in that whole mess.

She stares right at Molly, a subtly suggestive expression adorning her face.

SARAH: After all, the truth can be quite a pain to uncover sometimes, can't it?

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
NIGHT

BILL: What's wrong?

Paula just looks at him sadly, feeling that any speech might set the waterworks in motion.

BILL: Paula, please. What's the matter?

Her eyes beg him to stop asking questions - not here, not now.

BILL: Do you want to go upstairs and talk about this?

She wants to shake her head 'no,' but she can't. Softly Bill takes her by the wrist and leads her to the stairs.

INT: FISHER HOME (DINING ROOM)
NIGHT

Courtney turns to see what has caught Tim's eye; she spots Claire.

COURTNEY: If you don't mind my asking, is something the matter between the two of you?

Tim remains focused on his wife. A long moment passes before he snaps out of it and looks back at Courtney.

TIM: I'm not exactly sure.

COURTNEY: What does that mean?

TIM: I don't know. I honestly just don't know anymore - I don't know what she wants, I don't know what she's thinking ...

His outburst catches Courtney off-guard. She hardly expected him to offer this much information, and so quickly, at that.

TIM: I'm sorry. I just started throwing all of this at you-

COURTNEY: No, it's alright. If there's anything you wanna talk about-you can trust me.

TIM: Thanks.

He lets a deep sigh roll out.

TIM: I don't want to say too much, but I'm just frustrated ... There's someone I would rather Claire not see, but she doesn't seem to think there's any problem with it.

COURTNEY: So basically, you're just not seeing eye-to-eye on this one thing?

TIM: That's about it.

COURTNEY: Tim, listen to me: My parents let themselves be kept apart for months by what was literally nothing. It was all just a big bunch of misunderstandings and a serious lack of communication. And you know where it got them?

He responds with a nod as his teeth pull up the corner of his lower lip.

COURTNEY: Absolutely nowhere. They were both miserable for months because they made more of a situation than there was to make of it. Granted, my dad let things get a little out of control, but still-They could have saved themselves months of pain if they'd just stepped back and taken a look at the bigger picture.

TIM: I see what you're getting at.

Courtney takes a sip of her soda before answering with a grin.

COURTNEY: I'm glad.

Just then, Bill ushers a quiet Paula through the room. Tim watches his parents head into the living room and then upstairs.

TIM: Hang on for a minute, okay? I want to go make sure everything's okay with my mom.

He pushes himself up out of his chair and follows the path taken by his parents just moments ago.

ACT THREE

INT: ANDY'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)

NIGHT

Roberta returns from pouring herself another drink and seats herself beside Andy on the sofa. She pulls her legs up as well, though, taking the opportunity to kick her shoes off.

ROBERTA: What a crappy holiday ...

ANDY: Maybe so, but I appreciate your dropping by. It's nice to have someone to talk to, for a change.

He slams down the rest of his scotch as Roberta turns to him with a curious look.

ROBERTA: What's that mean?

Before he even says anything, a knowing look develops on her face.

ROBERTA: Oh, I see. With Danielle gone so much, you must spend tons of time alone, huh? That's gotta suck.

ANDY: It does get a little depressing sometimes, yes-

ROBERTA: Just forget about her.

He sets the empty glass down abruptly on the coffee table as he reacts to her comment with surprise.

ANDY: Excuse me?

ROBERTA: Seems pretty obvious to me that Danielle's more interested in her career right now - and why wouldn't she be? It's the opportunity of a lifetime.

She slides closer to him, worming her way across the leather sofa.

ROBERTA: But when a chance like that comes along - well, there are certain sacrifices a person has to make.

Her deep, brown eyes burn into Andy's. She lightly touches her tongue to her lips.

ROBERTA: Dear Danielle doesn't seem to want to make that decision, though - so whattaya say we make it for her?

She suddenly pounces. Her lips invade Andy's and her tongue quickly does the same to his mouth.

Strangely, the first thought he has is not of pushing her away.

INT: FISHER HOME (LIVING ROOM)
NIGHT

Molly breaks her sister's heavy stare with a jerkiness that, she scolds herself, showed a little too much discomfort. She stands, holding her hands over her hips.

SARAH: But anyway, I'm just glad to be home now. All those months away-It was awful not being able to be near my husband.

She slinks down onto the couch and snuggles up to Brent, lying her head across his chest. Molly watches, almost fascinated by the scene. It strikes her that this is the first time she's seen them being mildly intimate in many months.

Her eyes move for just a split-second to Brent's face, but the contact is shattered when his own eyes catch sight of hers. They each turn away, looking about the room uncomfortably.

Suddenly Brent pushes Sarah off of him, albeit delicately.

BRENT: I really need something to drink. My throat-I must be getting a cough or something-it's so scratchy ...

He stands and staggers out, faint excuses trailing after him lazily. Sarah pulls herself to a sitting position and, after watching his exit, looks back at her older sister.

SARAH: I am so lucky to have him. I just thank God I didn't blow things-

She stops her subtle taunting mid-sentence. A serious expression fills her face. You did almost blow

things, you idiot, her mind whispers. Don't get so cocky.

MOLLY: Didn't blow things when?

INT: FISHER HOME (MASTER BEDROOM)
NIGHT

Bill stands with his back against the door, holding it shut as he begins to question Paula.

BILL: Please, tell me what's going on. I can tell you're upset-

PAULA: I am. It's just ...

The weak boundary she'd established between holding herself together and letting it all go crumbles with these few words.

PAULA: Tonight just got me thinking about everything. About the kids-how terrible everything has been for them, how much they've all gone through. I just thank God we've been able to be here for them ...

Bill speaks slowly, soothingly.

BILL: I think I see where this is going.

PAULA: Bill, I can't do this anymore. Not knowing-not knowing where he is, where he went, what he's been through ... I need to know.

She looks up from the floor, wrestling with the loose tears to slow enough so that she might speak.

BILL: You can't.

A sudden rush of anger sends Paula's next words out loud and clear.

PAULA: Why the hell not?!?

INT: FISHER HOME (UPSTAIRS HALLWAY)
NIGHT

Tim presses even closer to the door, trying to make something of the scraps of conversation he's gathered.

END OF EPISODE #129

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