

"FOOTPRINTS"
EPISODE #131
TIME FRAME: THE DAY AFTER [#130](#)

TEASER

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

The subtle steadiness of the Matchbox 20 song floating over the usual midday hubbub of the coffeehouse is skewered by the jangle of bells. A few heads turn to the door, where Molly stands somewhat awkwardly. Her posture appears uncomfortable, her eyes quick. She is clearly searching for someone.

There he is. She spies Matt Gray sitting at a small table off in the corner. She has a profile view of him, and squints uncertainly for a few seconds to make sure it's really him. After all, she realizes, she's only seen him a time or two. But it is him.

Thankfully, he doesn't look up. Somehow she feels that she needs to be in control here - she needs to be the one who finds him. One of those all-too-familiar stabs of guilt hits her; she freezes in place. How can she do this? Is it really fair - to Sarah or Matt?

Her mind offers up a resounding "yes" as the answer, and she begins to approach Matt.

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

Lauren isn't even aware of the smile that pops onto her face the moment she catches sight of Alex. She tosses up a hand in an enthusiastic wave and jogs the fifty or so feet up to him.

LAUREN: Hey!

ALEX: Hi.

His greeting is accompanied by a cheery lift of the eyebrows. Oh my gosh, Lauren thinks, feeling that swirling in her stomach once again. How cute ...

LAUREN: So, what's up?

ALEX: Nothing too exciting. I just decided to treat myself to a little after-lunch shopping.

He holds up the Abercrombie & Fitch bag in his right hand.

LAUREN: Mind if I have a look?

ALEX: Go right ahead.

She parts the top of the bag with two fingers and peers over its edge. Inside, she finds a long-sleeved, olive green shirt, with a tiny pocket on the left arm.

LAUREN: This is so cute!

ALEX: On sale, too.

She flashes him a look of exaggerated approval.

LAUREN: Jeez, you could probably pick out better clothes for me than I do!

She doesn't notice the quick dart to the side that Alex's eyes do.

ALEX: Yeah, well ... I think you do a pretty good job yourself.

She smiles, replacing his new shirt in the shopping bag and basking in his casual compliment.

INT: TOUR BUS
AFTERNOON

Danielle stares at the contrasting hues of brown that shade the wood on the side of her bunk. She runs a finger over it absently and then yawns.

DANIELLE: I cannot believe I have to do a show tonight ...

Now she blows out a large puff of stale bus air, throwing her head back as far as it will go over the pillow. Not only is she exhausted, but she's completely frustrated. This tour is just going on and on and on ... Same thing, day in and day out.

DANIELLE: I am not cut out for this.

Hoping to take her mind off her misery, she slips off of the firm mattress. She brings herself to two feet and then looks around for no particular reason. Suddenly a thought hits her.

She heads to the back of the bus, picking up a few odd sweatshirts and portable video games until she finds what she's looking for. She holds her pager up in front of her and squints to read the characters against the bland gray background, especially in the dim lighting of the bus. Finally she realizes she has a voicemail message.

Picking up her cell phone, Danielle dials up her voicemail and plants herself down on a leather bench, the frigidness of which she can feel even through her jeans. She punches in a few odd numbers to access the message and then leans back against the bus's window, listening to it.

As she does so, she leans further and further forward. Her breath holds in her lungs, not wanting to cause any disturbance.

DANIELLE: Oh my God ...

She punches a few more numbers and the message replays, filling her ear and her head with confirmation of something she can hardly believe.

Finally she exits her voicemail and dials in a new number.

DANIELLE: Roberta Owens, please.

ACT ONE

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

Lauren forces herself out of her momentary stupor in order to keep the conversation alive. She finds herself at a loss for anything intelligent to say, but does her best to say something.

LAUREN: So how was your Thanksgiving?

Alex draws a sharp breath and then exhales slowly.

ALEX: It was interesting.

LAUREN: That doesn't sound too nice.

ALEX: It wasn't. I mean, I love my mom to death, but every time we spend time together like that, I just

wind up feeling bad about myself.

LAUREN: What does she do that's so bad?

The minute the words have escaped, Lauren wishes she could rope them back in. Stupid! she scolds herself. That was just a little too forward. To her relief, though, Alex doesn't miss a beat in answering.

ALEX: She's just always ragging on me about everything. About my plans for the future, my friends ... my personal life. It's just tiring.

He rolls his eyes.

ALEX: Especially considering that she doesn't have the most solid track record where stability is concerned.

Lauren studies the unhappiness manifesting itself in his warm brown eyes.

LAUREN: You know what?

ALEX: What?

She takes his free hand and holds it inside both of hers.

LAUREN: I'm willing to bet that your mom knows better than anyone that she maybe hasn't set the best example for you. She just wants you to wind up better off than she did.

Alex finds himself nodding slowly in agreement.

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

Matt's attention is focused on the streams of rainwater gliding down the outside of the coffee shop's windows. He looks out, watching as thick globs of rain strike the worn asphalt of the parking lot. A set of approaching footsteps catch his ear, and he turns instinctively once they stop nearby.

MATT: Molly?

MOLLY: Hi. I, uh, I saw you sitting over here and I thought it was you, but I wasn't sure.

MATT: Well, it is.

He chides himself mentally for coming back with such a rude-sounding response and tries to inflect his next question with as much warmth as possible.

MATT: So how are you doing?

MOLLY: Okay, I guess. Nothing too exciting. And you?

MATT: I'm ... getting by. It's weird trying to start over like this, you know?

Molly offers an understanding bob of the head.

MOLLY: So you're staying in King's Bay, then?

Before he answers, he lets out an uncertain huff.

MATT: Honestly, I don't know. I thought I was going to, but - it's hard. I don't really know anyone ...

MOLLY: What'd you do for Thanksgiving?

MATT: Went to a movie, grabbed something to eat ... Nothing much.

MOLLY: It has to be weird not having anyone to get together with or talk to in town.

Tempted as he is to bring Sarah into the conversation, he thinks it best to avoid mentioning her.

MATT: Yeah, it is.

MOLLY: Well ...

She studies the tips of her fingernails for a moment, brushing each one with her thumb.

MOLLY: There's always Sarah. Have you talked to her lately?

Matt looks up at her, trying to choose his words carefully.

ACT TWO

INT: SONIC SOUND MUSIC (ROBERTA'S OFFICE)
MIDDAY

Roberta looks away from her computer at the jingle of the telephone. She quickly reaches out a hand to grab it.

ROBERTA: Hello?

DANIELLE: Roberta ...

ROBERTA: Danielle?

DANIELLE: Yeah.

She is eerily quiet.

ROBERTA: What's up?

INT: TOUR BUS
AFTERNOON

Danielle drums her fingers on the windowpane as she begins to speak slowly.

DANIELLE: I got your message.

ROBERTA: What message?

DANIELLE: The voicemail you left me last night. I only thought it would be right to return the call.

ROBERTA: Danielle, I didn't leave you a voicemail last night.

DANIELLE: Are you sure, Roberta?

ROBERTA: I am.

DANIELLE: One hundred percent positive?

ROBERTA: Yeah ...

DANIELLE: Well, then, did you happen to send anyone else a voicemail last night?

ROBERTA: Danielle, what the hell are you-

Her sentence comes to a crashing halt as her mind pulls up the hazy memory of leaving a nasty resignation message for Katherine Fitch.

Roberta stops in front of her car and leans against the front as she draws her cell phone out of her purse. Blindly she punches in the number on the speed-dial. At the beep, she speaks.

ROBERTA: Hi, it's Roberta. I just wanted to tell you I'm done with this whole thing. It's not worth it - any of it. Your son doesn't want anyone other than Danielle Taylor, and he made it pretty damn clear to me that he never will. So you know what? I'm out. It's been a blast, Katherine-

She says the name of her "employer" with arrant defiance.

ROBERTA: -but the deal's off. Buh-bye.

Roberta is unable to say anything. What if she-No, she couldn't have! ... Could she?

DANIELLE: Then maybe it was a mix-up of some sort. A message for someone else that you left on my pager by accident, maybe?

ROBERTA: Huh?

Even though she plays dumb, the desperate hesitation before Roberta speaks is incriminating in itself.

DANIELLE: Drop it, Roberta. Don't forget - I saw through Katherine from the very beginning. It's about time I saw the truth about you, too.

Danielle just wishes she could be leering in through the windows of Roberta's office, savoring the horrified expression she must be wearing.

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

Even though he can't come up with one logical reason to lie to Molly, Matt feels as though he should - as though he must.

MATT: Well, I ran into her in the park one day a few weeks ago. I haven't seen her since then, though.

MOLLY: Oh, really? That's a shame.

She has a nearly uncontrollable urge to inform him that she overheard Sarah's telephone conversation with him last night, that she knows they're planning to meet here.

MOLLY: She made it sound like you two had gotten to be really good friends while you were in New York.

MATT: We ... got to know each other pretty well. But I don't wanna smother her or anything - I think she could use some time to focus on everything else in her life.

Just then, the rattling of bells fills the coffee house. Molly's head turns anxiously to the door, but her eyes find only a teenage couple entering.

MATT: You waiting for somebody?

MOLLY: Oh, no. I just came to grab a cup of coffee and relax.

MATT: It's a nice place, isn't it?

MOLLY: Yeah. Really cozy ... It can be nice at night, when they have live musicians.

MATT: I was here for that the other night! Some weird chick was playing her guitar and groaning about how much she hates everybody.

MOLLY: Sure her name wasn't Alanis?

They share a laugh.

MATT: No, don't think so.

MOLLY: You know, my friend used to sing here - Danielle Taylor.

MATT: Really? Is she the one who-

MOLLY: Has that song on the radio now? Yeah.

MATT: Wow ...

MOLLY: Hey, she's Brent's sister. Did you know that?

MATT: No, I didn't.

MOLLY: Ya learn something new everyday, huh?

MATT: Guess so.

Before he even finishes speaking, the ringing of bells again announces the opening of the door, pulling Molly's head in its direction. This time she sees exactly who she's looking for.

Sarah takes just a few steps herself before her eyes lock upon her sister, standing there next to Matt.

ACT THREE

INT: SONIC SOUND MUSIC (ROBERTA'S OFFICE)

MIDDAY

Roberta's teeth clamp around her finely manicured thumbnail as she listens to Danielle on the other end of the line.

ROBERTA: I-What are you talking about?

DANIELLE: Drop it already!

ROBERTA: Drop what?

DANIELLE: This whole stupid charade. It all makes perfect sense now, Roberta. No wonder you were so quick to throw a contract in my face - Katherine Fitch put you up to this, didn't she?

ROBERTA: Danielle, I don't know what you think is going on, but I can assure you-

DANIELLE: No, I can assure you that it would be best to just admit it already. Just stop protecting Katherine. There's no need.

Roberta is dead silent.

DANIELLE: Roberta?

ROBERTA: Yeah?

Her voice is crawling now. It is the voice of someone proceeding with maximum care, someone picking her words quite strategically.

DANIELLE: Just tell me that I'm right. Tell me that Katherine is the one who put you up to all this.

ROBERTA: Danielle, I have no idea what you're talking about.

DANIELLE: Look, I've got a voice message right here in which you clearly identify yourself and basically spell out the whole stupid plot. So you've got two options: Either you turn on dear old Katherine, or I go straight to your bosses and show them how you've been earning a little extra cash on their time.

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

Sarah looks at Molly in confusion, then down at Matt, and then back up at Molly. This time, she plants a smile on her face.

SARAH: Molly! Hey! What are you doing here?

MOLLY: I, um, just ran into Matt while I was getting some coffee. How about you?

SARAH: Oh, I ... I was just stopping in myself.

MOLLY: Weird little coincidence, huh?

Sarah forces a grin as she shrugs her shoulders.

SARAH: Yeah.

Molly turns her eyes back to Matt.

MOLLY: Well, it was nice running into you.

MATT: You too.

MOLLY: I'll see you guys later. Bye.

Sarah and Matt both give partial waves as Molly heads over to the front counter. Sarah waits just a second before scrambling into the chair across from Matt.

SARAH: What the hell is going on?

Over at the counter, Molly orders an eggnog latte and then waits idly as it is prepared. She shoots a quick glance over to her sister and Matt, but tries to refrain from staring. She notes that they are already deeply engrossed in conversation.

MOLLY: What in the world are you up to, Sarah?

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

Lauren offers Alex a sincere smile.

LAUREN: Look, it doesn't sound like your mom has had things too easy, either. Give her a break.

ALEX: Maybe you're right ...

He withdraws his hands from her hold.

ALEX: You know, I should get going. I've got something to take care of.

LAUREN: Okay.

ALEX: Well, I'll see-

LAUREN: Wait. Are you doing anything tomorrow afternoon?

ALEX: No ... why?

LAUREN: Wanna catch a movie or something?

Alex hesitates a moment before answering.

ALEX: Yeah, sure.

LAUREN: Alrighty, then. Meet here at, say, two o'clock?

ALEX: Sounds good. I'll see you then, okay?

LAUREN: Cool. Bye!

ALEX: Bye!

They head off in their separate directions. Lauren walks as if in a trance, unaware of the rest of the world. She scrunches up her nose in a giddy giggle.

Meanwhile, Alex finds himself walking at an increased pace. Nervous thoughts dart back and forth inside his head: Was she acting weird, or was it just me? Maybe she's-No, she couldn't be. We're just friends. Besides, I can't ... I can't let her get the wrong idea. It would just be wrong, especially after-

His thoughts stop with a solid thud as he realizes he's bumped right into someone.

Looking up, he finds that it's none other than Jason.

END OF EPISODE #131

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