

"FOOTPRINTS"
EPISODE #132
TIME FRAME: SHORTLY AFTER [#131](#)

TEASER

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

Sarah leans forward in her seat, her face hovering over the small table as she speaks to Matt.

SARAH: Did you hear that-that thing in her voice? She didn't show up here by accident, Matt.

MATT: What are you talking about?

SARAH: Molly is up to something. I can just tell.

MATT: What do you mean, "up to something"? She was getting a cup of coffee and she happened to see me sitting here. What's so suspicious about that?

SARAH: I-

She stops to gather her thoughts. She leans back in her chair, turning her head so that her eyes scan the rainy parking lot as she continues.

SARAH: There was just something about the way she was talking to me. She suspected something, Matt.

MATT: Suspected something?

Sarah turns back to him sharply.

SARAH: About us.

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

A storm is rumbling outside, but Claire doesn't feel much safety here in the apartment, either. She sits on the floor, handing little Travis and Samantha this toy or that as she sneaks peeks up at the television. Everything seems fine, but - it just doesn't feel like it. No, there's something uncomfortably cold about

the apartment today.

Keys jingle just outside the door, and Claire's head is immediately drawn upward. She waits, watching the doorknob turn and then the opening of the door. Tim enters and their eyes catch.

TIM: Hi.

CLAIRE: Where have you been?

Her voice is snappy and painfully blunt. It is clear that subtlety is not something she is embracing right now.

TIM: At the office. Like I said in the note I left you.

CLAIRE: But why? Tim, it's the day after Thanksgiving. Nobody expects you to work - and I doubt if you needed to be in the office before eight o'clock.

TIM: There was just some stuff I wanted to take care of, that's all.

CLAIRE: Oh, I'm sure there was something you were dealing with ... but what? Tim, tell me what's going on.

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

Alex swallows the heavy lump clogging his throat as he looks directly into Jason's stony face.

ALEX: Hi ...

JASON: Hi.

The silence hanging between them is more than awkward; it is bulging at the seams with all the unsaid words they share.

ALEX: So, um, how was your Thanksgiving?

JASON: It was ... fine. Normal, I guess.

ALEX: Good, good.

He nods his head slowly, obviously using the exaggerated pause to think of some way to fill the conversation.

JASON: How was yours?

ALEX: Oh, uh, fine. Yeah.

He begins to retreat into his thoughts again, but suddenly finds he can't hold them in any longer.

ALEX: Okay, I don't think Thanksgiving is the biggest thing we need to be talking about.

Jason doesn't say anything.

ALEX: You know, about what happened ... after the party?

Anxiety pounds inside him, choking his heart and lungs as he anticipates Jason freaking out once again.

JASON: Why? I don't think there's anything to talk about.

Alex's guard falls completely as his face stretches downward with surprise.

ACT ONE

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

Sarah waits for Matt to say something.

SARAH: Hello? Earth to Matt ...

He looks up slowly, cupping his palm and resting his face in it.

MATT: Do you really think she's suspicious?

SARAH: She has to be. God, you had to see her last night. She couldn't stay away from Brent for ten minutes.

MATT: I don't think you can complain about the two of them being friends, Sarah. They did get a lot closer while we were in New York.

SARAH: Maybe so, but it's gotten to the point of being inappropriate. It's like she has something against me for being married to him.

An amused grin shows up on Matt's face.

SARAH: What?

MATT: This is just getting a little ridiculous, don't you think? You've got something against her because you think she's got something against you. How stupid does that sound?

SARAH: Very, I'll agree. But it wouldn't even be a problem if she would just accept the fact that Brent is married to me, and that's not gonna change.

A shadow of discomfort settles over Matt, making itself perfectly visible in his face.

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

MIDDAY

Something inside of Tim just snaps as he launches into his response.

TIM: What could possibly be wrong? Let's see ... Oh, well, for starters, there's the fact that I spent a basically miserable Thanksgiving not talking to my wife-

CLAIRE: Hey-

TIM: No, let me finish. Then there's the little problem of my wife having this ridiculous desire to spend time with a guy who once made her life a living hell. How's that for ya?

CLAIRE: Why are you being so stubborn about this, Tim?

TIM: Because I'm worried about you! How many times do I have to say that, Claire? This thing - with Ryan being around - terrifies me!

Claire is silent for a moment. When she does speak, her voice is unsteady, as if it's wavering between a complete explosion and a total breakdown.

CLAIRE: I understand that. I tried to tell you last night, but you just ran away from me.

Tim shifts uncomfortably as he recalls his mother's secret crying fit last night, and the papers he found

that appeared to have something to do with it. Adoption papers.

CLAIRE: So if it's so important to you that we put this behind us, why did you just run away when I tried to talk to you last night?

Because I was trying to figure out what was wrong with my mother, he thinks as he tries to come up with something he can actually say.

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

ALEX: What do you mean, there's nothing to talk about?

JASON: There really isn't, is there? I mean-

He is cut off mid-sentence as a woman bumps right into his side and then continues on her way. He takes hold of Alex's arm and pulls him aside.

JASON: Hey, wait, come here.

He leads Alex to a bench, where they sit down before Jason continues speaking.

JASON: Look, I'm sorry I got so crazy that night. It just-it was scary. It was pitch-black, I was in a strange place, I was drunk as hell ... I just overreacted.

Alex is completely speechless. This wasn't exactly the conversation he'd been expecting - or rather, dreading - ever since that night.

JASON: I mean, we were both really drunk - things happen. It's nothing to get all worked up about, right?

The way he ends the statement by asking for reassurance almost makes him sound desperate to believe it himself. This is completely lost on Alex, though, who speaks only after a strained silence. His voice is thin, as if it has been worn out from trying to mask something.

ALEX: Right.

ACT TWO

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

The uneasiness that has taken hold of Matt has become visible to Sarah.

SARAH: What's wrong?

MATT: Nothing ...

The incompleteness of this statement is a fair indication to Sarah that something has to be wrong, and the heavy sigh that follows serves as confirmation.

SARAH: You're not very good at this.

Matt finally looks her in the eye.

MATT: Huh?

SARAH: Just tell me what's wrong.

MATT: It's just-This whole situation, I guess. I mean, I really don't have anything at stake if Brent were to find out about ... the two of us, but still ... I feel guilty about it all the time.

SARAH: Welcome to my world.

Despite the warnings of his mind to just stop here, Matt keeps on pushing the topic.

MATT: If you feel so guilty about cheating on Brent, how do you expect to live the rest of your life with him?

Sarah doesn't have an answer.

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

With Claire's eyes fixed upon him, Tim decides a half-truth would be better than a total lie.

TIM: My mom was upstairs, crying. My dad was up there with her, and when he came down, I wanted to go up and see what was going on.

CLAIRE: Was she okay?

TIM: Yeah. I think the holiday just got her a little depressed about how we've all grown up and stuff.

Well, it's sort of true, he thinks.

TIM: I wanted to talk to you - I really did. But I needed to check up on her first. And when I came downstairs, you didn't want to talk.

He spits out the words with a bit of scorn.

CLAIRE: I know. I'm sorry.

Tim's face softens almost immediately.

CLAIRE: I should've thought about the possibility that there was something a little more important going on than our little spat. I was stupid to think you were just trying to be impossible.

Tim is silent as he takes in these words. Claire lightly pats the carpet next to her, motioning for him to sit down as she reaches out the other arm to keep Travis from running away. Uncertainly, Tim accepts the offer.

CLAIRE: I think it's time we just laid all our cards out on the table and ended this thing.

TIM: I couldn't agree more.

CLAIRE: Okay, then ...

She heaves Travis up into the air and brings him to rest in her lap. Tim does the same with Samantha as Claire continues talking.

CLAIRE: Look, I know you don't like the idea of me being friends with Ryan. I guess I can see why you'd be concerned.

Tim bites his tongue, killing the sarcastic comment with which he is so tempted to reply.

CLAIRE: And I know I've been pretty inflexible with hearing you out. But I've been thinking about it, and-well, what you've said makes sense.

TIM: So what do we do about it now?

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

Jason and Alex sit on the bench in momentary silence. Both are leaning forward, their elbows resting on their knees. Alex is staring out at the sea of shoppers, watching wave after wave of person go by. Suddenly Jason speaks, jarring Alex.

JASON: So we're cool, then?

Alex nods his head deliberately.

ALEX: Yeah.

JASON: Cool. I just don't want things to get weird between us, you know?

This time, Alex responds with only a nod.

JASON: It's not like it's anything we need to get all freaked out about. I mean, we were drunk and everything ...

He trails off, but his pager proves to be his saving grace as it begins to beep. He quickly whips it out and smiles.

JASON: And that would be Courtney. I should go give her a call. Listen, dude, I'll see you later, 'kay?

ALEX: Sure.

He watches as Jason walks off, and can almost see the renewed spring in his step. From what Alex can tell, it's relief.

ALEX: At least someone's happy about it ...

ACT THREE

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

Claire doesn't hesitate in answering Tim.

CLAIRE: The solution is really simple: I won't see Ryan anymore.

Tim's eyes bulge in surprise.

TIM: Are you serious?

CLAIRE: Yeah. I can understand how scary it had to be for you to think about me being with Ryan, knowing everything we went through with my dad and all.

TIM: Claire, are you sure you're okay with this? I know you were upset about what you thought was me telling you what to do-

CLAIRE: I was. And in a way, it still annoys me. But it's obvious that Ryan being in my life isn't healthy for the two of us, and I'd rather not jeopardize our family. Not over something like this.

At long last, Tim exhales in definite relief.

CLAIRE: Happy?

TIM: Definitely.

He moves in, and as the children start slapping hands, Tim and Claire come together for their first kiss in days.

INT: KING'S BAY MALL
MIDDAY

Alex remains seated on the bench, not feeling up to moving right this moment. He is feeling a definite relief, something he's been waiting for ever since the night of the party - but it's not the pure, weightless relief for which he hoped. It feels tenuous, at best.

Maybe that's just because Jason seemed so uncertain, too, he figures. This can't be easy for him to deal with; he's just looking for a way to put it out of his mind for good.

Pain twists Alex's heart as he realizes that while their conversation may have been enough to put Jason at ease, it won't be that easy for him to put behind him. Not at all.

INT: CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE
MIDDAY

Much to her own surprise, Sarah struggles to come up with a response to Matt's question. She's worked it out so many times in her mind, forced it to make sense - and now, nothing. It all seems so painfully clear-cut. Still, she forces out the answer she's been holding onto ever since her night with Matt.

SARAH: Matt, I made a mistake. I know I shouldn't have been so quick to just ... jump into bed with you, but I did. Now, I can't erase that, but I don't have to keep dwelling on it for the rest of my life.

MATT: So you think you can just sweep aside the fact that we made love-

SARAH: Don't call it that!

Her outburst leaves Matt in silence.

SARAH: It was a mistake. I thought Brent was making a move on Molly, that he'd given up on us, and I was hurt. But that wasn't the case - Molly made him think those things. She made him think I didn't care anymore. I'm not gonna let her win just because I feel guilty.

MATT: Listen to yourself! "Let her win"? God, what are you, eleven years old?

SARAH: Jeez, what the hell is your problem? Are you trying to make me feel bad or something?

She slams her coffee down as she stands.

SARAH: I'll tell you what I am, Matt: I'm a woman who loves her husband very much, a woman who doesn't want to see him hurt. And if that means he doesn't find out that I made one stupid mistake on account of my sister, then so be it!

With that, she furiously storms away. Matt tries to watch, but then drops his eyes and listens to the subtle clink of her shoes on the floor. Her words bounce back and forth inside his head, unrelenting, like a ping-pong ball bounding out of control.

Jeez ... when did I lose her like this? he wonders in despair. Another voice in his head cuts in, though - When did I ever have her to begin with?

He doesn't even want to try and answer either question.

END OF EPISODE #132

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