

"FOOTPRINTS"

Episode #142

-A Few Days After [#141](#), Valentine's Day-

TEASER

EXT: APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF
EVENING

Claire looks up at Tim in amusement as they step through the steel door and onto the roof.

CLAIRE: The roof?

TIM: Yeah. Come on, if this isn't romantic, I don't know what is.

CLAIRE: No-

She gazes around, taking in the calm navy blanket of the sky, undisturbed except for the twinkling pinpricks in its fabric created by the stars.

CLAIRE: -this is definitely romantic. Look at the stars ... How in the world did you manage to get a clear night?

TIM: Just a little something I like to call luck.

She turns to face him squarely, resting her hands on his shoulders.

CLAIRE: So what were you going to do if the weather had been crappy?

TIM: Oh, there were other options.

CLAIRE: Is that so?

TIM: It is.

His hands wrap around her waist, pulling her closer.

TIM: Because you know what the only thing we need to make tonight special is? Us.

Their lips find each other easily, and they drift into a heavenly kiss.

INT: SKATING RINK
EVENING

Jason feels the suddenly biting cold of the ice fade from his bare forearms as he steps off the ice. He pulls his skate guards on; they snap into place and he puts his feet down, the task already forgotten.

JASON: So you two are gonna go back to your house now?

Courtney nods, tipping her head sideways towards Lauren.

COURTNEY: Yeah. I'll need her help getting ready!

LAUREN: Might as well make myself useful, right? It's not like I'm gonna be doing anything else tonight ...

Her words go deeper than whining; they are full of genuine disappointment.

COURTNEY: Don't let yourself get all down in the dumps. I'm sure you'll have some Valentine's Day magic of your own.

LAUREN: I'm not getting my hopes up.

JASON: Don't get discouraged.

LAUREN: I'm not ... I mean, I know it would be nice to have some big, romantic night like you guys have planned, but I'm not expecting one.

The itch to say something is growing more and more intense, but Courtney forces herself to scratch it in silence.

INT: BRENT & SARAH'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)
EVENING

Brent gives his watch the umpteenth check of the evening and is amazed to find that time has only progressed two minutes since the last one. He paces a few steps before removing his hands from his pockets and turning to the bedroom.

BRENT: Almost ready?

He projects his voice back to the bedroom. A handful of seconds pass without any sign of a reply before Sarah appears in the doorway, cramming her foot into a sleek, black high-heel.

SARAH: I'm coming!

She struggles and gets the shoe on at last. After taking just a handful of hurried steps, she pauses.

BRENT: What's the matter?

SARAH: Nothing ...

Despite the makeup decorating her face, a certain paleness is showing through. It only adds to the uneasiness that has trapped her facial features and eyes.

SARAH: It's nothing. I'm fine.

He offers a skeptical stare. As if on cue, her eyes roll back; her body begins to follow suit.

ACT ONE

EXT: APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF
EVENING

Tim and Claire's lips separate slowly, each savoring the softness of the other for some priceless last moments.

CLAIRE: So what are we doing up here, anyway?

Tim's eyebrows slink up suggestively.

TIM: I guess you'll see.

CLAIRE: Oh, no, you don't ... No funny business up here, mister. It's freezing.

She pulls the sleeves of her simple black shrug down over her hands for emphasis.

TIM: That's not what I meant - although now that you mention it ...

Claire shakes her head firmly, but she's clearly relishing the playfulness.

TIM: No, seriously, I think you'll be very pleased with me.

Until this point, they have been standing next to the door that brought them here, which is implanted in a cement wall wearing all the debris one might expect of something on a roof. Presently, Tim takes Claire's hand and leads her around the corner, which immediately elicits a gasp.

CLAIRE: Oh!

Laid out before her is a table bearing a hot meal, two glasses of wine, and a single red rose reaching out of a tall, slender, transparent vase.

TIM: You like it?

CLAIRE: I love it! Tim, this is ... wonderful!

TIM: You know, I was thinking a rooftop picnic would be nice, but sitting on the floor up here seemed like it might take away from the romance, you know?

CLAIRE: I think the table was an excellent choice.

She breaks away from him with a delighted half-skip, moving closer to the table to admire his handiwork. Tim looks on, something powerful swelling within him.

INT: SKATING RINK
EVENING

The casual conversation is being conducted at a slightly louder-than-normal volume, thanks to all the shuffling from the reloading of skating bags.

JASON: So is this getting ready gonna be a major ordeal for you two?

Lauren grins slyly.

LAUREN: We'll try to keep it to a minimum. You know how hard that can be, though.

JASON: I swear, you just make Courtney worse.

LAUREN: I try.

COURTNEY: It wouldn't be the same without 'cha, babe.

She pulls the zipper across the top of her skating bag, a rolling suitcase, finishing with a dramatic bob of the head.

COURTNEY: There we go. All done.

Jason, who has been ready for just a couple of seconds, stands with a flourish of superiority.

JASON: It's about frickin' time!

Courtney responds by jabbing her tongue out in his direction.

JASON: Well, I'm just excited to get to dinner. I went through a lot of trouble to make it a fun night - I don't wanna miss it!

COURTNEY: You'll have to wait two more seconds. I need to go see Sandy real quick.

JASON: I'll take your stuff out to your car, then. It's bound to save some time.

Lauren takes a step forward.

LAUREN: Here, I'll go with you.

JASON: No, stay. Otherwise you'll never get to leave! You need to keep an eye on her.

LAUREN: Good thinking.

She unzips the pockets of Courtney's fleece jacket and pulls out the car keys.

LAUREN: Here ya go.

An underhand lob sends the keys flying several feet. Jason snags them in one hand.

JASON: I'll just run these back in here before I go, okay?

Lauren nods and he is off, leaving her to move Courtney along onto her necessary distractions.

EXT: SKATING RINK

EVENING

Jason emerges from the glass doors of the rink, an Olympic-style training facility that mirrors the professionalism within with a simple gray exterior containing several large sections of windows. He makes his way across the parking lot at a slower-than-usual pace, bogged down by having his own equipment bag slung over one shoulder and using the other arm to drag Courtney's bag.

He arrives at her black Volkswagen Jetta and lets go of her bag as he selects the proper key. Swiftly he finds it and stows away her bag.

As he is lowering the trunk's lid, something catches his eye. Even in the dark, he can see something pink on the other side of the car. The trunk, forgotten, falls back into place as he walks around to the front of the car and inspects the decorated note on the windshield.

A sharp pain pinches the pit of his stomach.

ACT TWO

INT: BRENT & SARAH'S APT. (LIVING ROOM)

EVENING

Brent lunges toward Sarah as her weight begins to fall backward. Just as his hands get a grip on her arms, she snaps out of whatever odd state she fell into moments ago. Once she is standing upright, she looks at him with hazy eyes.

SARAH: What ... what happened?

BRENT: I don't know. It looked like you were going to pass out, and then all of a sudden it stopped.

SARAH: Yeah, it was weird ... I could feel myself ... falling.

She is referring not just to the physical loss of balance, but to something internal, the loss of control. Try as she might to express this sensation in words, she knows she cannot: Speaking has become an exhausting task.

BRENT: Are you okay?

SARAH: Yeah, I think so.

She now seems more solid, more assured, as if everything has suddenly begun to fall back into place.

SARAH: It's like a fog is ... lifting from over my head, or something.

BRENT: Are you sure? Maybe I should get you to the hospital.

SARAH: That's not necessary.

BRENT: Why not? You almost passed out!

SARAH: Brent, let's just go to the restaurant. I'm-

Her sentence is completed with a thud before Brent can even react.

EXT: APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF
EVENING

Claire is picking apart a piece of sourdough bread and eating it bit-by-bit, speaking in-between.

CLAIRE: So do you think that this thing with your mom the other day is related to the way she's been acting?

TIM: It has to.

CLAIRE: But what is it? It's scary to consider, but do you think she could - be sick, or something?

TIM: I don't think so.

He doesn't go into any greater depth, instead staring off into space.

CLAIRE: Why not?

TIM: Because ...

Because it must have something to do with these adoption papers.

TIM: I don't know. I guess it's possible, but ... it just doesn't seem like it.

CLAIRE: I just pray that she's okay. It would be like losing my own mother all over again-

TIM: We're not going to lose her.

Claire shoots him a dubious look.

TIM: We're just not.

He rises to his feet, his plastic chair scraping across the rough cement of the roof.

TIM: Okay, are we ready for the pasta?

CLAIRE: I suppose we are.

She stands, thinking it best to drop the subject of Paula for now. She moves closer to Tim, ready to give him a hand with the dish of pasta dressed in white sauce that he is lifting off a smaller table.

CLAIRE: Hit, let me-

She reaches a hand into the jumble, and it is immediately clear that something will have to give in order for the pasta to take it to the table intact. Unfortunately, neither of them has the chance to extract a hand in time ...

They watch in stiff shock as the dish of pasta soars over the waist-high wall surrounding the rooftop.

ACT THREE

EXT: SKATING RINK
EVENING

Just as Jason predicted, it is twenty minutes later when Courtney and Lauren emerge from the rink. Lauren gives her watch a quick check; she stares at it for a prolonged period of time, struggling to read the hands in the absence of daylight.

LAUREN: What time is he picking you up, 8:15?

COURTNEY: Yeah.

LAUREN: We're gonna have to move fast.

They arrive at the Jetta, but Lauren keeps staring at Courtney.

LAUREN: I've got an idea for your hair - it'll look so cute.

She pauses, analyzing Courtney's hair for a second before forgetting it entirely.

LAUEN: Ugh, I wish I got to go out tonight!

COURTNEY: Don't give up hope just yet.

LAUREN: Well, it's a little late, don't ya think?

COURTNEY: Not necessarily ...

She peeks around to the windshield, ready to grab what's looking for - but it's not there.

LAUREN: No, I think it probably is just a little too late for that.

Courtney turns the key and hears the synchronized clicks of the doors unlocking, but it's all in the back of her head. She's focused on trying to search underneath and around the car for the missing Valentine.

No luck. She climbs in the car with her unsuspecting friend, trying to comprehend what might have happened.

EXT: APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF
EVENING

The dish and the pasta separate during the course of their descent, which seems to occur in slow motion. Shattering rings in the air as the dish collides with the sidewalk; the pasta plops down in several lumps. Slowly, Tim and Claire turn to face each other, and they do nothing but stare for an extended moment, during which time one might expect some sort of tinkly, "whimsical" music to play. At last, wide smiles bust out on their faces.

CLAIRE: Did what I think just happened actually happen?

TIM: I think so.

They speak at a reduced pace, slowed by the surprise of the whole situation. Now, though, it is quiet again - until Claire bursts out in hysterical laughter.

TIM: Is this funny to you?

She nods, unable to slip enough gasps of air into her laughter to say anything. It's apparent that Tim is

just inches away from losing it, as well.

And watching his wife contort with hilarity, he does.

ACT FOUR

INT: HOSPITAL
NIGHT

Brent quits his pacing and turns to the doorway just as Sarah appears in it. His face makes a few desperate movements, and they are enough to express all the questions that have been pummeling his brain since he brought a barely conscious Sarah in over an hour ago.

SARAH: Relax. Everything's fine.

BRENT: Are you sure?

He comes closer, taking her hands in his.

SARAH: Yeah. It's nothing serious.

BRENT: What is it, then? I mean, you didn't pass out for no reason-

SARAH: I'm fine, really. The doctor said it was just ... stress.

BRENT: That's it?

SARAH: Mm-hmm.

This verbal confirmation is accompanied by a nod.

BRENT: God, that's a relief. I've been sitting her thinking, and all sorts of crazy things were going through my head ... Thank God.

Sarah can respond in no way other than by giving a reassuring smile.

BRENT: So you just need to relax a little, huh?

SARAH: I guess so. Look, I'm sorry this ruined Valentine's Day-

BRENT: Don't even consider worrying about it. We'll make it up, okay?

She nods agreeably.

BRENT: You ready to head on home?

SARAH: Yep.

He takes her by the hand and begins leading the way. Sarah follows eagerly, wanting nothing more right now than to leave behind the secrets held within these walls.

INT: TIM & CLAIRE'S APT.
NIGHT

Tim trades the pizza delivery man several dollar bills in exchange for the box of pizza. He clamps his hand over the side of the box and spirits it away to the rectangular, wooden table in the dining area.

TIM: There we go ...

He pops open the box's lid. A barrage of steamy air and delectable odors storms him.

TIM: I am starving ...

Claire comes over to stand by his side.

CLAIRE: You can say that again.

He begins to open his mouth, but she puts a halt to it by placing a finger over his lips.

CLAIRE: Don't.

She removes the finger with a grin.

CLAIRE: Didn't you feel sort of ... trashy facing that pizza guy, with it being Valentine's Day and all?

TIM: I guess, but do you think he would've believed that I set up an elaborate dinner on the rooftop and it was ruined when the main course went flying down to the sidewalk?

CLAIRE: Guess not.

She chuckles and throws her arms around his neck.

CLAIRE: That's just the story of our life together, isn't it? We just keep tickin', no matter what anybody else thinks.

Tim moves in and plants a swift but sweet kiss right on her lips.

TIM: I wouldn't have it any other way.

INT: CAR
NIGHT

The dark road ahead of Jason is lit only by the lights from homes on the other side of the Hill that is currently on his right. He pulls the car around the latest curve in his path, nearly crossing over the pair of solid yellow lines that divides the road in two. He maintains control,. however, and rockets down the now-straight road at a speed well above the posted limit.

He can't help but let his eyes be drawn to the passenger seat, where that damned piece of pink paper - cut in the shape of a heart - is resting. The message stares up at him, a series of black words drawn in a neat hand:

It then directs the recipient to go to the Chase home for further clues.

JASON: That asshole!

Not only is he trying to make a move on Courtney, but he's doing it with the same thing I did for her birthday! How could he?

Handfuls of other unanswered questions swirl in his head as he sticks added pressure to the accelerator. The car roars ahead into the night.

END OF EPISODE #142

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