

"Footprints"

Episode #148

[Immediately After #147, Afternoon]

Previously ...

*The day of Andy and Danielle's wedding arrived, but both were grappling with doubts.

*Bill and Paula argued over their secret. Paula insisted that it would be best to tell the kids, much to Bill's frustration.

*Sarah mentioned the idea of starting a family to Brent and became upset when he was unresponsive. Later, he discussed the situation with Molly, who finally advised him to get out of his marriage before it gets any worse. Sparks flew and the two shared a kiss - unaware that someone was watching them.

TEASER

ST. LOUISE DE MARILLAC CHURCH, FOYER-

The familiar, sandy-colored hair becomes visible to Jason before the accompanying face, which is hidden behind a cluster of guests. Momentarily, the hair pushes its way through the crowd and Jason can see Tim's face. The brothers come together in the middle of the foyer.

"You made it!" Tim says, his voice bearing a tinge of playful sarcasm.

"Hey, not my fault," Jason responds, holding up his hands. "I had to wait for Courtney to finish getting ready."

"Ah." Tim dips his head backward knowingly.

Jason glances around the foyer. "Besides, it's not like we're late."

"No, not at all. But speaking of Courtney, where is she?"

Jason gives a quick look around before giving up. "Who knows? I'm sure she found someone to talk to already."

"Well, good," Tim says, his voice slowing down. "I need to talk to you alone."

The seriousness of the matter is not lost on Jason. He lowers his voice as he asks, "About what?"

"Mom."

DRESSING ROOM-

Andy's hand is already on the doorknob when the door vibrates with the triple beat of a knock. He steps back, a little startled, and pauses for a breath before opening the door.

"Hi," Bob Taylor says, raising a hand. "Mind if I come in?"

"No, not at all." Andy steps aside to allow his father-in-law-to-be entrance and then shuts the door.

Bob smoothes the front of his tuxedo idly before he begins speaking. "I need to have a little talk with you, Andy."

"Oh?" Despite the relative calm of the older man's words, Andy can't help but be a little intimidated by his imposing figure.

His fears are quickly banished. "I just wanted to explain Danielle's behavior to you. She explained to me everything that happened with your mother - everything that the two of you went through and how your mother was shot."

Andy's uncertain response is a silent nod.

"I just hope you won't let Danielle's attitude cloud the fact that she really does love you," Bob continues. "But as far as mothers go, she's been through a lot ... and I'm afraid this situation with your mother doesn't make things any easier."

"I know that," Andy says, stuffing his hands in his trouser pockets. He begins to pace within a small area. "I know how much her-your wife's death changed everything for Danielle. And it seems to me that after everything my mother did, Danielle just feels like it's not necessary for me to even want her around." He pauses. "Do you see my point?"

"Yeah," Bob nods. "I agree. Danielle will get over her vendetta against your mother, though. I'm just asking you, please don't trash this relationship because of something like this."

ALCOVE-

Off to the side in a hallway not far away from the foyer where her brothers are talking, Molly is just as occupied.

Brent's lips crush against hers. They feel warm, soft ... and hungry. It is only a moment before their

mouths open, almost simultaneously. Brent's tongue worms its way inside Molly's mouth and probes around using delicate strokes.

Molly accepts the action but it takes her a few seconds to make a move herself. Finally she puts her mouth to work as well and their tongues and lips dance a fiery salsa. Brent slides his lips down to work on her lower lip and then, without intending to, separates from her just a fragment of an inch.

It is a tiny gap, but enough of one to allow the cold bar of reality to slip between them. They linger over each other for just a handful of seconds before drifting back to an appropriate distance.

"I-I'm sorry," Molly stammers, more for a lack of anything to say than because she feels genuinely apologetic.

Brent opens his mouth to speak, but the words never make it out. His eyes widen and Molly turns to see what behind her has him so stunned.

Her eyes bulge even more greatly.

ACT ONE

FOYER-

Immediately Jason sees what it is that his brother is getting at. "You mean ... ?"

"Yeah." Tim looks around quickly and is relieved to see no sign of Paula. "Something is going on, Jay."

"Duh. Considering the way she asked us all to come over and then just stopped as she was about to say something-"

"It's more than that," Tim says. He pauses, leaving his brother hanging for a second. "I just saw Mom and Dad sitting in there and they looked like they were in the middle of an argument."

"That doesn't necessarily mean anything."

"No, it doesn't ... but in this case, I have a feeling it does. Think about why Mom stopped talking that day - it was when Dad walked in. It's something she doesn't want him to know."

Jason's reaction is delayed just long enough to make it clear that he's not saying the first thing that came to mind. "She wouldn't do that, Tim. Especially telling us ... She'd have to know that one of us would say something to him."

"Good point," Tim acknowledges. "And yeah, I'm not sure how this fits together. But it must all be connected - I can just tell."

"All? Tim, what pieces do we have to put together here? Mom was going to tell us something and decided not to, and now, weeks later, she and Dad are arguing? Doesn't sound like much to me."

"Not without the most important piece of evidence."

"Huh?"

"There's something else to all of this," Tim says, his voice almost a whisper now. "Something I found on Thanksgiving."

"What?"

"Remember how Mom seemed upset? Well, I went upstairs to see how she was doing, and I saw her crying ... looking at some papers. Later, I slipped into her room and the papers were still sitting there. She must have forgotten to put them away."

Jason's hands make a rolling motion as he urges his brother onward. "And ... ?"

"They were adoption papers."

DRESSING ROOM-

"I won't," Andy says, almost immediately. "Not after everything Danielle and I have pulled through. This is just another one of those rough spots that we need to wait out."

"Exactly." Bob's hand connects with Andy's back in a pat of encouragement. "I'm glad to see you've got your head on your shoulders like that."

Andy grins. "I try."

"Well, I'm glad you feel that way," Bob says, moving for the door. "I need to go take care of some other stuff, okay? I'll see you later."

Andy's hand rises in a slight wave. Bob exits and only then does Andy sigh.

I know it's not easy for you having to deal with my mother, Danielle. And I know that we can get through

this. I just wish it wasn't happening on our wedding day.

ALCOVE-

"Danielle?"

Brent speaks his sister's name softly, uncertainly. The bride-to-be is standing before him and Molly frozen, her hands clasped together and her face registering no reaction at all.

"Danielle, it's not—" Molly begins. But it is - it's exactly what it looks like. The tiny parasite of guilt has reemerged in full force, gnawing on every inch of Molly's stomach and head, blocking her throat. She can say no more.

Danielle's lips move and a faint sound follows. "I ..."

Molly glances over at Brent for his usual reassurance, but it is unmistakably absent. He is looking right at his sister's face; the shocked expression has worn off and has been replaced by a complexly woven mask of which Molly cannot even begin to identify all the components.

And without another word, she rushes off, into the ladies' room.

Danielle swallows, keeping her eyes fixed upon her brother's.

"Danielle, I can explain," Brent finally stammers.

"How? How can you possibly explain this, Brent? I find you standing here kissing your sister-in-law and you're going to be able to explain it away? Doesn't seem too likely to me."

He inhales deeply. The air that moments ago felt so heavy now feels so refreshing to his lungs, which have been without any for too long, it seems. He knows it's do-or-die time. "But I can, Danielle. It's more complicated than you'd ever imagine."

She narrows her eyes. This had better be good.

ACT TWO

FOYER-

This time, Jason's reaction is immediate. Pure and unbridled shock stakes a claim over his entire body.

"What?"

"She had adoption papers," Tim repeats.

"Why?" Jason isn't sure why he asks this - it's not as though Tim has any answers, and he knows that - but it just slips out.

"Your guess is as good as mine."

"Maybe she's on some kick about adopting a kid," Jason says. "She's always talking about how we're getting older and she misses having so much to do"

"They were old," Tim cuts in.

Jason shakes his head. "What'd they say?"

"I don't know. I was going through them so fast and I just saw a bunch of signatures and a lot of little type, and then-I heard footsteps, so I put them back and pretended I was looking for something."

"She doesn't know that you saw them?"

"She shouldn't. I pretended I was going into their bathroom for something."

Jason's eyes search the floor. "So you think those papers have something to do with everything else?"

"They must. It's all starting to fit together, Jay. When we get that one final piece, it'll make perfect sense."

"So what should we do? Talk to her?"

"I've tried," Tim says, folding his arms. "I don't really want to come right out and ask her, but she's dodged every question I've asked."

"Why didn't you tell me before? Or Molly or Sarah?"

"I didn't know how ... or if I should."

"We need to get to the bottom of this, Tim," Jason says, nodding his head. "I don't like it, but it's gonna drive me nuts if I don't find out what's going on."

ALCOVE-

Brent draws a breath to speak - and then stops. Danielle turns around and sees the reason why: Bob is standing there.

"What are you two looking so serious about?" he asks.

"Oh, it's nothing," Danielle explains quickly, raising a hand to the veil sitting atop her intricately styled blond hair.

"Well, you shouldn't be standing anyplace where Andy might see you," Bob says with a wink as he moves along.

The siblings wait until their father is gone before even looking at one another again. When their eyes do meet, Danielle tips her head towards the hallway.

"Come with me," she says, taking his hand and leading him away.

INSIDE THE CHURCH-

Bob has to look around for just a split second before spotting his younger son. He summons Josh to come over with a motion of the index finger.

"Yeah?" the young man says upon arriving at his father's side.

"Is everything almost ready to go?"

"I think so," Josh says, glancing around. "Looks like most of the people are here."

"Okay, good. I think it's time we got things rolling."

Josh examines his father's face for a moment. "You look pretty tense."

"I'm trying not to be," Bob says with a huff. "But I can't shake this feeling that something is really wrong."

BRIDAL ROOM-

Danielle practically flings Brent inside before closing the door and locking it. "So what were you going to say?" she asks. There is a hostility in her voice that makes Brent squirm - the only time he's heard her use it recently is in reference to Katherine Fitch.

"I need to have a serious talk with you," he begins slowly.

"I'm the one who needs to have a serious talk with you, from the looks of it! What do you think you were doing out there?"

"It wasn't-Danielle, there's a lot you don't understand. Or know, for that matter."

She slams her hands up onto her hips. "Like what?"

"Like ..." He can feel the words - they're right there. They've been there for so long, trying to push their way out but always suppressed. It's never been the right moment; now it might be and he just feels like he can't say any of it.

"Like what?"

"Like about me and Sarah."

"What about you?"

Brent begins to inhale slowly, steeling himself for what he knows he must say.

ACT THREE

THE LADIES' ROOM-

Molly turns the lock on the door of the stall and takes a deep breath. She leans against the wall and its cool metal presses against the suddenly too-warm flesh of her exposed arms.

What the hell did I just do?

She feels like she should be crying or screaming or vomiting or-something dramatic. But she also doesn't feel stable enough to do any of these things.

I promised myself I'd never let it come to this. But I did anyway, and ... look what happened.

"You're an idiot," she says aloud, laughing sarcastically as she speaks.

INSIDE THE CHURCH-

Sarah's eye is focused on her and Brent's seats up near the front. A woman wearing a blue suit and matching (ridiculous) hat and the large man beside her are beginning to crowd into the empty space.

"I should probably find Brent," Sarah says, turning to Courtney. "I think our seats are about to be seized."

Courtney smiles. "I should get Jason, too. I think he's outside talking to Tim."

"Then you're one step ahead of me. I have no clue where Brent is."

"What, he just got up and left?"

"No, I did," Sarah answers with a self-deprecating grin. "I sorta freaked out on him and got up and left, and when I came back he was gone."

"Well, he must be around here somewhere."

"I hope so," Sarah says, standing as she tries to quell the growing anxiety in her stomach.

BRIDAL ROOM-

Brent extends the silence for as long as he can before Danielle cuts in. "Yes?" she asks, sounding as angry as she looks.

"Maybe we should talk about this later," he says. "It's your wedding day-"

"And it's already been marred. I'd rather hear some explanation and be settled than spend the rest of the day wondering what the hell I just saw."

"Okay." He swallows deeply and it is both audible and visible. "There are major problems between Sarah and me."

"That doesn't give you a right to go off and kiss her sister!"

"It's not the first time," he shoots back. Though the statement is intended to make things not seem so bad, he immediately realizes that those words alone won't get the desired effect. He continues before Danielle can yell. "I was ... attracted to Molly before Sarah and I got married."

"What?" Danielle's rage has vanished, replaced by a stunned type of quiet. Things she has viewed as truths are disappearing quickly and she is trying to steady herself in a situation that she no longer recognizes.

"Molly and I kissed the night Sarah and I got married," Brent explains. "Before Sarah asked me to elope. And it hasn't gone away."

"Why'd you say yes to Sarah, then?"

"Because ... I don't know. I thought I could make whatever I felt for Molly go away. It was guilt and stupidity and denial, all wrapped together-I don't know."

Danielle turns her head sideways and looks at him out of the corner of her eye. "So all this time you've been married to Sarah ... you've had feelings for Molly?"

He swallows another lump before answering. "Yeah."

"And you haven't acted on it at all until now?"

"No - not physically, anyway. But it's killing me, Danielle ... What you saw was the result of my being so frustrated with Sarah and having Molly there for me, like always." He stops himself. "I just envy the fact that you're marrying someone you know you want to spend the rest of your life with. I wish I'd taken more time to think about my decision."

Danielle doesn't say anything.

"Look, I know this is a lot to digest. But please, don't say anything to anyone else."

"Well, I plan to talk to Molly about it."

"Don't!" he cries. Catching her baffled look, he adds, "Or at least, don't repeat anything I've said, okay?"

She offers a somber nod.

"Okay. Look, I'm sure they're ready to get this wedding started. We can talk more about this later," he says, opening the door. He steps halfway out, ready to make an escape. When she doesn't say anything further, he exits.

The door shuts and Danielle doesn't move. Her gaze remains fixed upon the wall as she considers her brother's words.

FOYER-

Jason is still absorbing Tim's news when he catches sight of Courtney coming towards them. He affixes a smile to his face and puts his arm around her.

"They're getting ready to start, I think," she says.

"I should take my place, then," Tim says, shuffling off.

Courtney begins to walk back inside, but notices that Jason is moving very sluggishly.

"Is everything okay?"

"Yeah," he says quickly, shaking his head. "Yeah. Let's go."

He follows her to their seats. On the way inside, they pass Sarah, who greets them with a warm look before continuing on.

"There you are," she smiles. She stops and lets Brent walk the rest of the distance to her.

"You're back?"

"Yeah," she says, as if there were never any doubt that she would be. "I'm really sorry about before. I just let myself get too ... emotional, I guess. I shouldn't have blown up at you like that."

The little flame urging him to combat the apology is extinguished without much fight. "Don't worry about it," he answers quietly as they begin walking back to their seats.

ACT FOUR

FOYER-

Molly walks briskly toward the rest of the wedding party, confident that she now has herself together. She taps Tim on the shoulder to get his attention.

"Hey!" she greets him. He opens his arms and takes her into a hug.

"Are we ready to start?" she asks, wearing a broader-than-necessary smile.

"I think so," Tim says. He pauses a moment as he studies her face. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah, of course," she answers, reinforcing the smile.

"Is everyone here?" Bob asks. A flurry of responses confirms this and Andy and his best man, Tim, head out to take their posts at the altar.

Molly turns to Josh as the string quartet begins playing. "Here we go."

Two by two, the members of the wedding party march out. As the line at the back of the church decreases, Bob notices that Danielle has missed her cue to emerge from the bridal room. Hurriedly he rushes to the door, paying close attention to the progress of the music.

"Danielle?" he calls out as he opens the door to the bridal room.

It's empty.

The opening notes of the Wedding March trumpet in the background as Bob searches the room in confusion. There is a pile of shimmering white lying on a small sofa - for a moment he thinks it might be Danielle, but soon he realizes it's just her dress. He goes over to the dress and finds a sheet of plain white paper lying atop it.

"Oh, God," he mutters as he reads it.

The Wedding March continues to dance in the air.

END OF EPISODE #148

[Next Episode](#)