

"Footprints"

Episode #155

[A Few Days After #154, Midday]

[Previously ...](#)

*Danielle put an end to her relationship with Andy after he found her in San Diego.

*Sarah lied to Matt that the time frame of her pregnancy eliminates him as a possible father. She agonized over not having told Brent about the pregnancy yet.

*Tim informed Molly about the adoption papers and the siblings resolved to confront their mother.

TEASER

THE BURTON CLINIC-

Sarah's eyes scale the brick facade of the two-story building. Windows along both stories are evenly spaced, though she can see inside none of them.

Her eyes return to the front door, a large glass panel surrounded by a metal frame. Beside it sits a quiet sign bearing the name of the clinic and nothing more. Sarah watches the door and sees a young girl emerge.

The girl is perhaps twenty years old, if that, dressed in faded jeans and a flannel shirt. Her hair is long - down to the middle of her back - and somewhat stringy. She pushes it out of her face and behind her ear as she crosses the parking lot, though her eyes remain on the ground the entire time. Once she arrives at her car - a small blue sedan wearing patches of rust - the girl quickly pulls out her keys, lowers herself into the vehicle, and departs.

Sarah, who has watched the girl's entire exit, now refocuses on the clinic. Still, she can't get the image of that girl out of her mind. She looks at her own reflection in her car window: What she sees is a professional, adult woman, hardly some terrified teenager from the wrong side of the tracks. But she feels like that terrified young woman. Indecision and anxiety and all the other things that have led her here today are raging full-force inside of her body right now.

She takes a deep breath and approaches the door of the clinic.

FITCH MANSION-

"Hello, Mother."

Katherine's head turns sharply to the entry of her bedroom. "Andrew!"

Andy approaches her bed slowly, almost cautiously. "I'm glad to see you're doing better."

"And I'm so glad you're here!" Her enthusiasm is muted somewhat by her overall weariness, but Andy must admit that she looks far better than she did the last time he saw her.

"I would have come earlier, but ..." His sentence dies momentarily as he becomes lost in his thoughts. "I had something to take care of," he concludes at last.

"Nick filled me in on why you had to leave King's Bay."

"Yes, well ... I'm back now." Andy gets caught up in examining her. He cannot help but feel joy that she is awake and recovering, but neither can he embrace her with completely open arms - especially after what has happened with Danielle.

"So tell me," Katherine asks, "how is Danielle? All Nick said is that there was some confusion."

"It was more than confusion, Mother. Danielle ran out on the wedding."

"She what?"

"She couldn't go through with it," he says. "She left and went back to San Diego. That's where I was - I followed her."

"And ... ?" Katherine prompts him. Her characteristic impatience shows through as she adds a hurried, "What happened?"

FISHER HOME-

Paula stares at her children with a curious smile. "Three at once? What a nice surprise!" She steps out of the doorway and allows Tim, Molly, and Jason to come inside the house.

No sooner has she closed the door than does the entire mood change.

"We all need to sit down," Tim announces.

"Why?" Paula looks at him, perplexed both by his words and his tone.

"There's something we need to talk to you about," Tim says.

Paula's stomach sinks. She has an all-too-good hunch what this is about. She looks to Molly and Jason for comfort, but their faces offer none - just sternness tempered by concern.

Tim sits down on the sofa and Molly and Jason follow suit. Paula looks around, somewhat dazed, for a moment before settling into an armchair.

"What is this all about?" she asks, no longer able to restrain herself.

"We have some questions to ask you," Tim says, "and we're not leaving until we get some answers."

ACT ONE

THE BURTON CLINIC-

Sarah's breathing grows quicker and more intense as she pulls open the clinic's door. Thankfully, the front room is empty. She is somewhat relieved to see some gray industrial carpeting and sturdy black chairs with maroon padding - at least the place isn't a dump. Slowly she approaches the front desk.

"Hi," she says to the receptionist, a Latin woman with hair pulled back tightly into a bun who can't be much older than Sarah herself. "I have an appointment with Dr. Brandt." She swallows, pleased to be finished speaking.

"It'll just be a moment," the receptionist answers with a smile that convinces Sarah she mustn't be in the right place. No, an abortion clinic is supposed to be some sleazy, run-down hellhole-

"Sarah Taylor?" a nurse calls. Sarah, who has somehow worked her way over to one of the chairs, returns to the desk. The nurse nods down a hallway and Sarah falls into step behind her.

They stop outside one of the white doors lining the hallway. The nurse opens it and ushers Sarah inside.

"Dr. Brandt will be in to see you in just a minute," the nurse says before departing. Her voice isn't completely warm - How could it be, knowing why I'm here? Sarah thinks - but it's pleasant enough.

She picks up a copy of TIME magazine and flips through the pages, though her eyes absorb none of the words. She passes several minutes like this until the door opens. She looks up with a start and the magazine falls to the floor.

"Let me get that for you," the doctor says. She is an older woman, aged somewhere between fifty and sixty, and her light brown hair is showing traces of gray. Her slightly heavysset frame bends over to

retrieve the magazine and places it on the counter before turning to Sarah again.

"So, you're here for a consultation, correct?" Dr. Brandt asks.

"Mm-hmm," Sarah answers with a nod.

"It's all right," the doctor says. "You can relax. You're not committing to anything by being here - I'm simply going to give you the information you'll need to decide whether you'll have an abortion."

FISHER HOME-

"You're making this sound awfully grim," Paula says as she shifts in her seat.

"That's how it feels to me," Tim remarks. He looks over at Molly, who with a quick nod urges him to continue. "I've been dancing around this for months, Mom. I kept it to myself because - I don't know, maybe I didn't really want to know the truth. And I tried to get you to say something without ever directly confronting you ... I figured I could just let it linger."

"What are you talking about?"

"I saw you on Thanksgiving," he explains. "I saw you go upstairs in tears ... I saw you sitting on the bed with those papers."

Each of the siblings privately notices that the degree of color in their mother's face drops dramatically at this mention of the papers.

"And when you weren't in there, I took a peek at them," Tim continues.

"Timothy!" Paula cries out, lurching forward. Only once the name has passed her lips does she realize what she has done. She replants herself and tries as best she can to maintain composure.

"I had to," he says. "I saw you being all weird and - it scared me. And that's why I didn't say anything for so long. But eventually, I had to. I had to know what was going on, bad or good. So I told Jay, and then I told Molly."

"We've spent too much worrying about this," Molly says. "All sorts of crazy ideas have been running through my head and I know that I just want to know already."

She brings her hands, folded flat, up in front of her mouth and exhales slowly and heavily. The hands

move away and she narrows her gaze at Paula.

"Please, Mom, just tell us what's going on."

ACT TWO

FITCH MANSION-

"We talked everything out," Andy says. "She said she can't marry me."

"What?" Joy is already tugging on Katherine's heart.

"She ended things between us. She said it would be unfair to both of us if she married me knowing she doesn't love me."

"She said she doesn't love you?"

Andy nods, his eyes dropping to the floor.

"I was right about her, Andrew," Katherine says. "I knew she'd only make a mess of things and hurt you."

"Danielle didn't mean for this to happen."

"Maybe not, but it did happen. And that was precisely the problem - she dragged you along without thinking about what might happen in the long-term future." Katherine's tone is very matter-of-fact, but there is an obvious hint of relish included.

"Fine, Mother," Andy says in a firm voice, looking up. "Are you happy? You were right and you won! There, I said it! Is that good enough for you?" His eyes now burn directly into her, his teeth gritted.

"And the only cost of victory is your relationship with your son!"

He swings around and heads for the door.

THE BURTON CLINIC-

"You're in your second trimester, correct?" Dr. Brandt asks.

"Yeah," Sarah says softly.

"Okay, then," says the doctor. "I'll start out by explaining the procedure to you. Then we can get into some more specifics."

"All right," Sarah nearly mumbles.

"The procedure we use for aborting a fetus at this stage is called a D&E - that stands for dilation and evacuation," Dr. Brandt explains. "We put dilators in the cervix, which is stretched as the dilators absorb fluid. You'd likely be sent home overnight while the dilators did their job."

The doctor pauses, allowing Sarah a moment to absorb this. So far, so good, Sarah thinks. I'm still here.

"The next day you would return and we'd remove the dilators. Then, basically, we remove the fetus and the other products of conception."

"How is that done?"

"We use a variety of medical instruments and suction curettage."

The word suction strikes something in Sarah's gut and she feels a disturbing churning. "Do I get anesthesia while it's done?"

"Local anesthesia, around the cervix."

"Oh," Sarah says, a bit surprised. She simply assumed abortion was a more surgical-type procedure. "So how long does it take?"

"The actual abortion itself - the evacuation part - only takes about 10 to 20 minutes."

Sarah realizes that her hand has settled on top of the mound in her stomach. Once she becomes aware of it, it rests there for just a few seconds before she feels she must move it.

"So how far along are you, exactly?" Dr. Brandt asks.

"Almost six months," Sarah answers.

Immediately she sees the alarm on the doctor's face.

"What's wrong?"

ACT THREE

FITCH MANSION-

Katherine doesn't hesitate in calling out. "Andrew, don't go! Please!"

It is enough to stop Andy in his tracks.

"I'm sorry," she continues, returning to a quieter tone. "I've already apologized for the way I behaved while you and Danielle were together, and I'll do it again: I'm sorry."

The strength of her statement gets to Andy and pulls him closer to the bed once again.

"It's just that, in some way, it feels like this justifies everything I did," she says.

Immediately she sees the spark of resentment flare up in Andy's eyes. "Of course, it doesn't. Nothing could. The things I did ... They were out of line. And I am sorry for them. But I was looking out for your best interests, and it turns out I was correct. Danielle only wound up bringing you heartbreak."

"So what?" Andy shoots back. "No, things didn't end the way I wish they had with Danielle. If I had my way, we'd be married right now. But she was right - if she didn't feel she should be committing to me entirely, then she shouldn't have. If the entire relationship was a mistake, then so be it. But it was my mistake to figure out, not yours!"

"I realize that. I just - I wish I could wring that woman's neck for everything she's put you through. I said from the beginning that it wouldn't work-"

"Are you even listening to me? Or do you just completely refuse to accept the fact that I'm an adult and I have to make my own decisions? Or maybe that I want to make my own decisions?"

Katherine places her head, which has risen from the pillow with the rising level of intensity, back in its spot. She takes a deep breath before responding. "It's difficult for me, Andrew. You were all I had, and I saw her pulling you away - I couldn't help thinking that if she took you from me, I'd be all alone."

"It's natural to feel that way," Andy says. "But it's entirely another thing to scheme and plot and generally wreak havoc because of it. It's something you should have been above."

"I know. I'm trying so hard now - I just want you to be happy, and I can tell you're not. You don't know how that makes me feel towards Danielle-"

"This isn't her fault!"

"I understand that. I need to separate all of this, that's all. I just hope that you can, in some way,

understand why I did what I did, awful as it was. I just didn't want to be alone ..."

"You're not," Andy assures her. "I'm here and I'm going to try as hard as I can to make this work, I really am. But I need you to meet me in the middle."

"I'll try. I will."

"I hope so. I need you in my life - you're all I have."

Andy gives her a sideways look. "What about Nick Moriani?"

FISHER HOME-

Paula stands, no longer able to sit before the committee that has taken it upon itself to extract the truth from her. She wanders over to the fireplace and begins examining the photographs she knows so well that are lining the mantel.

"Come on, Mom," Jason finally says. "We need to know what this is all about - we need to know if everything is all right."

"Everything is fine," Paula answers. Her voice is low and nearly cracks, an indication of the moisture collecting in her eyes and throat.

"No, it's not," Molly says, rising from the couch. "You know that as well as we do and-Mom, you wanted to tell us at one point. The only reason you didn't was because Dad obviously didn't want you to."

Paula is silent.

"Whatever it is, it can't be worth having everyone so confused and worried," Molly pleads.

"You're right."

Paula is now holding a framed photo of the family at Tim's high school graduation. She continues to stare at it and a tear drops onto the glass. She doesn't wipe it away - instead she places the photo back on the mantel and repeats, "You're right. I do want to tell you. I wish I could. But it's more complicated than that."

Her voice is weak now and that forces Tim, Molly, and Jason to pay even more rapt attention.

When Paula's words have hung in the air long enough and the feeling that she is going to say something more is fading, Tim speaks up. "How is it complicated? Can you at least tell us that?"

"I-" At last Paula turns around. All three are surprised by her face, stained by silent tears. "I can't."

"Why not?" Jason finally calls out. "Is there really anything so terrible ... ?"

In contemplating a response, Paula realizes that the answer she would like to give and the answer she feels she must give are vastly different. So she says nothing at all.

Tim jumps in again. "Is one of us adopted? Because if that's it - I don't care how terrible or unbelievable the story is - we can deal with it. This family is strong enough for that."

Paula's lips part but no words emerge.

"I can see it in your eyes," Tim urges her. "You want to tell us. So do it, already - which one of us is it?"

ACT FOUR

FITCH MANSION-

Andy's question seems to catch Katherine by surprise. "Nick?"

"Yes," Andy says. "You two had gotten pretty close before the shooting, and it seems like he's been really devoted to helping you recover."

"He has. He's been wonderful ... He's visited me every day and he makes sure I have everything I could possibly need." An unfettered grin has taken hold of Katherine's pink lips and a new color has begun to show in her cheeks, observations that are not lost on Andy.

"How, um ... How serious are the two of you?"

The question puzzles Katherine, who takes a moment to consider it before speaking. "To be honest, I'm not certain. It's just ... comfortable. He's been so supportive and helpful and caring lately."

The joy on her face is some that Andy has not seen in her for a long time - since his father's death, he thinks.

"Well, whatever it is, I'm happy for you," he says, leaning over to kiss her forehead.

THE BURTON CLINIC-

"Six months? You're hardly showing at all."

"I know," Sarah mumbles. "What's the problem?"

"We only perform abortions up to the 25th week of pregnancy," Dr. Brandt explains. "You're right there - I don't think it would be possible for us to abort this child."

Child. The word echoes in Sarah's head for a moment. "But what am I going to do?" she asks.

"I suggest you examine the circumstances of your pregnancy very seriously. If you truly feel that there is no way you can keep or raise this child, then your most realistic option would be to give birth and then give it up for adoption."

"But-" Sarah stops herself. She knows she can argue with the doctor as much as she wants, but it's not going to accomplish anything.

"Well, thank you," she says, pulling herself together.

Dr. Brandt nods. "I'll give you a few minutes to collect yourself before you leave, okay?"

Sarah nods and the doctor shuffles out without another word.

"So that's it," Sarah says to herself. She feels stupid talking aloud, but it somehow feels necessary. "I'm having this baby."

For the first time, it really hits her that there is nothing that can be done to prevent the birth of this child. One way or another, she will have to make her pregnancy known.

FISHER HOME-

Molly, Tim, and Jason have all migrated over to the mantel and gathered around their mother, though they've left enough space to allow her to think.

"Where's Sarah?" Paula finally says.

The mention of their sister's name pinches something sharply inside Tim's stomach. Could it be her?

"We couldn't get in touch with her," he says. "I called her this morning and Brent said she'd gone out to do something important."

"Maybe she should be here for this." Paula breaks away from the group, moving several feet to the side.

They don't follow.

"We can't put this off any longer," Molly says. "So tell us - which one of us is adopted?"

"I ..." Paula begins sobbing openly now. The kids move in closer, resting hands on her shoulders and back comfortingly.

Her sobs and their whispered words of comfort are enough to drown out the key slipping into the doorknob, the knob turning, and the door opening.

"It isn't any of you," Paula says in a near-whisper.

"Then what is it?" Tim asks. "Why do you have those papers and why do they get you so upset?"

"Because - They're from the child I gave up!"

The kids all take a step back, stunned, and it allows Paula enough room to see Bill, his features hardened by anger, standing in the doorway.

END OF EPISODE #155

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