

"Footprints"

Episode #163

[Shortly After #162, Night]

[Previously ...](#)

*Jason tried to talk Courtney into having sex with him, but she wouldn't. Meanwhile, Alex was uncomfortable sleeping in the same bed as an affectionate Lauren.

*Ryan spoke to Nick of a plan that he felt would solve their debt problem.

*Danielle told Brent she has decided to go on a world tour rather than return to King's Bay.

TEASER

FITCH MANSION-

"That was excellent, don't you think?" Katherine takes Nick's hand and leads him up the two steps that put them inside the glow of the porch light.

"It was," Nick says cheerily. "I can't thank you enough for taking me."

"I can't thank you enough for coming! It's been ages since I enjoyed a good opera. My late husband was a fan, but he's been gone for so many years ... and Andrew was always bored by it ..."

Nick can see her eyes drifting downward and her demeanor sinking along with them. He taps a finger underneath her chin.

"Please, Katherine, don't get upset. Not now."

She looks back up at him, her expression one of strong resolve - a resolve to follow his suggestion - tempered by residual sadness.

"This has been a wonderful night," Nick says. "There's no need to ruin it for yourself now."

"No, I suppose not."

"You suppose correctly." Nick smiles warmly. "Besides, I have something very important to ask you."

ANDY FITCH'S APARTMENT-

The telephone's rattle overtakes the dialogue playing out on the television, and it is after just one ring

that Andy picks up the phone. "Hello?"

"Andy ... hi."

Everything about the voice - its familiar sound, its hesitance - immediately puts Andy in a serious mood. He picks up the remote control and turns off the TV with the push of a button. "Danielle."

"Hi," she says again, trying to get a read for his attitude regarding her. "How are you?"

"I'm all right." Andy exhales suddenly and realizes that he's been holding his breath. "And you?"

"I'm fine."

"Good." Silence blankets the phone line as Andy tries to figure out how he's supposed to make small talk. He comes to the conclusion that it isn't possible. "So what can I do for you?"

"Nothing, I guess. I just have some news that I want to share with you."

CHASE CABIN-

"Dammit," Jason mutters as he slides between the covers of one of the two twin beds in the spare bedroom. He fluffs up the pillow and then drops his head down right in its center, thinking, This is ridiculous. I should be in the other room with Courtney.

"She has no right to be mad at me," he grumbles. "If she would just act like she's supposed to ..." He pulls the covers tightly around his body, tossing his T-shirt on the floor beside the bed.

No sooner has he closed his eyes than does he hear a creaking that indicates the door is opening. Good - she came to apologize, he thinks, though a wave of guilt soon strikes him. He is about to say something when he realizes that the approaching footsteps are a bit too heavy to be Courtney's. He struggles to make out the form in the dark, leaving his head on the pillow.

The footsteps are coming closer and closer, and Jason can see the outline of the visitor now. Details begin to fill themselves in vaguely through the dark and breathing becomes audible as the person leans in, hovering just a few inches above Jason.

It's Alex. Wearing nothing but boxers.

ACT ONE

FITCH MANSION-

"All right," Katherine says uncertainly. "What is it?"

Nick smiles broadly. "No need to rush things. I just want to start off by saying what a wonderful woman you are, Katherine. I haven't known you for very long, in the grand scheme of things, but that fact is clear to me. You're charming, you're intelligent, you have such an appreciation for life ..."

He trails off, as if the compliments are coming to him more quickly than he can shower them on Katherine.

"Thank you," she mumbles, flustered.

"Don't be embarrassed," he says. "Your confidence is another thing I find so attractive about you."

Katherine moves her eyes away bashfully, though a pleased grin is toying with the corners of her lips.

"I've come to care about you, Katherine," Nick continues. "More than I've cared about anyone in a long time. Hopefully I've been mildly successful in showing you how much - because if I've managed to show you even half of what I feel for you, you should realize just how important you've become to me."

"Is this going somewhere, Nick? Not that I don't appreciate it - I do, I truly do - but it almost sounds ... too good to be true."

"It's not," he beams, reaching into his pocket. As his hand moves back out, his fingers wrapped around an object that Katherine most certainly recognizes, her breath catches in her throat.

"My goodness," she whispers.

"Katherine, what I'm trying to ask you," he says, flipping open the small box, "is this: Will you marry me?"

CHASE CABIN-

An involuntary shudder rocks Jason's body and he shoots to an upright position. "Alex! What are you doing?"

A flicker of guilt hurries over Alex's face. "I couldn't sleep in the other room, so I thought I'd come in here-"

He sees the discomfort in Jason's expression and it is clear that the ghost of that November night has settled over them. "No, Jason, it wasn't like that!" Alex insists. "It wasn't like-like last time. I was coming in here to sleep and I saw someone was in the bed and I couldn't see who and-

"Calm down," Jason says with a raised palm, his demeanor more relaxed now.

"I'm-I'm sorry I scared you like that."

"It's okay. Don't worry about it." Jason lies back down, trying his best to get comfortable. "So you can't sleep?"

"Nope. Do you mind if I crash in here?"

Jason shakes his head and Alex makes his way over to the other bed.

"So why are you in here?" Alex asks.

"I, uh ... I got the boot."

"From Courtney?"

"Yeah."

"Is everything okay? Did you guys have a fight?"

"No," Jason says, shaking his head as if slightly mystified about the whole thing himself. "Not really. It was just one of those ... couples things, you know?"

He can make out the shape of Alex's head nodding against the nearly pitch black background.

The topic lingers alongside the silence. Alex has no intention of prying and Jason is relieved that he's not being quizzed about it.

Well, maybe.

Jason's voice cuts into the silence. "It was nothing, really."

Alex looks over in partial amusement. "You sure about that?"

"Yeah," Jason says. "Of course. Yeah, everything's fine."

Alex decides to let it go at that, but a moment later Jason pipes up. "I just had too much to drink, that's all."

"Is there something you wanna talk about, Jay?"

Jason inhales sharply. The words are on the tip of his tongue, ready either to leap out or to be swallowed and forgotten.

ACT TWO

ANDY FITCH'S APT.-

Andy tries his best to sound casually interested. "Oh, really?"

"Yeah," Danielle replies a bit stiffly. She wants to share this news with Andy - first of all, she knows she has to, but some part of her still wants to share every bit of interesting news with him. But suddenly she's not so sure she can do it.

"Is something wrong, Danielle?"

"What?" She realizes she's been sitting in silence. "No, no. It's nothing bad. I just thought I owe it to you to let you know that I've made up my mind about my future."

Something within Andy is tempted to fling back some sarcastic comment about how he was supposed to be that future, but he holds it in check.

"I'm not coming back to King's Bay," Danielle says.

The news hits him hard, though he's not sure exactly why. "You're not?"

"No. I ... I can't. It's the wrong time. And I got a call from Roberta Owens - you know, from the record company - and she's got this slot for me on a world tour and-I need to go on it. I need to get away from everything for a good, long time."

"What about Brent? He told you about Sarah, didn't he?"

"Yeah."

"Won't you want to see your little niece or nephew? You can't just not come back here forever."

"I'll see the baby," she says calmly. "I'm not swearing off my family or anything. I just think that it's the right time for me to make a career move like this."

"Well ..." Another protest is lined up, ready to go, but he suddenly is quite aware that there's no use. Not for Danielle and not for himself. "I'm glad you called to let me know that, Danielle."

"I needed to. And besides - there are some things between us that I think need to be said before either of us goes on to anything else."

CHASE CABIN-

"I did something really stupid." When he finally says them, the words spill from Jason's mouth rapidly.

Alex turns onto his side. "How stupid?"

"Very. I tried to - God ..."

"What?"

"I tried to make her have sex with me."

"You did what?" Alex's response is sharp, but it's more out of general concern than simple shock.

"How?"

"I told her we had to," Jason explains in a low voice. "I told her that it's time we did it and she had to and ... Dude, I can't believe I acted like that."

"You didn't get really forceful or anything, did you?"

"Well, no. But I, like, kept trying even though she was telling me to stop. So finally she just told me to come sleep in here."

"That doesn't sound good."

"You're telling me." Jason slaps both hands on top of his face. "Why am I so incredibly dumb? I probably screwed up everything now ..."

"It can't be that bad," Alex says.

"I don't know. She's stubborn like that. When Court wants to be mad, she can be really mad."

ACT THREE

ANDY FITCH'S APT.-

Andy sighs and he can hear it reverberating on the phone line. "What else could we possibly say, Danielle?"

"A lot," she says. "The last couple of times we've talked - all we've done is address problems. And yeah, I did owe you a lot of explaining, and there was a lot to talk through, so that makes sense. But if we're really going to ... close this chapter ..."

Her choice of words pinch at his heart. Close this chapter. Meaning, move on to another. Alone.

"I guess I just want to make sure you know how important you are to me, Andy. That's gotten so lost recently, and I don't want you to think for even an instant that I don't appreciate everything you gave me. You were practically everything to me for awhile, and I need to make sure you know how grateful I am for every moment we had together."

He isn't sure how to respond. "Thank you," he finally says weakly.

"Okay, then," Danielle says, drawing out the words. "I guess ... I should go, huh?"

"I guess so."

"Okay, Andy. I'll-" But she won't see him around and she won't call. Not anytime in the near future.

"I should thank you, too," Andy cuts in hastily. "You helped me - this sounds odd, but it's true - you helped me grow up, in a way. You changed my life forever and I can't thank you enough for that."

Danielle lets a moment of silence pass to acknowledge the words. "All right. Take care, okay?"

"You, too."

Andy moves the phone away from his ear, but it suddenly feels so heavy in his hand that he doesn't think he will be able to place it on the receiver. Finally he brings in his other hand and very deliberately punches the "power" button, as a sigh passes from his body.

On the other end, Danielle is waiting. She hears that click and just waits, listening to the deadness on the line.

It's over.

FITCH MANSION-

The ring - its size, its elegance, its twinkle in the dim light - holds Katherine transfixed. It is with no small effort that she moves her gaze back up to Nick's expectant face.

"M-marry you?"

"Yes," he says calmly. "I know it may seem abrupt, but ... I don't know how to explain it. This just feels like what I should be doing."

Her eyes move from his face to the ring and back again. Finally she turns sideways. "No, I can't. I couldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because ..." She works her hands together, staring absently at the brick column a few feet in front of her. "I can't. I'm not ..."

"You're not what? Deserving of happiness?"

She turns back to him sharply. "No, no. It's not that. It's ... my late husband. He was the one I married ..."

"That time is gone, Katherine." He takes her hands, cradling the ring box in-between his own hand and one of her palms. "You deserve to move on, to be happy again."

She can feel her insides pulsing, wrenched by indecision and by dueling desires and loyalties and everything else that has complicated her life so much over the last few years-

"Yes."

The word is out before she realizes it, but when she does, an enormous smile bounces to the surface. "Yes," she repeats. "I will marry you."

CHASE CABIN-

"You've gotta apologize."

"I will," Jason says. "Let this blow over a little, though. It won't help if I go barging in there."

"No, you're right," Alex agrees. "Did she give you any real reason for saying no?"

"I don't know ..." Jason props his arms up behind his head. "I guess she doesn't feel ready yet. And obviously, she's entitled to that. I shouldn't have pushed like that."

"Why did you?"

"Cause I'm stupid," Jason says, though he is perfectly aware of the flashing images of the night of his party, of his time in the bed with Alex. "I drank too much and I wasn't thinking straight."

Alex draws a soft breath, ready to say something, but it lingers in his throat as he takes in Jason's slender body, stretched over the bed.

"Alex?"

"What?" Alex finds himself actually shaking as he is pulled from his thoughts.

"You just looked like you were a million miles away," Jason says. "Is everything okay?"

"Oh, uh, yeah." Alex rolls onto his back. "Yeah."

"You sure? Is there like a reason you can't sleep?"

"No, it's just hot and ... it's just one of those nights, you know?"

"Yeah."

Just one of those nights, Alex thinks to himself as he closes his suddenly heavy eyelids.

END OF EPISODE #163

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