

"Footprints"

Episode #176

[A Few Days After #175, Evening]

[Previously ...](#)

*Courtney and Jason shared a romantic picnic, while Lauren expressed doubts about the possibility of a future with Alex.

*Andy continued to struggle with the loss of Danielle.

*Molly and Sarah were at odds after Sarah's confession about the baby's paternity also brought about accusations regarding Molly's feelings for Brent - who moved out of his and Sarah's apartment.

TEASER

CHASE HOME-

The beep sounds in Courtney's ear.

"Hey, Jay, it's me," she says. "I just wanted to see how your butt was feeling after that fall this morning ... I hope it feels better. I was thinking that we could go out for dinner tonight or something? Gimme a call when you get a chance. Bye! I love you!"

She turns off the phone and is about to set it back down on the receiver when the doorbell rings, giving her pause. She returns the phone to its cradle and then makes her way to the front door.

"Hey!" she exclaims, opening it. "What's up?"

Lauren steps inside. "I have some awesome news."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah," the blonde nods with a delighted smile.

Lauren doesn't say anything more, causing Courtney to excitedly demand, "So come on, what is it? What's this awesome news?"

322 BAR & GRILL-

"If I go crazy then would you still call me Superman ..."

Three Doors Down's "Kryptonite" plays over the bar's sound system. Andy stares into the soft amber of his beer, hearing the song but not really taking any of it in.

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 forces himself to withdraw from the scene, not wanting to put his heart through the anguish of reliving it yet again. Still, he is drawn to the memory and it plays in the back of his mind even as he tells himself that he is done with it.

"Penny for your thoughts?"

Andy's head flips to the right with a start and his eyes fall upon Molly.

"They're not worth it," he says with a shake of the head.

"Are you going to force me to sit here and cheer you up?" she grins, assuming a seat on the stool beside him.

"Be my guest. I certainly wouldn't mind the company."

"So what's got you looking so down?"

"I'll give you three guesses."

"Um ..." She puts a finger to her chin. "The greenhouse effect?"

Andy shakes his head, although amusement can be seen tugging at the corners of his lips.

"The fact that the old guy didn't win Survivor?"

"Nope," he chuckles.

"Hmm. Could it be ... Danielle?"

"How did you ever guess?" Andy throws back a swig of his beer.

"I don't know ... Maybe the fact that mooning over her has pretty much become your occupation these days?"

"Very perceptive."

"That I am." She signals the bartender and puts in a drink order. "Have you spoken to her lately?"

"Not since San Diego," he answers. "It's better that way. She's busy with her tour and I'm ... trying to move on. It's better that I'm not being constantly pulled back towards her."

"That's true," Molly muses. "At least the worst is over for you, though. You can work on healing, you know?"

"Yeah."

"I wish I was at that point. But I'm caught up in the middle of this whole mess. It seems like it's never going to get resolved."

Andy's brow crinkles. "What mess?"

"Oh, wow, you haven't talked to Brent lately, huh?"

"No. Why, what's going on?"

"Sarah had the baby," Molly says. "And there was all this confusion and lying and-they're having major problems."

"What happened?"

"It's complicated."

"Sounds like it." He pauses, stares away for a moment, and then refocuses his gaze on her. "So how are you involved in it?"

ACT ONE

CHASE HOME-

"I got a job!"

"That is awesome," Courtney says, giving Lauren a congratulatory hug. "Where?"

"This advertising company, Willis. Jason's sister works there, actually. She was the receptionist on duty when I came in for the interview."

"Oh, wow. So come on, I want details. What was the interview like? What's the job?"

"I'm someone's assistant," Lauren shrugs. "Nothing too glamorous. But it's a start."

"Definitely."

"So I go in for the interview and it's just me and the lady I'm gonna be working for. It was totally relaxed and we basically just hit it off, which is what I think it came down to. She was comfortable with me."

"So she just gave you the job on the spot?"

"Yep." Lauren nods, her lips pursed and curved upward in a self-satisfied grin. "Isn't that great?"

"Totally," Courtney agrees. "I am so happy for you!" She lunges into another celebratory hug.

They are interrupted by the appearance of two bodies in the open doorway.

"Lauren, hi!" Helen says as she and Don enter the house. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," Lauren answers.

"She was just telling me about her new job," Courtney adds excitedly.

Don looks over at Lauren. "What kind of job?"

"I'm an administrative assistant at Willis Advertising," Lauren says.

"Congratulations," Don says before his gaze roves over to his daughter. "Maybe you can inspire Courtney to do something with that degree of hers."

322-

"I'm ... caught in the middle," Molly answers, gesturing emphatically. "Sarah's my sister and Brent - he's a friend. It's hard to be taking sides like this."

"Shouldn't you not be taking sides?" Andy asks.

"Probably. But Sarah is in the wrong here, believe me."

"How so?"

"The baby isn't Brent's," Molly says, her disgust obvious. "Or at least, she may not be. I don't think she is."

"Whoa!" Andy holds up his hands, his palms facing Molly. "What in the world is going on?"

Molly is about to answer when her drink appears on the bar in front of her. She allows Andy's inquiry to hang as she takes a sip.

Finally she turns back to him. "Sarah had an affair."

"What?" Andy's astonishment shows clearly. "Sarah? How? With who?"

"This guy Matt. The one she helped out in New York, remember?"

"Wow." Andy shakes his head, his gaze focused down on the bar as the news sinks in. "So how did this ... come out?"

"She admitted it, actually," Molly says, contempt apparent in her tone. "She probably realized she couldn't keep it a secret that much longer and she didn't want it to be out of her hands. That's her problem - she's always got to be in control. At least this way she got to be the one to drop the bomb."

The degree of Molly's hostility is coming across loud and clear. Andy is a bit taken aback by it and it is a moment before he says, "So she's been carrying on with Matt since last fall?"

"Yeah - well, sort of. She says it was only a one-time thing. I don't know about that."

"What do you mean?"

"I just have trouble believing anything she has to say," Molly says. "Especially after she went behind Brent's back with all of this for so long. Does she realize what she's done to him?"

"What's with you being so concerned about Brent here?"

"Like I said, he's a good friend." She retreats to her drink for a pause. "This whole situation is just making me sick."

"I hate to go back to Danielle," Andy says, "but I think she'd be really disappointed to hear all of this."

The first thing that the mention of Danielle brings to Molly's mind is the memory of her aborted wedding to Andy - specifically, the shock on Danielle's face that Molly saw the moment she pulled away from her kiss with Brent.

"Danielle? W-why?" she stammers. "What did Danielle say?"

ACT TWO

CHASE HOME-

"Hopefully a lot," Courtney says, a little surprised by her father's question.

"Did you have a time frame in mind for that?" Don asks. "It's been a few months already ..."

"I've still got skating," she responds. "Remember?"

"So is that all you're going to do with your life?" Don asks, his voice taking on a bit of an edge now.

"No-" Courtney begins at a suddenly increased volume.

"Calm down, Courtney," Helen intercedes. "There's no need to get into a shouting match. What your father is trying to ask is what you're planning to do in terms of getting a jump on some sort of career."

"I don't know!" Courtney fires back, seemingly already having forgotten the admonition to calm down. "I thought we'd agreed that that wouldn't be my focus until I was through with skating competitively!"

Her parents' expressions do not acknowledge any such agreement. Courtney flashes Lauren a sideways look for some assistance.

322-

"Nothing," Andy says tentatively, a little startled by Molly's sudden jumpiness.

"Oh." She stares at him blankly for a moment. "But what'd you mean, she would be disappointed?"

"She'd be disappointed with the way things are going," he explains. "For Brent, and for you and Sarah. I know she considered both of you good friends - it would probably upset her to hear how tense everything is."

"I'm sure she'll hear about it from Brent."

"True." Pensiveness sweeps over him again. His eyes drop, his lips tighten, and his hands fold together. "Have you heard from her lately?"

Sensing the change in the tone of the conversation, Molly's response is a simple shake of the head.

Andy leans forward, propping his chin up with his fists, as he considers it all. Finally he leans back and wonders aloud, "Why am I doing this to myself?"

"Doing what?"

"Beating myself up like this. Thinking about Danielle. About how things could have or would have been. It's stupid, isn't it?"

"No. It's normal," she says. "You shouldn't just be able to come away from a relationship that serious and stash it away and never think about it again. It's good to having a grieving period - it's healthy."

He shrugs, drawing a deep sigh and then blowing the air out slowly.

The lull continues comfortably, with neither feeling pressure to speak. Molly's eyes begin roaming the bar, however, and on their third pass over the door, they are greeted by an unwelcome sight. Before Molly can snap them away, though, her eyes lock with Sarah's.

"Look what just blew in," Molly mutters. It is enough to make Andy look up and he, too, catches sight of Sarah.

Sarah stands by the door, watching Molly and Andy. She isn't sure what to make of it - the first possibility that leaps to her mind is a date, although that doesn't seem likely, from the looks of it.

Wishful thinking, she tells herself as that image of Molly and Brent kissing sweeps through her head for

the billionth time. She remains planted in her spot, wondering what to do. Although she came here with the intention of getting lost in the crowd for awhile and having some time to sulk, the idea of having someone like Andy to talk to seems appealing. She decides to head over to the bar, where he is seated.

She tries to tell herself that it has nothing to do with the temptation to get into it with Molly again.

"Hey," Sarah says, sliding onto the stool beside Andy. She does not acknowledge her sister.

"Uh, hi," he responds, clearly confused but trying not to show it.

"How are you?" Sarah asks.

"Fine," he says, nodding for emphasis. "You?"

Sarah's lips part, but in that instant, her gaze catches Molly's. "I'd say I'm fine, too," Sarah says, "but you'd realize I was lying, right? I'm sure you've already heard all about how wonderful my life is right now."

Andy freezes.

"Molly told you everything, I'm sure," Sarah continues. "So there's no need to lie - my life pretty much sucks."

She shoots Molly a nasty look.

"And of course, it was Molly's place to tell you all that," Sarah says, her words heavy with sarcasm.

"Sarah ..." Andy begins in an effort to maintain peace.

But the brewing argument overtakes him. "It's not like I'm gossiping!" Molly argues. "I'm involved in this, too!"

"I know!" Sarah cries. "That's the whole problem!"

ACT THREE

CHASE HOME-

"I can't believe this!" Courtney exclaims. "I thought we were in for the long haul with skating!"

"We were," Don counters. "But don't you think it's time you went out in the world and did something

now?"

"Yes, I do! And right now, that 'something' will hopefully be doing well at Nationals this year! If Jason and I can move up to senior level next year-

"Then what? We'll wait another couple of years until you start making your mark there?" Don asks, irritation hardening his face.

Courtney shrugs, at a bit of a loss for any type of response. "Dad - I can't believe you're doing this! Why waste all the time I've put into skating?"

"Because you're an adult now! It wouldn't be a waste - you've gotten a lot out of it. But isn't it about time that you started earning some money and stopped expecting that your mother and I would take care of everything?"

Courtney looks to Helen but can see that her mother is siding with Don.

"You can't make me quit now!" Courtney shouts. "Not when I'm this close-

"You're not that close, Courtney," Helen says. "Maybe you would be if you hadn't been hurt and missed two seasons, but ... that's a lot of time. It will be a few more years before anything substantial happens on senior level. Are you expecting us to support you until you're twenty-five?"

"No, but-" Courtney isn't sure where her part of the argument is going. "Skating is my career! Why not let me make what I can of it and when the time comes, I'll put my degree to use doing something else?"

"Do you realize how much that's asking of us?" Don shoots back. "We'll let you go through this season, obviously, but after that ... That's it."

Courtney's eyes go wide at actually hearing him say it.

322-

Molly freezes for only a moment before jumping to her feet. "You know what, Sarah? I'm not in the mood to have this same argument with you again! I'm leaving."

Andy reaches out a hand. "Molly, wait-

"No, I need to go," she says, scooping up her purse. "Thanks for the talk, Andy. I'll talk to you later."

She makes a hasty exit, not even bothering to look at her sister again.

Sarah watches the exit. "What a drama queen," she mutters.

"What?" Andy asks.

"She's so full of herself," Sarah says with a shake of the head.

Andy thinks it best to steer the topic away from Molly. He tries to think of a question that won't lead back to the turmoil in Sarah's life but realizes that this will be next to impossible. He studies her, trying to think of something, but he keeps coming back to the pain that is so evident in her face.

"Are you really fine, like you said?" The question comes tumbling out before he knows it.

Lips pursed, Sarah looks over at him. Her eyes are cloudy; yet somehow, they are perfect indicators of the conflict raging inside of her.

"I guess," she says finally.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah." She shrugs. "I guess I don't have much room to complain. The baby is so good. I love her. And even with all this mess ... I wouldn't trade her for anything in the world."

"That's good," Andy says after a brief moment of consideration. "At least you've been able to find something positive in this whole situation."

Sarah exhales heavily. "It would be nice to have this whole father thing resolved, but I'll just have to wait."

"Are you having a test done?"

"Yeah. I guess it won't be long until we have the results - just a few weeks. And it'll be a relief, I think. Just to have some direction again and to be able to plan for the future a little."

"I can understand that," Andy sympathizes with a light nod.

"Besides," she continues, "maybe then we can all start to move on. I'm tired of having to deal with this. I admit that I made a mistake ... This would be so much easier if it was just about me."

"What do you mean?"

"It would be my mess," she says. "That sounds weird, I know. But at least that would be the end of it. But now that Molly's mixed up in it - it just makes it that much more complicated. And that much more difficult to resolve."

"I must be missing something," Andy says. "Molly dodged the question, so maybe you'll be able to give me a straight answer. Why is Molly such an enormous part of this?"

ACT FOUR

CHASE HOME-

"This is ridiculous!" Courtney shouts. "Whatever happened to being supportive of me?"

"We still support you," Don says as though it is the most obvious thing in the world. "That's not the issue."

"Then what is?" she asks loudly.

"You're an adult," he says firmly. "It's time you took on some degree of independence. You lived with us all through college. Don't you think it's time you started taking steps towards being independent?"

A flustered Courtney is at a loss for a response. She simply shoots him a disbelieving look. A glance over at Helen, another plea for support, receives no positive response.

"This is insane!" Courtney cries, turning and dashing up the stairs.

Don, Helen, and Lauren stand in silence as she disappears up the stairs. They hear her heavy footsteps pounding across the upstairs hallway and then the exaggerated slam of her bedroom door.

"I'll go talk to her," Helen says finally.

"No, leave her," Lauren says. The Chases look at her. "It's Courtney. You're not gonna get through to her on any rational level yet. Just give her some time to cool down first."

Helen obeys, despite the nagging feeling inside of her that is urging her to head upstairs and fix things at once.

ADAMS STREET-

Molly isn't even looking where she is walking, but the moment she sees those feet in front of her, she knows she should look up.

"Hey," she says to Matt.

"Hey." The awkwardness between them feels heavy. "So how are you?" he asks.

"I could be better," she says. "I just had a run-in with my sister, so ..."

"Ah."

"I just wish this whole stupid thing could get sorted out. Maybe if we had some answers, everyone could start getting their lives in order again."

"It won't be long," Matt says.

The confident tone of his voice catches Molly's full attention. "What do you mean?"

"I just came from the hospital," he says. "I just had blood drawn - for the paternity test."

322-

"Because she's made herself a part of it," Sarah answers after a slight hesitation. "Over and over, she stuck herself in the middle of everything. She was always hounding Brent to tell her every little detail of our problems. She must be feeling awfully happy now that she knows I screwed up."

Andy doesn't say anything.

"Andy?"

"Yeah?" he responds absently. He is too busy mulling over everything that has been said today, by both Sarah and Molly. The vague explanations, the bitterness ... It's all pointing to one thing.

"Look," he says finally. "If there's anything you want to talk about, I'm here for you."

Sarah nods.

"I know this stuff with Brent and Molly must be tough to deal with ..." he leads.

He can tell immediately that she will not be sharing anything more. At least, nothing to explain his suspicions about Molly and Brent.

"I'm just scared," she says quietly, folding her arms on top of the bar and leaning forward to rest her chin on them. "What if this really is the end? What if I do lose Brent for good?"

That look - the worry that has been present on her face the entire time - intensifies now, and for the first time Andy begins to realize what an enormous blow such a loss would be to Sarah.

END OF EPISODE #176

[Next Episode](#)