

"Footprints"

Episode #200

<A Few Days After #199>

[Previously ...](#)

**Brent announced to both Molly and Andy that he is proceeding with his divorce from Sarah.*

**Lauren gushed to Courtney that things are going very well with Alex and she envisions a possible future with him.*

**Jason confronted Alex about his confusing behavior. When Jason asked point-blank if Alex is bisexual or gay, Alex assured him that everything is fine and made Jason leave.*

SARAH TAYLOR'S APARTMENT

Sarah pushes the front door open with her shoulder and negotiates her way through the doorway. Once she is inside, she drops both bags in her arms to the floor, closes and locks the door, and heads for the kitchen.

Setting her purse and today's stack of mail on the counter, she goes to the refrigerator. The energetic sizzle of the bottle of mineral water opening calms her somehow, and she lets the first sip wash through her body and cleanse her of some of the stress she's collected today.

She cannot wait to get out of these clothes and into some sweats, to put both of tonight's meetings with potential new clients away for the weekend. But, per tradition, she must sort her way through the pile of mail first.

The first two envelopes are junk -- she can tell from the exteriors -- and she sets them aside to wait in a sort of purgatory before they are sent to the trash. The third is a bill, which she opens and skims quickly. She makes another mental deduction from her checking account and then places the bill back on the counter, too.

She flips through the next few envelopes. There are a few more pieces of junk mail, another bill, and ... something that catches her interest immediately.

The envelope is a subtle off-white, a color that unmistakably suggests class. Its texture echoes the sentiment. Her name, generated by a computer, sits on the front of the envelope. And the return address is printed in a bold green.

What in the world? she wonders as she pries the envelope open quickly. In a matter of seconds the letter, printed on matching paper, is out and unfolded, resting in her hands as she reads it quickly.

She draws careful breaths, one after another, slowly, trying to pace her escalating heartbeat. Her eyes dart up to the address, making sure this really was intended for her. And there it is: *Mrs. Sarah Taylor*.

Her fingers trace the printed words of the letter, returning to some over and over. She stands there for a long time -- how long, she has no idea -- just reading and thinking and reading some more.

"No," she says weakly. "No ... This can't be."

REGAL CINEMAS

"I don't know if I liked that," Lauren says as she exits the theatre, grasping onto Alex's arm.

"Yeah, it was kinda weird," Courtney agrees.

"It was great!" Jason says, tossing his arm around Courtney as they walk. "You just didn't like it because of your whole blood thing."

"It wasn't that bloody," Alex says.

Jason looks back at Alex and Lauren, who are walking just behind him and Courtney. "The sight of blood makes her puke."

"You know, as much as she says that, I won't believe it 'til I see it happen," Lauren chimes in.

Courtney lifts her eyebrows. "Don't push your luck."

The foursome is quiet for the remaining few yards to the cars. When they get there, Jason moves to the driver's side door of his, while the others linger around.

"So what are we doing now?" Jason asks.

"I dunno," Courtney says. "Maybe ..."

Lauren signals to her with a look.

"What?" Court asks.

Lauren motions with her index finger for her to come closer. Courtney does, and Lauren playfully pushes Alex away.

He and Jason stand near the car, waiting, as Lauren whispers something in Courtney's ear. Neither of the young men looks at each other, except for the occasional stolen glance that lasts only a fraction of a second.

After what feels to both Alex and Jason to be far too long, the girls divide. Lauren takes Alex's arm and leads him to the other car.

"So what's going on?" Jason asks.

"We're gonna split up," Courtney says. "Just go hang out or whatever."

Goodbyes are exchanged as Jason and Courtney get into one car, and Alex and Lauren into the other.

Jason puts the key in the ignition but doesn't turn it. Courtney fastens her seatbelt, but Jason simply sits still, watching Alex's car pull away.

"Are we gonna go?" Courtney finally asks.

"Yeah," Jason says absently.

Unphased, Courtney goes on. "Lauren just wanted some time alone with Alex, so I figured this was the best thing to do. Besides, it couldn't hurt to have some time to ourselves either, huh?"

Jason manages an uncomfortable shake of the head. But now it is too much, and Courtney can tell something is wrong.

"What is it?" she asks.

His instinct is to say "nothing" and brush it off, but he doesn't. He says slowly, "I think ... maybe it's not such a good idea to be encouraging this thing between Lauren and Alex."

"Why not?" Courtney persists.

Words toy with Jason's lips, with his tongue, and a moment of stuttering passes before he can manage to say, "It's been too--too back and forth. I--I just don't think that they can be ... stable."

"I think they can."

"No, you *hope* they can."

A look of annoyance -- slightly crinkled nose, partially gaping mouth -- settles on Courtney's face. "Don't you want Lauren and Alex to be happy?"

"Yeah," Jason says. "Yeah, of course. But maybe this isn't the best way, that's all."

"What is going on with you?" she demands.

"Nothing," he says after a slight hesitation. "Forget it."

"No! There's something you're not telling me. What is it?"

KING'S BAY METROPOLITAN HOTEL

The knock comes unexpectedly, and it sends a tiny shiver of surprise through Brent's body. He rises from the sofa, flips off the television, and heads for the door.

"Hey," he greets his visitor. "What's up?"

"And by 'what's up,' you mean, 'what the hell are you doing here this late?'" Molly grins.

Brent shrugs. "Yeah, sort of."

"I'm sorry to just drop in on you like this," she says. "I know I do a lot, too. I guess I just find myself possessed by this urge to talk at odd times."

"Well, there's a lot to be said for spontaneity."

Molly brushes a piece of her dark hair back, but it falls forward again almost immediately. Brent takes a moment to appraise her, doing so almost unconsciously. She is dressed simply enough -- in a white button-down shirt that runs three-quarters of the way down her arms, with black pants -- but the ensemble manages to make her look as good as she might had she taken the time to get completely decked out. There is something elegant about the simplicity, something about the way her hair frames her slender, beaming face--

She speaks suddenly, bringing his thoughts to a halt.

"I've been thinking," Molly says. "A lot. Everything lately ... It's just made me want to make sense of things."

Brent raises a hand to the back of his neck. "Like what?"

"My entire life. My--everything. Nothing makes sense anymore, Brent. I've let everything fall to pieces. I don't know how it happened, or when, but ..." Her words drift off.

Silence descends upon them, resting heavily for what feels to both like an eternity. It is flooded with flashes of imagination, pangs of doubt, and a million other things that zip by before they can be recognized.

In Brent's mind, they all keep leading back to one place, and it is only by concentrating all the strength he thinks he might possess that he is able to force out the simple question.

He locks his eyes with Molly's. "What are you trying to say?"

As if in slow motion, he watches Molly's lips part, the words poised for action -- and then there is another knock at the door.

Neither of them moves for a second. Finally Brent raises his index finger. "Just a sec," he says, apologizing with his expression as he makes his way back to the door.

The instant he pulls open the door, it's as though he's opened the floodgates. Sarah comes tearing inside, waving a piece of paper around.

"What is this?" she cries. "I come home and I'm going through my mail and out of *nowhere* I find this letter from your lawyer telling me I'd better get an attorney so we can proceed with the divorce!"

"That's standard procedure," Brent says calmly.

"I didn't even know we were *getting* a divorce! Don't you think you should have run this by me first, Brent?"

"This is the running-by!"

"No, this is completely out of nowhere!" Sarah fires back. She turns around, still waving the letter. "This is--"

Her eyes fall upon Molly and she is stricken silent.

JASON FISHER'S CAR

Jason doesn't speak. He starts the car and begins fiddling with the CD player.

"What's going on?" Courtney asks. "What's gotten into you?"

"I told you, it's nothing!" he replies without looking up at her. He begins to back the car out of the parking space.

"It obviously isn't nothing, if you were making such a big deal out of it two seconds ago!" she persists.

His head snaps back to face her. "I just don't think it's a good match, okay?"

"But why? Jason, just 'cause they had trouble getting their act together at the beginning doesn't mean they shouldn't have a shot at making this work. Remember how long it took us to get on the same page when we were getting together?"

Jason's gaze remains fixed on the road ahead. "That was different. Shannon was manipulating both of us."

His point does seem to phase Courtney, who takes a moment longer than would otherwise be necessary to respond. "Some people have trouble without outside interference."

"Exactly! And I just think Alex and Lauren are--they have different issues and those are gonna clash. That's why this has taken so long already."

"What issues? They're not exactly basketcases, Jason!"

"Just--" He lets out a frustrated sigh, his teeth gritted. "Trust me on this, okay?"

"Not unless you give me an actual reason to!"

"Court, I--I can't. I'm just saying, please believe me."

"What is going on with you?" When he doesn't say anything, she spits, "Just take me home!"

"No, this isn't--"

"Take me home. I don't want to be around you right now."

Jason glances at her again. She has her arms folded in front of her and her face pulled into a scowl. His lips twitch as if to speak, but nothing comes out.

"Take me home," she orders firmly.

Jason doesn't even protest. He clamps his hands down a little harder on the steering wheel and keeps driving.

MARSHALL APARTMENT

"So where is she this time?"

"I don't even know," Alex says as he leads the way into the apartment. He swats his hand around over the wall for a second until he finds the lightswitch, and once he finds it, he and Lauren come quickly into the apartment.

"I know she was hitting California on this run," he continues, shutting the door. "Knowing my mother, she'll decide to spend a week there and not let me know."

"Well," Lauren coos, moving closer to him, "it's not always such a bad thing to have some alone time, you know?"

Her hands reach up to his chest and rest there. He can almost feel the whiz of electricity surging from her fingertips. He swallows deeply as she moves in closer.

"I'm so happy this is working out," she says in a near-whisper, her lips coming close to his ear and her breath tickling his skin. He tries to relax ...

"Do you want a drink?" he asks suddenly.

"Uh, sure," she answers, looking surprised.

Alex commits her choice to memory and heads to the kitchen. He buries his head in the refrigerator for a moment as he searches for the drinks and tries to let the cold silence everything that is racing about in his head.

When he returns to the living room, drinks in hand, he finds the room darkened, lit only by two side lamps that are acting as bookends to the sofa. Lauren is on the sofa, an

inviting grin on her face.

Alex approaches slowly and sits down beside her, handing her her drink. She gives it a single sip before placing it on the coffee table.

"So where were we? Oh, yes, I think I remember," she says playfully, leaning into him again. This time their lips meet.

Alex feels the fire of the liplock absorbing him. He returns to that familiar zone, falling deeper as her hands begin to roam his body. He feels her fingers up under his shirt, dancing lightly on the smooth skin.

Lauren draws her lips away from his. Alex's breathing is heavy now, and he stares at Lauren as he awaits the next move.

"I want you," she whispers. He watches her soft lips form the words, those lips that were on his a moment ago ... Her grin widens as she slips his shirt up and over his head. She tosses it aside and repeats the action with her own top, only more slowly. Alex doesn't move his gaze from her.

"I want this," she says, bringing her lips back to his. She begins leaning back onto the couch, bringing him down on top of her.

And he feels the whispered words crawl into his ear. "Make love to me."

KING'S BAY METROPOLITAN HOTEL

"What's *she* doing here?" Sarah demands, never removing her stony stare from Molly.

"Nothing," Brent says. "Sarah--"

"What, Molly, did you come over to try and get your hooks into Brent yet again?" Sarah spits.

"I just came over to talk," Molly says.

"Oh yeah?" Sarah's eyes narrow with anger. "So by 'talk,' do you mean you came over to have Brent rescue you from another horrible predicament?"

Molly holds up her hands. "Just to talk. We're friends, Sarah."

"I realize that. Believe me, I realize that. How could I forget when I'm reminded every time I see either one of you? You like spending time together, I get it already--"

"Stop!" Brent interrupts. "Cut it out, Sarah. If you want to talk about the divorce, then fine, but stop it with this."

"It's not like it isn't all related!" Sarah fires back. "We all know exactly why this is happening!"

Brent shoots her a menacing look. "I mean it. Cut it out--"

"No!" Sarah screams. "I won't cut it out. I am through pretending that there isn't a very good reason this is all happening!"

Neither Brent nor Molly says anything this time, although Sarah can tell that protests are waiting hesitantly on the tips of their tongues.

She beats them to the punch. "Let's just put an end to this once and for all. Just admit it, Molly. Admit that you're the reason this is happening. Admit that you're in love with my husband!"

END OF EPISODE #200

So there it is! What did you think? Where do you hope things will go from here? Share your thoughts over at the Message Forum!

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