

## "Footprints"

### Episode #204

<Immediately After #203>

#### [Previously ...](#)

*\*In a rage after she received notification of the divorce, Sarah railed at Molly. Brent admitted his feelings for Molly to both women. He broke up a physical altercation between the sisters and then urged Sarah to leave Molly alone and grant him a peaceful divorce.*

*\*After being kissed by Alex, Jason was left so confused that he turned down Courtney when she arrived and told him that she was ready to make love.*

*\*Ryan pleaded with Claire to put their tangled past behind them and accept him as a friend. They were interrupted by a knock on the door -- and Claire was stunned to find Diane Bishop outside her apartment.*

### **MATT GRAY'S APARTMENT**

No sooner has Matt opened the door than Sarah comes bursting into the apartment. "You are not going to believe this!" she explodes.

"Did I miss a hurricane warning or something?" Matt wonders aloud as he stands by the open door.

Sarah's outburst, ready to continue, freezes on her lips. She shoots him a baffled look. "Huh?"

"The way you came blowing in here," he says. "You just about knocked me over!"

"Sorry," Sarah says, putting her free hand to her forehead as she rebalances Victoria with the other arm. "I'm just a little on-edge, that's all. You would not *believe* the night I had last night."

"Why? What happened?"

"Well, I was out working 'til pretty late. I was thinking I'd have a chance to relax when I got home, right?" She pauses a second for dramatic effect. "No such luck. I start flipping through the mail and I find this letter from a lawyer--Brent's lawyer."

Matt flashes an expression that combines curiosity and a desire to say, "Uh-oh."

"So apparently," she says, throwing up her free arm, "Brent decided to go ahead with the divorce without even talking it over with me!"

"Oh my gosh."

"Yeah. I figured I should go discuss it with him, you know? But when I go over to the hotel -- ugh -- you are not going to believe what happened."

She swings around as she finishes speaking. Matt moves closer, reaching out his arms. Before Sarah speaks again, she takes the hint and hands off Victoria.

She goes on. "Of course, Molly was there. I'm sure she was up to her usual routine of bad-mouthing me and making Brent feel sorry for her."

Matt bounces Victoria lightly. "I don't think I like where this is going."

"You have no idea where this is going. Seeing Molly there--it just set me off. And all of a sudden, it was like I couldn't control myself anymore. I lost it, Matt. I completely let loose."

He nods, urging her on.

"I just ... I tore into Molly. Into both of them. And the way she was standing there -- so smug, like she just loved letting Brent see me blow up -- it made me so angry."

"What'd you do?" Matt asks, concern edging into his voice.

"Nothing terrible. Don't worry. I just yelled at her. I tried to get her to admit that she's totally obsessed with Brent."

"And?"

"She wouldn't say anything. At least, she didn't have a chance. Brent jumped in and got to be her hero all over again. And get this -- he said that Molly isn't the one to blame, because he is."

"Isn't that a good thing, for him to be taking the blame instead of throwing it on you?"

"Maybe." Sarah brushes back her hair with a full hand. "Maybe. But not this way."

"What way?"

"The reason Brent says he's to blame ... is because he has feelings for Molly."

Matt's eyes literally bug out. "What? Did he say that?"

"In those words. It just goes to show how brainwashed she's got him, doesn't it?"

Matt is silent.

"Ugh," Sarah groans. "And you know what else? I finally let them know that I saw them kiss on the night Brent and I got married."

"You did?"

"Yep. I figured a little guilt might do some good."

Matt raises an eyebrow. "What kind of good?"

Sarah trips over her response. "Just--you know--so they have to acknowledge that they're the ones who set this in motion."

"So what now?" Matt asks as he watches Victoria wrap her fist around one of his fingers.

"I'm not dropping this. I'm going to make Brent see what a mistake he's making here. And I'm going to make Molly pay."

Again, Matt doesn't say anything.

Sarah doesn't seem to take the hint. A grin crosses her lips as she explains, "I'm going to file a counter-suit. And I'm naming Molly as co-respondent."

## **FISHER HOME**

"Is there something *really* interesting up there that I'm not seeing?"

Startled by the intrusion, Jason pulls his gaze from his bedroom ceiling and turns sharply to the doorway. He finds Molly leaning against the doorframe. Her hair is pulled back and she is dressed in a simple gray t-shirt and jeans.

"Not exactly," he answers, sitting up. "I'm just staring off into space."

She takes a few steps into the room. "You definitely looked a million miles away."

"I know. I'm just tired, that's all."

Molly examines her younger brother for a moment. "Are you sure? You look like you've got something pretty heavy on your mind."

He shrugs.

"Is it Courtney?"

He hesitates, but finally gives in with a weak nod.

Molly shoves her hands into the pockets of her jeans. "Did you guys have a fight last night?"

"Kind of ... I don't know. Can we just not talk about it?"

"Sure."

"So anyway," Jason says, taking control of the conversation while he can, "when did you get in last night? I was thinking of waiting for you, but I just sorta conked out."

"It was late," she sighs. "I don't even know what time. And it's a good thing you didn't wait up, because I pretty much climbed into bed and passed out the minute I got in." As she speaks, she suddenly looks much more exhausted, almost haggard. Jason notices the deep creases underneath her eyes and the lack of color in her skin.

"Did something happen?" he asks.

He manages to read the "yes" in her response, even though the half-shrug and strained nod hardly seem to say anything.

Something links up in Jason's head, and suddenly his intensity increases tenfold. "Was it Brent? Did something happen with the two of you?"

Molly knows that she shouldn't even bother trying to deny it.

## **CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT**

"Hello, Claire," coos Diane Bishop.

"Diane," Claire says, clearly rattled.

Diane is quiet for a moment, as if waiting for Claire to make a gesture. When it doesn't happen, she takes the initiative. "Give her to me."

"What?"

"My daughter. Give her to me."

"Diane--" Claire pauses for a heavy breath. "Samantha is asleep right now."

"So what? She can sleep plenty when she's back at the hotel with me. Besides, I'm sure she'll be thrilled to see her mommy."

Even though Claire knows Diane has every right to refer to herself that way, it still irks her. Maybe unsettles her a bit. She tries to brush off the feeling. "Look, she went down for a nap not that long ago, and Travis is sleeping, too. You're not going in there and waking them up."

"I think I'm entitled to see my daughter."

"Actually," Claire says, stepping up and trying to match Diane's attitude, "according to the custody arrangement, you get four pre-planned weekends per year. I don't recall any pre-planning for this."

Diane narrows her eyes. "I don't think that custody arrangement would exactly hold up right now, do you?"

Claire holds herself together and opts for a mere lift of her shoulders.

"Come on," Diane pushes. "Let me take her. If you're nice, I might even let you keep seeing her once I get custody."

The comment knocks the wind out of Claire. She is stricken silent.

"I'm just gonna grab Samantha and I'll be out of here in a jif, okay?" Diane says, entering the apartment.

Claire's face is filled with enraged protest, but she cannot summon the words to express it. Diane forces her way past Claire.

And that's when Ryan steps out to block her way.

"Hold it," he orders.

"Well, well," Diane says with an obvious hint of amusement. "What have we here?"

"I want you to leave," Claire says forcefully. "If you want to see Samantha, call me and we can work out a time."

The words hang between them for an excruciating moment, but finally Diane slinks back to the door.

"Fine," she says. "I'll go. But you're gonna be hearing from me, and real soon."

She walks through the door, never removing her gaze from Claire. Once outside, she pauses and casts a glance over at Ryan.

"I guess I can see why you want me to leave," Diane says, pursing her bright red lips and raising her eyebrows suggestively. "Didn't take you long at all, did it, Claire?" And she strolls off.

## **MATT GRAY'S APARTMENT**

"No. Sarah, you can't."

"Watch me," she says smugly. There is an element of delight in her expression that sends a shiver through Matt.

"This is not the right way to do this," he says. "All you're doing is trying to hurt them because you got hurt."

"Exactly."

He wants to roll his eyes, tell her how ridiculous she sounds, but he knows that reasoning will probably be more effective. "This isn't what you want." She opens her mouth in protest, but he cuts her off. "Not really. What you want is for Molly and Brent to not have these feelings for each other, but that ain't gonna happen."

"It will eventually. Just wait. Once Brent realizes how Molly's got him totally snookered, he'll wake up."

"Sarah ..."

"I need to do this," she says calmly. "I need to show that I'm not the bad guy here."

"No one's saying you are!"

"It's what they think. Both of them, they think that I'm the one who screwed up and that makes it okay for them to be so crazy for each other."

"No one said that--"

She throws up her hands. "They don't have to say it! It's just what they think."

"Don't be melodramatic."

"I'm not!" She takes a step back and a new aggression settles over her face. "What, are you on their side now?"

"No! Of course not!" Matt steps forward to close the gap between them. "I just don't want you to do anything that'd make things worse."

"The damage has already been done, don't you think? All I'm trying to do is show them that I'm not going to take anymore of this."

Matt lets out a very heavy sigh. "You can't take out your anger on Molly like that."

"Sure I can. She did this, and now she's going to pay."

"Listen to yourself! Who are you, The Joker?"

"This isn't funny, Matt." She reaches to take Victoria from him, and he reluctantly lets her.

"It's not like Molly is the only one to blame here," he says. "You had a part in this whole thing -- so did I. We made a mistake."

"And they pushed us to it! I know it wasn't my smartest decision, but I wasn't exactly thinking clearly. She couldn't keep her hands off Brent for two seconds while you and I were in New York."

"I'm just saying ... This isn't something you should do lightly. It's gonna totally change everything. Do you wanna do that to your sister? It's not like she's some chick you don't know."

"No, unfortunately, I've had the displeasure for many, many years."

"Don't make things worse. Just give Brent the divorce and move on." She starts to roll her eyes and he catches her. "Sarah, I'm serious."

"So am I. I'm not letting Molly get away with this."

## FISHER HOME

"What was it?" Jason asks. He moves to the edge of the bed. "What happened with Brent?"

"It wasn't so much Brent and me," Molly says. "I just sort of happened to be there. I went over to talk to him."

"And? It must be something significant if it has you so exhausted."

Molly's eyes move away from him, looking to the wall, the desk, anything to avoid eye contact. But finally they come back and, with a light sigh, she says, "Sarah came over while I was there."

"I take it she wasn't too happy to see you there."

"Not quite. It turned out to be *really* bad timing -- she had just gotten notification of the divorce."

Shock warps Jason's features. "Brent is divorcing her?"

"Yeah. It's been a long time coming, Jay."

"I know ... It's just weird that it's actually happening."

"Yeah." Molly folds her arms in front of her. "Anyway, she went completely nuts when she saw me. She started screaming at both of us and trying to blame me for everything."

"What?" A note of alarm rings sharply in Jason's voice.

"She was ranting and raving about how this is all my fault, and how I must have Brent under some kind of spell. And--" She pauses, reliving the heated confrontation in her mind. "It got really ugly."

Jason springs to his feet. "You didn't say anything about--about your feelings for Brent, did you? 'Cause that's the last thing she needs to hear right now."

"No. Of course not. But -- jeez ..." She puts a hand to her forehead.

"What?"

"Something happened to make her even more angry."

He urges her on with a roll of his hand.

"Brent jumped in," Molly says. "He tried to stop her. And ... he said it."

"Said what?"

"That ... the way I feel about him ..."

Jason's eyes go wide with realization. "Are you serious?"

Molly nods somberly.

"Oh my God. This is insane, Molly."

"I know. And there was something else." She inhales, stretching the breath out as far as she can. "Sarah told us that she--she saw us kiss on the night that she talked Brent into eloping."

Jason is stunned into silence, and when he does speak, all he says is, "Whoa."

"My thoughts exactly. Jason, do you realize what this means? She's known all along -- or at least, she's suspected. After the whole blowout when Victoria was born, I knew that she had an idea, but ... this means that she knew before she and Brent even got married. For all we know, the reason she even wanted him to marry her that night was because she saw the kiss and panicked."

"Can you really blame her? You know how in love with Brent she was."

"She wasn't in love with him," Molly says. "Not in the way you need to make a marriage work. She was in love with the idea of him, with the idea of having such a terrific husband. Maybe it could've worked, who knows? But the whole basis of their marriage was so fake."

Jason runs a hand over the back of his neck awkwardly.

Molly keeps going. "If anyone's to blame, it could just as well be her, couldn't it? She knew this--this issue was there and she just kept trying to ignore it and force it back down. She brought this on herself."

"That's not fair."

"But it's true. Maybe her intention wasn't to be devious, but she sure set up one hell of a mess here. And now she's going completely loony."

"It's not like she hasn't had reason to! This is a *lot* for someone to deal with, Mol. Not that I agree with everything Sarah's done, but I can definitely understand why she's done it. Can you imagine how badly all of this must've hurt her?"

Molly raises a hand to her face. It covers her mouth, as if trying to absorb some of the pain that is dancing so wildly inside her, drying out her mouth and making her lips quiver. "I didn't want any of this to happen. I didn't want to hurt Sarah."

"I'm sure you didn't," Jason says, wrapping an arm around his big sister. "But it's a little late for 'sorry's now."

Molly closes her eyes.

## **CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT**

"Ugh!" Claire groans, slamming the door. "That woman!"

"I can see why you've never spoken too fondly of her," Ryan says.

"I had forgotten what a pain in the ass she could be!" Claire pulls her fists together tightly. "She just ... she makes my blood boil!"

"I can tell."

Claire stares at the closed door, as if following Diane's exit path with her eyes. "I'm not letting her have Samantha. I'm not letting that woman raise my daughter."

Ryan is quiet for a long moment as he ponders the situation. Brushing his anxiety aside as best he can, he offers, "Don't worry about that. You're an excellent mother, Claire."

"But I'm not her biological mother. And her biological father is dead." She whips back around to Ryan, an intense flame burning suddenly within her. "And don't start with me

again! Flattery and this--this fake sympathy -- they're not going to get you anywhere."

Ryan takes a step back, looking genuinely hurt. But instead of responding, he moves back in Claire's direction ... and goes around her, straight for the door. He opens it and then looks back at her.

"I'm sorry you have to go through all of this," he says. "And I'm sorry you can't accept me as being genuine. I know what you're doing and I'm not going to give you the chance to keep it up."

"Oh, you know what I'm doing, do you? And just what is that, exactly?"

He lets a heated second pass before he says, "You're pushing me away because you're looking for a bad guy, for someone to blame for all of this."

He casts another sad look at her before walking away from the apartment. With teeth gritted, Claire watches him leave, and she gazes out into the hallway after he is gone. And then, abruptly, she shoves the door closed again.

The moment it slams, she leans her back against it. Her teeth relax, her fists uncurl, but the tightness inside of her won't go away.

Tears begin to blur her vision as she lets herself sink down to the floor.

## **END OF EPISODE #204**

*What did you think of Diane's return? What do you think the future holds for Claire? Share your thoughts over at the Message Forum!*

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