

## "Footprints"

### Episode #205

#### <A Few Days After #204>

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

*\*Molly confessed to Jason that Brent admitted his feelings for her in front of Sarah. Jason sympathized with Sarah, and Molly's aggression toward her sister began to give way to guilt.*

*\*Paula visited Claire to express her concern about Claire's recent behavior, but they were interrupted. Paula did manage to assure Claire that she will always be a member of their family.*

*\*Nick managed, with relative ease, to talk Katherine into granting him access to her money.*

*\*Courtney and Lauren commiserated over their troubled relationships and tried to figure out what is wrong with Jason and Alex.*

## FISHER HOME

"Molly, is that you?"

"Sure is," Molly calls back as she kicks off her shoes. She makes her way into the kitchen. "So how was your day?"

Molly finds her mother sitting at the kitchen table. Paula answers, "Fine. And yours?"

"Good, I guess. Work was ... a little crazy. There were a couple of big things going on and everyone was sort of frantic. But it wasn't too bad." She glances down at the table, where a notepad and pen indicate that Paula has been busy working on something.

"What are you doing?"

"I had an idea earlier and I decided to sit down and organize my thoughts," Paula explains. "I suppose I've been planning for a few hours now."

"Planning what?"

"Well," Paula begins, signalling that her explanation is going to contain a preamble of sorts, "I think you'd agree that we've all been a little ... out of it lately."

Molly nods, her lips pursed.

"I think that maybe what we need is some time to pull together," Paula says. "As a family."

"Oh." Molly tries to keep from sounding too alarmed, but her nerves have kicked into high gear.

"So I've decided ... I'm going to throw a dinner party for the whole family next week." When Paula sees no immediate response, she adds, "Good idea, huh?"

## **ANDY FITCH'S APARTMENT**

"I got your message," Claire explains as she steps inside the apartment.

"Terrific," Andy says. "I was hoping you'd be able to drop by tonight."

"So what's going on?" Claire asks as Andy closes the door. "Why'd you want to see me?"

Andy brings two fingers up to his right temple and rubs lightly. "I found out something this afternoon that I wanted to share with someone."

Claire motions for him to go on.

"It was a rather ... disturbing discovery. But I think it could be a break for us." When Claire looks confused, he adds, "I may have found what we need to pry my mother away from Nick Moriani."

"Really? What is it?"

"I was at the bank taking care of some things today," he says. "Mother and I still share a few main accounts, so I was transferring some of the money into my account. And I noticed that she withdrew a sizable amount."

"Do you think Nick might have talked her into something?"

"I know he did. I checked the account activity. It turns out that my mother had the money transferred -- into a new account that she shares with Nick."

Claire folds her arms in front of her, readjusting her black purse to get it off her wrist. "I think I see where you're going with this."

"He's conning her, Claire. He must be. He's in this for the money."

"That sounds like vintage Nick to me."

"All we have to do is catch him now," Andy says. "He's going to slip up, I know it. We just have to find out what he does with this money and we'll have the proof we need."

He pauses briefly. "So are you in? Are you ready to bring down Nick for real?"

Claire's uncomfortable eyes betray her uncertainty over how to respond.

## **CHASE HOME**

"Is this what I think it is?" Don asks as he enters the family room.

"'Full House'," Courtney confirms.

"You were so infatuated with this show when you were younger," Don recalls with a grin. "You even made a point of catching all the reruns."

"What can I say? I had my priorities straight when I was a kid." Even though she puts on a slight smile, it is hardly enough to shine through the blanket of gloom that has been sitting over her for days.

Don takes note of her uncomfortable smile and leans on his elbows on the back of the couch. They watch the television in silence for a few seconds.

Suddenly Don speaks again. "Is everything all right, kiddo?"

Courtney looks startled by the question -- not only by having it asked, but by having to conjure up a response. She pauses, her mouth hanging open.

"I--It's not really anything," she manages.

"Are you sure? I've noticed ... you've sort of been slumping around the last couple of days. And your mother said something happened between you and Jason the other night that had you upset."

Courtney hesitates, but finally gives in with a quick nod.

"So what happened?" Don asks, coming around to the front of the couch and taking a seat beside his daughter. "Did you and Jason have a fight?"

"Sort of," she shrugs.

"Sort of?"

"Well ... I kinda got mad at him over something. But it was sorta stupid, so I went over to apologize and patch things up."

A glimmer of amusement flickers over Don's face. "You? Apologize?"

"I know, shocking. But I figured it wasn't worth having a full-out fight over something not so important, you know?"

Don nods. "So did the apologizing go okay?"

Another shrug. "Kind of."

"I take it that 'kind of' is what has you down, huh?"

"Yeah. Jason was just ... indifferent, I guess. Like he didn't even care that I was apologizing, or like it didn't matter to him."

"Do you think he's angry at you?"

"That's what I thought. But he hasn't really acted like it. We've been skating the last few days and he's been talking to me and everything. I don't know how to explain it -- it's just ... awkward."

After a moment of consideration, Don offers, "Maybe he's dealing with some things on his own that don't have anything to do with you."

"Maybe." She pauses, turning something over in her mind. "Dad?"

"Yeah?"

"Speaking of guys being weird ... I think something's really up with Alex. He's been acting really strange lately, especially with Lauren."

"Do you have any idea what it might be?"

"No, that's the thing. And he hasn't really opened up to any of us at all." She sighs. "I was wondering if you could ... if you could talk to him. It's not like his mom is ever around to talk to him."

"Of course," Don says almost immediately.

"Thanks," Courtney says, putting an arm around him. "Maybe he'll actually tell you what's going on."

## FISHER HOME

"You don't think it's a good idea?"

"No, no," Molly says, scrambling to cover what she knows was an obviously unenthusiastic response. "It's fine. It's--it's good."

"It just seems like the family has been really fractured lately. I think something like this would be good to pull us together." Paula is quiet as she tries to read her daughter. "Is there some reason I shouldn't have this party?"

Molly shakes her head. "No, of course not. But ... what makes you say that there's something wrong? I know it's been rough since Tim died, but ... I think things are getting better with time, don't you?"

"Maybe. But I visited Claire the other day, and ... she's not doing well, Molly. She's very edgy -- it's like she's only holding on by a thread."

"Well, I can only imagine what losing Tim must be like for her," Molly says. "It was bad enough for us. She has the kids to worry about -- she was going to spend her life with him! I hardly think a dinner party is going to fix that."

"I know that. But she's very insecure about her place in this family now. She seems to think that because Tim is gone, she's no longer a member of our family. That's why I want to try and pull everyone together -- to make Claire feel like a part of the family again."

"I guess that is a good idea."

"I'm hoping it will help Claire at least a little bit," Paula says. "You know how she is -- she never wants to ask for help or admit that she might need it." She pauses a moment, caught in reflection.

"What?" Molly narrows her eyes with concern.

"Well ... I get the impression that there's something else going on. Something she hasn't told us about."

"Like what?"

"I have no idea," Paula says. "Something at work, maybe. Or ..." Her mind returns to her visit to Claire's apartment a few days ago, when Ryan showed up.

"Or ... ?"

"Nothing." Paula shakes her head. "I don't know. But there is something else, I'm almost sure. And until it's resolved, whatever it is, I don't think Claire will even begin being able to heal."

## **ANDY FITCH'S APARTMENT**

"I don't know," Claire says weakly. "It's just ... after how wrong things went on New Year's--"

"I'm sorry," Andy cuts in. "I should have realized--of course you wouldn't want to be a part of something else like that after ..."

"I still want to see Nick caught."

Andy is quiet. "It would probably be best to get Brent involved," he finally says. "I'm sure making it more official wouldn't be a bad thing."

"No, probably not."

"Claire," Andy says abruptly, "I--I'm sorry. I should have thought. I shouldn't have tried to drag you back into this. Especially after the way I messed up on New Year's."

Claire closes her eyes and drops her head. "What happened to Tim -- that wasn't your fault. It was Nick's."

Andy tries to let that segment of the conversation pass, even though it's clear he's still grappling with it inside.

His struggle is not lost on Claire. "How about that woman you met on New Year's Eve? Maggie?" she asks.

"Nothing to report on that front. She sent me an e-mail a few weeks afterward, and I sent her something back, but we haven't had contact since then."

"I'm sorry. I know things must be lonely for you."

"I didn't realize what an enormous part of my life my mother was until I stopped spending so much time with her." He shifts his eyes downward. "And Danielle. Maybe it's foolish -- it's been almost a year since we ended it -- but ... it still feels like there's something missing with her gone."

Claire nods sympathetically. "That's not foolish. It's real. You had deep feelings for Danielle, and she came to represent a whole new life for you."

He turns his back to her, focusing down on his busy hands. "Just a few weeks ago ... It was supposed to be our one-year wedding anniversary. That was probably one of the hardest days of my life, knowing what it was supposed to be and seeing how different everything is from how I imagined."

Stillness buzzes in the air. Finally Claire reaches a warm hand up to his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Andy."

He lets her hand linger for a moment and then slides away from it, swallowing hard as he turns back to face her. "And I'm sorry for having dragged you into such a gloomy conversation."

"Seems like the only kind I have these days, anyway," she says, raising her eyebrows. She glances at her watch. "But it looks like I'm going to have to go be gloomy in transit. I have to go get the kids from the Fishers'."

"All right," Andy says, leading her back to the door. "Thanks for stopping by."

She steps out onto the landing outside his door. "Keep me posted on this Nick situation. And if you need someone to talk to about ... whatever, just let me know."

"Thanks," he smiles warmly, dimples creasing his tanned cheeks.

Claire makes her way down the stairs and crosses the parking lot to her car. Andy watches her get in and start it, and then heads back inside.

He leans on one shoulder against the closed door, going in his mind back to New Year's Eve. That spark he'd felt -- it was unlike anything he had felt in a long time. Since long before the ill-fated wedding to Danielle.

He is reliving his late-night conversation with Maggie as they sat in 322, as they walked through the park, trying to recapture some of the hope he felt that night and the next morning--

And he is jarred from his thoughts by a knock on the door. He jumps away from it and then, as reality settles in, he takes a moment to recompose himself. Then he reaches his hand to the knob and turns it -- and his jaw nearly falls to the floor.

"Maggie!"

## **END OF EPISODE #205**

*What did you think of this episode? How was the Don/Courtney chat? Did you like the Claire/Andy scenes? And what do you think Paula's dinner party will mean for the Fishers? Come and share your comments and predictions over at the Message Forum!*

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