

"Footprints" Episode #260

[Previously ...](#)

- Claire and Ryan awoke to the reality of having slept together. Claire tried to reconcile her own guilt for feeling like she cheated on Tim with her desire to be with Ryan.
- An uncertain Ryan left quickly, promising to call soon. On his way out, he ran into a surprised Brent, who was on his way to see Claire. Brent warned that he'll be watching Moriani's every move.
- Helen encouraged Courtney to discuss her decision about her skating career with Jason before making any official moves.
- Sarah happened to see Diane at the coffee house and apologized for overstepping her bounds in calling Brian, though she insisted that Diane still needs to face whatever happened in Los Angeles.

CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE

Sarah watches Diane's lips for the emergence of some type of response, but before any can come, she finally hears her drink being called out.

Wordlessly she steps aside, reaches out, and grabs her drink from the counter. She removes her eyes from Diane only long enough to confirm that she is snatching the correct cup.

"Hey, listen," Diane says as Sarah steps back in front of her. "I'm over the whole you-calling-Brian thing. Let's forget about it."

Sarah cocks her head disbelievingly. "You're 'over' it? I didn't think Diane Bishop ever got 'over' anything."

"It's been known to happen from time to time."

"Really? Like when?"

"I got over your brother, didn't I?" Diane asks, though it's more a declaration that begs to be legitimized. "I could've put up more of a fight if I'd really wanted to, believe me."

"All right," Sarah shrugs, deciding to accept the example despite her own doubts. "So that's it? We're pals again?"

"I'm not sure that we were officially 'pals' before, but yeah, sure. Forget about it."

"That wouldn't happen to be because you don't want the Brian thing mentioned anymore,

would it?"

"Could be because I kinda like the idea of having someone who actually understands where I'm coming from," Diane counters. "I was getting to like our little pow-wows."

Sarah nods in agreement. "Yeah, me too."

"Good, then we're set." Diane throws a glance over at the counter, probably in the hope of catching her drink ready. No such luck. "So how's life going for you? I miss anything good?"

"Um ..." Sarah actually has to ponder that for a moment. The last few weeks of her life have been downright uninteresting compared to how action-packed things were for so long. "Actually, there is something, yeah."

"Ooh, do tell."

"This one night, Victoria and I went over to Matt's for dinner. So I wound up drinking a little much a little too quickly and kind of blew up at him for something he said -- something about Molly, I think. Anyway, I wanted to take off, but he made me go lie down rather than drive, and I dozed off. And when I got up ..."

"Yeah?" Diane coaxes her on impatiently, as though she's waiting for a TV show that just tossed out a nail-biting cliffhanger to return from a commercial break.

Sarah hardly notices that she has hesitated, but that's because she is so wrapped up in rethinking what happened that night -- and whether it's even worth dredging up further. "I happened to peek out into the hallway before I came out of the room, and Matt was kneeling on the floor in front of the closet, looking through something."

"Did you see what it was?"

"Yeah. Pictures."

"Photographs?"

"Yeah. He seemed really ... upset. And for whatever reason, a few minutes later he put them away and left the apartment, I thought to go for a walk and think."

Diane's eyes practically bug out of her head. "Did you go see what he was looking at?"

"I opened up the closet and grabbed the box, but there was one picture that'd fallen on the floor," Sarah explains. "It was a picture of two little boys. I guess him and a brother,

or maybe a good friend."

"Does he have a brother?"

"I don't know. I mean--he's never mentioned one. But he's never talked about his family much. He just said that he doesn't have any family left." Sarah is momentarily swept back into a whirl of thoughts, considering that with as much as Matt knows about her, she knows so little about him. "Anyway, he came back then, so I stuffed the box away and didn't get a chance to look at the other pictures."

"Did you ask him about it?"

"No, I ... I don't know, I'm not sure how to bring it up. Or if it's even appropriate to."

"Obviously something's buggin' him," Diane urges, adding with a grin, "You seem to like encouraging people to face things that are bothering them."

"I don't even know how I could bring it up. He doesn't like to talk about himself, really. It'd probably be impossible."

"It's not impossible," Diane says. "And come on, if you're gonna have any sort of future with this guy -- you're gonna have to figure out what his deal is."

CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT

The knock on the door rattles Claire to the core. The first thought that flashes through her mind is that it might be Paula, here to drop off Travis. But they agreed that Travis would stay with his grandmother until Claire's shift at the hospital was done. And besides, Paula would have phoned first.

Of course. Ryan. He must have forgotten something.

Somewhat unburdened by the realization, Claire makes her way to the door as a second knock sounds. *Hang on*, she thinks, although she picks up the pace just a bit as she takes the last few steps across the living room.

"Brent," she says when she opens the door, her surprise audible as the name pops out in a startled gasp.

"Hey," he says. He seems relieved to see her. "Can I come in for a second?"

"Uh, yeah, sure." She steps aside to usher him into the apartment and, once he is inside, promptly shuts the door. "What can I do for you?"

"I came by to talk about last night," he explains.

She should have known he and Molly would be worried, after they saw her out to dinner with Ryan. They have every reason to be, actually; they don't know half of what's gone on.

"And," Brent adds, "on my way up here, I ran into Ryan."

That declaration stops everything in its tracks for Claire. "Brent, I ..."

"You don't have to explain," he says, sounding somewhat reluctant. "But I wanted to make sure you realize what you're getting into here, Claire. I thought you of all people would be wary of the Morianis--"

"There's a lot you don't know, Brent. Things that ... change everything."

"How? They're dangerous criminals!" He seems to rein himself in as, in a softer tone, he adds, "I don't see how you could be getting involved with Ryan, especially after how hard you worked to help prove that he and Nick were up to something--" A new awareness seems to dawn in him and a look of horror overtakes his face. "Wait. Tell me this isn't part of some scheme to get inside info or something."

"It's not. I promise."

"So you're ..." She can see him struggling with the concept. "Are you two together?"

"No," she says firmly. "We're not. But there is a lot you don't know, just be aware of that."

"How? Claire, a couple of months ago you wanted to see the two of them rot away in prison for the rest of their lives. Now you're ... doing whatever with Ryan. I don't understand how you get from Point A to Point B here."

Until last night, she was never sure how she and Ryan would make that journey, either. But something clicked between them, something fell into place, and she can feel the freedom of a new beginning coming over her.

"Brent, there's a story I need to tell you. Maybe it'll help clear some of this up."

FISHER HOME

"Did you call Sandy to cancel your lesson?" Paula asks from her spot at the kitchen counter, where she is fixing her second cup of morning coffee.

"Yeah, last night. I just said I wasn't coming in this morning," Jason says. He stabs at the eggs on his plate with his fork but doesn't take a bite. "I really didn't wanna go watch Courtney skating around with that Dylan guy."

Paula brings her coffee over to the table and sits across from him. "They were only having a tryout, Jason. That doesn't mean they're going to be skating together. You know how hit-and-miss those things can be."

"Great ... so I can watch her skate with a *bunch* of different guys? Even better." He rolls his eyes in disgust before finally scooping up some of the scrambled eggs into his mouth.

"I don't imagine there are many male junior pairs skaters who don't have partners. It could be a while before she finds anyone else -- if she even does."

"I just can't believe she would hold tryouts without even letting me know!" he exclaims as he swallows.

"You two haven't skated together in weeks and weeks," Paula reasons. "Something had to give. Who knows, maybe something good will come of it?"

Jason recognizes that she's attempting to rationalize the situation calmly for his own good, but right now, he's so wound up that it just annoys him more. "I doubt it."

"Don't let yourself get even more upset without finding out what's really going on. You need to have a talk with Courtney--"

"Well, obviously she didn't think it was necessary to have a talk with me about a huge decision like this!"

"So give her a call later. See if she wants to get together this afternoon and at least figure out for good what you two are going to do about your skating. I know you've been hanging on all this time hoping that you'll be skating together again ..."

"I'm not sure I wanna hear what she has to say," Jason says. "Besides, Alex and I are going to work out the details on that apartment later this afternoon."

Paula draws in a slow sip of her coffee. "You're sure this is the apartment that the two of you want?"

"It's as good as we're gonna get for the money we want to spend. Which reminds me of another thing I have to do. Find a real job."

"Your father and I did say that as long as you're skating--"

"Well, that's sure been shot to hell, huh? Might as well do something productive with myself if I'm gonna be training without a partner from now on."

"Jason ..." But Paula's attempt to calm him is interrupted by the shrill cry of the phone.

He bolts out of his seat to answer it, quite happy to have a distraction from the discussion about Courtney.

"Hello?"

His spirits rise quickly but then sink again as he staggers through the conversation. His responses are automatic, almost mechanical, as he restrains his emotions and does what he knows he should.

When he puts the portable phone back on the receiver, Paula immediately asks, "Who was that?"

"Take a guess," Jason says with another roll of his eyes, making the answer abundantly obvious.

"Courtney? She wanted to meet with you?"

"Yeah, she wanted to know if I'd have coffee with her in a little bit," he says, sounding about as numb as he feels. "Said she wants to talk about this whole thing."

"Well, there you go. How's that for timing?"

"Oh, uh, just peachy," he answers. He focuses on finishing his eggs, not sure if he should be feeling dread or relief.

Some twisted mixture of the two swells inside him as he eats the rest of his breakfast under Paula's watchful eye.

CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE

"Why do I have to deal with this thing with Matt and you get to ignore the Brian thing?" Sarah asks.

"Because you wanna wind up with Matt, right?" Diane explains, widening her darkly

made-up eyes. "You've got a kid with him. It's totally different. Brian and I--we'll probably never see each other again. So what the hell does it matter?"

"You seriously wouldn't care if you never saw him again?"

The response comes quickly. "No. I wouldn't."

Something about Diane's demeanor isn't entirely convincing, but before Sarah can call her on it, Diane goes back on the offensive. "Come on, Sarah, if Matt's got some screwed-up thing going on with his family--"

"He said he has no family left. So maybe looking at the pictures just made him sad."

"Maybe. Still, if he's got issues with it, that's gonna affect the way he handles Victoria, don't you think? You should at least know where he's coming from if you're raising a kid with him."

A protest is lost on Sarah -- until an idea hits her. "Hey, wait a second."

"What?"

"How about we make a deal?"

She can tell that Diane is intrigued. "What kinda deal?"

"If I--" But before she can say anything more, she sees recognition fill Diane's expression, no doubt in response to the latest drink called out from behind the counter. Sarah has no idea what it was, besides that it sounded really complicated and pretentious, and her impression is only confirmed by the complex markings all over one side of the cup that Diane grabs from the counter.

"All right," Diane says after taking a quick sip of her drink. "Explain this deal."

"Well, if I look into Matt's family, then you have to go try and settle things with Brian." Sarah waits for some sort of reaction, unconsciously preparing for it to be struck down.

Diane's response surprises her. "Not bad. A little kick in the ass never hurt anyone."

"That's what I figured," Sarah says, still waiting for the other shoe to drop. "So that's it? You're in?"

"If it'll get you to figure out what's going on with Matt, then yeah, I'm in. Sure."

"Excellent!" Sarah isn't sure if she's more excited that she talked Diane into facing Brian or nervous that she actually has to address Matt's past, but at least they both have to do this now.

"Hey," Diane says, glancing at her watch, "I need to get to the office. Why don't I give you a call later and we can get together?"

"Sounds good." Sarah begins walking towards the exit so that they can say their goodbyes on the move, but Diane stops mid-path.

"Oh, wait. There was something else I wanted to tell you, actually."

"What?"

"I went out to dinner last night," Diane says. "At Windmills, with Eric. Anyway, guess who we ran into?"

"Who?"

"Your sister. And Brent."

"Oh jeez," Sarah groans. "What were they doing there?"

"Having a nice non-date," Diane says with a roll of her eyes. "At least, they *said* it wasn't a date ... Anyway, I've gotta get going. But I thought you'd wanna know about that."

"Yeah, thanks," Sarah manages. She offers a tiny wave as Diane heads out the door, leaving her inside the coffee house to consider this latest news.

There is no way they're going to get away with making a fool of her like this.

CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT

"My God." Brent leans against the back of the sofa, hands clasped firmly together for lack of anything more appropriate to do with them. "Claire, I-I'm sorry. You didn't have to ..."

"No, I did," Claire says. "If not to help you understand, then for myself. I've kept it bottled up too long. I need to start working past it."

"This Stan guy -- he's still floating around?"

"Yeah, he showed up a while ago and he's been trying to patch things up with Ryan. I

think. Like I said, I honestly don't think he remembers what happened ... He has no idea what he did."

"Wow. I-I had no idea you were dealing with something that heavy. I'm really sorry."

"But that does help explain how I could've changed my opinion of Ryan, doesn't it?"

"Well, yeah, of course." Truthfully, Brent has no idea how he should be responding to Claire's tale. To learn that someone he's known for so long has been secretly grappling with such trauma ... He hears stories like this everyday on a professional basis, but it's much different coming from someone in his personal life. "You haven't tried any sort of therapy, have you?" he ventures.

"No. I ..." She trails off, obviously contending with some personal resistance. "Tim and Paula have both suggested that I should. But I ... I don't think it would help. Dwelling on the past like that--it hasn't been good for me so far. Why would it do any good to do it so intensively?"

"I don't know," he admits, letting the idea go. Her story has thrown him for quite a loop, but it doesn't erase the original reason he came to see her. "And I can see why you feel closer to Ryan through all of this, but still--he and his father are dangerous. You know that better than anyone."

"Maybe I don't," she counters quickly. "I mean--I know Nick is. He was in business with my father, and he's been nothing but nasty to me since they showed up in King's Bay. But Ryan insisted to me that he has nothing to do with Nick's business anymore, and why would he lie to me after there were so much more serious issues between us?"

"It doesn't mean he wouldn't lie."

"No, but ... I need to start trusting him at some point."

With a sigh, he decides to let it go for now. Besides, another bell is ringing in his head. "What about pressing charges against Stan? Have you thought about that?"

"Sort of ..."

"I know you don't want to dredge up the past, but maybe having Stan put away for this could give you some peace of mind -- especially if he's haunting around now."

"Could I even do that?" she asks abruptly after a long moment of silence. "Isn't there a time limit on pressing charges or something?"

"It depends. You said it happened in Chicago? I can check on the statute of limitations

there. But especially since you were a minor at the time--there's a good chance it could still work."

"All right," Claire says, exhaling heavily. He can see that she's still debating it, but providing her with information can't hurt.

For the first time, he can understand the sadness that has always lingered in her a lot more clearly. There's no reason a lout like this Stan should get away with ruining a woman's life like this.

And if Brent has anything to say about it, he won't.

END OF EPISODE #260

Should Brent and Claire pursue charges against Stan, or would it be best to leave the past alone? Can Jason talk Courtney out of skating with Dylan? Is the deal between Sarah and Diane going to be a good thing? And should Diane have told Sarah about Molly and Brent? Come make your opinions heard in the Footprints Forum!

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