

"Footprints" Episode #284

[Previously ...](#)

- Jason and Lauren decided to throw a party at the Brooks' home before Lauren and Trevor's parents return from their vacation.
- Lauren convinced Courtney to attend the party and suggested that Court and Trevor might make a good match.
- Matt told Bill of his concerns about Sarah's hesitance regarding their relationship. Bill questioned Paula about what might be bothering Sarah. Paula panicked, thinking that Bill might figure out that she and Sarah conducted the search for Paula's son.

JASON FISHER & ALEX MARSHALL'S APARTMENT

"Mail call!" Jason shouts as he bursts through the front door.

Alex looks up excitedly from his spot on the couch, where he's been relaxing for the better part of an hour with a book. The novelty of having their own place -- and receiving mail that is entirely theirs -- still hasn't worn off entirely.

"Phone bill ... cell phone bill ... cable bill ..." One by one, Jason shucks the envelopes onto the coffee table. "Mail sucks."

Setting his book aside, Alex sits up. He eyes the remaining items in Jason's hand. "What else is there?"

"Umm ... *Rolling Stone*."

"Who's on it?"

"Shania Twain," Jason says.

"Damn."

"Yeah, this is my issue," Jason says through a grin as he examines the magazine's cover.

"I liked the last one better," Alex pipes in when Jason finally tosses it onto the coffee table.

"Justin Timberlake isn't gonna be shirtless on every issue."

"I realize that. Unfortunately."

Jason laughs and tosses another envelope at him. "Ooh, look, another credit card offer. We might need six or seven more of those."

Alex doesn't even glance at the envelope; he simply rips it in half.

"What are you doing this weekend?" Jason asks as he drops the magazine to the table. Its pages flutter as it hits the glass with a splat.

"I don't know. Probably just hanging out."

"Okay, good. We're having a party at Lauren's on Saturday. You should come."

"Like, a big party?"

"Yeah."

A look of trepidation comes over Alex. "I think I'll pass."

"Why?" Jason asks -- more a demand than a question, and a pleading one, at that. "It'll be fun."

Alex's expression goes flat with disbelief. "Are you nuts?"

"Huh?"

"Jason, when was the last time we were at a party together that *wasn't* a disaster?"

Jason knows that he won't be able to produce any sort of truthful answer, so he just sidesteps the question. "We're done with all that crap. Lauren and her brother just wanna have a party before their parents get home and--"

"Lauren and I aren't exactly on the best of terms."

"It's just awkward," Jason says. "It's not like you hate each other or anything. Besides, she said I should invite you."

That's enough to give Alex pause, and Jason sees his opening. "Come on. I want you to be there. God, Courtney's gonna be there and *I'm* going."

"I don't know ..."

"Bring Dylan if you want. You can just hang out with him if you want."

Alex sighs, and Jason knows he's got him.

"All right, we'll at least stop by," Alex says.

"Oh, you think you'll be able to pencil us into your evening?" Jason teases.

"I'll see what I can do."

"You'd better! Besides, it'd be nice to actually meet this Dylan character outside of skating."

"You don't, like, hate him or anything, do you?"

"Because he's skating with Courtney? Nah. I don't even know him." As he's been doing since Alex first went out with Dylan, Jason decides to bite his tongue in regards to all the murmurs he's heard about Dylan being a complete brat. "So what's going on with you two? Are you, like, a couple now?"

Alex shakes his head immediately. "I have no idea. We're just hanging out."

"Hanging out," Jason repeats, making air quotations.

"I'm serious! That's all it is right now."

"Ah-ha! That's all it is *right now*, huh?" Jason asks with a teasing grin lingering on his face. "Does that mean you think it'll get more serious?"

KING'S BAY ICE ARENA

"It's days like this," Courtney says, her voice rippling with excitement despite her labored breathing, "that make me keep convincing myself to get up at the butt-crack of dawn and beat myself up out there."

"I know. That was such an incredible program!" Dylan drops down onto the bench and leans back against the wall with a heavy sigh.

They sit in silence for a few moments, catching their breath. Finally Dylan picks up the sweatshirt lying beside him and pulls it over his head.

"I wish we could just take that program and, like, play a tape of it at competition," he

says.

"Nah. We can do it again."

"I hope so."

Courtney pulls a towel from her equipment bag and begins wiping her blades carefully. "I'm still blown away at how well this is working out."

"You mean, us skating together?"

"Yeah." She finishes wiping and folds up the towel. "Honestly, I was kinda worried that I wouldn't ever find a partner who was as good a fit as Jason."

"Well, that was sort of a different relationship," Dylan says, raising his eyebrows. "I don't think things are gonna get *that* complicated with us."

"Not unless there's something you're not telling me!" she fires back with a wink.

"No, I think we're pretty clear on where we stand."

"Good to know." She bends down and begins working the laces of her skates with her tired fingers. "I guess I've got nothing on Alex, huh?"

He smiles broadly. "Not as far as I'm concerned."

She sits back, leaving the untied skates on her feet for now. "I'm glad things are working out with you two."

"So am I! Have I thanked you yet for setting us up?"

"Only a couple hundred times or so."

"Then I'll do it again." He grabs both of her hands and squeezes. "Thank you! He is so great."

Courtney smiles, then turns more solemn without even intending to do so. "How's he doing? I haven't had much of a chance to see him in a couple weeks."

"He's good. Definitely doing better. I think having something like--" He fumbles for words. "--having someone has been good for him."

"Good. That's what's important." Now she reaches down and removes her skates, though

she makes no immediate move to replace them with her shoes. "So are you guys, like, 'together' now?"

Dylan shrugs. "No. We're just dating, I guess. We're not quite up to 'couple' status -- not yet, anyway!"

SARAH FISHER'S APARTMENT

"Mom, what's wrong?"

Sarah stands by the open door and watches as Paula paces within the confines of a tiny space, her arms folded and her head tucked down. A moment ago she blew into the apartment with little more notice than a vague, frantic phone call.

"It's your father," Paula says, her voice a nervous, shaking thing that Sarah hardly recognizes.

A shot of panic stabs Sarah. "What's wrong?"

"I think he knows. Or he knows that something is going on."

Sarah's relief is short-lived, quickly replaced by a different kind of terror. "How?"

"I'm not sure," Paula says with a shake of her head. "He's been talking to Matt, and ... somehow they've gotten the idea that you're keeping something from Matt. And apparently they think I know what it is."

"Oh God." Sarah closes her eyes and lets it all run together in the pitch black space. She didn't imagine that this would all collide. She hasn't even considered the possibility, though now she doesn't see how she could have ignored it.

"What?"

"It's a mix-up. Matt doesn't have any idea that I was doing any work for you. He definitely doesn't have any idea about Ryan Moriani."

"Then how did this happen?" Paula's stare burns into Sarah, demanding some kind of explanation -- or, even better, a release from her worries.

But Sarah can't offer that, not really. "Things have just been ... weird between Matt and me."

"That's what he told your father, apparently. They seem to think that something is bothering you and you might have confided in me."

Sarah doesn't want to get into this. "When are you planning on telling Dad about Ryan?"

No response.

"Are you planning on telling Dad?"

"Of course," Paula says raggedly. There's something different about her, something far less warm and diplomatic than usual. Sarah wonders how much of a toll keeping a secret like this can really have on a person.

"I'm just waiting until the time is right," Paula adds after a long, uncertain pause. "That isn't now."

Sarah is going to ask why not, maybe do a little prodding, but then Paula turns it back around on her.

"What about Matt? Is something bothering you?"

"It's nothing," Sarah says firmly. The words don't sound at all convincing to her ears, but they make it clear that she's not about to open up about Matt and his brother and whatever else. Especially not when she doesn't even have the whole story.

"Sarah, you can--"

"I can handle it." End of discussion. She shoots her mother a look to make that clear. "Mom, I think you need to talk to Dad about Ryan. Soon."

"I want to," Paula says, clutching her hands together. "I would love to. But I have no idea how he'll react, and there are still so many things to consider -- especially with Claire."

"It's not going to be any easier if she gets more serious with Ryan."

"I know." And it's clear that Paula does understand that.

Suddenly Sarah feels, just for a flash, what her mother must be feeling. It's a feeling of being utterly confined, pushed up against a wall, with the ground threatening to explode underfoot. She's felt it before herself, and she remembers how close to the edge it pushed her.

Another urging to tell Bill as soon as possible dies on her lips, strangled by thoughts of

confronting Matt about the truth.

JASON FISHER & ALEX MARSHALL'S APARTMENT

"Maybe," Alex says, the most noncommittal of shrugs moving his shoulders.

"You really like him, though?" Jason asks.

"I wouldn't be spending time with him otherwise, would I?"

"I dunno. You are kind of a goofy kid." Jason grabs the remote control off the coffee table and switches on the TV. "You're having fun, though?"

"With Dylan? Yeah. It's kind of cool to, like, have someone to take me into that world."

A smirk spreads across Jason's face. "That sounds kinda kinky."

"Shut up." Alex pulls one leg up onto the couch. "I mean, like, going to clubs and just hanging out and actually acknowledging what's going on between us. It's cool. It's--really different."

"Good! You needed this so badly."

"Yeah, tell me about it."

There's something about the way Alex's agreement ends that captures Jason's attention. It trails off just a little bit, has a note of uncertainty dangling off the end that is impossible to ignore.

Jason decides to bite. If Alex needs to vent about something, he'll let him. He can only imagine how awkward it must feel for Alex to open up about stuff like this, still. "But?"

For a long moment, the buzz of the commercial on TV has to fill the air.

When Alex speaks, his words come slowly, deliberately. "It's just ... it's really different, you know?"

"How?"

"Like, it has to be. There's nothing wrong with guys being with guys or girls being with girls or drag shows or anything like that. It's just a lot different from the world I'm used to being in. Does that make sense?"

"Totally, yeah." Jason isn't sure what to say, but he can tell that it's up to him to do the steering right now. "But you're enjoying it? You're having fun, I mean?"

"I guess," Alex says, so vaguely that Jason can't determine which side of the fence his uncertainty falls on.

They sit and watch the TV for a few seconds as "The Price Is Right" returns from commercial. Finally Jason turns to Alex.

"Just have fun with it," Jason says, trying to preach while being as non-preachy as possible. "Take it slow if you need to."

"Yeah, I will, don't worry," comes the surprisingly quick response.

"You sound pretty sure about that."

"I am. I kinda told him that I'm not ready to go any faster. He's got a lot more experience than I do."

"It sounds like you know what you want, at least," Jason says, wondering if that's going to mean anything to Dylan.

KING'S BAY ICE ARENA

"Sounds like this is going pretty well," Courtney says as she jabs her foot around on the floor until it finds its way into her shoe.

"Very well." Dylan finally reaches down to untie his own skates. "He's an incredible guy."

"I know he is. I've just been really worried about him. It sorta looked like he was going into a tailspin after his mom died."

"He's doing better. We've just been having fun ... He's been less and less uptight about his mom lately."

"Good. Then you must be doing something right."

Dylan pulls off both his skates. "I hope so. He--Court, I am really getting into him."

"Have you told him that?"

"Of course!" With the swiftness of a switch being flipped, Dylan turns somber. "I just

hope he feels the same way. He's been telling me he wants to take it slow and stuff."

"I can understand that. This is the first time he's really been involved with a guy at all." She picks up her skates and packs them into her bag. "Give him time. Just be there for him and he'll get more comfortable."

"That's what I'm hoping. You deserve major credit for this, though. Very good matchmaking."

"Glad to be of service," she says. "I just wish I could pull off the same kind of thing for myself."

"You're ready to jump back into that whole thing?"

"Oh yeah! It's just a matter of figuring out how the hell I jump. Or where."

He leans down again, this time to put his shoes on, and looks up and over his shoulder at her as he ties them. "Got any prospects?"

"Not really." She pauses long enough to get the idea through her lips. "Well, Lauren's got this idea that I should try to hook up with her brother."

"You think it has potential?"

"It could," she admits. Somehow that makes it sound ridiculously simple, certainly not worthy of all the tossing and turning the idea has done in her head since Lauren sprung it on her.

"So go for it," he says breezily. "You've got nothing to lose, right?"

"I guess not."

"Is he cute?"

"Very cute, yeah."

"Nice?"

"He can be," she says, though something flares within her at the memory of how he got in her face those few times.

"I say you should go for it," Dylan says with a casual shrug. "You could use the fun."

She stops to think about it that way for a moment. "Yeah, I could."

END OF EPISODE #284

What do you think about the possibility of a Courtney/Trevor pairing? Is there a future for Alex and Dylan? And how should the big Fisher reveal go down? Come and share your thoughts in the Footprints Forum!

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