

"Footprints" Episode #289

[Previously ...](#)

- Claire and Ryan spent an evening with the kids. Samantha called Ryan "Daddy," and Claire had to explain that Tim is still her father. Later, Claire confided in Paula that things are getting serious between her and Ryan.
- At the party, Courtney planned to pursue Trevor. They danced together and she thought something would happen, but then he abruptly broke away and took off. Courtney left the party in a fit.
- After all the guests left, Jason and Lauren got to talking -- and shared a kiss. Neither of them noticed that someone inside the house saw them kissing and then rushed off.

BROOKS HOME

Cans, cups, and bottles litter the living room, and the pillows and cushions of the couches are strewn all over. Lauren sits in one of the armchairs, cradling a cup of coffee between her hands. She has her legs tucked underneath her, and her fingers barely peek out from the sleeves of her oversized sweatshirt.

"This should be a hell of a lot of fun to clean up," comes the voice from the stairs.

Lauren turns slowly. She's been waiting for Trevor to wake up since she came downstairs nearly an hour ago; she half-expected him to be down here already, waiting. But it appears that he had quite a time pulling himself out of bed: His hair is ruffled, his t-shirt sits off-kilter across his shoulders, and his face looks drawn and tired.

"I'm not even touching it until this afternoon," Lauren says as she does another scan of the room.

"Good idea." Trevor descends the remainder of the stairs slowly. "Looks like people had a good time, at least."

Lauren isn't sure what to say or how long she should wait before asking what she really wants to ask. "Yeah."

She sips at her coffee as Trevor silently explores the room, touching bottles and looking at labels but not doing any actual clean-up.

"Did you have fun?" Lauren asks, hoping that Trevor understands what she's getting at.

"Yeah, I did. Drank way too much, I think." He shakes his head and grimaces.

"It was a good party, though. There were people here who I had no idea would show up."

"That's what we wanted, wasn't it?"

"Totally, yeah. Only now we need to make sure there are no signs of disaster when Mom and Dad get back."

"We've got a couple days. It'll be fine." Trevor adjusts one of the couch cushions and plops down.

Lauren stares down into the deep brown of her coffee. "Any good stories? I feel like I was doing so much running around that I missed all the good stuff."

He shrugs. "Not really."

Time to step it up, Lauren thinks with a groan. He's not biting, but she wants to know what happened with Courtney. Her stomach flip-flops and her mind flashes a vision of Trevor biting her head off for being too pushy.

"Do you know why Courtney went running out of here?" she asks, hoping that she's not leaving the question too open.

But Trevor's face freezes for just an instant, and it's enough to show Lauren that he knows what she's talking about.

"Did something happen between the two of you?" Lauren adds as she awaits Trevor's version of events.

JASON FISHER & ALEX MARSHALL'S APARTMENT

Jason's body is stretched across the couch when he hears the key in the front door. He turns his attention from the television and watches as Alex comes in.

"Oh, hey," Alex says. "I didn't think you'd be up yet."

"I crashed at Lauren's for a few hours and I came back here really early," Jason says. "I just haven't felt like going back to bed yet."

Alex bends down and unties his shoes. "Sorry I kept you away from the party for so long last night. Everything just sorta hit me when I got some alcohol in me."

Jason shrugs it off. "That's what I'm here for. Are you feeling better?"

"Yeah. Thanks for letting me spill, though." Alex walks his shoes into his bedroom and reappears a moment later. "Did you have fun after I left?"

"Sorta, yeah," Jason says, though he's been realizing throughout the morning that he doesn't remember much of what happened between the time Alex left and the time he got to be alone with Lauren. It's not that he drank so much that he's forgotten; it all just pales in comparison to what happened later in the night.

"Anything juicy go on?"

That sends a chill through Jason. He realizes that he's got to talk to someone about this. "I dunno. To be honest, I just sort of floated around after you left ..."

Alex gives him a knowing look and sits down on the other couch. "So what happened?"

"What?"

"Come on, lemme have it." Alex waits another few seconds, then adds, "Jay, you're not good at this. I can tell something's on your mind."

"All right," Jason says. He draws in a rough breath, prolonging the moment as long as he can. Once he says it, it's out there. It's no longer just between him and Lauren. And then ... well, then it's a lot more real.

"This is just between the two of us," Jason adds. "You can't tell anyone. *Anyone.*"

"Absolutely."

"So ..." Another deep breath. "After everyone left, Lauren and I got to talking. And one thing led to another, and we wound up kissing ..."

He sees Alex's eyes go wide. "Wait, so when you say you crashed there last night -- do you mean ... ?"

DIANE BISHOP'S CONDOMINIUM

The door flies open in Claire's face.

"There you are," Diane says. "I've been waiting."

Claire glances at her watch disbelievingly. "I thought we agreed on 10:30."

"Something like that, yeah." Diane kneels down and smiles broadly at Samantha. "Hey, Little Missy. Did you have fun the last few days?"

Claire finds herself watching Samantha's response intently. She's relieved that it is a big, bold nod that leaves no room for outside interpretation.

"Good. Why don't you go have a look on your bed? I got you a little present," Diane says, shuttling the little girl along with a pat on the rear.

Samantha disappears into the condo. Claire hands over the colossal bag of clothing, toys, and other accessories to Diane.

"How was she?" Diane asks. There's something about her tone that suggests she's waiting for Claire to confess that it's been an awful couple of days, that she can't handle having two children around, and that Diane deserves to keep Samantha forevermore.

"She was good. We had some nice, quiet nights and a big trip to the mall yesterday." Claire is tempted to add that it was "nothing special," and she might in most circumstances, but she's sure that Diane will somehow use that to imply that Claire can't be bothered to do anything extra for the limited time she gets with Samantha, so she keeps her mouth shut.

Claire clutches her hand tighter around her keys and starts thinking about a way to make a graceful exit. She's about to call out for Samantha to come say goodbye, but she doesn't get the chance.

"The hearing's coming up," Diane says, folding her arms in front of her.

"I know." Claire wonders what she's supposed to say in response to that. They both know it's coming up; it's been coming up forever.

"You think you're ready?" Diane asks.

"Ready as I'll ever be," Claire says. "It shouldn't be anything out of the ordinary. It's just a chance for each of us to show why we could provide the best home for Samantha."

"Yeah, well, don't think you're gonna upstage me on this one. No judge in the world would have any reason to take my daughter away from me now."

Claire begs to differ, but that's a matter best left for the courtroom -- particularly if she doesn't want to wind up smacking Diane in the face right now.

"We'll see," Claire says diplomatically. "Samantha! Come here! I need to get going!"

A moment later, Samantha comes toddling out from her bedroom. Claire scoops her up into her arms and pulls her close. And though she manages to keep a straight face throughout the goodbye, she can't help thinking that their time together might forever be confined to a disconnected scattering of weekend days and occasional holidays.

Desperation swells anew in Claire as she walks away from the condo, the gears in her mind cranking as she tries to figure out how she can possibly emerge from this hearing victorious.

BROOKS HOME

"We danced a little. That's it." Trevor re-adjusts the cushion beneath him but still doesn't look comfortable.

Lauren eyes him suspiciously. "That's it?"

"That's it." Trevor returns the eye. "Why?"

"I just thought--one second you two were dancing and the next she couldn't get out of here fast enough. I thought there might be some kind of connection, that's all."

He shrugs, but the rest of his response takes a little too long. "Nothing happened that I know of."

Maybe he really didn't get what was going on, Lauren wonders as she tries to figure out another angle to come at it from. Unfortunately, Trevor seizes upon the opportunity to flip the questioning around on her.

"So what'd you get up to last night?" he asks, suddenly looking a whole lot more at ease.

"I was doing too much running around to get into much during the party," she says. The urge to tell him about what happened with Jason is growing with each second that passes, but she knows she should test the waters first.

"What about after the party?"

Her gaze averts itself from his before Lauren realizes it. "That was a little more eventful."

Trevor sits back and folds his hands together. When Lauren doesn't add anything more, he says, "I heard you and Jason out in the hallway."

"He stayed in the guest room."

"Yeah, but I heard you guys whispering." His stare awaits further explanation, but Lauren is too tongue-tied to offer any. "Something happened between the two of you, didn't it?" It's more of a statement than a question.

Lauren brushes her hair back behind her ears. "We kissed. That's all."

"That's all?" he asks, mocking the way she questioned him earlier.

The joke isn't lost on her. Thankfully, it helps relax her a little bit. "I swear. Just ... a couple different times. In the backyard, in the living room, up in the hall. But I swear that's all."

Trevor mulls over the information for a long moment. "Are you happy about it?"

"Yeah," she responds with a slow nod. "Yeah, I am. Except I have no clue what we do now."

"Are you worried about Courtney?"

Lauren nods again, this time more vigorously. "God, I have no idea how anything else *can* happen. The whole thing is way too messy."

Her heart sinks a little at the quickness of Trevor's reply. "Yeah," he says. "It really is."

JASON FISHER & ALEX MARSHALL'S APARTMENT

"No, no!" Jason shakes his head quickly. "We didn't--nothing else happened. We just kissed."

Alex seems to accept that. "Good. I was about to strangle you."

Jason realizes that he'd probably be doing the same to himself right now; a large part of him is already delivering a series of swift mental kicks as it is.

"Is it bad?" he asks, bracing himself for a harsh reaction.

"Maybe. I mean, it's not terrible," Alex says with a shrug. "I've kinda thought that something might be going on between you two for a while."

"But ..."

"But it's pretty rocky territory, don't you think?"

"Yeah, completely." Jason raises his eyebrows for emphasis, to show that he understands how ugly this could be. "Courtney's not gonna like this, is she?"

Alex considers the question, then returns with one of his own: "Do you think there might be a chance for something between you and Lauren? If Courtney weren't an issue, I mean."

The answer comes almost instantaneously to Jason, but he feels as though he needs to wait a few seconds before voicing it. "I think so."

They both fall into silence. Jason is pretty sure that Alex is just as uncertain of what to say as he is.

"I guess you need to sit down and talk to her," Alex says at last. "Figure out where you both stand and stuff."

"I don't know if anything can happen -- because of Court," Jason says, a little surprised at the amount of disappointment that creeps into the statement.

"Just proceed with caution, I guess." Alex rises to his feet. "I'm gonna go take a shower and then make some breakfast. You want some?"

"The shower or the food?" Jason asks, his lips turned up into a grin.

Alex doesn't bother answering. "Just be careful with this whole thing. I really don't think you want to deal with the disaster this could become."

He leaves for the bathroom, leaving Jason to think that over. But he's right -- the thought of facing the explosion that is sure to be Courtney's reaction is almost enough to make him want to forget last night.

Almost.

END OF EPISODE #289

What do you think is to come in the tangle that is the Lauren/Jason/Courtney story? And how will the long-delayed custody hearing between Claire and Diane turn out? Join us in the Footprints Forum to voice your thoughts!

[Next Episode](#)