

## "Footprints" Episode #299

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

- A run-in at the coffee house led to Alex and Trevor talking. Trevor offered to read some of Alex's novel and also took his phone number, taking care to say that he doesn't hold Alex and Lauren's failed relationship against Alex.
- Courtney came by the Brooks' to return some of Lauren's things. She squabbled with Trevor, who later told Lauren that they needed to talk.
- Diane made a phone call to Brian in Los Angeles. He thanked her for arranging to have Vision Publishing offer him Tim's old executive position in King's Bay but said he would have to consider the offer some more.
- Claire shared with Ryan her concerns about Paula and Bill. When alone with Ryan, Paula asked him if they could have a private conversation later on.

### **BROOKS HOME**

Trevor Brooks ushers his sister inside his bedroom and closes the door.

"I don't really want Mom and Dad to come barging in when they get home," he explains, seeing the puzzled look on Lauren's face.

"This sounds serious," she says.

"Yeah. It is."

Trevor sits down in the computer chair. It's the same chair that he used to sit at while he did his homework during high school, and the same one he came home to during breaks from college. To be sitting in it now, to do this, feels a little weird.

"What's going on?" Lauren asks warily. She lingers by the door, as if awaiting whatever it is that he has to tell her before deciding whether she can relax or not. "Did something happen?"

He debates his response. "Not exactly. It's more ... general than that."

"Then what is it?" She must see his hesitation, because she quickly adds, "Just tell me, Trevor."

"Have a seat. You're--" He glances down at his fingernails and scrapes something out from underneath the middle finger of his left hand. "You're making me nervous."

"And you're doing it right back to me. So talk."

"Sit first."

She stands by the door, her gaze locked with his, for a long moment before consenting and moving to the bed. Still looking very uncomfortable, she seats herself on the edge of the bed.

"Remember how I told you about how I stayed away from home because of not doing so hot with school?" he starts.

She eyes him nervously. "Yeah ..."

"It wasn't just school. I mean, I wasn't really motivated to finish, and I knew Mom and Dad wouldn't be too happy about it, but that wasn't the only thing."

"Yeah. You said that modeling thing--"

He sucks in a deep breath before cutting her off. "It wasn't that, either."

She leans forward even farther, and Trevor wonders how she doesn't fall off the bed.

"You're starting to scare me. What's going on, Trevor?"

"I guess what it comes down to," he says, "is that I wasn't comfortable facing any of you yet. Mom, Dad, you, even friends from here."

"Why not? You know we all love you, whether you ever finish college--"

"It's not that easy. I got into this whole scene at school that I was really comfortable in, and I wasn't sure how to combine those two parts of my life. So I tried to shut this part off, I guess."

The color of her face drops several shades. "Uh-oh."

"It's been great being back here and getting to spend time with you," he continues, trying to force himself to get to the point. "It makes me wish I hadn't missed out on the time that I did. But there's been this little wall in front of me the whole time, and now that Mom and Dad are back, it feels even worse."

"What are you talking about?"

"Lauren, I--" It doesn't seem like it should be so simple. To just say it, after all this

worrying? "I know it shouldn't be that big of a deal, especially because I was around so many people back at school who didn't care at all, but to do this here--it's different. Especially knowing what you went through while I was away."

"Trevor." She drops any pretense of being relaxed and rises to her feet. "You're gonna drive me crazy if you keep talking in circles like this. Just tell me what's going on."

His focus drops back down to his fingernails for a few seconds, but finally he makes himself raise his head and look directly at her. It seems like the only way to do this.

"I'm gay."

## **FISHER HOME**

The stairs creak lightly under Ryan Moriani's footsteps. Normally, he might not even notice, but he just said goodnight to Claire and left her upstairs. Now he's acutely aware that he is in someone else's home, it's deathly quiet, and he does not intend to leave as he told Claire he would.

Instead, clutching his keys in his hand, he walks through the living and dining rooms, into the kitchen. He can see Paula through the glass doors. She sits at the round patio table, staring out into the dark summer night.

Until Claire announced that she was going up to bed, Paula was bustling around the house. Ryan is fairly certain that her moving outside is his cue to follow, so they can have the conversation that she asked him to have earlier. He takes the cue and crosses the kitchen.

A chill goes through his body as he opens the sliding door, but it has nothing to do with the cool night air. The night is actually quite warm; a light breeze would be a welcome respite from the heat, even with the sun long withdrawn from its place high in the sky. The chill going through Ryan is strictly about Paula Fisher.

There was something about her tone earlier that made him nervous, but he realized there could be a hundred reasons she might want to speak with him in private, especially on the eve of the custody hearing that has Claire so anxious. As the night has gone on, though, he's become convinced that he knows what this is about. And he's not looking forward to it one bit.

Paula snaps suddenly from her thoughts at the sound of the door opening. Ryan can tell that she's studying him as he steps out onto the deck.

"Claire's in bed," he says. It's another way of inviting her to launch into whatever it is she

wants to discuss with him.

"Good. Have a seat."

He sees her scanning the second-floor windows, even though Claire's room is on the other side of the house.

Ryan selects a chair and seats himself across from Paula. He's careful not to scrape the chair against the deck too loudly as he pulls it out.

"I've been meaning to talk with you for some time. Or wanting to talk to you, actually." She speaks slowly, as if she's as uncertain about how to approach this as Ryan is about sitting here to listen to it.

"At first I wasn't even sure that this was something I should do, but ... it's become clear that I need to have this conversation with you," she says.

Something suddenly seizes Ryan. He can't make it through this painfully slow extraction. Time to cut to the chase.

"I know what you're going to say," he blurts out. "Actually, I've known this was coming for a long time."

## **SEATTLE-TACOMA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

Streams of passengers hauling luggage pour out of the narrow passageway. Most of them look tired, almost haggard, as if this last leg of the journey might be too much to handle.

But Diane Bishop's eye goes immediately to the family decked out in full tourist regalia: Hawaiian shirts, leis, shorts, the whole nine yards. She hopes they know how ridiculous they look, but something tells her that this is anything but some sort of ironic commentary on tourism.

She forces herself to look away and strains to find the familiar face in the crowd. Damn airport security. This would be a lot easier if she could've gone straight to the actual gate, rather than waiting out here.

She sees him long before he sees her. Of course, she's looking for him, while he has no idea that she's here, but she delights in watching him as he searches the area for the expected sign with his name on it.

Finally, the searching brings him right to her. At first, he moves right past her, but she can see quite clearly the moment when it clicks and he recognizes her. She gives a small

wave, wiggling her fingers at him.

Uncertainly, Brian approaches her.

"What are you doing here?" he asks.

"Picking you up, you idiot." She shakes her head. "Do you wanna explain to me how I can arrange this whole job for you, and yet you don't bother to tell me that you accepted it or that you were coming into town so soon?"

He doesn't even bother responding. He knows she's got him.

"Luckily, I figured I'd look into things," she says, "and I was surprised to see that they'd arranged to have someone pick you up. So what's the big idea?"

"I was going to get settled first. I wanted to surprise you at the office," he says.

"Uh-huh. You underestimate me, Brian."

"I know. Fatal mistake."

"You got that right."

For the first time, she inspects the luggage he brought off the plane with him. "I assume we need to go down to baggage claim?"

He nods. "I just checked one suitcase. Everything else is being shipped."

"Good. I have no desire to spend any more time down there than absolutely necessary."

She starts walking in the direction of the escalators. Brian stands around for a moment before rushing to catch up with her.

"Hey, I want to make sure you know how grateful I am," he says as they ride down the escalator. "This job really means a lot to me."

"Well, on behalf of Vision Publishing, welcome back to King's Bay." They go down the remaining few feet of the escalator in silence, but Diane pauses as they step off it.

She gives Brian a swift whack in the back of the head. "And next time, don't even think about surprising me. You should know better than anyone that it doesn't work."

## BROOKS HOME

Time seems to freeze as Trevor waits for Lauren's reaction.

Finally her shoulders drop and she exhales heavily. "That's not so bad, Trevor."

"I know, but ... I wasn't sure how you'd react after how things went down with Alex."

"This is way different. You're my brother." She comes closer, right up next to his chair. "And it's not like I have a problem with the fact that Alex is gay. It's the way it came out. So to speak."

She cracks a smile, and he can't help doing the same.

"You had me really worried," she says. "When you were talking about getting into some scene at school -- I thought you were talking about, like, drugs."

"Nah, I'm good. Look, no track marks or anything," he says as he extends his arms for her to see.

"Funny."

She crosses around to the back of the chair and places her hands on Trevor's shoulders. Only when she begins to knead the muscles does he realize how tight he's gotten in the last ten minutes or so.

"It's seriously not a big deal," she says.

He relaxes into her hands, or tries to, at least. "It is and it isn't. Like, for me, personally, it's not such a big deal anymore. But dealing with people at school and work, you never know what to expect. And I don't even wanna think about Mom and Dad's reactions yet."

"I really don't think it would be so huge to them, either."

"I don't know about that." His shoulders start to scrunch up again, and Lauren's hands press down hard to relax them.

"They're not, like, completely conservative or anything. And they didn't raise us to think that there's anything wrong with being gay."

"Yeah, but it's different when it's *your* kid. It'll probably be another reason for them to be disappointed in me."

"They're not disappointed in you, Trevor."

"Are you kidding? They're already not thrilled about the school thing. No way are they gonna be cool with me not going back this year."

She stops the massage and leans down to wrap her arms around his neck. "Well, we'll deal with them when the time is right. But right now, just know that I'm your sister, and I love you, and I'm so glad to have you back home. Okay?"

"Okay," he agrees, forcing a nod as he tries to convince himself that all that is enough.

## **FISHER HOME**

Paula is torn between shock and disbelief. He couldn't know ... could he? It's not completely impossible, she realizes, though she hasn't much considered the possibility. The records have been just as available to him as they were to her.

"This is a very sensitive issue," she says, unsure how much she's going to have to explain to him. "A lot of people could be affected -- especially Claire. The last thing she needs is to get hurt again, after all she's been through."

Ryan's hands slap down hard against the table. "I knew it."

"Knew what?"

"That you were gonna pull this on me." He shoots up out of his chair, shaking his head roughly. "For a while there, I really thought it might not be an issue. I've been feeling comfortable coming over here lately. I thought we'd gotten past all that."

"Past what?" Paula asks, glued to her chair even as Ryan towers over her.

"You can save your breath. I know where this is going. You're not sure where I'm coming from, you still blame my father and me for Tim's death, you don't want Claire to get hurt. Believe me, it's not anything new."

Any possible response gets stuck in Paula's throat. Ryan pushes the chair out from behind him and goes to the sliding door.

"I'm going to be good to her," he says, his eyes steely, his face tight. Total determination.

"Ryan--"

"Forget it."

Before she can conjure up any kind of protest, he yanks open the door and disappears back inside the house. Paula thinks of chasing after him, but the moment is ruined. She won't be able to have the conversation she wanted to have with him, not after this.

She's never seen him as intense as he just was. And, though she's had her doubts -- great doubts, at times -- and though she's wanted to believe the best when it seemed less than realistic, she's now convinced that he truly does love Claire and wants nothing more than to see her happy.

She feels something close to pride in her son for the first time since she's been able to think of him that way.

The front door slams hard, echoing all the way to the backyard.

### **END OF EPISODE #299**

*What did you think of this episode? Will Paula have to find another way to share the truth with Ryan? Did Lauren's reaction to Trevor surprise you? Join us in the Footprints Forum to share your thoughts!*

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