

## "Footprints" Episode #307

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

- Diane and Brian began to work together again at Vision Publishing with less tension than she expected there might be.
- Molly confided in Camille that things have been going wonderfully with Brent.
- After a picnic in the park, Matt drove Sarah home. When it came time to drop her off, he moved awkwardly into a kiss -- which turned passionate and led them to the bedroom.

### **SARAH FISHER'S APARTMENT**

Sunlight dances across Sarah Fisher's face as she turns in bed to face the window, her eyes opening slowly. It takes a few moments, but soon enough the events of last night come rushing back to her: Matt's surprise picnic, their wonderful afternoon together ... and him spending the night.

Unlike so many past experiences, particularly with Brent, Sarah didn't feel herself rushing things with Matt. Their lovemaking escalated naturally, because the time was right, because each step was the only possible next move. She lets her mind wander backwards briefly before rolling over to embrace the man sleeping next to her. She brushes a mess of golden blonde hair from her face as she turns over, careful not to wake him.

But Matt isn't there.

Sarah is wide awake now and sitting upright. Her fingers trace the empty spot on the bed beside her as if her eyes are misleading her. *Where is he?* she wonders. Her breath catches in her throat when she spots a piece of paper on the nightstand.

"Had to go to work. Didn't want to wake you. Will come by tonight. Matt"

A wave of relief spreads through her, followed quickly by a startling rush of disappointment in herself for doubting even momentarily that last night meant any less to him than it did to her. More importantly, she looks toward her future with more excitement than she has in years -- her future with Matt. She can't wait.

Sarah smiles and rolls over again to face her bedroom window, basking in the glow of a new day.

### **BRIAN HAMILTON'S APARTMENT**

The brown paper of the bakery bag crinkles as Diane Bishop's hand moves around inside it. She removes two of the bagels, still warm to the touch.

"These are the best bagels in the world," she announces as she pulls a small carton of cream cheese from the bag.

"Best bagels in the world, huh?" Brian Hamilton grins. He replaces the coffeepot in its proper niche in the machine and carries the two steaming mugs over to the small table in the corner of the kitchen.

"Seriously. I could eat them all day ... except then I'd wind up all bloated on carbs, and that never turns out well."

They organize their breakfasts quietly. Diane adds a generous helping of sugar to her coffee and stirs it in deeply. She draws a long sip, careful not to burn her tongue, before slicing open the bagel and covering its surface with the rich cream cheese.

"These are good," Brian says as he chews his first bite of the bagel.

"Told you." Diane has a bite of her bagel and then reaches for her briefcase. She pulls out a thick file and slaps it down upon the table, right in-between them.

Brian eyes the folder warily. "Whoa. That is ... colossal."

"I told you this wasn't going to be a quick five-minute catch-up," she says. "But you need to be brought up-to-speed on this if you're going to be in charge of it. We don't need to do any more damage to this situation."

He reaches for the folder and begins thumbing through it, perusing this and that document. It's not a particularly careful inspection, but he's merely getting an idea for the contents of the file.

She watches him, waiting for the reaction that she knows is inevitable.

"This is a complete mess," he finally says, eyes going wide as he looks up at her.

"Yeah. It's a train wreck. We've been back and forth with this guy more than I care to think about. That's why we really can't afford any more mistakes."

He nods carefully. "Understood."

"All right, let me show you what's going on here." She takes the file from him and flips through it herself. What an unbelievable amount of crap there is in here. They never should have let that idiot Lindley have any hand in it ...

"Thanks for taking the time to go over this with me," Brian says.

"No problem. Besides, I wanna make sure this job gets done *right*."

"You can trust me."

"I hope so--" Diane tries to cut herself off, but the words have already spilled out. After the initial flash of panic, she wonders if maybe what suddenly struck her -- the undercurrent that suddenly leapt out of her -- went unnoticed by Brian.

But she can tell by his expression that that isn't the case.

"Listen," she says, doing her best to bat away the cobwebs of discomfort that have closed in on them. "I do trust you. I know that you're capable of doing a perfectly competent and even exceptional job. I don't want you to think--"

"Don't worry about it."

She is about to go on, but that stops her in her tracks.

"Let's not dwell on the Serena thing," he says. "This isn't Los Angeles. You worked out this position for me, and I'm taking that as your vote of confidence."

"Really?" It's such a reversal from the firm stand he took when she went down to L.A., and even when he first found out about the job offer. Now he's just letting it go?

"It's not forgotten," he says, as if somehow reading her mind, "but I'm willing to move on. You obviously have enough respect for me to trust me with this job. So let's stop worrying about the past, go out there, and kick some ass together."

## **BRENT TAYLOR'S APARTMENT**

Molly Fisher drums her manicured nails impatiently along the edge of the counter. The coffee-maker gurgles, dripping a continuous stream of dark brown liquid into the glass pot at a pace that Molly is certain must have been designed to taunt her.

"Coffee ready yet?" Brent Taylor asks from the entry to the kitchen.

Molly turns to find him knotting a steel-gray tie around his neck. "It's getting there," she says through gritted teeth.

She casts another glance at the coffeepot. Still not finished. The gurgling sound rumbles on.

"If you're in such a rush," Brent says, "you could always stop at Starbucks or something."

She shakes her head. "There's no telling how long that could take. Too unpredictable. I'd have to deal with the parking lot and the line and the speed of the people working there--"

He holds up a palm. "Point taken," he says through a smile.

Using his reflection in the black refrigerator door, Brent fiddles with the knot of his toe. Molly watches for a few seconds, amused, before stepping up behind him and taking hold of the knot.

She pulls it a bit tighter and pats it down against his torso. "There. You're fine."

"Thanks," he says, leaning in to plant a peck on her lips.

She looks over at the coffeepot again. Still going.

"It's almost done," Brent says, obviously trying to calm her.

"I know. I just get so worried about being late for work. I don't want Camille to think I'm not committed--"

"I'm pretty sure she doesn't think that at *all*. You've poured so much time and effort into that company already."

"Yeah, but now we're working with all these other people, and they've all got so much experience ... I guess I feel like I need to prove that I'm supposed to be doing the job I'm doing."

"You are supposed to be doing it," he says.

She lets his reassurance pass without response. "It's just always a little more stressful driving to work from here than it is from my place. I never know what to expect from the traffic on 202 ..."

"Just calm down. You'll be fine." He wraps his arms around her waist, drawing her nearer to him. "Besides, I think it's worth the extra minutes in the car, don't you? I know I've gotten awfully used to being able to wake up next to you."

"I have, too," she says, resting her head against his chest. "And it is worth it."

She takes a deep breath and enjoys the moment of quiet, resting against him. It is worth the extra annoyance in the morning to be able to spend the night with him. But he's right: It is a pattern now. It's something she's come to expect and look forward to, not something spontaneous. And that makes her think that there should be another step coming soon.

Not that she has any idea how to broach the subject. "By the way, where do you think our relationship is headed?" seems a little too out-of-nowhere. And she has no idea how she'd respond if he turned the question around on her.

The moment of quiet thought is interrupted by a noticeable change in the atmosphere of the room. It takes her an instant to figure out what it is: The gurgling noise has stopped.

Brent has already softened his hold. Immediately she breaks away from him and starts pouring the coffee into her travel mug.

"Well, uh, have a nice day," he says with a laugh.

His grin only broadens at the look she shoots back at him.

## **J&M SUPERMARKET**

Hours after starting her day, Sarah still feels like she's glowing and is struggling to keep her mind on grocery shopping. Victoria, meanwhile, has climbed onto the back of their cart as Sarah pushes her along and listens to her daughter relay all of the details of her sleepover. Jessica has a Golden Retriever and lavender paint on the walls of her bedroom, and Victoria thinks they should get a dog and paint her room, too.

Her mother smiles and calmly offers, "Maybe when--"

"Sarah?"

She recognizes the voice behind her instantly: he's been inexorably supplanted in her mind lately. She turns and offers an overly energetic response to her half-brother. "Ryan, hey! What are you doing here?" She slaps her forehead mentally the moment she asks.

"Uh ... shopping? Sorry to interrupt your conversation here." To her surprise, his attention turns almost immediately to Victoria. "And what are you up to, kiddo? Causing trouble?"

Sarah watches as the two interact playfully for a bit before her daughter runs off at his suggestion that she remember to find a box of Lucky Charms, her favorite cereal. When

Victoria is further down the aisle, he turns and meets her gaze.

"How are you holding up?" His question catches her off guard, and she's impressed that he had the presence of mind to ask in light of the fact that *he's* the one whose entire world has very recently been thrown into complete upheaval.

"I'm great. Well, at least I was until you reminded her about those Lucky Charms. She goes through a box in two days and bounces off the walls from all of the sugar."

"I'm sure she'll be all right. Just limit her dosage," he jokes.

"I'll see what I can do," she says, chuckling a little. She changes directions. "Hey, um, how was ... yesterday?"

"Lunch, you mean?" He is clearly still uncertain as to how to refer to his -- their -- mother. "With, um, Paula?"

"Yeah. I haven't gotten a chance to speak with her in a couple of days."

"Well, you can tell her that I had a really nice time," he answers. "With her, anyway." A pause. "I dunno about Claire, though."

"Did something happen?"

"Nothing major. I just wish she'd sit down with me and talk about ... all of this stuff. She came home while I was there and would barely even look at me."

"Well, give her some time."

"That's what Paula said. I hope the two of you are right."

His tone strikes a chord with Sarah; it's one of not only heartache but confusion, perhaps desperation. She lived the better part of four years ping-ponging between that and bitterness. That is, until Matt pulled her out of it. Her mind has just rested on him again when Ryan meets her drifting gaze.

"Listen, Sarah, I have to get going, but there's something I really need you to know."

"What's that?"

"I'm really sorry about all of the shit that I've caused for your family, especially the whole bribing-Diane stunt. I just, I--"

"It's okay, Ryan," she cuts in. "Really. You wanted to protect Claire. I understand that. I mean, if anyone knows what it's like to do something stupid out of love, it's me. Seriously."

"Well, thank you. That means a lot. Probably more than you realize." He glances down at his watch. "I should get going, but it was truly nice bumping into you, Sarah. Thank you again for being so understanding."

"It's nothing," she replies, smiling. "I should probably track down my daughter before she finds the cookie aisle. So, I'll see you soon, I'm sure."

"Most likely," he affirms, adding another thank you before smiling briefly and heading in the other direction.

She watches him walk away before turning around to face a giddy Victoria, who proudly displays a box of Lucky Charms before tossing it into the shopping cart.

## **BRIAN HAMILTON'S APARTMENT**

Brian switches his briefcase to his other hand as he pulls the apartment door closed and turns the key in the lock.

"Crap, I bet it's gonna be a pain in the ass getting to the office from here," Diane groans. "They're still doing work on 202, aren't they?"

"Have been ever since I moved in," Brian says. He makes his way down the stairs toward the parking lot, and Diane follows him.

He stops at the bottom of the stairs, though, not sure where she's parked. "So you're going to sit in on that meeting with me tomorrow, right? I don't know if I'm ready to go it alone yet."

"Yeah, I'll be there," she says. "I'm not gonna throw you to the wolves just yet."

"Good." He walks the few steps to his parking space and begins to unlock the driver's door. He is about to get inside the car when he realizes that Diane isn't moving.

"What?" he asks, but she's already pointing to some spot behind him. He whips around, trying to figure out what has captured her attention.

It takes him a few seconds to spot the attraction.

No way. Is that ... ?

Yeah. It is.

Truth be told, he hasn't thought much about Molly since he left King's Bay, and he hasn't bumped into her since he returned. But he recognizes her immediately. And the guy she's with--

"No shit," Diane says, slowly, obviously in shock. She breaks her focus from Molly and Brent for just a split-second to ask Brian, "Do they live there?"

"I have no idea." Come to think of it, he has seen Brent coming and going from the apartment, but the face only seemed vaguely familiar, and he hasn't given it enough thought to connect the face with the person. But he hasn't seen Molly here before.

And then, completely oblivious to their audience, Brent and Molly share a kiss at the bottom of the stairs before parting to head to their respective vehicles.

"Are they together now?" Brian asks as Diane hurries to his side. "I thought he was married to Sarah--"

"He was. But there was this whole thing going on with Molly and him all along. It was one of the main reasons they got divorced."

"Seriously?"

"Yep. But this--I think I definitely would've heard about it if Sarah knew it was going on."

It takes Brian a moment to figure out the significance of that. "You think they're doing this behind her back now?"

"They've gotta be," Diane says. A familiar curl takes over the ends of her full lips.

He can tell that the gears are turning in her head.

"I have a feeling," he says, "that this is about to get good."

Diane shakes her head, looking downright devious now. "Just you wait."

## **END OF EPISODE #307**

*What is Diane up to now?  
Is Brent and Molly's private little world about to come crashing down?  
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