

## "Footprints" Episode #309

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

- The news about Ryan Moriani being his half-brother rattled Jason, who lashed out at Lauren in the aftermath.
- Jason informed Sandy that he wanted to find a new skating partner, so Sandy set up an audition that turned out to be a disaster.
- Molly expressed insecurities about her capabilities as a designer. Both Camille and Brent tried to assuage her doubts.

### **BROOKS HOME**

Lauren Brooks sighs as she lets the cordless handset fall back onto its base with a small thud, followed by a high-pitched beep. She has resolved all morning to give him a call prior to dropping by to return of one of his books, yet when she finally held the phone in her hand ...

"This is insane," she mutters to herself, tucking the novel into her purse and stopping for an instant to check her reflection in her bedroom mirror. She looks well, apart from the uneasy expression she wears and the uncertainty in her eyes-- something she hopes will go unnoticed when she sees Jason in a short while. In a few moments, she's down the stairs and just about to leave when she sees her brother in tow.

"Lauren," Trevor begins, "where're you headed in such a hurry?"

"Oh, well..." She hears herself trail off. Why does she feel as though she is sneaking off to see Jason? Probably because she's built the visit up in her mind for the past few days, weighing and reviewing the messy way they left things in Cassie's, and is fairly apprehensive about dealing with his misplaced hostility again.

"Lemme guess. Stopping by Jason's?"

"Yeah," she confirms. "What made you think that? I mean, I have some other errands to run, too ..."

"Because you've been in a weird mood for, like, the past two days and haven't wanted to talk about it. I figured something else happened. Plus, you've got his book sticking out of your purse. How was that, by the way?"

"Oh, really good. It's about this corporate executive who ends up fighting with breast cancer. She's pretty courageous, in the end."

"Nice. So, what, does she live or die?"

"You'll have to read the book," she says, casting him a sideways smile as she turns and puts her jacket on. A bolt of silence strikes, and she wonders if he'll let this line of questioning go any deeper than it has. She's not sure that there are many concrete details to discuss at this point, anyway, so, she shifts gears. "Are you going out, too?"

"Yeah, but it's top secret." There's something in Trevor's expression that intrigues her. It's the same look that he used to get when hatching one of their childhood schemes to raid their parents' closet in mid-December in search of Christmas presents.

"Oh, come on, Trev," she probes. "Where are you headed?"

"Listen," he replies softly, suddenly serious, "you'll know if all goes as planned."

"Uh-huh," she scoffs with mock indignation as she watches him search the cluttered table in the entryway for the keys to his car.

"Anyway, yeah. Good luck with Jason. I'm not fully sure what's going on with the two of you, but, like, that's some major shit to take in -- everything that he found out about his half-brother. I'm sure he could really use a friend."

"Thanks, Trev," Lauren offers half-heartedly, all the while thinking, *We'll see about that ...*

## **JASON FISHER & ALEX MARSHALL'S APARTMENT**

"You're back from the rink already?"

Jason Fisher glances up briefly from his bowl of Lucky Charms. "I didn't go this morning."

Alex Marshall pads into the kitchen, barely lifting his bare feet from the linoleum floor. The bottoms of his navy sweatpants drag on the floor behind him. He moves to the cupboard and removes a bag of ground coffee. Jason can tell that more questions are coming any second.

"Why not?" Alex finally asks. "I thought Thursday was the day you--"

"I cancelled everything," Jason says. "I didn't feel like being there today."

"Oh." Alex grabs a filter from the cupboard, inserts it into the coffeemaker, and then pauses. "Something happen?"

Jason stirs his spoon around in the bowl, creating swirls of faded color that run together in the milk.

"That audition," he says, "turned out to be complete crap. It was a total joke."

Alex makes a pained but somehow sympathetic face, and Jason takes it as his cue to elaborate.

"The girl was a complete lunatic. It was like she had no control over her limbs."

"Sounds dangerous."

"It was! She took me out a couple of times." Jason drops the spoon against the side of the bowl with a clink. "And the best part is that she kept making it *my* fault. She had no idea what she was talking about, but every time something got screwed up, it was because *I* allegedly had no clue what I was doing."

Alex finishes pouring the coffee into the filter and contemplates the story for a moment. At last, shrugging, he says, "On the plus side, I bet she never roasted her parents to death in a house fire."

"At least Shannon could skate."

Shutting the coffeemaker, Alex turns to the refrigerator. He opens it and pulls out the water filter. "So what now? Do you have any more auditions lined up?"

"Not that I know of. And frankly, I'm a little scared of them now." He brings a spoonful of mostly milk, with a few pieces of cereal drifting in it, to his mouth. "I'm surprised Dylan didn't say anything about it to you. He and Courtney were getting a good laugh out of it, from what I could tell."

"He didn't mention it," Alex says, and Jason is fairly certain that he's being honest. "And hey, maybe it wasn't as big a spectacle as it felt like."

"I doubt it. Courtney and Dylan are out there, training these awesome programs for Nationals, and I'm flopping around with the freaking love child of My Little Pony and Evil Knevil."

Alex lets out a wild laugh, and for the next thirty seconds or so, he is doubled over in hysterics. Jason doesn't think his comment was that funny, but Alex's laughter does serve to lighten the mood a little bit.

"I just want something *good* to happen," he says, stirring the spoon around in the milk some more. "This whole year has been one big crapfest."

"What about Lauren?" Alex asks. His tone is suddenly much more careful, much more measured.

The only response Jason can muster is a shrug. "I don't think we're on the best of terms right now."

"Why not?"

"She started pushing me about this whole thing with my family. She thinks I should give Ryan a chance and blah blah. I'm not just gonna roll over and play brother with him, you know?"

"I do know. I mean ... yeah, I understand. But what, you had a fight with Lauren over it?"

"Not a fight. We just didn't agree. I got up and left because I didn't want it to turn into a fight."

Alex presses the button to turn on the coffeemaker and then leans against the counter, arms folded in front of him. "So you guys are on the outs because she gave you advice?"

"No." Maybe. "I dunno, it's hard to explain--"

"It sounds like all this stuff is getting jumbled up for you."

"Huh?"

"Ryan and Lauren and Courtney and skating and whatever else," Alex says. "You have a lot of crap going on. I totally get why you'd be frustrated. But maybe you're taking it out on the wrong people."

Jason puts the spoon, with nothing on it, back in his mouth.

"I'm just saying, don't burn bridges that don't need to be burned just because there are a few things in your life that suck," Alex says, letting his stare linger on Jason for a moment before opening the refrigerator again.

## **ANGELO LEONE STUDIO**

"Behind you!"

The warning call comes out of nowhere, tearing Molly Fisher from her thoughts. She turns

in search of its source, just in time to see the ladder coming directly at her. The two men carrying it pause barely long enough to allow her to step aside before continuing past her.

Molly folds her arms in front of her and goes back to observing the scene. There are more people here than she ever imagined would have a roll in selecting the models for their first show and ad campaign. Everywhere she turns, there's someone else -- makeup, sets, lighting, cameras, models, executives, everyone. It's a wonder the building hasn't exploded from sheer volume of activity yet.

She doesn't hear Camille Lemieux come up beside her.

"This is so exciting, isn't it?" Camille beams, clasping her hands together.

"Uh, yeah," Molly says, in an attempt to hide her surprise at Camille's sudden presence. Truthfully, it's reassuring to have someone so familiar nearby. She has been forcing herself to walk around and explore all morning, trying to act as though she has some idea of what is going on, but this might as well be another planet. So much of it is absolutely foreign to her.

"I can't wait to select the models so we can see the clothes on them. When that happens--that's when it really starts to feel as though something is coming together."

Molly considers that. The whole thing still seems completely surreal to her, and she has a feeling that even seeing the models in her designs at the debut show will not erase the sense that she's living in some sort of dream.

"I can't believe how busy it is," she says, unable to think of anything else.

Camille smiles warmly. "You get used to it. In my old age, there's almost something comforting about all of it! If nothing else, it means that there are still things going on and things to be done, and God knows that's better than nothing."

That gives Molly something else to think about, and by the time she has a response ready, Camille is drifting off in another direction.

"I'm going to go have a word with the ad director," she says. "I'll catch up with you later, dear!"

Molly nods and returns her focus to taking in the entire thing. Currently there is a parade of female models lined up, posturing and posing ridiculously even though no one has told them to do anything yet.

"Really something, isn't it?" comes a voice from behind her. It's a voice that is becoming all too familiar to her, but it doesn't provoke nearly the same sense of reassurance that

Camille's does.

She turns slowly to face Julian St. John. He is dressed sharply, in a black turtleneck sweater that hints at the muscle definition beneath it and a pair of gray slacks. He smiles at Molly, but there's something almost threatening about it.

"It is fascinating to watch, yeah," she says calmly. She has no intention of letting Julian see how out of her element she feels. Ever since Camille brought her into contact with the rest of the people helping to launch the company, Molly has been receiving a very uncomfortable vibe from Julian.

From what she knows, he is an executive with an impressive success streak in the industry. He worked with Camille several years ago at Charlene Powers, and when she decided to open her own company, Julian was one of the first people she consulted about coming onboard. As far as Molly can tell, he has never passed up an opportunity to mention his Princeton education or his successful stints at various firms -- her distinct lack of which, Molly is pretty sure, have made him quite disdainful of her.

"It becomes less intimidating each time," Julian says. "At least, that's what I've found."

"That seems about right." She cannot think of anything else to say, but she's pleased with the fact that she isn't contributing to his gigantic ego by swooning over his immense experience.

Apparently, it works, because a moment later he is moving away from her, apparently bored.

She lets out a deep sigh. She knows that she just has to ride this initial period out. Once they have the show, once they open the first boutique, she'll have some successful design work under her belt, and then people won't be able to question her lack of experience.

That is, of course, presuming that her designs go over well.

She tries to shut out that little nagging voice and refocus on the models, now stepping forward one by one as their names are called.

## **JASON FISHER & ALEX MARSHALL'S APARTMENT**

Jason isn't sure how long the knocking's been going on, but he awakens from his nap, rises, and walks over the door in what feels like one quick motion, still half-asleep. His eyes widen, however, when he jerks the door open to reveal Lauren.

She looks radiant, especially against the gloomy, overcast day behind her. His gaze drifts from her lips to her eyes, resting there for a beat. He swallows hard. "Hey."

"Hi."

He's not sure what to say next, though his first impulse is to wrap his arms around her -- especially after Alex's words prior to his nap drift back into the forefront of his consciousness:

*"I'm just saying, don't burn bridges that don't need to be burned just because there are a few things in your life that suck..."*

He invites her in, and as she brushes past him he catches a faint whiff of her perfume, of her. That's when it hit him. She's probably the only good thing in his life right now, and he blew up at her. He watches her brush some of her long blonde hair behind one ear, no doubt sensing the awkwardness of the moment just as much as he is.

"So, uh--"

"Listen, Jay," she cuts in, surprising him by how composed she seems, arms crossed and all. "I just came over here because I need you to know that I'm, like, here for you. I mean, if you need me. But I can't be your emotional punching bag, so you don't want me around anymore, then I need to know that. That's ... yeah, I guess that's all."

He drinks in the sight of her for a few seconds, trying to decide how best to respond. Or rather, how to swallow his pride in one shot and get this out of the way.

Because, really, it doesn't matter.

And the sight of Lauren standing before him, leaning ever so casually against the wall of their entryway, stirs something else within him -- something he's never felt before, even with Courtney; Lauren's monologue, despite its scattered showing of strength, had a vulnerability about it that makes Jason want to be nothing else but close to her. Closer to her.

He crosses the space between them wordlessly for a second, then says, "I'm ... sorry. I'm sorry, Lauren." And as soon as he's said it, things get a lot easier. "I shouldn't have taken all of that crap out on you. I'm just ..."

"It's a lot to deal with," she asserts. He nods, right in front of her now.

Before he even considers the ramifications of what he's about to do, Jason's hand has traveled to up to the side of her neck, and their faces are inching closer and closer together.

"Jason..." she whispers. Her words are stifled an instant later by his lips pressing against hers, softly at first. He feels her deepen the kiss, return it with more intensity than he could've possibly imagined. There's neediness there, as well. And it seems to create a growing sense of pressure in the pit of his stomach

He pulls away, taking a second to catch his breath before offering, "Are we okay, then? Do you forgive me for being a total asshole?"

She kisses him, lightly this time. "Perhaps," she teases, offering a mischievous smile before crushing her lips against his yet again.

## ANGELO LEONE STUDIO

A frustrated gasp, slightly more melodramatic than necessary, emanates from Camille's throat.

"No, no, no," she mutters. She lifts her hands into the air, one on each side of her head, as though they possess some force that might be capable of bringing everything back under her control.

"You don't like them?" Molly asks, half-suspecting that there must be something wrong that is far more disturbing than a lackluster selection of models.

Maybe not.

"No! They're just not--they're not right," Camille says with a wave of her hand. "None of them are right."

Molly folds her arms in front of her chest and examines the fifteen or so men lined up in front of the cameras. Earlier in the day, despite all the hustle and bustle, Molly was surprised by how uncomplicated the selection process seemed to be. It turns out, though, that was only for the runway models at the show. Now that they're dealing with the models for the print ads, a much graver feeling has taken hold of the proceedings.

"What don't you like about them?" Molly asks as calmly as possible.

"Too blond. Far too much blond. I want darker hair. And younger-looking, too."

"These aren't exactly old men," interjects Denise Vachon, one of Camille's executives. "We were pretty selective about who even got in here."

Camille stares at Denise as if she has two heads. "But it's not the *look* I want."

"I'm with Camille," Julian says. "Let's bring in the next batch. None of these guys are what we're looking for."

Molly watches as Julian whispers something to one of the people from Willis Advertising, who goes and whispers it to one of the people down by the models, who are then dispersed. A minute or so later, another group of around fifteen emerges.

Camille coils a finger beneath her chin. "Hmm ..."

"I don't know about this bunch, either," Camille says.

Molly studies the group. Her only real idea of what they are looking for comes from the short briefing they received earlier in the week from the Willis people, and she struggles to picture each of these men in the proposed ad designs.

"What about that one?" Her voice barely comes out as more than a whisper, and she lifts her index finger only a few inches above her waist to point.

"What's that, dear?" Camille asks, leaning closer.

"That one," Molly repeats, pointing more directly now. "What about him?"

She braces for the rejection. Camille takes a step back, narrowing her gaze at the model in question. Then come the noises: first a low, contemplative groan from the depths of her throat, then a higher-pitched sound that seems far more positive than Molly anticipated.

"He's tall," Camille says.

Molly isn't sure whether that is a good or a bad thing. "Yeah, he is."

"Taller than I was thinking. But I think I like it."

"Really?"

Before Camille can answer, another voice cuts in.

"I don't know," Julian says. "It's going to be harder to find a female to pair him with, and he looks kind of--"

"Boyish. Devious. I like it." Camille turns to Molly. "Excellent catch."

Julian takes a step closer to them. "Camille--"

"No, let's go with this," Camille says. She motions to one of the Willis people and points out the model in question. "This one. Who is he?"

The woman, whom Molly recognizes from her time working at Willis, flips through a folder for a moment before stopping on a page that Molly can tell has a picture of the man.

"Here he is," the woman says. "Brooks. Trevor Brooks."

### **END OF EPISODE #309**

*What are the possibilities with Trevor modeling for Camille?  
What did you think of Julian St. John?  
And will it be smooth sailing for Jason and Lauren from here on?*

[Next Episode](#)