

FOOTPRINTS

episode #139

a few days after [#138](#)

TEASER

INT: MORIANI HOME (LIVING ROOM)

MORNING

The ringing of the telephone draws a hurried Nick into the living room. With brisk steps, he makes his way over to the long oak table upon which the phone rests, next to a multicolored glass bowl filled with decorative marbles. He lifts the old-fashioned phone off the receiver and brings it to his ear.

NICK: Nick Moriani speaking.

He listens as the voice on the other end identifies itself and then quickly adds the reason for the call.

NICK: What seems to be the problem?

INT: ANDY'S APT. (BEDROOM)

MORNING

Danielle breathes out through her nose as she rolls over. With a yawn, her eyelids split apart. They continue to spread open, revealing the familiar mint green color of the sheets and the gleaming winter sunlight flooding the room. She moves her head just slightly, raising her eyes - and they connect with Andy's smiling face.

ANDY: Good morning, beautiful.

Danielle blinks a few times as the fog of sleep begins to lift.

DANIELLE: How long have you been awake?

ANDY: Just a few minutes. I was watching you sleep.

Without responding, Danielle sits up, inadvertently pushing away Andy's arm, which has been lying across her body.

ANDY: Is something the matter?

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)
MORNING

Bill is lingering over the coffee pot when he hears cushioned footsteps behind him. Turning, he sees Paula entering in her fluffy, pale blue robe and matching slippers - a Christmas gift from Sarah and Brent.

BILL: Good morning.

He lifts the mugs off the counter and swoops over to his wife, to whom he hands one.

PAULA: Thank you.

She takes a prolonged sip. Life spreads through her face as the steaming beverage fills her body.

PAULA: Are Molly and Jason gone already?

BILL: Yep. Molly already left for work and Jay's supposed to be at the rink for another hour.

PAULA: Good ...

She drags the word out, trying to work up the nerve to bring up the topic that's been dominating her mind lately.

PAULA: Because it's time we had a talk.

ACT ONE

INT: MORIANI HOME (LIVING ROOM)
MORNING

As Nick listens to the voice on the telephone, worry begins to work its magic on him. His fingers tingle and his stomach is heavy. However, years of training keep all of this out of his speech.

NICK: No need to worry. It'll be taken-

The voice on the other end silences him with some ominous comment.

NICK: Yes. It's under control, don't worry.

He pauses to listen.

NICK: I promise ... Yes. Fine.

He resists the urge to slam down the phone, but he does hang up without any sort of goodbye. The moment the phone is back on the receiver, the stopped-up air in his lungs comes gushing out in a desperate rush.

NICK: Dammit! What am I going to do now?

He brings an angry hand crashing down upon the table, but his sotto voce voice is far less steady than it was on the phone.

INT: ANDY'S APT. (BEDROOM)

MORNING

ANDY: Is something the matter?

Danielle considers the question, realizing that she's not certain whether her response should fall under the category of lying.

DANIELLE: No. No, I'm fine.

ANDY: Good ... I wouldn't want you to be preoccupied.

A wickedly playful smile accentuates his dimples as he rolls over onto his side, kicking one leg up over her body. His nose and lips nuzzle up against her neck.

Danielle lies helplessly, accepted his charged affection. It continues like this for just seconds, as Andy flings the comforter away and pulls himself atop his barely clad fiancée.

DANIELLE: Andy?

ANDY: Yeah?

His voice is muffled, as his lips dive down to the exposed part of her chest.

DANIELLE: Andy!

She sounds far more forceful this time, enough to make him stop and look up at her.

ANDY: What?

DANIELLE: We can't do this.

ACT TWO

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)

MORNING

BILL: Talk about ... ?

Paula gazes down into the calm brown sea of her coffee, but it does little to calm the storm brewing within her.

PAULA: You know.

BILL: Paula ...

His grumbling tone doesn't win any points with her.

PAULA: Enough fooling around! On New Year's Eve, we said we would discuss it, but you've been avoiding it ever since.

Bill runs a hand through his hair, an elegant mixture of interspersed brown and silver.

BILL: There's nothing else to say!

Her wide eyes show that this is the most offensive thing he could have said.

PAULA: There's everything to say!

BILL: Like what? It's been on your mind a lot lately, and it's upsetting you? We've been over that how many times?

PAULA: And that's as far as we've gotten!

BILL: How much further can we go? Do you-

He freezes, his face slipping into a mask of outrage.

BILL: Oh, no! You're not thinking-

PAULA: Yes, I am.

They remain stuck in an unwavering stare, bound so tenuously by strands of boiling tension.

PAULA: It's time we told the kids.

INT: ANDY'S APT. (BEDROOM)
MORNING

Andy's face is devoid of any exaggerated expression that might convey bewilderment. It is simply frozen: mouth open just slightly, eyes full of uncertainty.

ANDY: What?

DANIELLE: We-we can't do this.

She shifts just enough to get him to roll off of her. She feels compelled to add something more.

DANIELLE: It's just ... I'm not in the mood right now.

Andy skips an expression of relief and goes right to one of disappointment.

DANIELLE: Actually, there was something else I was hoping we could do.

Numerous possibilities leap to Andy's mind, but he can tell all too clearly that none of them is the one of which Danielle is speaking.

DANIELLE: I was thinking we could set a wedding date.

A different kind of glow manifests itself on his face.

ACT THREE

INT: MORIANI HOME (LIVING ROOM)
MORNING

Nick is still brooding over the telephone when Ryan walks in, outfitted in a pair of khaki pants and a navy blue sweater. He watches his father in silence and with a bit of confusion before clearing throat rather loudly. A startled Nick spins around.

RYAN: What's the matter?

NICK: I just got off the phone with Esposito.

Ryan comes closer, seeing that Nick isn't going to move.

RYAN: And ... ?

NICK: We're screwed. I'm talking screwed like you can't even begin to imagine.

RYAN: Why?

NICK: The whole thing with him-it fell through.

RYAN: So what, he's pissed? Dad, he's not gonna try anything just 'cause this deal didn't work out-

NICK: That's not all.

RYAN: Well, what, then?

His voice rises with frustration, and his hands join in for emphasis.

Nick finally takes a few steps, thought it's only to pace.

NICK: We owe him money.

RYAN: How much?

NICK: A lot.

RYAN: How much is a lot?

Nick pauses, debating how to approach the inquiry.

NICK: Remember that whole mess in Jersey with the warehouse?

Ryan nods.

NICK: Well, triple that, give or take a couple dollars.

His quiet worry immediately spreads to Ryan.

RYAN: My God ... what are we gonna do?

Nick can think of no better response than to shake his head.

INT: ANDY'S APT. (BEDROOM)
MORNING

Danielle is relieved to see all disappointment melt from Andy's face.

ANDY: What a wonderful idea.

Tempted though he is to give her just a gentle kiss, he doesn't feel right about it.

ANDY: So what do you have in mind?

DANIELLE: I don't know. Summer?

ANDY: Summer is so far off!

DANIELLE: Well, we need planning time.

Andy dismisses this with a flip of the hand.

ANDY: Not that much. Besides, it's not like we have to worry about saving up for it.

DANIELLE: But what about your mom locking you out of the joint accounts?

ANDY: Miraculously, I have access to them again. Don't worry about it.

He allows just enough of a lull to steer things back on-topic.

ANDY: How about April? The first weekend?

DANIELLE: Well ... What is that, like the 2nd?

ANDY: I believe so. Do you like that?

DANIELLE: Yeah, I guess. I just hope we have enough time.

ANDY: Don't give it another thought. It will all work out fine.

Having forgotten the intimacy issue of just minutes ago, a beaming Andy reaches out an arm and pulls his bride-to-be into a romantic cuddle.

INT: FISHER HOME (KITCHEN)

MORNING

BILL: Absolutely not!

He slams his mug down on the counter with enough force to send scalding droplets of coffee sailing through the air. Several land on his own hand, but he hardly notices.

PAULA: Why not? Bill, this is my issue! I'm the one who should be ashamed! But you know what? I'm over it! I made a terrible mistake - I've come to terms with it. Why can't you?

He sputters in answering.

BILL: I-I already have!

PAULA: Then why do we have to keep it from the kids?

Realizing the level their voices have reached, Bill rubs his left temple with his index and middle fingers in a useless attempt to fight off the beginnings of an awful headache. He fills the thick silence with a deep breath before continuing in a quieter but no less stern voice.

BILL: Because ... we agreed to keep it between us. How many times over the last thirty four and a half years have we said that?

PAULA: Plenty. But bill, the kids aren't ten anymore. Tim is already curious about what was going on with me on Thanksgiving.

BILL: There's no way he can ever find out, so why make it worse by telling him - or Molly, or Sarah, or Jason?

PAULA: They're adults now! They don't need to be protected!

BILL: What about us?!?

The words come roaring out with such fire that Paula actually draws a sharp breath and waits several long seconds before releasing it.

PAULA: I think I'm beginning to see what this is about.

Bill stares her down, as if challenging her to go on. He seems to change his mind suddenly, though; with a dismissive wave of the hands, he walks right past her, grabbing his keys off the counter as he does so.

BILL: I need to get to the restaurant.

He says nothing more. Paula, suddenly wanting to have the silence all to herself, does nothing to keep him from going. She stays in the same spot, and moment later hears the opening and closing of the front door.

Except for her, the house is now empty, and her thoughts seize the opportunity to dash through her mind with abandon. The one that keeps pushing itself to the forefront, though, is particularly troublesome.

In more than thirty four years, it's never gotten this bad. He's never taken it so personally - well, not since ...

With a huff, Paula heads for the stairs, and what will hopefully be a relaxing hot shower.

Somehow, she doubts it will help.

END OF EPISODE #139

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