

FOOTPRINTS

episode #140

time frame: three days after [#139](#)

TEASER

INT: WILLIS ADVERTISING (BOARDROOM)

AFTERNOON

The majority of the board members are up and about, catching up on the latest happenings since last quarter's meeting. A healthy but professional buzz fills the room - but it floats right past Katherine's idle ears.

She is sitting alone, her mind wandering as she anticipates the entry of a certain someone ...

Katherine is seated at the same table. A strong voice rattles her, yanking her away from her thoughts.

NICK: Good afternoon. You must be Katherine Fitch.

Katherine appears flustered as a handsome man who looks to be in his fifties pulls up the seat beside her. Her answer comes after an uncertain delay.

KATHERINE: Yes ... yes, I am. And you are ... ?

NICK: Nick Moriani.

He extends a hand, which Katherine promptly shakes. Her composure now restored, she is able to smoothly slide into small talk.

KATHERINE: It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Moriani.

Another pause ensues as Katherine wonders how to approach her next question.

KATHERINE: If you don't mind my asking ... How did you know my name?

NICK: Oh, Byron was pointing people out to me.

He gestures toward Byron Willis, president of the firm, who is engaged in conversation with a stiff-looking man and woman across the room.

KATHERINE: You must be new to Willis, correct?

NICK: Yeah. I just moved to King's Bay a few months back, actually.

KATHERINE: Oh, really?

NICK: Yeah. My son dragged me here ... I suppose it's good for business and all, but I was comfortable in Chicago. But when that boy gets something in his head ...

Katherine nods understandingly.

KATHERINE: I know the feeling.

The opening and closing of the door pulls her out of the memory. Her eyes are greeted not by Nick, but by a Hispanic woman in a stylish gray pantsuit. Without even realizing it, her mind forms a clear question, almost as if she's talking to herself: Where is he?

EXT: CHASE HOME
AFTERNOON

Jason jogs up to the front door and presses the doorbell. Its melodic, four-note chime comes to him even through the solid wood of the front door, though it probably has a lot to do with his constant exposure to the tune.

He twirls his car keys by the Adidas lanyard for a few seconds before he hears the ratcheting and clicking that indicates the unlocking of the door. It opens and Courtney stands before him.

JASON: Hey!

COURTNEY: Hey ... Class is over so soon?

He double-checks his watch to make sure he's not going nuts. He's not.

JASON: It ended like 45 minutes ago!

COURTNEY: Oh.

He waits for her to add more, but she doesn't.

JASON: So, you wanna hang out, or ... ?

COURTNEY: Oh, uh, no. Not right now.

There's something about her facial expression that sends a joint wave of puzzlement and nervousness through Jason's body.

INT: HOSPITAL
AFTERNOON

Claire scratches a battered golf-course pencil across several dully printed boxes on the photocopied sheet before her. Finished, she moves to set the clipboard down on the counter.

As she lowers it, it reveals a body standing about ten feet away, facing her straight-on. She falls right into an annoyed expression and slumps her shoulders as Ryan approaches her.

RYAN: Jeez, it's about time you came out here!

CLAIRE: How long have you been waiting?

RYAN: Not long. Ten minutes, maybe.

A smile breezes across his face.

RYAN: It doesn't matter. I can wait longer than that to see you-

CLAIRE: Stop!

She holds up her hands in an accompanying gesture.

CLAIRE: Look, it's time to put an end to this.

ACT ONE

EXT: CHASE HOME
AFTERNOON

JASON: Why not?

COURTNEY: Alex is here.

JASON: So?

COURTNEY: Well, he needs help with something sorta private, so it's probably not the best time for a group hang-out.

Jason scratches the back of his neck, not sure what to make of this.

JASON: Okay.

All is silent between them, as Jason tries to figure out how to excuse himself and Courtney ponders how she can get back to Alex.

JASON: So, I'll call you tomorrow, okay?

COURTNEY: Yeah, of course.

She leans in to give him a quick smack on the lips.

COURTNEY: I love you.

JASON: I love you, too.

He turns and heads back to his car, slowing once along the way to glance back. She waves as she shuts the door.

INT: CHASE HOME (FOYER)
AFTERNOON

Just as the door settles into place with a click, Alex appears at the bottom of the stairs.

ALEX: Was that Jason?

COURTNEY: Yeah ...

Her response drifts off, an indication of the fact that there was something unsettling about the brief encounter with Jason - though what it was, exactly, she can't figure out.

ALEX: Why didn't you invite him in? Is everything okay?

COURTNEY: Yeah, everything's fine. I just thought you and me needed some more time alone.

INT: HOSPITAL
AFTERNOON

Claire can't help but notice what she is nearly positive is genuine hurt in Ryan's face ... and in response, she can't help but soften her tone just a little.

CLAIRE: You can't keep coming around like this.

He doesn't say anything.

CLAIRE: I'm sorry.

RYAN: You don't have to try and make me feel better.

CLAIRE: No, I don't - and I'm not. I mean this. There are things that I miss about our friendship. But it's never going to be the way it was when we were teenagers!

RYAN: I know. I screwed that all up - Believe me, it was the biggest mistake of my life.

A thoughtful pause momentarily halts his words.

RYAN: So, I guess I'm just lucky that you're even speaking to me now, huh?

CLAIRE: You made a mistake. You were young, you were stupid ... You'd been raised to just take whatever you wanted, everybody else be damned. God knows I really didn't make it difficult for you.

RYAN: Still ...

His eyes link up with hers, and they are very clearly pleading.

RYAN: I just want you to believe that I've changed. I want you to know how much I care about you ...

She swallows so hard it's almost audible.

CLAIRE: I do.

RYAN: Then why can't I see you anymore?

ACT TWO

INT: WILLIS ADVERTISING (BOARDROOM)
MIDDAY

Just as Katherine is beginning to lose hope, Nick strides into the boardroom. He locates a now-standing Katherine with a quick look around, and approaches her.

NICK: Good afternoon.

KATHERINE: Same to you.

He motions for them to sit, which they do.

NICK: It's nice to see they're running late. I got caught up with some business things, and I thought I'd wind up being late. Sorry I kept you waiting.

What a stupid thing to say, he scolds himself mentally.

KATHERINE: Oh, it's not anything to apologize for ... Although I must admit, I was waiting for you to arrive so I could have a discussion with someone about something other than their charities and their children.

She laughs, almost nervously, he finds himself joining in.

NICK: Speaking of children ... Have you seen Andrew lately?

KATHERINE: Not since my disastrous visit on Christmas Eve, no.

The lipsticked mouth that just a moment ago was caught in laughter is now bogged down by a frown.

NICK: Things will get better. He just needs time to get over what you did to him and Danielle.

KATHERINE: I'm beginning to think he never will.

Nick watches as the frown deepens-nestled among suddenly visible creases in her skin, overshadowing eyes that have been drained of their sparkle-and finds himself desperate to erase it.

INT: HOSPITAL
AFTERNOON

Time seems to hang for Ryan as he awaits an answer of some sort from Claire. For her, however, it's moving far too fast: She's scrambling for that answer.

CLAIRE: Because ... Like I said, everything is different now. I have Tim, we have the kids-

RYAN: So what difference does any of that make? It's not like I'm asking you to give all that up.

Just Tim.

CLAIRE: I know, but ... Ryan, it's hard.

RYAN: It doesn't have to be! Just-

He interrupts himself as a new thought lands in his head.

RYAN: Wait a second. This isn't you, trying to get rid of me - it's Tim!

ACT THREE

INT: CHASE HOME (COURTNEY'S ROOM)
AFTERNOON

Courtney is flopped across the bed on her stomach, her hands propping up her head and a frustrated face.

COURTNEY: I can't think of a thing.

Alex, who has been sitting on the floor, drops back into an outstretched position.

ALEX: Ugh, me neither.

COURTNEY: We'll think of something, don't worry.

She picks up a nearby magazine and stares at the cover blankly.

COURTNEY: It's so cool that you're setting up a Valentine's surprise for Lauren!

Alex raises an eyebrow and grins.

ALEX: Did I say it was for Lauren?

She chucks the magazine at him, but it lands at his feet.

COURTNEY: Stop being such a goof! Besides-

She stops, noticing the proverbial lightbulb that has just lit up Alex's face.

COURTNEY: What?

ALEX: I've got it!

COURTNEY: The surprise?

ALEX: Yeah.

She waits just a second or two before busting out impatiently.

COURTNEY: Well?!? Are you gonna tell me?

He shakes his head "no," wearing the same grin as before.

COURTNEY: C'mon - you have to! I helped you brainstorm for what, an hour?

ALEX: No, you can wait and find out on Valentine's Day! Besides, it'll be a better secret that way!

She growls in playful annoyance.

INT: WILLIS ADVERTISING (BOARDROOM)

AFTERNOON

NICK: Enough about that. There's no need to keep mulling over it if it's only going to upset you.

KATHERINE: You're probably right.

She transitions away from the topic with a sigh.

KATHERINE: If you don't mind my asking, how is everything going with Ryan?

NICK: Better ... I think. He hasn't said much about Claire recently.

KATHERINE: Do you think he could be getting over this obsession with her?

NICK: I hope so. Like I kept telling time, it's only going to hurt him in the end.

KATHERINE: Why don't you try and distract him with something else - say, business?

Nick's mind immediately travels back in time a few days ...

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.

NICK: I don't think I'll have a problem doing that.

INT: HOSPITAL
AFTERNOON

Claire hardly hesitates in responding to Ryan's accusation. After so many weeks of walking a tightrope in trying to spare everyone's feelings, it seems like a breath of remarkably fresh air to get it out.

CLAIRE: You're right.

Ryan is stunned, almost as if he didn't even believe his accusation could have been true.

RYAN: Really?

CLAIRE: Yeah. Tim told me he didn't want me to spend time with you anymore.

RYAN: That's great!

Before she can react, he pulls her into a hug. She extricates herself from it in a matter of seconds.

CLAIRE: No, Ryan ... Tim knows everything.

RYAN: You mean ... ?

She nods somberly.

RYAN: How?

CLAIRE: I told him about it - a long time ago. Eventually he just put the pieces together.

RYAN: But you've ... put it behind you, right? Then what place does he have making decisions for you? You need to tell him-

CLAIRE: Nothing.

She holds up both hands, halting him, though her stern face probably would be sufficient.

CLAIRE: Tim is trying to do what's best for me.

RYAN: No, he's trying to control you-

CLAIRE: No!

Her dark brown hair flips through the air as she turns on her heels and storms off.

Ryan calmly watches her exit. Despite the tension of it, he can't help but feel that has been some sort of victory. *Tim's the one keeping Claire away from me - not Claire.*

He grins to himself as he strolls back to the elevator.

END OF EPISODE #140

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