

"Footprints"

Episode #151

[Shortly After #150, Midday]

[Previously ...](#)

*A comatose Katherine had a health scare. Afterward, Nick poured out his sincere apologies, unaware that she was awakening.

*Claire asked Ryan to find out if Nick had any responsibility for Katherine's shooting, but hid her continued involvement with Ryan from Tim and everyone else.

*Tim told Jason about the adoption papers he found and the brothers resolved to get the truth from Paula.

*Jason was surprised to see Alex and Lauren kissing.

TEASER

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, DINING ROOM-

"Can you believe it?" Jason sets his glass of Coke down on the table. "Three weeks!"

"At long last," Alex adds. "I've waited five years to graduate."

"But it's almost over now. And besides, now you get to do it with Courtney, Lauren, and me." Jason picks up a French fry and begins munching on it slowly.

"I guess," Alex says with a light sigh. "I can't wait another minute, though."

"I think we're all feeling that."

Alex's eyes wander around the room, studying the lunch crowd. Slowly they come back to rest on Jason.

"So ..."

"What?"

"I know you didn't just invite me out to lunch to talk about school," Alex says. "So why don't you say what you really want to?"

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, KITCHEN-

"Tim! Hi!" Bill's face looks up from a bowl and lights up at the sight of his oldest child.

"Hey, Dad," Tim says. His voice is stiff with preoccupation, something Bill immediately notices.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm not sure," Tim answers after a short pause.

Bill sets the wooden spoon down. "Am I missing something?"

"Maybe ... I know I am."

"Tim, stop being so vague and tell me what's going on."

"Fine," Tim says. "I just hope it's a question you can answer."

POLICE STATION-

Claire shuts the door carefully behind her. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yeah," Brent says, pushing his chair back from his desk and leaning back.

When he doesn't say anything else, Claire's pulse begins to quicken. "Is something wrong, Brent?"

"I don't think so ... At least, I hope not."

Her confused look begs for more information.

"I've been looking into Katherine Fitch's shooting," he begins in a voice that Claire hardly recognizes in comparison with the one she encounters at family functions. "I think you might be able to help me with something."

"Me?" She does her best to sound shocked, but she can already tell where this is leading.

"Yeah. I need you to tell me everything you know about Nick Moriani."

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

"You don't deserve this. You didn't do anything to deserve it ... It's all my fault."

At first the words seem hollow and far away. Gradually they gain more mass, solidifying until they sound to Katherine as real as any other sound she can remember in the hazy jumble of her memory.

"Nick?"

Despite Katherine's efforts, the sound that comes through her lips is nothing more than a raspy breeze. Panic sets in but she forces it to the back of her mind as she rolls her head to the side - so that it is perfectly in-line with Nick's.

It is only now that he sees the long-absent green of her eyes.

"Katherine!" he gasps, moving back instinctively. He studies her for a drawn-out moment, stunned into silence.

"Nick ..." Her voice is still weak, but there is enough body in it to make the word audible.

A grin erupts on his face. "You're awake!"

"Why ..." She begins feebly. She draws a long, careful breath before completing the statement. "Why were you saying you're sorry?"

ACT ONE

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, DINING ROOM-

Jason's hesitation is quick, just a single beat in the rhythm of the conversation, but it's out of synch just enough to confirm Alex's suspicion.

"Huh?" Jason responds, recovering from his second of indecision. "I just ..." But the words want to come faster than he can safely process them and the ball is in Alex's court.

"This is about the coffee house the other day, isn't it?"

Again Jason is caught off-guard. "Alex, I-"

"Want to know what's going on, right?" Alex smiles knowingly, but it's not smug. "That's what you want to say, isn't it?"

"Well, yeah." Jason marvels at how easy it is to admit it and avoid his usual tip-toeing around; he is surprised to realize that it has much to do with the ease he feels around Alex.

"It's sooo complicated, Jason," Alex says. "But I guess you ... know that better than anyone else."

Their eyes catch and there is the spark of their shared confidence, of the unspoken but understood (though shakily) secret between them.

"So yeah, I guess I do owe you an explanation," Alex continues. "And I'd planned on giving you one, believe me."

He pauses and Jason makes no attempt to fill the silence, knowing that the rest will follow.

And it does. "I told Lauren that I'd like to ... continue what we started." Another pause, as he waits for Jason to react forcefully. He doesn't, though; for Jason, the situation has ceased to be so overly stunning.

"I hadn't planned to," Alex says. "But after Valentine's Day ... and the talk I had with Courtney after that ... it started to make sense. So I thought about it and I thought about it and it just seemed like something I needed to do. Does that make any sense whatsoever?"

Jason fumbles for words now. "I-I think so, I guess."

Alex feels something very close to relief and it shows in the relaxing of the muscles in his face. "I'm glad I'm not a total lunatic."

The confusion hasn't faded from Jason's face or mind yet. "So what now? What role is Lauren gonna play in all of this?"

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, KITCHEN-

"Do you have a minute?" Tim asks, scanning the bustle of the kitchen.

"Of course," Bill says. Seeing Tim's whole point, he leads his son over to an undisturbed corner. "What is it?"

"It's about Mom," Tim begins, and he's certain he sees a steel door slam over Bill's face.

"What about her?"

"Like I said, I'm not sure ... Have you noticed her acting strangely lately?"

Paula's words of a few days ago, about Tim's seeming suspicion, come rushing back to Bill. He manages to maintain composure, however, as he responds, "Strangely? How?"

It is now that Tim realizes how difficult this is to put into words - more so than when he told Jason, because he doesn't intend to share all the details. "I don't know ... Just like how she's been getting so emotional, and that day she asked the four of us to come over to hear something and then just stopped."

Bill's mind is cloudy with a thousand rambling explanations. None of them make it to the fore.

"Dad, she stopped talking that day when you walked in. Why?" Tim's reservations vanish as he goes in for the kill. "Do you know what's wrong with Mom?"

ACT TWO

POLICE STATION-

Claire doesn't flinch.

"Claire? You remember Moriani, don't you?"

"Oh, uh, yeah. Yeah, of course." She clutches her purse a little tighter in front of her body.

"Good," Brent says, standing. "I was hoping you would. We need your help."

"How?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure," he answers. "But I know how you felt about your father's business and I'm hoping you'll be willing to give me a hand if you can."

He is beginning to ease up, to return to the brother-in-law she knows well, and it's having a calming effect on her.

"Do you have any memory of your father doing business with Nick Moriani?"

She doesn't consider saying anything but the truth. "Yeah, I mean, not explicitly - I wasn't exactly included in it - but I'm sure that's what it was. Why?"

"Because," he explains, "we've got a hunch that Mrs. Fitch getting shot had something to do with Moriani having ties to the mob, but he's never been convicted of anything, if you can believe that."

"I knew it. I knew all along that this was his fault!"

Brent can't mask his confusion. "How'd you know that Nick Moriani had anything to do with Mrs. Fitch?"

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

A chill rolls through Nick's mind as well as his body. Katherine is staring up at him with heavy eyes. "What are you sorry for?" she asks again, with more stability.

"You're awake!" he exclaims, perhaps a little too excitedly. "I need to get a doctor-

"Hold on," she says, a spark of the domineering matriarch already buoying to the surface.

He has already broken away, eager to get a doctor for multiple reasons, but her tone stops him.

"What are you sorry for, Nick? What ... what happened?" Her eyes rove over the Intensive Care Unit. Until now, she's only been aware of it as a background, but now she realizes that she must be here for a reason. "Why am I here? And how is it your fault?"

He is relieved by the speed with which everything melts together in his mind. "You were shot, Katherine," he begins, and the rest just flows. "We were standing outside the restaurant and - a car sped by and fired shots. You were hit ... You've been in a coma for weeks."

The first thing he sees on her face is an acute sadness, and he suspects that it has less to do with the shooting itself than it does with the weeks that have been lost from her life. Something inside him is crying out to soothe that somehow, but she cuts off the thought.

"So how is that your fault?"

He actually hesitates at the idea of lying to her so blatantly.

ACT THREE

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, DINING ROOM-

"Role? That sounds a little sinister, doesn't it?" Alex smirks.

"Maybe," Jason says. "But that's kinda what this sounds like - some plot or something." He pauses, sinking his teeth into his bacon cheeseburger before continuing, "It's like Lauren is just part of whatever

you're doing."

"She's not," Alex says hastily. "I really do care about her."

"I know that. I never said you didn't. But you don't ... care about her, do you?"

"I'm not leading her on, Jason," Alex insists. "I really do wanna give this a shot."

Jason's eyes narrow and his brow crunches. "You do?"

"Yeah. This is something I need to do. I ... I let myself get out of control - thank God you didn't let it totally ruin our friendship."

Jason would like to protest, but he can't put together anything that sounds right in his head.

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, KITCHEN-

"I have no idea," Bill says firmly.

Tim scans his father's face, first out of suspicion and then with sorrow. "Really?"

"Mm-hmm," Bill nods. "I-I've talked to your mother about it and I don't think there's anything to worry about."

"Are you sure, Dad?"

"Absolutely." Bill begins moving back to his spot at the counter. "Just put this aside, Tim, before you turn it into a real problem."

Bill slips away, leaving his son with a chilly feeling.

ACT FOUR

POLICE STATION-

Claire stutters in answering. "No, it's just ..." the words begin to tumble out. Suddenly the answer hits her, though, and she wastes not time in presenting it. "From being at the hospital. I saw Nick there when Katherine was brought in, and he's been there to visit."

"Have you had any contact with him?" Brent asks.

"With Nick?" The question scares her until she realizes that despite all her run-ins with Ryan, she's had none with Nick. "No, I haven't."

Brent sighs. "Now that you're here, I'm not really sure where I'm going with this ... I guess I just wanted some confirmation that my hunch makes sense."

"It does," she says emphatically.

"Good." Brent circles around to the front of the desk. "This guy sounds like bad news. I'm itching to find something to put his ass away, just because he's been so slick at weaseling his way out of trouble. The sooner I get him off the streets, the better ... It'll make King's Bay a safer place for a lot of people."

Claire is silent.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

"It's nothing." Nick begins smoothing Katherine's frazzled hair. "I just meant that if I'd been able to protect you ..."

"You couldn't have, at least not in the way you've described it. My getting shot sounds like it was fairly random," she says insistently.

"Still ..." Despite his better judgement, he's feeling an internal push to lay out the truth.

"Nonsense." She looks up at him with a certain twinkle. "And the fact that you're here right now - that means a lot to me."

His stare lingers upon her for another moment before reality jolts its way in. "I really should go get a doctor," he says.

She releases him to go do just that by relaxing the grip on his forearm. As he goes, his brain is rattling off a desperate prayer to a god of whose identity he isn't even sure.

CAR-

*I can feel the magic floating in the air
Being with you gets me that way ...*

Faith Hill's "Breathe" is playing over the radio and Alex is drinking in every melancholy note of it as he mulls over his lunch with Jason.

Jason's reaction was quite different than what Alex had expected. He thought he'd see relief, maybe even joy, at the news that the past is moving behind them. And Alex thinks he did see a hint of that - but only a hint. There is so much more to consider ...

"I can't do this," he says aloud. There are so many loyalties crashing into one another: to Courtney, to Lauren, to Jason ...

"But I have to."

THE FISHERMAN'S PIER, DINING ROOM-

Jason turns at the sound of his name being called and sees Tim hurrying towards him.

"What's up?" Jason asks once his brother is in front of him.

"I just talked to Dad," Tim explains. "Something really weird is going on."

"What do you mean?"

"Dad knows whatever it is that Mom's been keeping from us," Tim says. "I asked him about it and ... the way he reacted - there was something off about it."

"I'm not seeing how this all fits together," Jason says with a shake of the head.

"Neither am I ... but we're gathering an awful lot of little pieces."

"It just doesn't make any sense!" Jason blurts out. Suddenly conscious of the fact that they're in a public place, he lowers his voice as he adds, "I mean, if ... say one of us is adopted. Why wouldn't Dad want us to know?"

"Therein lies the mystery," Tim answers with a lift of the eyebrows.

END OF EPISODE #151

[Next Episode](#)