

"Footprints"

Episode #158

[The Day After #157, Evening]

Previously ...

*Ryan decided not to tell Claire the truth about the rape - yet.

*Sarah learned of Paula's secret and rushed out in a hurry, dropping her appointment book. Molly picked it up.

TEASER

WILLIS ADVERTISING-

The book sitting to the right of Molly's elbow continues calling out to her, despite the stack of papers in front of her that needs to be sorted. She tries to ignore it, focusing on the words printed on the papers, but they are not meaningful enough to hold her attention.

She places the paper in her hand in the appropriate pile and then glances over at the book - Sarah's appointment book. She's had it for twenty-four hours now and she hasn't peeked inside. The urge has not subsided, however, for a reason Molly doesn't even want to try and deduce.

Her hand lingers over the book's cover, ready to pull it open ...

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APARTMENT-

"Come on in," Brent says, stepping aside to let Tim and Paula into the apartment.

"Is Sarah here?" Paula asks. She scans the visible portion of the apartment, basically the living room and dining area, but does not see her daughter.

"She's in the bedroom." Brent takes the inquiry as his cue and disappears down the hallway.

"I hope this is the right thing to do," Paula worries aloud.

"It is," Tim assures her. "We needed to give Sarah a little time to calm down and absorb everything, that's all. Now we can straighten things out."

His eyes fall upon Sarah as she comes down the hallway, led by Brent. She stops several feet in front of her mother and brother and simply stares at them, saying nothing.

"Sarah ..." Paula says. "Can we talk?"

Sarah tilts her head. "Why? Is there something else you forgot to include me in?"

Paula's shoulders slump. This is going to be more difficult than she'd wished.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

"Claire!"

She turns at the sound of her name. Ryan is standing at the other end of the empty hallway.

"What?" she says, not moving.

He closes the gap between them as he speaks. "We need to talk."

"Why? Ryan, if this is more of your 'second chance' stuff, please-this isn't the time. I'm working."

"That's not it," he says, and she detects an edge to his voice.

"Then why are you here?"

"Because you owe me an explanation."

ACT ONE

WILLIS ADVERTISING-

The phone jangles and so do Molly's nerves.

She draws a sharp breath, oddly startled, before regaining her composure and answering the call. "Willis Advertising ..."

She proceeds to jot down a quick message and says a cheery goodbye to the caller before hanging up the receiver. Her attention then returns to the appointment book.

This is stupid, she tells herself. Why look inside? It's not like there's anything I need to see.

But the urge doesn't fade.

It's just me being nosy again. I think I can put that aside and respect Sarah's privacy-

The row of pictures lined up on her desk catches Molly's eye. One picture in particular, though. It is a photograph of herself and Brent, standing side-by-side with broad smiles.

She can't help but flash back to Andy and Danielle's aborted wedding, to that sensation of having her lips melting into Brent's, lost in him for just that moment ...

Her fingers flip open the cover of the book.

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

Seeing the agony on his mother's face, Tim cuts in. "Sarah, it's not Mom's fault that you weren't there when she told us-"

"No, you're right," Sarah snaps. "It was yours and Jason's and - Molly's." Her eyes dart over to Brent for a split-second. "You guys set this up without even thinking about me."

"We called you!" Tim shoots back, trying not to sound hostile. "You weren't around!" His hands drop to his sides. "Sarah, it's not like this just came up and we rushed into it without even thinking about you. I've been sitting on this since Thanksgiving - I needed to know what was going on!"

"Oh, great. So instead of not telling me over a period of a couple of days, you kept this from me for months?"

"I kept it to myself," he says. "You have to understand that, at least. I only told Jason a couple of weeks ago and I didn't tell Molly until a couple of days before we went to see Mom! It wasn't some conspiracy ... it just happened this way."

"And it's not as if I decided to tell everyone but you," Paula adds in her own defense. "It just all came out when Tim, Molly, and Jason came to see me-"

"Well, I'm glad I'm such an important part of this family," Sarah spits.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

Claire crosses her arms in front of her chest. "I owe you an explanation? For what?"

"Some cops came by to ask my dad questions," Ryan says. "About Katherine Fitch's shooting."

"So how is that my fault?" Claire asks, though she can feel the walls closing in just a little bit.

"You're the one who's been pushing this mob nonsense."

"It's not like I don't have reason to suspect your father of being involved with the mob! Do I need to refresh your memory as to the fact that he did business with my father?"

"I'm aware of that," Ryan says. "But I already told you - I did some digging and I really don't think Katherine getting shot had anything to do with my father." Saying the phrase my father to her feels odd; suddenly it strikes Ryan that the majority of their conversations are based upon absolute lies.

"I don't see how this is my fault," Claire says.

His eyes burn into her and she feels like he can somehow see the truth.

"Like I said, you've been pushing this whole mob thing. And I know about your brother-in-law."

"What about him?"

"That he's the police commander. This all fits together too easily, Claire."

ACT TWO

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

"Please, Sarah," Paula pleads. "It was difficult enough for me to share this with anyone. It's not that I never intended to tell you. You just weren't there when I did it."

Sarah responds with another dirty look.

"What do you want us to do, Sarah?" Tim argues. "We can't go back and change things."

"Unfortunately, no," Sarah says. "Why don't you just leave?"

"No!" Paula cries, stepping squarely in front of her daughter. "This was my worst fear - that telling you all about this would divide us in some way. I'm not about to let that happen, especially over something

as trivial as this."

"I don't care!" Sarah shouts. She flips around and takes a step back towards the bedroom, but Brent catches her by the arm.

"Sarah, wait," he says. "They've got a point. You guys need to talk this out."

She looks at him even more viciously than she did at Paula and Tim. "You know, you'd think that for once, you could take my side on something. But no, I guess that's too much to ask, huh?"

She snaps away from him. "You can all go to hell," she says before disappearing back down the hallway.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

Claire has fallen silent in the wake of Ryan's accusations.

"You put the cops up to this, didn't you?" His face is now merely inches away from hers. "How could you do this? Especially after I ... investigated for you!"

There is something about the heat, the intensity, emanating from his every pore that sends an involuntary shudder up Claire's spine. A hazy but somehow vivid memory seizes her - she can feel her shoulders being pinned down amidst a cloud of colors and screams ...

Without realizing it, she takes several steps backward, so that she is nearly pressed against the wall. Her terror is quite visible to Ryan.

"What's wrong?"

"You're doing it again!"

"Doing what?"

"Acting like this," she says. "Like you're going to - hurt me."

"I'm not going to hurt you -"

"How do I know that? You've done it before." Her lips quiver as she speaks.

Something inside him snaps. "I didn't -"

"Claire!" Immediately both Claire and Ryan turn their heads to the open end of the hallway, where Molly is standing. She doesn't seem aware of the intense nature of the scene on which she has walked in.

"Can I talk to you?" she asks.

In a fragment of a second, Claire has broken free of Ryan and is standing by Molly's side. Her forced ignorance of him leaves Ryan no choice.

"I'll talk to you later," he says, already in the midst of an exit. "But this isn't over yet, I swear."

Molly watches him depart. "What was that all about?"

"Oh, nothing," Claire says, rubbing her forehead. "So what can I do for you?"

Molly reaches into her purse and is withdrawing the appointment book when she stops. She immediately looks up at Claire. "Was that him?"

"What?"

"That guy - Ryan. Nick Moriani's son."

Claire freezes for just a moment and, in that instant, becomes aware that she will not be able to lie.

ACT THREE

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

Without saying anything, Paula takes off after her daughter. She, too, disappears into the bedroom.

Brent turns to Tim with an expression of exhaustion. "I don't know why she's getting like this."

"That's how Sarah is," Tim says. "Which I'm sure you know."

The thought hangs on Brent's brain as he nods.

"Mom will be able to get through to her," Tim continues. "It'll just take a little time."

In the master bedroom, Paula finds Sarah seated on the bed, her feet hanging down almost to the floor and her back to the door.

"Sarah, dear," Paula says softly. She is almost certain she sees Sarah flinch but her suspicion is not rewarded with any further action.

"I'm so sorry about the way this happened," she explains. "I never intended for anyone to be left out of this, but the timing wasn't right to pause everything just so I could wait for you ..."

Sarah remains quiet for enough time to make Paula's heart sink. It rises again, though, as Sarah gently says, "I know."

Paula isn't sure what to say now.

"Fill in some details for me," Sarah says, finally turning.

Paula takes this as a sign of encouragement. "Like what?"

"Like ... I don't know. Start at the beginning. Tell me what you told the others."

Her mother draws a deep breath and then lets it out heavily. "All right. It was thirty-five years ago - your father and I were engaged. We were dealing with some ... issues in our relationship."

She pauses somewhat involuntarily, as her mind is drawn back to the exact circumstances.

"There was a lot of conflict, a lot of turmoil. I allowed myself to ... to go to bed with another man."

"You slept with another man once and got pregnant?" Sarah finds herself fixated upon her mother's story.

"No, it was more than once. I think that's why it was so difficult for your father to forgive me, and for me to forgive myself. It was like I just kept adding insult to injury."

"How long did it go on?"

"Not long," Paula answers. "About six weeks. I ended it, for a number of reasons. Smartest thing I ever did."

"Why'd you even do it to begin with?" Sarah finds herself only the least bit uncomfortable with the subject matter; the discussion feels strange, as if she's having an opportunity to talk to some neglected corner of her own self.

"I'm still not certain why I did it - perhaps it was to spite your father, I'm not sure. But a pregnancy was the result." Paula pauses again. "And the only option I felt I had was to give that baby up for adoption the moment he was born."

"So that was your way of putting it all behind you?"

"Not entirely, no," Paula says. "It helped, of course, because raising that child would have been so strange, especially after I made the decision that I absolutely wanted to spend my life with your father. But what really helped me move on - at least, as much as I could - was the forgiveness he granted. Being able to talk to him about what I had done and realizing that he would accept me, faults and all, was truly what saved me and our relationship."

Sarah's stomach churns.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

"What was he doing here, Claire? I thought you said you had cut off all contact with him," Molly says with both excitement and confusion.

"Tim said that."

"Wait, what is going on with you? You're hiding this from Tim?"

Claire turns her back.

"Oh my gosh! Claire!" Molly exclaims. "Why? Are you ..."

Before she can form the words, Claire cuts in. "No, no! There is nothing going on between Ryan and me, believe me. There's nothing to tell Tim."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely," Claire says. "He'd only get worried."

"It doesn't sound like he likes this guy much."

Claire frowns. "Major understatement. He basically ordered me to stay away from Ryan at all costs."

Molly's brow furrows. "So you're defying him? Why?"

"It's not up to Tim to set ground rules for me-

"I know that. But he obviously has reasons for wanting you to stay away from this guy. Tim's not some hothead who barks out orders for no reason. So why doesn't he want you to be around this guy?"

ACT FOUR

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

"I hope so," Brent says. "The last thing I want is for Sarah to be holding some grudge against all of you - or me, for that matter."

"She'll get over it, don't worry," Tim reassures him with a outward swoop of the hand, as if pushing the worries out into the wind. "This isn't anything that a little time and a couple of well-chosen words won't fix."

In a way, he is right. In the bedroom, Sarah is resting her head upon Paula's shoulder. Her anger has stepped out of the spotlight but has been replaced with panic - Is this where she is going to be in thirty-five years? Confessing a secret that she kept all to herself?

"At least Dad knew about it. It gave you some way to talk about it when it was on your mind," Sarah muses.

"I suppose," Paula responds. "Your father hasn't been too keen on discussing this lately, though."

"Yeah, but at least he's always known about it. ... Mom, can I ask you a question?"

"Sure."

"How did Dad find out that you'd had an affair? Did you tell him?"

"No," Paula sighs. "I'd convinced myself that if I ignored it long enough, it would go away. But I didn't count on getting pregnant - that was what gave me away. The child wasn't your father's, we knew ..."

"How did Dad react?"

"Not well. It was a long road to forgiveness and acceptance for both of us, believe me."

Sarah lifts her head. Despite the beginnings of tears in her own eyes, she looks directly into her mother's. "Didn't you ever just want to pack up and run away and forget the whole thing? How'd you stay in it long enough to fix things?"

"Because I believed in your father and myself," Paula says. "I believed that we were meant to be

together and I had no intention of letting some stupid mistake ruin that."

Desperation grabs hold of Sarah's heart. She can feel it, squeezing, twisting, forcing the tears out and down her cheeks.

"Sarah, what's wrong?" Paula asks hesitantly. "Maybe I should go-I'm sorry I've thrown all this at you-"

"No, stay, please," Sarah says through tears. "Please, stay." She wraps her arms around her mother. "Mom, I screwed up. And now I need you."

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

Much to Claire's disappointment, no one - not a doctor, not a nurse, not a patient, no one - comes to her aid by interrupting. Tim's words of several months ago ring in her ears:

"I don't think it's that unusual for a man to be worried about his wife spending time around a guy who raped her!"

"Molly, listen," she says. "It's really complicated."

"Why, is it the mob thing? I know about that, remember?"

Relief floods Claire's body. "Oh, yeah. I totally forgot. Brent told you all about Ryan's father, right?"

"Yep," Molly says. "So that's why Tim doesn't want you around him?"

"Yeah."

"Well, I can't blame him, especially after what happened to Katherine Fitch."

Claire half-nods, then tips her head to the side. "So what brings you by?"

"I have something to ask you, actually." Molly reaches into her purse again and removes the appointment book. She flips pages, searching for the right one, and finally settles on a date.

"Is there a Dr. Brandt at this hospital?" she asks.

"Not that I'm aware of," Claire says. "Why do you ask?"

ACT FIVE

MORIANI HOME-

The heat clouds around Ryan the minute he enters his study. The room is muggy, having soaked up too much of the June afternoon sun without having had a chance to breathe. He immediately crosses over to the window.

En route, however, a flashing light catches his eye. The answering machine is blinking, alerting him that he has a message. He presses "play" and then continues on to the window. He cracks it open. As the female recording on the machine says, "You have one new message" in its own mechanical rhythm, a gust of pleasantly moderate evening air hits his face.

A male voice takes over, far more relaxed than the machine-woman in its cadence. "Hey, Ry, it's me. I just wanted to say hi - it's been a while since we talked. Gimme a call when ya get a chance, okay? Bye."

Ryan shudders as the voice speaks and it leaves him thinking long after the machine-woman pipes up and announces the date and time of the call: just a few hours ago.

Thank God I was able to keep my mouth shut around Claire, Ryan thinks. It would have been idiotic to blow this now.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL-

"I'm just curious," Molly explains. "And confused."

"I'm lost," Claire says with a shake of the head and a good-natured grin.

"It's Sarah's book. She dropped it and I picked it up at the party the other day, when she ran out." She puts the book back in her purse. "So there's no Dr. Brandt here?"

"No, I'm almost positive there's not."

"That is so weird ..." Molly says, perhaps to herself more than Claire. "None of Sarah's doctors have that name, from what I know. And if it's not a doctor here - this is weird. She's got it written in red, too, and nothing else is."

Claire thinks for a moment of asking why Molly was looking through the book to begin with, but she thinks better of it. "No, I don't know any Dr. Brandt."

"Then Sarah's been making appointments with doctors somewhere else that were important enough to highlight with a different color ... Why?"

Claire shrugs. Something tells her to stay out of this as much as possible.

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

Paula holds onto Sarah, sensing her daughter's need for the contact. "What do you mean, you screwed up? And how can I help?"

"I'm terrible, Mom," Sarah sobs. "I need to tell Brent, I know I do. You're right. But I'm so scared ..."

Her sobs are audible out in the living room.

"I hope everything's okay," Brent says to Tim.

"She's probably just emotional about this, that's all. But at least she's not screaming at anyone," Tim grins.

"Yeah, still, she doesn't sound too happy."

Brent walks back to the bedroom, his steps delicate, as the mood seems to require.

"What do you have to be scared of, Sarah?" Paula is asking. "What haven't you told Brent?"

Sarah looks up at her mother again, her face contorted by distress and blotted with tears. "I'm pregnant!"

END OF EPISODE #158

[Next Episode](#)