

"Footprints"

Episode #160

[The Day After #159, Mid-Morning]

[Previously ...](#)

*Sarah told Brent about her pregnancy. Molly was mystified by an entry in Sarah's appointment book.

*Nick and Katherine continued to grow closer.

*Danielle received a call from record exec Roberta Owens, who said she had a proposition.

*Bill remained angry with Paula for telling the kids about her other child against his wishes.

TEASER

MORIANI HOME-

The summer sunlight, vibrant already at this relatively early hour, streams through the colored glass panels that stand on each side of the front door. Beams hit the wooden foyer floor and skew in peculiar patterns.

Ryan notes how interesting a sight this is, privately lamenting the fact that it is also a rare one. The characteristically overcast Washington skies tend to keep this sort of weather at bay - but when it breaks through, he thinks, it is truly something to experience.

He is about to pull the door open and allow himself to fall into the fresh air outside when he is addressed from behind.

"Going somewhere?"

Ryan turns around. "Nah. I just wanted to feel the air outside. It looks real nice out."

"It is," Nick says. "I've been sitting out in the back reading."

"So that's why I couldn't find you anywhere."

"Very astute, my boy."

"What time did you get in last night?" Ryan asks. "I turned in about eleven and you still weren't back."

"It wasn't long after that," Nick says, switching the folded newspaper in his left hand to the right one.

"Katherine and I had a drink at her house when I dropped her off and then I came back here."

"Good date?" Ryan's face sparkles with a tinge of amusement. "I can see it in your face."

"You've got me," Nick concedes as a grin that might only be characterized as dopey appears on his face.

FISHER HOME-

Bill freezes in front of the coffeepot. Without turning his back, without even hearing any footsteps, he becomes aware of a presence, something that tells him he is not alone in the kitchen anymore.

"Good morning," he says with a distant edge to his voice.

"Good morning," Paula responds. If Bill's version of the greeting was lacking passion, his wife's is the exact opposite. She infuses the two words with weariness, frustration, and sorrow.

"Molly went out already," Bill says. He finishes pouring his own cup of coffee and steps away from the counter, allowing Paula access to the machine. She glumly notes that whenever he had the chance, he used to pour her cup before his own.

"Where did she go?" she finally asks, more out of a desire to stimulate conversation than actual interest.

"She had to see Sarah about something."

His answer is clipped, as if he has said everything necessary and has no desire to add anything more.

Paula persists. "It's amazing about Sarah, isn't it? Our little girl is six months pregnant!"

"So it's officially six?" Bill's voice carries a note of interest now and Paula is a bit relieved.

"Yes, I called her last night."

"That is surprising," he says, turning to leave.

"Bill, wait," Paula calls after him. She waits until their eyes have come together. "How much longer is this going to go on?"

POLICE STATION-

The ringing of the phone is all Brent needs to be completely pulled away from the file he is examining.

He flips the cover of the manila folder closed and drops it onto the desk as he answers the phone.

"Brent Taylor speaking."

"Danielle Taylor calling," comes the response. It is followed by a slight giggle.

"Hey, you!"

"Hey," Danielle says. "So how's my brother doing?"

He is about to say "Same old" when he realizes that would be about the furthest thing from the truth.

"Interestingly," he finally says.

"Meaning?"

"I've got some big news for you."

"Oh, really?" Danielle says. "Because I've got some for you, too."

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

An African-American woman who might be described as overly corpulent struts across the screen and up some stairs. As she crosses in front of the row of standing people on the way back to her seat, she gives each person a high five. Screams and hoots continue to erupt from all over the studio.

Sarah lets out the craziest laugh she's had in a long time. Jerry Springer appears on the screen with some pompous commentary, but it's only a moment before the camera flashes back to the large woman's opponent, who is on the stage, hissing and being restrained by a gaggle of beefy security guards. Sarah's laugh erupts anew.

At first she's not even sure there was a knock on the door. She quiets down, though, and waits, and another knock follows. She pulls herself up off the couch and flips off the television. Still chuckling to herself, she undoes the locks and opens the door.

"Hi," she says, caught off-guard. The humor of the trashy talk show is already forgotten.

"Hi," Molly says, not moving to come inside.

"What's up?" Sarah asks after a dead moment, a moment heavy with the unacknowledged tension

between the sisters.

"I've got something to give you." Molly withdraws Sarah's appointment book from her purse. "You dropped this at the graduation party."

"Oh, I was wondering where it had gone! Thanks," Sarah says, easing up.

Her repose doesn't last for long.

"There's something else," Molly says. "I think you owe me an explanation."

ACT ONE

MORIANI HOME-

Nick's demeanor is unmistakable to Ryan. "You're really falling hard for her, aren't you?"

Ryan is significantly surprised to see his father at a momentary loss for words. "I-Katherine's a great lady, Ryan. I care about her a lot."

"Do you think any of that has to do with guilt?"

"Over the shooting? No," Nick says quickly. He pauses to consider the question and then continues, "Maybe. I don't know. I do feel awful about that ... but she's recovering well. It's not as though any permanent damage was done."

"I guess so," Ryan admits.

"But that's why we need to get this debt paid off," Nick says right away. "Esposito is getting mad and they're killing us on interest. I've done what I can, but it's a lot of money - I just want it taken care of before anyone else gets hurt."

Ryan considers the grim possibilities for a minute before a light bulb snaps on inside his head. "I think I've got a solution!"

FISHER HOME-

"This isn't something that will just end," Bill says firmly. "Things won't just clean themselves up and fall back into place again."

"Why not?" Desperation tinges Paula's words, though there is also an element of angry frustration present, something she is trying to hold it off.

"Because you've done something that can't be reversed!"

"What can't be reversed, Bill? The kids knowing that I had another child? I don't see why it needs to be!"

"That's not the problem!" he barks. "You changed the way they look at me - forever. None of them will ever be able to look at me the same way, do you realize that?"

"Why? It was my mistake, Bill, not yours!"

"But the problem was mine! You never would have had an affair if I'd been able to-" He trips on the end of the sentence, not knowing how to say it, and he angrily hurls his coffee cup against the refrigerator.

The coffee becomes airborne. It spatters on the counters and the refrigerator. Some of it joins the shattered pieces of the cup in falling to the floor. The cup's fragments lay dead, so close to one another yet broken apart so effectively that they can never be put back together.

Paula can't help making the parallel in her mind.

ACT TWO

POLICE STATION-

"You go first," Brent says happily, settling back into his chair.

"No, you."

"You sure?"

"Yeah, go ahead," Danielle urges.

"All right." Brent takes a pause that provides plenty of dramatic effect, though his intent was more unconscious - he's simply preparing himself to say the words. "I'm going to be a father."

"What?!"

"Sarah's pregnant."

"Oh my gosh, Brent, that's terrific! When's she due?"

Brent sighs. "Less than three months."

Confusion hangs on the other end of the phone line in the form of silence. Finally Danielle speaks. "Huh?"

"She's six months pregnant," he says. "She found out on Valentine's Day, but she didn't know how to tell me, I guess. She's been trying-"

"For four months?" Danielle asks with a sharp note of skepticism in her voice. "That's a little too much waiting time, don't you think?"

"I can understand why she waited so long, Danielle."

Danielle is trying to fill in the blank without success when, suddenly, it hits her. "She knows? About ... Molly?"

"No, no!" Brent says emphatically. "Besides, there's nothing to know. Molly and I-we kissed, that's it."

"That's not what you told me when I saw you two."

"Danielle-"

"No, let me try to remember your exact words. Something about feelings you've had for a long time, and a warning to me not to marry someone I don't totally love ..."

Brent is quiet on his end of the line.

"Do you even want this kid, Brent?"

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

"What do I have to explain to you, Molly?" Sarah's tone turns hostile. "What information do I have that you absolutely must know?"

"I heard that you're pregnant," Molly says calmly.

"Yeah ..."

"Six months, right?"

"Yep." Sarah can't hold back a smirk that is brimming with attitude and perhaps even a touch of victory.

"So why'd you wait until now to tell Brent? Until he overheard you and you had to tell him?"

"That's an issue between me and Brent and no one else."

"Was there some reason you didn't want him to know about it?"

"No! Molly, it's not like I could have hidden it forever. It's practically a miracle that I'm not completely showing by now anyway. I would have had to tell him eventually, regardless of whether I wanted to."

Molly stares her sister straight in the eye. "Well, did you want to?"

ACT THREE

MORIANI HOME-

Nick's eyes scan the floor. "I don't know ..."

"Dad, come on. It's perfect."

"No, it's not," Nick says. "What if she were to find out?"

"She won't," Ryan counters. "She can't."

"And how am I supposed to make that work, anyway?" Nick's thoughts are spewing out now without any particular screening process.

"Move some money around. You've done more difficult things-"

"Maybe, but this is ... personal."

"And it's also business." Ryan folds his arms in front of his chest. "This might be the only way, Dad."

Nick raises his eyebrows as a sign of grudging acceptance.

FISHER HOME-

Removing her gaze and her thoughts from the shattered cup, Paula looks up at Bill. "So what am I supposed to do? Just sit back and let everything fall apart?"

"You had your chance to hold it together!" he shoots back. "But you threw it away."

"I didn't throw anything away-"

"Except my kids' respect for me! No, I suppose that isn't anything."

"Oh, come on," Paula says with a flare of attitude. "You're being overly dramatic. The kids don't have any less respect for you now just because they know I cheated on you thirty-five years ago!"

"You don't know that! It's not like they're going to come right out and say it!"

"Bill!" Frustration wracks Paula's facial features. "It's not necessary to make any more of this than we need to. You haven't had any signs of them losing respect for you, have you? No. If you see some, then maybe that would be cause to worry. But you won't see any, because they haven't lost any respect for you."

He just stares at her for a drawn-out moment before turning around. "I have to go to work," he says coolly as he exits.

Paula begins to gather the broken pieces of the coffee cup. Even as they collect in her hand, her mind is working, thinking of ways to restore the pieces to a whole.

And she won't stop until she does.

POLICE STATION-

"Of course I do!" Brent says. "How could you even ask something like that?"

"Well, you hadn't been too receptive to the idea when Sarah brought it up before," Danielle says.

"That was different. It was so ... abstract. But now, I think, I'm gonna be a father in just a couple months, and it feels ... cool."

"So what about Sarah?"

Brent huffs into the phone, hoping to convey as much annoyance with the incessant questioning as he can without snapping at his sister. "What about her? We're gonna have a baby!"

"Then how about Molly?"

No huffs this time. Brent is quiet, and even when he speaks, his voice is lower. "I've got everything under control."

He can just see Danielle's face getting redder by the moment. "You can't keep going back and forth like this, Brent! One moment you've got these feelings for Molly that you can't ignore, the next you're totally committed to Sarah and this baby - which is it? You can't have both."

"You know, you said you had big news for me. What is it?"

Danielle accepts the change of topic, though a bit unhappily. "I've decided that I'm not going back to King's Bay."

"Why not?" Though this is news to Brent, he is hardly surprised by it.

"I got a call from Roberta Owens the other day," Danielle explains. "You know, the woman from the record company. Anyway, she was explaining that they've got a spot on a new tour. I wouldn't be the headliner, so it wouldn't be as crazy for me."

"But I thought you hated touring."

"I did. But I don't know, now. It could be good for me to get away from everything. Besides, she said it would definitely help push my album up, since it's sort of been drooping lately."

"So that's it? You're going away for good?"

"For now, yeah. I have to, Brent. It's time I got away from everything and just spent some time by myself."

BRENT & SARAH TAYLOR'S APT.-

"Of course I did!" Sarah cries, throwing up her hands. "I've been trying to tell him for months ... though I'm sure you knew that."

Molly's heartbeat quickens. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Just that I know Brent tells you everything. Frankly, I wish he wouldn't. It just fills your head with ideas about how you can come over here and bug me."

"Don't make me into some bad guy," Molly says. "I just want both of you to be happy."

Sarah rolls her eyes. "Fine. Look, I've got stuff to do. You'd better go."

"Fine." Molly takes the liberty of opening the door for herself. "I'm just warning you, Sarah. Too much of this funny business is gonna make a mess for you, eventually."

She exits before Sarah can respond.

END OF EPISODE #160

[Next Episode](#)