

"Footprints"

Episode #182

[Immediately After #181]

[Previously ...](#)

**Sarah told both Brent and a heartbroken Matt that she hopes Brent is Victoria's father so that they can build a family. Brent said that he isn't sure that can happen, while Matt reacted uncertainly to her plea for forgiveness. The doctor arrived and prepared to tell them who the father is.*

**Claire had a nasty encounter with Nick, who insinuated that she still has feelings for Ryan.*

**Nick discovered that Katherine has sufficient wealth to pay off his debt and pressured her into agreeing to marry him as soon as possible.*

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Brent's eye wanders over to Sarah. Here they are, preparing to have their fates decided -- waiting to find out who is a father and who shares a child with whom and who will have license to what emotions -- and Brent finds that he cannot help watching his wife. His interest is little more than that: simple interest. He is curious to know what is going through her head, what she is feeling right now, how she will react to the announcement.

Matt, too, is watching Sarah, attempting to read her in some way. He cannot tell much, though, because of the stark intensity of her focus upon the doctor. Matt's attention drifts to Brent. His first thought -- something that strikes him and latches on, refusing to let go or get out of his head -- is how peculiar Brent's study of Sarah seems to be. It isn't that of a genuinely concerned husband, he realizes. Not at all. Certainly Brent's demeanor reveals that he has a great stake in this announcement, but it isn't the type of focus one might expect. Or that Sarah is hoping for ...

"All right," the doctor says. "The father of your baby is ..." He pauses, unconsciously adding a dramatic pause. "... Mr. Gray."

At first Matt doesn't even hear his name. For some reason, it isn't what he expected. To hear himself referred to so formally -- by a title and his last name, the last name he might pass onto *his daughter* -- catches him off-guard and seems somehow inappropriate. For the doctor -- who is obviously quite aware of the bizarre situation between Matt, Sarah, and Brent -- to use such a respectful address somehow seems ridiculous.

Matt's reaction, already delayed somewhat, is stunted even further when he looks to Sarah for her reaction and finds that she has turned to Brent.

"I'll leave you alone for now," the doctor says. "I'll be in my office, if there's anything any of you would like to discuss." He makes a graceful exit and again Matt finds himself marvelling, this time at how smoothly the doctor has removed himself from what is quite clearly a messy situation.

"Brent," Sarah says. The desperation in her voice is clear.

Brent allows her eye contact only long enough to shoot her an icy stare. And once that has settled over her, he turns and storms out.

"Wait!" she calls out. She makes a move to follow him, but Matt's grip on her arm stops her.

"Don't," Matt says. "You need to give him some time to cool down. You're not gonna help things by having it out right now."

"I need to talk to him--"

"No, you don't. That's the last thing either of you needs right now. You're just gonna make it worse."

He can tell that Sarah is accepting his advice, although she continues to stare at the exit, following with her gaze the path that Brent took in tearing out of the waiting room.

"Besides," he says, trying to win her attention, "we've got some stuff to talk about, don't we?"

She nods, albeit a bit reluctantly.

He finds that it is impossible to look at her the same way as he could even two minutes ago, and the thought gives him momentary pause. "So, uh, this probably changes everything between us, huh?" he asks.

"Yeah," Sarah says, still staring off at the exit.

"So what do we do now?"

CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE

"Thanks for meeting me," Claire says as she settles into a dark brown wooden chair. She sets her latte down on the small table in front of her.

"I'm the one who should be thanking you for meeting me," Andy says.

"Glad to. Brent told me that I could possibly be of some help to you with your mother and Nick Moriani."

"I hope so." Andy absently sips his own coffee. "So how do you know Moriani, exactly? Brent was pretty vague about the whole thing."

"I've actually known him since I was about twelve," Claire explains. "He and my father used to, um, do business together."

"And what business was that?" The tone in Andy's voice makes it clear to Claire that Brent clued him in to Nick's mob ties.

"Mob activity. Drug running, gambling rings, money laundering ... They were involved in a lot of stuff. And they were pretty high up on the food chain. I know that my father called a lot of shots, and I'm sure that with as close as he and Nick were, Nick had the same type of power."

"So he's fairly deep in all of this ..."

"Absolutely. You do *not* want your mother in close proximity to these people. It almost cost her already."

"You mean her shooting? Brent said something about that. Do you really think she was shot because of Nick?"

Claire takes another sip of the latte. "Makes perfect sense. What are the odds that someone with a gun would randomly drive around downtown King's Bay and shoot at people outside a restaurant? The cops already know it was a hired hand, I'm sure. They just can't tell whether your mother was the target or if it was meant for Nick and things got out of hand. And they're having a hell of a time proving that Nick is still connected to the mob. I don't know how that guy keeps his hands so clean."

"You would think there'd be some obvious connection, wouldn't you? How does he keep it so hidden?"

"Because he's good. If there's one thing I have to give Nick, it's that he's always been good at what he did. My father tended to get sloppy, and I remember quite a few times where Nick had to bail him out of a nasty situation."

"So you were just privy to all of this?" Andy asks, the note of curiosity in his voice

standing out.

"Not exactly. I started to see things and overhear things and finally I began to suspect that there was something fishy going on. I knew my father didn't have a real job, so it became pretty obvious to me that he was involved in something strange. He actually didn't find out that I knew until about three years ago."

"And he died a few years back, right?"

"Yeah," Claire says. "Thank goodness. But Nick still thinks their friendship entitles him and Ryan to have some kind of hold over me."

"Ryan is Nick's son?"

"Yeah. Andy, we need to stop your mother from marrying into all that. If she does -- I just don't want to see them hurt anybody else."

"You're really hell-bent on stopping them, aren't you?"

"Absolutely," she says. "Especially after everything Ryan's done to me ..."

"Why? What did he do?"

FITCH MANSION

"Hello, my beautiful fiancée! Soon to be my beautiful wife!" Nick takes Katherine's smiling face in his hands. "How are you?"

"I'm well," she answers, accepting the kiss that he leans down to offer. "And you?"

"Fine," he says. "Wonderful, now that I've seen you today."

"And what brings you by, exactly?"

"Do I need an excuse to see you?"

"Of course not," she smiles.

"Well, I had one prepared anyway, just in case."

"How thoughtful of you."

They share a look to appreciate the moment of joking. "Let's have a seat," Nick says.

They settle down onto the living room sofa, the type of old-fashioned, rigid sofa that reminds Nick so much of his own mother's home years and years ago.

"I wanted to discuss the wedding," he says. "I had a grand idea."

"Hold onto it," Katherine says. "Because unless we get some things sorted out, I don't know that there will be a wedding at all."

FISHER HOME

From the living room, Molly hears the car stop and the door open and close. For some reason, she knows it is someone coming to this house, and she goes to the front door. She peeks out the curtains covering the nearby window and sees who it is.

What? That must mean ...

She opens up the door and is waiting for Brent as he steps up onto the porch.

"Hey," she says without any inflection. She cannot figure out how to present a greeting, given the circumstances. Then again, she wonders, what exactly are the circumstances?

"Can I come in? I need to talk to you," Brent says. There is an intensity about him that strikes a chord of worry within Molly.

"Yeah, sure." She lets him into the house and shuts the door. "What happened?"

"I went to the apartment to see the baby," Brent explains. "While I was there, Sarah got a call--"

"That the test results were in?"

He nods but gives her a questioning look.

"Matt was here," Molly says. "Sarah called him and told him to get to the hospital."

"He was *here*? God, what does that guy think he's doing?" Brent's voice escalates as he speaks, and there is a palpable fury in it.

"He just wanted to talk about everything--"

"With you? What, now you're his best friend, too? What the hell is he trying to do?"

"He's not trying to do anything!" Molly shoots back. "Calm down! Why does it matter to you, anyway?"

"Because--because he's got to be involved in everything everywhere! First he gets Sarah, now you--"

"He didn't 'get' me, Brent. He's a friend," Molly says forcefully. "I can be friends with whoever I want, can't I?"

Brent closes his eyes for a moment and collects himself. "Yeah. Of course you can. I didn't mean--I'm just blowing off steam, that's all."

"Does that mean the test turned out the way I think it turned out?"

"How do you think it turned out?"

"That you're not the father. Otherwise you wouldn't be this angry with Matt, for one."

"Yeah. He's the father. God--"

"Matt is?" Paula asks from the foot of the stairs.

"Mm-hmm," Brent answers as he nods.

"You just found out?"

"Yeah." Suddenly it dawns on Brent that he isn't the one who should be here. In fact, it might even be inappropriate. "Sarah is still at the hospital," he explains. "I just needed to get out of there and talk to someone, and I figured Molly would be willing to listen ..."

"I'll leave you two alone," Paula says, slipping back upstairs.

"Jeez," Brent moans as he drops his head into his hands. "This is wrong. I shouldn't be here. I need to go."

"No! Brent, I'm your friend. If there's something you need to talk about, which there obviously is right now, I want to be able to help you."

"And you're Sarah's sister!"

"That--" Molly pauses, caught without words. "That doesn't have to be an issue right now. Just talk to me."

He nods and slumps onto the couch, throwing his head back.

Molly takes a seat beside him. "There must be so much going on in your head right now. What are you feeling? Just try to tell me--"

"There's all this stuff running around, so much that I don't even know where to start," he says. "But it just keeps jumping back to the future and what I'm gonna do now and all that."

"So let's start there," Molly says in a soothing voice. "What are you thinking you need to do now?"

CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE

"Ryan and I -- we've got a, um, history," Claire explains. She can tell Andy's expression turn from intrigued to critical, and she adds, "I just don't want to see him and Nick get away with the same things my father did."

"Look, Claire," Andy says, "I appreciate the help, but if you're doing this to get back at an old boyfriend--"

"It's more than that," she says firmly. "Much more than that. You're concerned about your mother, right? And I don't want to see the Morianis get away with anything else. If we can stop her from marrying Nick, then maybe we can both get what we want."

"You sound awfully determined."

"I am. This has been going on too long. These people think they run the world, I swear. If we can stop them from getting away with anything else, I'll feel a lot better. And frankly, a lot safer, too."

Andy nods. "So how do we make this happen?"

"That's where I'm having trouble," she says. "It's pretty clear to me that Ryan and Nick are up to something, but I'll be damned if I know what it is. If we can figure that out, of

course, then we can tell your mother, and chances are she wouldn't want to marry Nick then. But we need some solid proof."

"But how do we get that? Brent said that their police records are clean."

"I've been trying to get Ryan to open up. I don't know if it'll work, but maybe he'll slip. And if I hang around enough, I'm bound to find something out."

"Is that going to be enough?"

"For now, it has to be. How much time do we have?"

"I'm not sure," Andy shrugs. "But the sooner we can put a stop to this marriage, the better."

FITCH MANSION

"What? What's wrong?" Nick asks, doing what he can to conceal his sudden desperation.

"I just don't know that I'm comfortable marrying you. Not yet," Katherine says.

"Why do you say that? Are you ... are you questioning your feelings for me?"

"No! No, of course not!" she answers. Her demeanor softens. "Nick, you make me feel like no one since my late husband has made me feel. That's a feeling I treasure. I certainly don't want to lose it."

"Then what is it?"

"I wonder if we've had enough time. If we know each other well enough, that is. This has all happened so quickly--"

"It's been over a year, Katherine."

"I know. But with my shooting and coma and our problems with our sons -- I can't help but think that we've rushed things just because of the feelings that developed out of all those situations."

"I can see why that would concern you," he says, placing his hands upon her shoulders. "But if something feels so right, why not go with it? Every time I'm with you I learn something new about you, and every time it deepens my feelings for you. If we have a

lifetime of that ahead of us, why not embrace it?"

It's working, he thinks as he studies her reaction. *She's buying it.*

"Tell me more about yourself," she says at last. "About your childhood. Your parents. Your past relationships. All you've given me is the basic outline of your family background and where you went to school! I want to know more."

"Well ... my childhood was fairly unexciting, like I told you before. I grew up in Chicago as an only child. After college I began working with my father--"

"Doing what?"

"Um, financial business. The type of thing you hate, remember?" He offers the joke with a smile, and she accepts it.

"A few years after college I met Sharon," he continues. "We were married for several years. She was Ryan's adoptive mother."

"Why did you and she decide to adopt?"

He widens his eyes. "It was a bit more complex than a simple decision to adopt. But suffice it to say that we raised Ryan together until her death."

"How did she die?"

"Cancer. When Ryan was just seven. After she passed away, I moved Ryan back to Chicago with me and raised him there."

"So the two of you were brought together by being on your own for so long," Katherine reflects.

"Basically, yes. We were close as he grew up. There were some rough spots, of course -- one in particular that was worse than any of the others. Ryan's biological father found him when he was twelve, and when Ryan became upset with me, he lived with Stan for nearly a year."

"But he came back eventually ..."

"Yes. Things happened and -- he realized how terrible Stan was, essentially. They've kept in touch a bit over the years, I suppose, but Ryan and I have always been closer than they have."

Katherine nods, taking in all of the information.

"Is that enough for now?" Nick asks with a smile. "Reliving all of this isn't always so pleasant."

"I suppose not," Katherine says. "But yes, that can be enough. I just want to know that you're always willing to open up to me and share things with me. The idea of marrying someone and then discovering I don't actually know him at all -- it's terrifying."

"You have nothing to fear," Nick assures her, although the irony is setting off alarms in his head. "Now are you ready for my idea about the wedding?"

"Go ahead."

"I was thinking ... that we could be married on New Year's Eve."

"That's a splendid idea!" Katherine exclaims, but then she quickly calms. "Is that going to be possible? Will everything be ready in time?"

"I can make it happen," Nick says, taking her in his arms. "Don't doubt that. When Nick Moriani wants something, he gets it."

FISHER HOME

"Bill!"

Even from within the bathroom, over the running water, Bill hears his name being called. He finishes rinsing his hands and turns off the faucet. Quickly he dries his hands and pulls the door open.

"What is it?" he asks the flustered Paula, who is standing just a foot or so from the bathroom door.

"Brent's here," she explains quickly. "He came from the hospital -- the results of the paternity test came in."

"And?"

"He isn't the father."

Bill is absolutely silent. His expression is a complex one: It is striving for disbelief, but

unfortunately he believes.

"Where's Sarah?" he asks.

"She's still at the hospital. Brent just came over to talk to Molly -- I don't think he's taking it well at all."

"Do you blame him?" Bill fires.

"Well, no, but--"

"But what? Paula, do you realize what's happening here?"

She asks what with her expression.

"It's the past repeating itself!" Bill cries out. "Doesn't this scenario sound a little bit familiar?"

She knows exactly what he is talking about. "It's different ..."

"Not really! The exact circumstances are different, obviously, but it's the same thing we went through."

"And everything turned out fine for us, right?"

"Yes, but ... No. Look how hard we've had to work to make everything be okay. It's thirty-six years later and we're still working on it. Do you realize what kind of problems Sarah has created for herself?"

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Sarah shrugs a shoulder. "I have no idea. I think whatever we do next depends on you."

"Yeah," Matt agrees. Then he adds, "But it depends on you, too. I mean, now that this isn't just speculation anymore, are you sure you want me being part of Victoria's life? Won't that make things ugly with Brent?"

"Things are plenty ugly with Brent, believe me. I don't want Victoria not having her father in her life."

"Yeah, but couldn't Brent be that father? I'm nothin', Sarah. All I did was help make this

kid. Doesn't automatically mean we're all gonna be one big, happy family."

"I know that. But I want Victoria to know who her father is and have you be however involved you want to be. After this whole thing with my mother and the son she gave up ... I've seen that the past has an ugly way of jumping up and biting you in the butt, and I'd rather give it as little chance as possible to do that."

"So what if when she turns sixteen she decides that her mother is a horrible person for having a kid from an affair and forcing Brent to raise it? Or if she loves Brent and decides she hates me, or the other way around?"

"We'll deal with any of that when we hit it," Sarah says.

"It's not gonna be that easy--"

"It's not going to be easy any way we go about it! But I want Victoria's biological father involved in her life -- if you're willing to be, that is."

"Yeah, of course," Matt answers.

"So you're willing to give this friendship another shot, then?" She looks at him hopefully.

"I guess I have to," he says with mock hesitance.

Without even realizing it, she throws her arms around him. "Thank you, Matt!"

Matt tries to worm his way out of the embrace and is successful. "Look, Sarah. I wanna try and make this work. But I don't know if it will. And we can be friends, but ... things have changed. I don't know how things are gonna work or how they're gonna feel. We'll just have to take it a step at a time."

She agrees with a humble nod.

"Are you worried about what Brent's gonna do now?" he asks.

"Of course," she sighs. "I just -- I don't want to lose him. And I could now, I really could. I know how badly I screwed up. I guess I just have to hope that he can be okay with this whole situation ..." She lets the statement trail off.

"I sense a 'but' or an 'and' or somethin' coming on."

"Yeah." She exhales deeply and buries her face in her hands. Her hair falls forward over

her face and she pushes it back. "I'm worried that this is going to give Molly the chance to steal him."

Matt gives her a skeptical look. "I don't think Molly would pull something like that, even if she does have a thing for Brent. She's not like that."

"I wouldn't be so sure," Sarah says. "The way she's acted with Brent, I wouldn't put anything past her."

FISHER HOME

"No clue," Brent says. "I mean, my first instinct is to get really mad and just throw in the towel and leave Sarah for good."

It's almost as if Brent has said something dirty: Even the mention of such a possibility stuns Molly into silence.

"But I can't," he continues. "Not like that. I've got to give this a try, right? What kind of husband would I be if I didn't?"

"You're not obligated to do anything, Brent. Not after all this."

"But I am! I *married* her!"

"And she broke those vows."

"Still ..." he argues. "But the thing is, I *am* mad! How could she do this to me? She slept with another man, had his baby, and planned on lying to me about the whole thing! How can I not be mad?"

"You have every right to be," Molly says, rubbing his back gently.

"And part of me is just mad that I had to waste so much time with complete lies!"

The comment lingers in the air. Molly is unsure of how to interpret it and Brent is afraid that perhaps he has said too much.

Finally Molly says, "Sarah screwed up. You've got to sort out how you feel about that and how you feel about her before you can really make any decisions."

"That's the thing!" he fires back. "I'm the one who started this all! I pushed her to it!"

Even if she did make the most colossal mistake she could've made, it was because of me!"

"Don't tell yourself that--"

"I'm not going to lie to myself!" he shouts, springing to his feet. He moves for the door and yanks it open.

"This is all ... my fault!" he mutters, casting a final look back at Molly before rushing out the door and shutting it heavily behind him.

Molly is now on her feet as well. *This is a complete mess. And he blames me as much as he blames himself!*

END OF EPISODE #182

[Next Episode](#)