

"Footprints"

Episode #187

<New Year's Eve, The Day After #186>

[Previously ...](#)

**Claire promised Andy she would help him stop Katherine from marrying Nick. Later, she overheard Nick making plans for a meeting shortly before the wedding's scheduled time and decided the meeting could be the key to stopping Moriani.*

TIM & CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT

A commercial for Dick Clark's "New Year's Rockin' Eve" blares from the television. Claire absently watches it, seeing and hearing the commercial but not knowing or particularly caring about its subject, as she slips her arms into her coat. She finishes putting on the coat and zips it up.

Then she stops and takes a deep breath, steeling herself. She tries to hear the exact words she is going to say, in the exact tone in which she is going to say them, in her head. But the anxiety is too much and she just blurts it out.

"I've got to go out for a little bit!" she calls out.

"What for?" Tim calls back from the bedroom.

"I need to go to the store!"

"Why?" Tim asks, emerging from the bedroom and coming into the living room. "We're going to the party in an hour."

"I need makeup," she explains quickly. She reaches for the doorknob as she adds, "I didn't realize I had so little eyeshadow left. I can just run to a pharmacy to get some for tonight--"

"You're sure that's all this is? Eyeshadow?"

She turns back. "Huh?"

"You seem awfully jumpy," he says, approaching her.

"What are you talking about?"

"You're practically shaking!"

"I told you--"

"Eyeshadow, I know. I'm not buying it, Claire. What's really going on?"

She is silent. She reaches for the door, but he slips in the way and stands in front of it, blocking her path.

"I don't know what you're up to," he says, "but I have a feeling it would be best if you didn't go anywhere right now."

FITCH MANSION

The grand ballroom, usually so open, has been divided in two for the night. The side closest to the double doors has a number of circular tables filling its middle. Buffet tables, which will soon be covered with elegant arrangements of food and drink, line two sides of the makeshift party room. A third side has become temporary home to a deejay's booth. Silver and white, with touches of royal blue, adorn the reception area in the form of streamers, tableclothes, and other decor.

This area is separated from the other half of the ballroom by expansive white curtains that bear delicate touches of the same silver-and-blue motif. Beyond the curtains lie two blocks of chairs, separated by an aisle. At the head of this scene is an elevated area, laden with delicate floral arrangements, upon which the minister will stand to marry Katherine and Nick.

The bride-to-be sweeps through the curtains and takes in the scene. She sighs heavily. Suddenly a hand settles on her shoulder.

She turns with a start and finds Nick. He smiles broadly.

"It looks wonderful," he says.

"Yes, it does." She turns forward again and continues to absorb the decor with her eyes. "How different from my first wedding."

"That's a good thing. I don't want this to be a repeat of old memories -- this is *our* wedding. It's time for some new memories."

"That sounds like a marvelous idea," Katherine says.

"I have another marvelous idea I'd like you to consider," comes a voice from behind

them.

Both Katherine and Nick spin around to see Andy standing by the curtains, his hands in the pockets of his black pants.

"Andrew!" Katherine cries out. "What are you--"

"I need to talk to you," Andy says.

"I hope nothing's the matter," Nick says.

Andy doesn't even acknowledge Nick's comment. "Can I please speak with you alone, Mother?"

Katherine knows exactly where this is headed. "Unless you've had a change of attitude, I'd rather not."

"I have something important to tell you."

Nick watches the exchange in confusion. What in the world is going on? What attitude is Katherine referring to? And why is Andy being so cold to him?

His speculation is cut short by the sharp ring of his cell phone. He removes it from his jacket and holds it up to excuse himself.

"Mother," Andy says, "you need to listen to me. You can't marry Nick."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the curtain, Nick answers his phone. "Nick Moriani."

He listens to the frantic voice on the other end, his ease draining away with each word he hears.

TIM & CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT

"Tim, I have to go!" Claire cries. She tries to push him out of the way, to no avail.

"Go where? What the hell is going on?"

"There's something important I have to take care of."

Tim's eyes bulge with frustration. "What is it? Just tell me what's going on!"

"I need to help Andy," she says, her voice suddenly much less aggressive.

"How?"

"The wedding is tonight--"

"So what are you going to do, rush in there and denounce Moriani while he's standing at the altar? I thought we were going to celebrate New Year's together!"

"We are," she says. "There's just one little thing I have to do."

"What is it?"

"I have a way to figure out exactly what he and Ryan are up to. Then Andy will have the proof he needs to convince his mother not to marry Nick, and I'll be able to help Brent toss them in jail."

Tim crosses his arms in front of his chest. "So what's this way you've found?"

The thought of lying crosses her mind, but it passes just as quickly as it came. "I went to their house yesterday to see if I could get Ryan to say *something* that would give me some direction, or maybe see if I could do some snooping around. But when I went up to ring the doorbell, I heard Nick talking on the phone through an open window."

"And ... ?"

"He was planning a meeting for tonight. It had to do with business, and it sounded like he didn't even want to do it but he had to--"

Tim throws up his hands. "Claire! This is ridiculous!"

"This is what I've been waiting for!"

"Why? *Why?* How many times have we gone around and around on this? Why is it necessary for you to put yourself in danger for the sake of incriminating these two?"

"Because I need to see them stopped! I need to stop them!"

"Stop them from what? They're not doing anything to you, not anymore!"

"You're wrong!" she shouts, her face only inches from his. "You're wrong! My father haunts me every single day of my life, do you realize that? All the terrible things he did, all the lives he ruined -- God, he was so close to pulling us apart!"

"Your father is dead," Tim says. He has lowered his voice, realizing that they have suddenly moved into sensitive territory, but his intensity level is still high. "He's gone, Claire."

"Yes, he is -- because I killed him! Because I had to kill him, or he would have killed you! I can't let the Morianis get to that point. I can't let them push someone to that point, hurt someone so badly that the only thing left to do is something that will haunt that person for the rest of his or her life. I'm not going to let it happen again, Tim ..."

He can see her drifting off, becoming lost in a swirling nightmare of horrible memories and questions. This has so little to do with the Morianis themselves, he is realizing. It's about Claire -- about her past, her life, her identity, all of which have been so warped by her father's presence.

"So what were you planning to do tonight?" Tim asks. "Follow Nick to his meeting?"

"Yeah." She has folded her arms and is holding them closely to her body. Her head is down, almost as if she is tucking herself into a ball. "Andy and I were going to go listen and see if we could come up with what we're looking for."

Tim stands against the door, watching his wife. He can see the woman he loves, the woman he married, in there. She is so clear to him now, that strong, vibrant woman. And he sees the other side, the side with whom he has been in conflict so many times over Ryan -- the side that, until now, he has never truly been able to make sense of. But suddenly it fits right in, and he is not seeing two separate sides, but one -- one person, determined and strong yet so vulnerable and troubled all at the same time.

"Get the phone," he says.

"What?"

"I need to call my mother. We have to run the kids over there now."

"What? Why?"

"Because," he says, draping his arms over her shoulders, "we have a meeting to go spy on."

FITCH MANSION

"No," Katherine says, shaking her head. She looks squarely at Andy, a fire quite visible behind her eyes. "I'm not going to go through this with you yet again. I am marrying Nick tonight, and that is the end of the story."

"No, Mother, the end of the story will be where you're accidentally shot once again -- only this time, you won't pull through. Is that the kind of end you want?" Andy pauses, hoping for some kind of response, but receives none. "Because that's how it's going to go."

"Why can't you let me be happy?" she pleads. "I'm sorry for everything I've done! Please, can we try and leave it in the past? Can you try to be happy for me today?"

Andy shakes his head sternly. "I can't be anything but worried about you today."

His cell phone rings, interrupting the standoff. He removes it from the inside pocket of his coat. "Excuse me," he says to Katherine as the phone rings again.

"Hello?" he answers.

"Hi, it's Claire," comes the response. "We've had a slight change of plans."

"What do you mean?"

"Tim is coming along. Just meet me like we'd agreed and we'll go over the revised game plan in person."

"Okay. And thank you for doing this."

"My pleasure," Claire says. "See you in a little while."

Andy ends the call with the press of a button. "I need to go," he says to Katherine. "I have something to take care of."

"Will you be at the wedding?" she asks as he turns to leave.

He turns back slowly. "We'll see."

"I'd love for you to be here."

"Oh, I'll be here," Andy says as he heads for the exit. "With bells on."

She tosses up her hands in disgust. "Fine, Andrew! If you can't at least be respectful, then don't come! You have no idea how badly it hurts to think that my own son can't even bring himself to sit through my wedding. But do what you want to do. I'm not going to ruin this night for myself."

"I promise you, I will be back, Mother." He pushes his way through the curtain, but turns back quickly. "And I'll have exactly what I need to convince you to listen to me."

He brushes past Nick and out of the room. Katherine stands in place, watching the curtains flap shut behind him. She drops her head, pinching the bridge of her nose between her thumb and forefinger and closing her eyes, hoping to wash away the pulsing that has begun on her brain.

Nick, too, observes Andy's exit, reflecting on the parting words of his stepson-to-be. He casts a glance back down at his phone. *He was right ...*

END OF EPISODE #187

What do you think of the reasoning behind Claire's quest to "get" the Morianis? Is Tim making the right decision by agreeing to help her out? Should Andy even try to stop the wedding, or should he let Katherine make her own mistakes? Comments, questions, and suggestions are all welcome. Let us know what you think at the Message Forum!

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