

"Footprints"

Episode #192

<An Hour After #191>

[Previously ...](#)

**Claire rushed home and was stunned to find that Tim had not been home all night. She called Paula and Andy in an attempt to track down her husband, to no avail.*

**Angered by Brent's announcement that their marriage is over, Sarah threw a drink in Molly's face and stormed out of the New Year's Eve party.*

KING'S BAY METROPOLITAN HOTEL

Still trying to seek refuge in the scant sleep he has achieved in the last few hours, Brent is sure he hears knocking. It can't be the door -- who would be here this early on New Year's morning?

But it is the door. He knows this even as he clutches his pillow more tightly to his head, hoping to retreat back into sleep. His heavy eyelids pull open, and the blurry red letters of the alarm clock reveal that it really isn't that early -- 8:13 a.m. He curses whoever it is at the door as he drags himself from the bed.

He reaches the door and leans against it for a moment, trying to collect himself, but another series of quick knocks sounds. Abruptly he pulls the door open.

"Claire," he says in surprise.

"Hi. Sorry to drop in like this -- I know it's early--"

He can tell something is wrong. "Don't worry about it. What's going on?"

"I need your help."

"What? Why?"

"Tim's missing," she explains hurriedly. "He never came home last night. I got in this morning--"

"Where were you guys last night?" he interrupts. "I noticed that you weren't at the party."

"We had something to take care of." Brent's furrowed brow prompts her to continue. "I found out that Nick was having a meeting at the pier, so Tim and Andy went down there

to try and find out something that Andy could use to stop Katherine from marrying Nick."

"Did they get married?"

"Yeah ... but I guess Andy rushed out of there to go interrupt the wedding and Tim stayed behind. That was the last anyone saw of him."

"He's not at his parents'?"

"No. I called Paula already. She hadn't seen him at all." She closes her eyes and rubs her forehead. "You've got to help me find him, Brent."

"I'm on it already," Brent promises, reaching to the nightstand for the phone. "Listen, you go get some rest. I'll get to work on this."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"No. Just go rest." He ushers her back out the door. "I'm sure everything will be fine," he says, closing the door.

But even as he begins dialing the phone, the feeling in his stomach is contradicting his words of reassurance.

MATT GRAY'S APARTMENT

"Do you ever wear a shirt?" Sarah asks.

"I wasn't really expecting visitors at 8:15 on New Year's morning," Matt says, wincing at the snappish tone in her voice.

"Sorry," she says, pushing her way into the apartment. Baby Victoria, looking as tired as Matt, lets out a gurgle as she is hurried inside in her mother's arms.

"I just needed to see you," Sarah continues. "I needed to ... I don't know, talk to someone, or something. I hardly slept a minute last night. I was just rolling around, thinking--"

"Back up," Matt says. He closes the door. "Start at the beginning. What's going on?"

"The party last night ..." She shakes her head and momentarily closes her eyes. "It was a nightmare."

"What happened?"

"Brent -- he -- The thing is, it wasn't even that bad for most of the night. We actually had a pretty okay time. I was worried that he was going to act distant with me or something, but everything was actually fine. Molly didn't even get in the way ... although I guess she didn't have to *do* anything."

"So what was the bad part?"

"At midnight. Brent and I went to kiss, and ... all of a sudden he stopped and said he couldn't do it. I dragged him outside to talk about it and he just drops this *bomb* on me that our marriage has to end."

"Whoa," Matt manages as the news sinks in. "Wow. I-I'm sorry."

"So am I," Sarah mutters, turning her eyes down to Victoria. "Sorry that I let it come to this -- sorry that I let her do this to me."

"Her?" Matt asks, although he has a bad feeling that he knows where this is going.

"Molly." Sarah falls quiet for a moment. "She's the one who did this. She's the reason Brent thinks we can't make our marriage work."

"Did he say that?"

"He didn't have to. I could tell." She balls up her free fist and raises it slightly. "Damn her. She did this ... and I'm not going to let her get away with it."

KING'S BAY METROPOLITAN HOTEL

No sooner has Brent placed down the phone than there comes another knock at the door. At first he is certain he is imagining things. Another visitor, this early on New Year's morning? But the knock sounds again just seconds later, making him quite certain that someone else really has come to see him.

He moves quickly to the door and undoes the locks to open it.

"Molly," he says in surprise.

"Hey," she manages. "Good morning ... did I wake you up?"

"Actually, no," he says with an incredulous shake of the head. "What's up?"

"I'm really sorry I came by so early. But I wanted to talk to you, and I figured I'd better get over here before you went out."

He sits down on the bed and a yawn escapes. "Is this about last night?"

"Yeah ... You ran out after Sarah so quickly that I didn't get a chance to ask you what was going on."

"It was ... quite a scene."

"I noticed. I'm the one who wound up wearing champagne, remember?"

"All too well, yes." He drops his face into his palms and sits like that in silence for an extended moment. "I'm really sorry about that."

"You don't have to apologize for Sarah."

He shrugs. "I guess I owe you an explanation as to why that happened, huh?"

"I was kind of hoping you could do that, yeah."

"Well, I don't know if you saw, but at midnight," he explains, stalling with a pause, "I ... I couldn't kiss her. I don't know what happened, but I just looked down at her and I thought, 'I can't do this.' There was no way I could kiss her."

Molly says nothing in response. She brushes a hand over the bottom of her nose, trying to come up with some way to fill the space.

"So she took me outside to talk," Brent continues. "And I just told her ... what I had to."

Molly's heartbeat is quickening, and the organ suddenly feels as though it will leap into her throat any second now. "What was that?"

She isn't sure that she hears the words at first, but they are real. "I told Sarah that our marriage is over. For good."

MATT GRAY'S APARTMENT

"Listen to yourself," Matt says with a raised eyebrow. "What is this, *Melrose Place*?"

"What's that supposed to mean?" Sarah asks, adding a touch of the defensive to her already sharp tone.

"You just sound a little ... psycho, that's all."

"No, shockingly, I haven't yet been driven to complete insanity."

Matt shrugs and holds up his palms. "I'm not a fan of this vengeful thing. Besides, do you honestly believe this is all Molly's fault?"

"Yes!" Sarah fires back, although Matt notices the split-second hesitation before her rebuttal.

He responds with a skeptical look.

"She's the reason that everything has gotten so complicated," Sarah insists. "If she hadn't kissed Brent that night--"

"Then you wouldn't have married him."

"Not that night, no, but eventually. And if she hadn't kissed him then he wouldn't have had her on the brain and things could have been normal between the two of us. I never would have had to get him to go to New York--"

"And you wouldn't have met me."

Sarah's eyelids lower and then reopen. "And this whole mess wouldn't have happened. Brent and I would be happy together."

Matt crosses his arms in front of his chest. Sarah can't help noticing the slight flex of his muscles as he does so.

"So you regret having Victoria?" he asks.

"Of course not," she says quickly. "But I would have liked to have her under different circumstances, you know?"

"You mean with Brent as her father."

"Matt--" She reaches out and touches his bare arm as he lowers his head. "You know that

I think you're an excellent father for Victoria. As complicated as it's going to make things with Brent -- as complicated as it already has made things -- I think it's going to be a really good experience raising this little girl with you."

She brushes dark blond hair out of her face with her free hand. "And you know how much I value you as a friend. But to raise a child with Brent, a child that's *ours* ... it would just make everything so complete."

"A complete disaster, maybe."

"What?"

"Why are you acting like there isn't really anything wrong between you and Brent? Having a kid with him now wouldn't magically fix everything. Nothing will. Maybe it's time you accepted that it may not be fixable -- and not just because of Molly."

Sarah is stunned into silence. Finally she adjusts Victoria on her arm and says, "That's where you're wrong. If Molly hadn't made herself a part of this -- if she hadn't made Brent be so preoccupied with her -- then he would be completely devoted to me!"

"You can't live in a world of 'what if,' Sarah--"

"I don't have to!" she exclaims. "Because I'm going to make it reality. I'm going to bring back the marriage that Brent and I should have had if Molly hadn't interfered. And I'm going to remove her from the equation for good."

Matt just sighs.

KING'S BAY METROPOLITAN HOTEL

"Oh my God ... Brent ..." Molly raises a hand to her mouth. "You told her that?"

"I had to," Brent says, walking past her. "It was just too clear to me, all of a sudden, that I couldn't pretend to make it work -- or pretend to try, or whatever I've been doing -- any longer."

A heavy silence sits upon them. Brent's back is to Molly, not by accident: at this moment he doesn't think that he can look her in the face. And as nervous as not being able to see his expression makes her -- maybe he's mad, maybe he blames her -- Molly is a bit relieved as well.

"I'm so sorry," she finally says. "I am so sorry."

He sighs and lets the words sink in for a few seconds, a length that to Molly seems to last a torturous lifetime. "What do you have to be sorry for?" he asks, at long last.

"Everything," she says, her index and middle fingers pressed to each temple. She closes her eyes. "If I hadn't butted in -- if I hadn't made things so complicated -- maybe you two could have worked it out. I'm so sorry ..."

"You don't need to apologize."

"But I do -- I'm the one to blame."

"No, you're not," Brent says with a big exhale. "Don't try to lift the blame off of Sarah here. You know as well as I do that she drove the nails into this coffin. And I ..." He turns back around suddenly, startling Molly. "Don't blame yourself."

"I can't help it. If I hadn't been so involved, none of this might have happened ..."

"How?" Brent asks. The single word lingers in the air and it takes him another long moment to add, "How could we have avoided this?"

Molly's tongue fumbles. "Sarah did everything she did for a reason. Without--without me, she wouldn't have slept with Matt, she wouldn't have lied about Victoria."

"You didn't make her do any of that."

"I know, but ..."

"But what?"

"You know ..."

Brent's mouth opens, uncertain words ready to make the leap out into the world, when the telephone's shrill ring sounds instead. Brent's words are swallowed again and he pauses, seeming to debate whether or not he should answer the phone.

The answer is made as he holds up a finger to tell Molly to hold on. He reaches the phone on the third ring.

"Brent Taylor."

Molly watches him, not at all concerned with the phone call except that it is keeping her

from whatever he was going to say next. But her focus shifts, slowly but steadily, as she watches him listen to the voice on the other end -- and she watches his face harden.

CASSIE'S COFFEE HOUSE

Andy settles onto the vintage, brown sofa, holding his coffee mug steady as he sits. "Still no word?"

"Nope," Claire says, putting her cell phone down on the coffee table in front of them without removing her eyes from it. "Brent said it could be a while, though."

"So try to relax."

"I can't. Not knowing that I sent Tim out to that pier and that the only reason he might be -- he might be in whatever trouble he's in is because of me." She raises her mug to her lips and takes a weak sip.

"You look absolutely exhausted," Andy says. When Claire's only response is a pair of raised eyebrows, he asks, "What did you end up doing last night?"

"Nothing." She stares into her coffee to fill a pause. "I went to the Morianis' to make sure there hadn't been a change of plans, but Ryan saw me and he tried to lock me in the cellar."

"Oh my gosh."

"Yeah ... Only it didn't work out the way he planned, because he wound up getting locked in with me."

"So how'd you get out?"

"That was actually courtesy of Nick," she explains. "He came by the house to pick up some things before he and your mother left on their honeymoon ..." She sees a pall settle over Andy.

"I'm sorry we couldn't stop the wedding," she says.

"We tried our best," he sighs. "I can't thank you enough for everything you've done to help me. Only ... I wish we knew why the meeting at the pier didn't work out."

"Nick really didn't show, huh?"

"No ..." He looks up at her, his confusion apparent. "What do you mean, 'really didn't show'?"

"Ryan told me that he had figured out what we were up to, so he warned Nick not to go to the meeting. I wasn't sure whether I should believe him, but ... I guess he was telling the truth." The moment the words are out, they hit her on a completely different level. She tries to combat the sudden nausea with another sip of coffee, but it does little for her.

"So did you ever get to the wedding?" she finally asks.

"Not soon enough, but yes, I did get there. It's actually a wild story -- I'm still trying to make myself believe that it really did happen."

"What happened?"

"Well, I left the pier because nothing had happened and I thought I should at least try to talk my mother out of marrying Nick. But of course I was driving too fast and too carelessly, and I wound up slamming into another car."

"Oh my--are you okay?"

"I'm fine. But the woman whose car I hit -- her name was Maggie -- ended up giving me a ride to the wedding because my car wouldn't start."

"Wow ..."

"My thoughts exactly," Andy muses. He considers the night quietly and then opens his mouth to add more, but Claire's phone interrupts him.

Claire's hand darts out and the call is answered before the second ring begins. "Hello?"

Andy watches her listening and sees the color drain from her face. Her mouth widens and her breathing seems to become more and more ragged.

"Oh my God," she mutters, her voice quivering.

END OF EPISODE #192

What are your thoughts on this episode? Do you have predictions on what has happened with Tim? How should Molly handle the Brent/Sarah situation now? Let us know what you think at the Message Forum!

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