

"Footprints"

Episode #197

<Shortly After #196>

[Previously ...](#)

**Ryan visited Claire, claiming he wanted to offer his condolences. She angrily blamed him and Nick for Tim's death and kicked him out.*

**Katherine blew off Andy's warnings and went through with her wedding to Nick. After the wedding, she again ignored her son's protests and left for her honeymoon with Nick.*

**Matt urged Sarah not to blame Molly for everything that has happened, but Sarah would not let go of her aggression.*

**On New Year's morning, Molly was stunned to learn that Brent had told Sarah that their marriage has to end. Molly apologized for her role in the situation and a nervous Brent asked what she meant, but news of Tim's death interrupted them.*

MORIANI HOME, EXTERIOR

"But if you'd just been honest with me on the I-don't-know-how-many occasions when I'd asked you to tell me the truth, Tim never would have been out on that pier. He never would have been in danger."

Claire's words circle through Ryan's mind, driving themselves deeper and deeper into his consciousness with every round. They sound worse every time -- more condemning, more hateful.

"I swear this is not my fault," he mutters as he pulls the car into the driveway.

He is taken aback by the sight of an unfamiliar car. It strikes him that it might belong to Katherine Fitch, but he rejects the thought almost immediately -- this is not the kind of car that the woman his father married for money would own.

He turns off his own car and steps out, looking around. He doesn't see anyone, and it doesn't look as though anyone is inside the other car, either. He surveys the area once more and doesn't notice anyone.

Carefully, but briskly, he makes his way up to the front door. Thoughts of Claire and her violent reaction to his visit are still clogging his head, and he tries to force them aside as best he can as he climbs the steps in front of the house.

A shocked spasm seizes his body when he reaches the porch -- and what he sees brings those thoughts of Claire even closer to the surface.

FITCH MANSION

"Dear, you can put those in here!"

Nick smiles as he turns in response to Katherine's call. He comes towards her with the pile of clothing he is holding in his arms. She steps away from the armoire, allowing him to set the clothes in an open drawer.

"There," she says, closing the drawer. "Is that all of your clothing?"

"I suppose." Nick sighs heavily. "This is reminding me why I hate moving."

"It can be tedious, I know. But just think of the end result ..."

His smile returns, a warm expression that beams from beneath his silver mustache. "Very true," he says.

They share a peck on the lips.

"It's so wonderful to be home," Katherine says as she steps back.

Nick furrows his brow. "Europe wasn't good enough?"

"Europe was lovely. Goodness knows it had been far too long since I'd spent time there ..." She clasps her hands together and turns, a wistful air radiating from her. "But you know what I mean. Returning home is such a splendid feeling."

"Yes, it is. Especially returning home to a wonderful new life."

The corners of Katherine's mouth turn up in a grin, but it is one tempered by shadows from the past. "There were so many times I thought I would never find this kind of happiness again."

"I felt the same way ... but those doubts were gone the moment I met you."

She brightens. "Really?"

"Absolutely. There's something special about you, Katherine. You just exude something ... magical. And I'm so thankful I get to be the one to share in that."

They join hands and face each other, sharing a moment of silent appreciation. But it fades away as Katherine is overtaken by a somber pall.

"There's only one thing missing," she says softly.

Nick doesn't need an explanation. "Andrew."

She nods glumly.

"Yes. I just keep recalling his face when he came into the wedding -- he looked so determined, so upset. I worked so hard to hold onto him ... I can't allow him to slip away like this."

Something about Nick's expression seems off to her.

"What's the matter?"

He shakes his head. "Nothing. Nothing ... It's just that ..." His reluctance is clear, so strong it is almost tangible.

Katherine widens her eyes and asks again, with more intensity, "What?"

Nick holds his lips together sadly. After a lengthy pause, he finally speaks. "Maybe it would be best to let Andrew go."

SARAH TAYLOR'S APARTMENT

The television hums in the background, but Sarah is paying little attention to it. At the small dining table, she finishes the last bite of a sandwich. She rises to bring her plate to the sink just as Matt emerges from the bedroom.

"... and she's out like a light," he announces.

Sarah sets her dish in the sink. "Terrific! Now all we have to do is get her to nap like this every day and we'll be set. Maybe then she'd stay asleep for a whole night."

"She been waking up a lot?"

"I don't know if it's a lot," she says with a shrug, "but it feels like it. My sleep has been so broken up lately ..."

"Well, if you ever want me to take her for a night--"

"Nah, I think I can handle her. Besides--" She inhales deeply and then lets the air out thoughtfully. "--I think I might get lonely without her."

Matt leans against the wall. "You've really taken to this motherhood thing."

A smirk lights up her face. "Yeah, I guess I have." She turns on the water and begins to rinse off the dish. "And as far as I can tell, you're not doing so badly with this father thing, either."

"Guess not." He clasps his hands together behind his head, accentuating the muscles in his upper arms. Sarah glances over but quickly jerks her eyes away.

"I never really thought I'd be any good at being a dad," Matt says, dropping his arms. "Or that I'd want to be good at it."

Sarah turns the water off. She picks up the plate and sweeps over its surface a few times with a dishtowel before placing it in the rack to dry.

"Do you worry about screwing up?" she asks once she has set the plate down. "About being a really awful parent? It's like, no matter how hard I try, I worry that I won't be able to do it, you know?"

"Totally ... But don't worry, you're not going to screw up."

"Matt, look at what a mess I made of her *birth*. How am I supposed to hold myself together for the next eighteen years -- or the rest of her life, even -- well enough not to mess her up completely?"

Matt spends a moment fishing for his words, but once he finds them they flow smoothly. "Because you care. Because you love her and you want to give her the best life you can."

"I just keep thinking that it can't be that simple," Sarah sighs. "Look at my family. I *know* that my parents love us and have always wanted what's best for us -- but it didn't stop us from winding up with problems. Stuff gets in the way. Like ... I told you about Claire's father, didn't I?"

Matt nods.

"There's a perfect example. He did love her and he wanted what he thought was best for her -- that just happened to include getting her away from Tim and the life she had. Don't you worry about stuff like that -- about making mistakes without knowing it? Isn't -- wasn't -- there stuff in your family that makes you think like that?"

Matt doesn't say anything. His eyes move to the floor, and when they come up, he speaks quickly and without looking directly at Sarah. "I see what you mean. But hey, I've gotta get going."

He makes a move for the door, but Sarah remains frozen by the sink.

He is almost at the door when her voice stops him in his tracks. "Not so fast, mister."

He answers without turning around. "What?"

"That was not so smooth," she says, her arms folded in front of her.

"Huh?"

She cocks her head to the side. "Why do you refuse to talk about your family?"

POLICE STATION, BRENT TAYLOR'S OFFICE

Brent doesn't even look up from the mess of papers spread over the desk in front of him. "Come in!"

He continues scribbling a few final notes as he listens to the door open and someone enter.

"Are you busy?" the visitor asks.

Brent's eyes pop up from the desk immediately. "Oh, uh, hi. No, I'm not -- sit down."

He watches Molly carefully as he settles into a chair across the desk from him.

"So what's up?" he asks, still observing her. Her whole demeanor screams 'serious,' and it has him on edge.

"Nothing much," she says. "We just hadn't talked in awhile, so I thought I'd come by and see how you were doing. And if everything is all right."

"I'm fine ... What do you mean, see if everything is all right?"

"With us." She says it quickly and then pauses, her eyes shifting around uncomfortably.

"Yeah, of course." He leans forward, propping up his elbows on the desk. "Everything's fine, Molly. I know we haven't talked much lately, but I was just trying to ... give everyone some space. This was a time for your family to get themselves together -- there wasn't any need to for me to be poking around."

"You were needed."

Her comment hangs between them for a moment until Brent speaks up. "So how's everything going? How's everybody doing?"

"Better, I guess," she says. "We're all kind of trying to get back to normal, but it's ... weird. It's hard."

"I know. Because it's like the whole dynamic changes."

"Yeah. It's not like I saw Tim everyday, but ... he was my *brother*. There were things I had with him -- memories, in-jokes, you know -- that I don't have with anyone else. And it feels really strange for that to just suddenly be gone."

"I bet." Now Brent leans back in his chair, folding his hands in front of his stomach and gazing up at the ceiling. "When my mom died -- it was different, I mean, it wasn't unexpected, but ..." He trails off without taking the thought much of anywhere and continues staring at the ceiling in silence.

"I can't even imagine what it would be like to lose one of my parents. Especially if I were as young as you were when your mom died." Now it is her turn to watch him, and she does it for almost a minute. Neither of them speak.

Finally Molly says, "I'm sorry. I come in here talking about Tim without even thinking about you losing your mom--"

Brent brings his gaze back to her. "Don't worry about it, Mol."

They fall quiet again. Finally Molly says, "It's been hard on everyone, I know, but it's almost like I want to put it behind us. I don't know if that sounds awful, but ..."

"It doesn't sound awful. It makes sense. No one wants to go on mourning forever."

"No, I guess not. But my parents -- my mom, especially -- are having a really hard time. They don't talk about anything else, or at least not for long. Jason's still hardly talking about it at all. And Sarah--" She stops herself.

"How's Sarah doing?" Brent asks quietly.

Molly is caught off-guard by this question. "She's been even more distant with us. I'm sure she's told you all about it. She keeps turning everything around on us. I don't know if it's her way of coping or what, but she's being really hard on everyone."

"She hasn't told me anything," he says.

"Really? But I thought--" The words are coming more quickly than Molly can make sense of them, and she has to pause. "I thought you two were doing better. You sat with her at the memorial service, and ... I saw you trying to comfort her after we found out about Tim."

"You did?"

"Yeah. And I just assumed -- I mean, it looked like ... like things were going better between the two of you."

Brent shrugs. He twirls the pen in-between his fingers for a moment and then looks up at her. "There's something you need to know, Molly."

MORIANI HOME

"Don't look so shocked!"

"I *am* shocked," Ryan replies, still catching his breath. "Why shouldn't I be? It's not like I knew you were coming -- and it's not like you come by that often."

"Sorry," Stan says. "So how are things with you? How's everything goin'?"

"Oh, everything's freakin' peachy." Ryan fumbles for his key to the house.

"Look, do you, uh -- do you wanna go grab a bite to eat or something? Maybe we could talk a little--"

Ryan turns sharply to him. "How much do you want?"

Stan leans back, looking puzzled. "Huh?"

"How much? You know, money? That's what you're here for, isn't it?"

Stan looks hurt. "I came here to see you, Ry."

"No, you didn't. You came here for money. The seeing-me part is just so you won't feel so guilty about it. And besides, it's probably easier to get some cash out of me if you put in a little 'quality time,' right?"

"Don't be stupid. I--" Stan tosses up his hands in frustration, but then seems to reign himself in. "I know I don't come around much, Ry. That's just -- it's how I am. But I'm here now, and it's to see you. Believe me, I wouldn't be in King's Bay otherwise."

"I'm not saying that you came here for a reason other than to see me," Ryan says, the element of disgust in his voice rather pronounced. "But there must be money involved. There always is."

Stan's shoulders droop. "Okay, fine. I was gonna ask you for a couple bucks. But I did wanna see you. And I need the money."

"I don't have any to give out," Ryan says curtly. "Remember when you came by last summer looking for a handout and I said I couldn't give you any? That ... situation still hasn't been resolved."

"What's goin' on? Did the old man get you two in some sorta trouble?"

After a pause, Ryan sighs. "Yeah, kind of. With any luck, it'll be taken care of soon."

Stan is quiet, though Ryan can see the seeds of some effort at bonding planting themselves in his father's mouth. He doesn't have the patience to wait for them.

"Look, you're not going to get any money from me," Ryan tells him. "And I'm really not in the mood to play catch-up, okay?"

"Fine," Stan finally says with a shake of the head. "I have things to do. I'll see ya later, okay?"

Ryan unlocks the front door as quickly as he can and slips inside without so much as another glance at Stan.

FITCH MANSION

"What?" Katherine's eyes flare. "Let Andrew go? Are you mad?"

"No, Katherine, dear," Nick says, placing his hands on her in an effort to calm her. "I didn't mean that you should let him go entirely. But I think what Andrew needs -- what

both of you need -- right now is some space."

"If I give him space I'm going to lose him," she says, her voice thinning. "He's going to slip away from me even more than he has already."

"Maybe," Nick admits with a shrug. "But if you keep having these nasty encounters with him, things are never going to get better. You're almost certainly going to push him away for good if things continue the way they've been going."

Katherine seems ready to fight back, but then simply drops her head. "I miss him, Nick. I miss having a son. I just want things to be the way they were -- before that wretched Danielle came into our lives."

"It would be wonderful if we could go back in time, wouldn't it? But it's not possible, Katherine. The only way for you to have that type of relationship with Andrew again is for both of you to step back for awhile."

His cellular phone cries out before Katherine can reply.

"Excuse me," Nick says, removing the phone from his jacket.

He steps out of the room, taking care to remove himself from Katherine's range of hearing as the phone rings again. He heads down the hallway into a spare bedroom and is closing the door as he answers the call.

"Nick Moriani."

"Moriani." The voice on the other end sends shivers up Nick's spine, for which he mentally scolds himself.

"Yes?"

"It's time," says the voice.

Nick knows exactly what the caller means. He swallows hard.

"You've got 48 hours," the voice continues. "You come to us with the money or else."

Nick can't find it in himself to protest. "Fine."

"Wonderful." And with that, there is a click on the other end of the line.

Nick turns off his own phone, gritting his teeth in aggravation. How dare they treat him like this?

But he knows they're right -- it's time for him to pay up. *At least I can do it now*, he thinks with a sigh of relief. He tries to focus his mind on Katherine's financial documents, the ones he helped organize not long ago.

It's do-or-die time, he thinks as he heads slowly back to his new wife.

SARAH TAYLOR'S APARTMENT

"Sarah, I'm not ..."

"Uh-huh." She unfolds her arms and they drop to her sides. "Matt, I mentioned your family and the next thing I knew, you were bolting for the door. You could have at least tried to be a little less obvious."

Matt turns around, but avoids eye contact with her. He stuffs his hands into the pockets of his jeans. "I'm not avoiding anything. There just isn't anything to talk about."

"Nothing at all?"

"No, nothing. I've told you, I don't have any family left. And just 'cuz you have family problems doesn't mean everybody else does."

The comment stuns Sarah and her aggressiveness falls away before Matt's eyes.

"I--I'm sorry," he says, the edge gone from his voice. "I didn't mean--"

"Don't worry about it." She shakes her head back and forth rapidly, scattering loose wisps of dark blonde hair. She brushes them back into place with her fingers.

"No, that was stupid of me. I'm sorry." He comes towards her slowly and puts an arm around her shoulders. "I know things've been rough lately with losing your brother and all."

Sarah is quiet now, though she doesn't pull away from him.

"Have things been any better?" Matt asks. "I figured maybe this whole thing might help you patch things up with them a little."

"I don't know if that's possible ... It's like there's something up between us, some wall or something, and there's no way to break it down. Like I'm separated from the rest of them somehow."

Matt struggles for a moment for something to say. "Why do you think that is?" he finally manages.

"Because that's how it's always been," she says. "Tim was the oldest, so he was special. Jason had skating and he was the baby. And Molly -- she was always perfect. Perfect grades, good at sports, involved in everything at school, blah blah blah. I kind of got lost in the shuffle."

"Are you sure that's not you looking at things differently than they actually were?"

"What?"

"Like, are you -- I don't know -- projecting your feelings back on the past or something? Because you feel separated from them now?"

Sarah looks up at him with an amused twinkle lighting up her face. "Wow, Dr. Freud, I'm impressed."

"What?"

"You're getting all psycho-analytical on me," she laughs, sliding out of his arms.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!"

"What now?"

"I think maybe *you're* the one avoiding talking about *your* family now!" he accuses, though the tone of amusement in his voice is quite evident.

She throws up her hands. "Guilty as charged. I'd just rather not get into it, okay?"

"Then I'll leave ya alone," he says, finally making it all the way to the front door. He opens it up but then pauses. "Gimme a call if you need any help with Victoria, okay?"

"Sure. Bye." She offers a little parting wave and Matt disappears out the door.

He closes it behind him, but Sarah goes to it anyway and locks it up. And then she heads straight for the bedroom, where she curls up on the bed.

Clutching the pillow tightly, she tries not to think of anything Matt just said.

POLICE STATION, BRENT TAYLOR'S OFFICE

Molly shifts uncomfortably in her seat. "What?"

"Sarah and I are anything but back on track," Brent says. "We're being civil, yeah, but even that's still shaky."

"It's a step."

"A step that's not leading anywhere." He leans back in the chair again, although this time he maintains eye contact with her. "I needed to be there for Sarah after Tim's death. And I did want to be -- I didn't like seeing her go through that feeling like she was all alone."

"She wasn't all alone. Or she didn't have to be. We were all there for her. She just wouldn't let us in."

"I realize that. We both know how Sarah can get." He exhales deeply, taking the extra seconds to pull together his words. "Molly, the time I've spent with Sarah lately made a lot of things clear to me."

"It did?" Molly asks, hoping as soon as the words are out that she doesn't sound as stupid as she thinks she might.

"Absolutely. I did want to be able to comfort Sarah -- but that meant I couldn't spend any time with you at all. And I didn't like that. We're--we're friends, and you deserved just as much as Sarah to have me there to talk about the whole thing."

"You don't owe me anything, Brent."

"Actually, I do. You've helped me through a lot of difficult times. And I wanted to be there for you. I know it had to be a little stifling going over the same things with your family over and over."

"Just a little bit," she says, holding her thumb and index finger about an inch apart.

"But the thing is, I couldn't be there for you because of Sarah. And there's no way I can go on in a marriage that restricts me like that."

Molly leans forward, resting her elbows on her knees. "What are you saying?"

"I--" He swallows hard and then springs to his feet. He begins pacing behind the desk.

Molly's breath is caught in her chest, and even the effort of speaking a few simple words is a strenuous task. "What is it?"

"Something I've needed to do for a while now."

She urges him on with a lift of her eyebrows.

He stops pacing and their eyes connect. For Molly, the moment brings her back to so many moments of the past -- moments when she was sure there was something between them. And she can feel it now, see it now, pulsing in his eyes as they stare into her.

His teeth graze over his lower lip before he finally speaks. "I'm going through with the divorce."

END OF EPISODE #197

What will the divorce mean for Brent and Molly? What's going to happen with Nick's debt? Let us know what you thought about this episode and what you would like to see happen in the future at the Message Forum!

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