

"Footprints"

Episode #199

<Same Day as #198, Later>

[Previously ...](#)

**Brent informed Molly that he plans to divorce Sarah.*

**Andy continued to think of Maggie Hudson, with whom he spent New Year's Eve.*

**Ryan had an unpleasant encounter with his biological father, Stan.*

**Nick begged his associates for an extension, but they declared that enough is enough and promised him some "surprises."*

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"It still shocks me," Brent says as he sticks a French fry into his mouth.

"Me, too," Andy agrees. "To think that Tim is really gone ... It's strange."

Brent leans against the back of the booth and glances around the bar and grill. The dinner hour has brought in a sizable crowd; there isn't an empty table in sight, as far as he can tell. Even if he weren't looking, he could tell how busy it were -- there is a steady buzz of voices and music hovering just underneath his and Andy's conversation.

"I remember when I started dating Sarah," Brent says, "Tim got shot and wound up in a coma. We all knew it was a reality that he could die, but ... no one was ready for it. It just seemed like he should recover, and he did. So for him to die this way, with no warning at all, was that much more of a shock."

"I can imagine." Andy sits back as well, folding his hands in front of his stomach. "It never should have happened. Tim shouldn't have been alone at that pier."

"No one expected it would go down like that, Andy."

"Of course not. But I was supposed to be there with him. He didn't even want to be a part of it -- he only went to keep Claire from putting herself in danger. So I can't help ... I can't help feeling like I'm to blame for what happened."

Brent quietly allows the comment to sink in. After the pause, he hurriedly says, "Don't. This isn't your fault."

"If I'd stayed with Tim--"

"Then maybe the both of you would've gotten killed. Who knows?" Brent goes in for

another French fry and when it has disappeared into his mouth, he continues, "Besides, the Morianis are really the ones at fault here."

Andy simply raises his drink to his lips for a long sip.

"They're the reason your mother was shot, don't forget that," Brent says. "And it was because of them that anyone, Tim included, had to be at that pier."

"I suppose so."

Brent shakes his head, his face clouded by thoughts. "I would still love to lock those bastards up."

Andy sighs. "I think we're definitely in agreement on that."

FITCH MANSION

Ryan reaches up and curls his fingers around the door knocker, pausing a moment to examine the finely formed brass piece. But before he can bring his hand back down to knock on the door, it bursts open.

"Nice timing," Ryan says to Nick.

"I saw you coming up the driveway," Nick explains.

"You just happened to be staring out the window?"

"I've been watching all day." When Ryan flashes him a curious glance, Nick adds, "Come inside."

He closes the door and locks it up as quickly as he can.

Nick's nervousness is not lost on Ryan. "What's going on?" the younger Moriani asks.

"I'd feel a lot better if I knew," Nick says. He leads Ryan into the living room and takes a seat in an antique chair, which allows him a view out into the driveway. He gestures for Ryan to be seated as well.

"I went to the bank this morning," Nick explains. "It turns out that Katherine hasn't authorized my access to her accounts yet -- so I called Esposito and tried to explain."

"I gather that didn't go over well."

"Unfortunately, no." Nick sighs and continues staring out the window. "He said to expect some 'surprises.' I'm waiting for Katherine to get home so I can have her take care of this and I can get him the money. Maybe if I get it to him quickly, he'll forget about pulling anything."

"I hope so." Ryan pops up out of his chair. "I don't like this."

"I'm not exactly enjoying it, either."

"Yeah, but -- this is your thing. You know this business, you're used to dealing with situations like this ... I'm not comfortable with it at all. I've never been caught in something like this before."

"There were plenty of times that things like this happened when you were younger, Ryan." Nick rises from his seat as well. "You weren't aware of it, but it was the same thing. And it always worked out."

"Ignorance is bliss, right?" Ryan turns his back to his father. "I know I'm not running this operation or anything, but ... I'm uncomfortable even being as involved as I am. I worry too much."

"You just have to learn to deal with this sort of thing. You'll be fine--"

Ryan cuts him off. "What if I'm not? What if I'm not cut out to do this? I'm pretty old to be playing lackey to my father, aren't I?"

"Stop being so melodramatic, Ryan."

"I'm not being melodramatic. I just think that maybe ... maybe it would be better if I got out of this and went legit."

Nick's eyes, which have begun to wander around the room in thought, snap back to his son sharply. "You can't do that."

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"So what happened on New Year's, anyway?" Brent asks. "I never did get the full story from you. You mentioned that you left the pier and there was a big mess that kept you from stopping the wedding ..."

"'Mess' is definitely a good way to put it," Andy says. "Although ... it could have been a lot worse. For what it was, it wasn't too bad at all."

Brent munches away at a few more fries. "What happened?"

"I was on my way to the house and I wasn't paying enough attention to my driving. So I ended up ramming into another car, which put mine out of commission."

"You got in a car accident?"

"Uh-huh. Luckily, the only damage done was to my car, and I suppose there have been bigger tragedies."

Brent finishes off another bite of his burger. "So you didn't actually make it to the wedding, then?"

"No, I did. Just in time to hear my mother and Nick pronounced husband and wife," Andy says, his discomfort apparent as he relives the moment.

"Wow." Brent raises his eyebrows. "How did you manage to get there?"

"Actually, the woman whose car I hit -- Maggie -- gave me a ride."

"Really? How's that for irony?"

"I know. What's funny is that the first couple of things we said to one another were pretty snappish. I never expected she would have offered to drive me there."

Brent shrugs. "Sometimes you get lucky."

"Absolutely." Andy pauses a moment as his mind wanders back to New Year's Eve yet again. Then he launches back into his speech as if there were no lull. "It's strange how things like that happen at the most unexpected moments. I never would have imagined--" Suddenly he cuts himself off.

"What?" When Andy merely glances down, Brent asks again, "What is it?"

"Nothing," Andy says quietly, the fervor of just a few seconds ago suddenly vanished.

Brent considers his friend's odd behavior for a moment. A knowing look suddenly lights up his face. "Oh, wait, Andy -- do you mean ... something happened with this woman?"

Andy seems to ponder his answer before saying, "No. Nothing happened." But it is clear that he is holding something back.

"Then why did you just clam up all of a sudden?"

Andy's response stutters out. "What? I--It's not that anything happened--"

"It's okay," Brent assures him. "We're friends. You don't have to censor things around me just because of Danielle."

"Are you sure? I know it must be awkward for you -- it is for me."

"It's not the easiest situation, but hey, things happen. And it's not like you did something terrible to hurt my sister. Relationships don't always work out."

Andy nods in agreement. "Thanks, Brent."

"Like I said, we're friends. So what happened with you and this ..."

"Maggie. And nothing happened. We spent the rest of the night together. We went out to eat, went for a walk, talked. She was a big help to me after I had to watch my mother marry Nick."

"That's great. So have you seen her again?"

"That's the thing," Andy says. "She's from Seattle. She was only here on business."

"Seattle's not that far."

"I know." Andy begins nodding again. "I know," he repeats. "But we'll see what happens -- if anything."

"Well, good luck."

"Thanks." Andy pauses to work on his dinner for a few seconds and then says, "And I think that's enough about me. How are things with you?"

"Things are ... fine."

"Oh, really?" Andy leans in a little bit closer. "So does that mean things are better with you and Sarah?"

He can tell what the answer is going to be before Brent even says a word.

"I'm sorry," Andy says before Brent has to answer. "I shouldn't be prying."

"No, don't worry about it," Brent answers quickly. "Not a big deal. Just suffice it to say that things are not on the upswing."

Andy lets the appropriate moment of silence pass. Finally he says, "I haven't seen much of Sarah lately. I spoke to her a little at the memorial service, but that was it."

"That's about been the extent of my contact with her lately, too ... although I get the feeling that things are about to get a lot messier."

There is visible hesitation on Andy's part before he asks, "Why's that?"

"Because," Brent says, dropping his head back and exhaling heavily, "Sarah should be receiving notice of our divorce any day now."

FITCH MANSION

Ryan, caught somewhere between shock and annoyance, stares at Nick. "What do you mean, I can't do that?"

"You can't just drop out of this and go legit," Nick says, as if it the most obvious thing in the world. "Cutting ties is a lot harder than you think."

"But it's possible. Besides, all my ties are through you. If you're still in the business, no one's going to care what the hell I'm doing."

"That's not necessarily true, Ryan."

"But it probably is."

After a short silence, Nick adds, "It also wouldn't be nearly as lucrative."

"Ah, yes, because we're currently enjoying such a comfortable financial situation."

Nick ignores the jab. "You'd have to work your way up that ridiculous corporate ladder ... play by the rules ... you'd go insane."

Ryan's shoulders slump. "Maybe. But--I don't know if I'm cut out to be a part of this

business, either. You've always talked about me taking over when ..."

"When I'm gone," Nick finishes.

"Yeah. Do you really think I'm capable of that? Because I have serious doubts."

Nick studies the younger man, the person he has known as his son for so long. All he sees in Ryan is confusion, upheaval, and anxiety. That old certainty -- the self-assuredness that drove Ryan to come to King's Bay in pursuit of Claire in the first place -- is buried deep beneath the surface.

"Is this another Claire Robbins-induced mood swing?" Nick asks.

"No." Ryan shakes his head. "This is a me-induced thing."

"I don't believe that," Nick says after another moment of consideration. "Maybe you believe it, but I can't. This isn't happening because of you, Ryan. It's because of Claire. Ever since she's been back in your life, it's like you've gone haywire."

Ryan hesitates before saying, "Well, I'm sorry if I let emotions get in the way every now and then."

Nick hesitates a little more before asking, "What happened in that cellar on New Year's Eve? I could tell something had happened when I found you in there, but you tried to pretend it hadn't."

Ryan's first instinct is to insist it was nothing, but yesterday's encounter with Stan comes rushing back to the front of his mind. "I told her," he blurts out.

Nick looks puzzled. He pats his moustache, thinking, and then says, "About Stan?"

"Yeah. I just snapped ... All of a sudden, I didn't want to keep it in anymore."

"Good," Nick says firmly. "He didn't deserve your protection. And you don't deserve to have to deal with this just to save his hide."

"I did need to get it out. But I think the damage is done. Claire wasn't exactly receptive to the news, as I'm sure you could see."

"She was stunned. It's only understandable."

"Even so ... I let a couple of weeks go by and then I went to see her again. All I wanted

to do was tell her I was sorry to hear about Tim. But she wouldn't even be civil with me. She kicked me out of the apartment."

Nick sighs. "Then maybe you need to let this go. You've been chasing after her for too long."

"I've never felt this way about anyone, Dad. And for it to last this many years -- I don't exactly think this is some passing infatuation. I *love* her."

"Maybe--maybe not. Ryan, you don't think logically when it comes to this woman. It's time to figure out what you want, and if you can even have it."

Ryan doesn't say anything.

"I know this may not be something you want to face," Nick says. "Claire is an important part of your life -- at least, she's come to stand for something important in your mind. But this isn't good for you."

"So what the hell am I supposed to do?" Ryan snaps suddenly.

"Resolve this," Nick says. "Either give up on Claire or go after her for real."

END OF EPISODE #199

The stage is set for the big 200th episode! What are you hoping to see? Visit the Message Forum to let us know what you think and check out a special preview.

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