

"Footprints"

Episode #207

<Several Days After #206>

[Previously ...](#)

**Paula decided to throw a dinner party to pull the family together.*

**Jason's comments made Molly feel guilty for interfering in Sarah's marriage.*

**Diane Bishop returned to King's Bay and told Claire that she plans to pursue custody of Samantha.*

**Nick was able to gain access to Katherine's money, though he felt uneasy about manipulating her.*

**Maggie Hudson came back to King's Bay on business and visited Andy, who was thrilled to see her.*

ANDY FITCH'S APARTMENT

"And here's the man I've been waiting for," Andy says, half to Maggie and half to Brent, as he and Brent share a handshake in greeting.

"Sorry I'm late," Brent says. "I got stuck downtown ... You know how it is this time of day."

Andy nods. "It's not as though it's a big deal. My mother's been living with Nick for five months. I don't think another 15 minutes is going to make much of a difference."

Brent lifts his eyebrows. "You never know, considering Moriani's involved."

Andy's nod grows more vigorous as he agrees with that grim truth. He turns a bit, stepping out from in front of Maggie. "Brent, I want you to meet Maggie Hudson. Maggie, this is Brent Taylor."

"It's nice to meet you," Maggie says warmly.

"You, too," Brent says with a slight raise of his right hand. "I've heard a lot about you."

"All good things, I hope."

"Nope," Andy cuts in. "Terrible things. Terrible, horrible things." He and Maggie share a grin.

Brent clasps his hands together. "Anyway, we'd better get going."

"Let's," Andy agrees. "And let's keep our fingers crossed that this works."

"It will," Brent says, though it's clear that he's trying to convince himself as much as Andy. "And if--when it does, we may have that crack we need to bring Moriani's house of cards tumbling down."

FISHER HOME

"Hi, Bill," Claire smiles warmly as she ascends the last few steps and comes up onto the porch.

"Hi, Claire." Bill gently shakes the glass of wine in his hand.

"Is everyone else here?" she asks as she comes into the house.

"We're still waiting on Sarah. Dinner should be coming up pretty soon."

"Then I guess I have excellent timing," she grins.

"Do you want anything to drink?" Bill asks as he closes the front door.

"Not right now."

"Well, there's all sorts of stuff inside whenever you want something."

"Wonderful." She pauses, gazing around the house. There is a warmth here, something that she hasn't felt -- that she hasn't let herself feel, maybe -- in so long. Now, for the first time in so many months, she feels it again, embracing her. She takes a deep breath, drawing the feeling inside of her.

"Having this dinner really was a good idea," she says finally. "It'll be nice for all of us to have some time together."

Bill closes his eyes ever so briefly in agreement. "I think so, too."

"Claire! Hi!" Molly calls as she comes into the room.

"Hey!" The two dark-haired women come to meet in the center of the living room.

"How are things going?" Molly asks, trying to make the question sound as casual as possible.

"They're ... not bad," Claire says, raising a hand to her forehead. "With as difficult as the last few months have been ... I've come to realize how much I have to be thankful for."

"I'm glad you're seeing things that way. I know--losing Tim, it must be unbelievable for you. Every night before I fall asleep, I think about him ... and even during the days, he's always sort of in my mind. I can't imagine how that must be for you."

"It's rough. It is. But I ... I have a lot to keep me distracted, you know?"

Molly is about to respond when Paula's voice cuts into the conversation. "Is Sarah here yet?"

"Fortunately, no," Molly mutters.

Paula looks sharply at her daughter. "What, Molly?"

Molly shakes her head. "Nothing."

Another voice cuts in, this time from the front door. "Bad-mouthing me yet again?"

Molly doesn't respond. But Sarah strides closer and the sisters exchange nasty looks.

"Hi, Sarah," Claire says, not at all oblivious to the tension.

"Hi, Claire." Sarah's response seems oddly cool, and Claire is a bit taken aback by it.

"No Victoria tonight?" Claire continues.

"I left her at Matt's," Sarah says. "I figured it wouldn't hurt to have a night alone, and he loves to spend time with her, anyway."

"I know what you mean about time alone. I found a babysitter for Travis and Samantha just so I could relax tonight."

"It's been so long since I saw them," Molly says. "I kind of wish you'd brought them. I always seem to miss them when they're over here."

Sarah folds her arms in front of her. "You could go visit. You haven't seen much of Victoria, either, have you? Might not hurt to take a little initiative. Doesn't seem to be a problem for you elsewhere."

Claire is trying to think of something to come to the rescue again -- and figure out what in the world is going on -- when Paula returns. "Dinner is served!" she calls.

The three women begin heading towards the dining room, but the tension between Sarah and Molly doesn't dim the slightest bit.

FITCH MANSION

"Thank you, Walter," Nick says, implicitly excusing the butler from the scene.

Ryan waits until Walter has exited the foyer, and even then he waits a moment longer before he begins speaking. "I got your message. I came over as soon as I could."

"I was beginning to think you weren't going to come," Nick says gruffly. He turns and begins leading Ryan up the stairs.

The younger man hesitates at the bottom. Nick's words echo in his ears -- just the type of disparaging comment his father manages to slide in every once in a while. But he follows him up the stairs and into the extra bedroom that has become Nick's study.

Not another word is spoken until the door is shut.

"It's done," Nick announces, the note of relief in his voice quite apparent.

"What?"

"The debt. It's paid."

Ryan looks at him disbelievingly, but Nick nods his head slowly and steadily. "Paid in full."

FITCH MANSION

"Was that the door again, Walter?" Katherine asks with a hint of annoyance.

"It was," the butler confirms from his spot at the entry to the kitchen.

"Who is it?"

"Mr. Fitch," he says. "Your son. And some others."

Katherine is already out of her seat at the table, where she has been catching up on some correspondence.

She sweeps into the foyer, where Andy -- flanked by Brent and Maggie -- is waiting. "Good evening, Mother."

"Good evening," she says. "I'm so glad to see you."

Andy can see her trying to place the other two faces. "Mother, I'm sure you remember Brent Taylor -- commander of the police force."

Brent's last name stings Katherine, but she replies with a composed, "Yes. Yes, of course."

"And this is Maggie Hudson," Andy continues. "A friend."

"It's a pleasure to meet you," Katherine says, not-so-discreetly examining the woman. She then turns to Andy. "What brings you by?"

"I'd like to have a talk with you," he says. "Is there somewhere we can go where we won't be interrupted?"

"Nick is upstairs with his son," Katherine says. "So I suppose we could go back to the kitchen--"

Andy cuts her off. "Fine." And with that, he leads the party into the kitchen.

No sooner have they reached the kitchen than does Katherine freeze in her tracks. "What's going on, Andrew?"

"I need to speak with you," he says. "It's very important."

He can see her waiting for the 'why' and trying to figure out why Brent and Maggie are also present.

"It's about your husband," Andy adds, a bit of pleasure creeping into his voice. "We're here to tell you the truth about him."

FISHER HOME

This isn't going well.

Paula doesn't know why she's having the thought or where it's coming from, but it has planted itself firmly in her head. It's not as if things are going badly -- everyone is talking, catching up, and sharing a meal of which Paula is very proud.

But there's something wrong. She isn't sure what it is, but something is definitely ... off. It's as though there is something in the air, a tightness, a tension, strung between everyone -- like every cord of conversation, every statement and every action, is being pulled as tightly as it can stand and the slightest extra tug will make it snap.

Her eyes connect with Bill's as she passes him the salad, and she can tell that he is feeling the same thing.

But then again, she tries to reason, that's exactly the reason I wanted everyone here tonight. To loosen things up. So maybe it will just take awhile ...

"Did Sarah tell any of you what happened at the restaurant the other night?" Bill asks. Paula can tell that it's his way of trying to keep things normal, and for it she is quite grateful right now.

Shakes of the head and quick "nopes" sound from around the table, giving Bill the prompt for which he was hoping.

"It was a nightmare night," he relays. "One of the cooks quit that afternoon in a fit, so we were running short-staffed anyway. And for some reason, the place was more packed than usual. So Sarah comes in ..."

Paula listens happily to her husband's tale, but she never feels herself quite relax. She glances around at the others. Sarah is trying her best to look comfortable, but the effort is not producing the most convincing of results. Molly, Claire, and Jason are listening to the story almost too intently, as if trying not to focus on anything else.

"So Matt just comes into the kitchen and offers to help cook," Bill is saying. "And he was excellent! I was absolutely blown away. He stuck around all night and helped out."

"Matt doesn't exactly strike me as a culinary sorta guy," Jason says, looking over at Sarah.

She shrugs. "He surprised me, too, believe me."

"I'm thinking of offering him a job," Bill adds. "I was amazed. Sarah, did you really not know he could cook?"

"I had no idea."

"He was a great guy to work with. Do you think he'd be interested in a job?"

"He might be. He's not really doing anything serious right now."

The conversation tumbles into an awkward pause as they all become caught up in how bizarre the circumstances are. Paula realizes this and looks around, trying to come up with a shift for the discussion.

She can't ignore how glum Molly looks.

"Molly," she says. "Molly, dear, is everything all right?"

Molly looks up, a bit startled. "I'm fine."

"Are you sure? You're awfully quiet. Are you feeling all right?"

Molly's lips part, ready to spill out a weak excuse, when Sarah interrupts.

"Don't worry about her," Sarah says. Her voice reeks of bitterness, but she maintains an unsettling calm as she speaks. "I'm sure she's just off in la-la land obsessing over Brent yet again."

Paula is sure that she isn't the only one who feels the entire dinner come crashing to a halt.

END OF EPISODE #207

What did you think of Sarah's outburst? What do you think the truth about Molly and Brent will do to the Fisher family? Come share your feelings on this episode and on the series in general over at the Message Forum!

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