

## "Footprints"

### Episode #208

<Immediately After #207>

#### [Previously ...](#)

*\*At the Fishers' family dinner, Sarah silenced everyone with a remark about Molly obsessing over Brent.*

*\*Nick informed Ryan that their debt has been paid in full.*

*\*Andy, accompanied by Brent and Maggie, set out to convince Katherine of the truth about Nick.*

## FISHER HOME

It feels to Paula as if all the air has suddenly been sucked out of the room. Utensils are frozen in mid-air, open mouths have been left hanging and wordless, and the temperature feels as though it's dropped a good twenty degrees.

"What?" Paula asks, looking at Sarah. The eerie calm of her daughter's voice is still ringing in her ears.

"Nothing," Sarah says, offering a half-shrug. "I just said that maybe Molly's so quiet 'cause she's too busy obsessing over Brent." And she goes right back to work on her dinner.

Paula glances around at the rest of the family, as if they hold some sort of explanation, but her gaze passes right over Molly. It returns to Sarah as she asks, "What are you talking about?"

Sarah tips her head down the table, towards her sister. "Ask Molly."

Now Paula does look at her other daughter, but Molly's eyes escape before Paula's can grip onto them. Paula waits and in a few seconds, Molly does look up at her. And this time, Paula catches her with a questioning look.

Everything is static for a moment -- and then Molly scrambles out of her chair and out of the dining room.

Everyone else is left looking around, helpless and confused. They search one another, as if an explanation is to be found among them. But Sarah just follows Molly's path with her eyes, staring coldly after her sister.

Suddenly Claire pushes herself back from the table and begins to rise. "I'll go check on her," she says quickly, and she is gone.

She heads for the living room and takes a moment to figure out her path. Then she moves straight towards the entry.

She finds Molly sitting in a chair, staring intently at the front door. Her hands are folded together in her lap and the color has rushed away from her face.

"Molly," Claire says softly. "Are you all right?"

Molly nods hurriedly, still not looking at Claire. "I'm fine, yeah."

"Are you sure?"

There is a hesitation before Molly says, "Yeah." When Claire doesn't respond, she adds, "Go back in there."

Claire sighs, torn over how to deal with this. But she forces herself to choose a course of action and she kneels beside Molly.

"Look," she says, "I don't know what was going on back there with Sarah or why you ran out ... but from what I can see, it must be something pretty heavy." She waits for some sign of confirmation, but there is none.

"Molly, come on ... Why don't you tell me what's going on?"

## **FITCH MANSION**

Katherine tosses her head back in annoyance. "Oh, please! No more of this, Andrew."

"You're right," Andy says firmly. "There will be no more of this. Because I'm--we're--going to stop it right now." He looks back at Brent and Maggie for reassurance and they urge him onward with nods.

Katherine looks at him sideways, thrown by his steely determination.

"Please, Mrs. Fitch," Brent adds, "just listen to what your son has to say."

She hardens, ready to shoot Brent down, but holds herself back. She turns back to Andy, and though she won't give him the satisfaction of giving him the okay to continue, she is quiet long enough so that he gets the idea.

"I was doing some banking and I noticed that you transferred a significant amount of money out of one of the accounts," he says. "That interested me enough to make me look into where it had gone--"

"That's none of your business!" Katherine snaps.

"Yes, it is. I know that you moved that money into a joint account with Nick."

"So what? He is my husband, Andrew! I know you may not like it, but the least you can do is have enough respect to keep your nose out of our affairs."

"Are you really not connecting the dots here, Mother? Hasn't it at least crossed your mind that Nick might, just *might*, be after your money?"

Katherine's lips flap soundlessly several times before something is actually able to push past the outrage. "That's ridiculous! How dare you--"

"It's not so ridiculous, Mrs. Fitch," Brent says calmly.

She turns sharply to him, her nostrils flaring. "What are you talking about?"

"Your husband -- I have reason to believe that he may be dangerous."

"What?"

"Are you aware of his brushes with the law? Your husband has been under investigation a number of times in various jurisdictions, especially in the Chicago area."

"Under investigation? For what?" The outrage is still detectable in Katherine's voice, but it is quickly giving way to something else.

"A number of things," Brent says, injecting a touch of compassion into his professional tone. "Gambling, prostitution, drugs ... all of that."

"He's--he's been convicted?"

"Well--" Brent breaks momentarily. "No, he hasn't. But I believe that's more a matter of luck on his part than innocence."

He can see Katherine fumbling for a response. Devastation is scrawled all over her face, and she is trying desperately to hang onto the resistance that was so strong just minutes ago. Her focus trails down to the kitchen floor.

"Mrs. Fitch," Brent says. "I'm warning you, for your own good -- get out of this marriage before you get hurt again."

Now her attention snaps back to Brent. "Again?"

## **FITCH MANSION**

"You did it? It's paid completely?"

"In full," Nick answers with a satisfied grin.

Ryan breathes a heavy sigh of relief. "Oh! Oh, that is terrific." He brings his hands together in front of his mouth, staring straight ahead at nothing in particular as the good news continues to soak in.

"So how'd you do it?" he finally asks.

"I simply told Katherine that I'd received word of an exciting new investment opportunity and I needed some cash because my money was tied up elsewhere at the moment."

Ryan pauses, waiting for the rest of the story, and then flashes Nick a sideways glance. "That's it?"

"That's it." Nick sees the bafflement in Ryan's face and explains, "She didn't just hand me the money. That reminded her of how we'd discussed opening a joint account and she decided to go ahead and do it. It was easier than I thought it would be -- I was sure I'd have to do some prodding."

"Talk about easy, yeah." The younger man shakes his head in amazement. "I cannot believe you pulled this off! I--jeez, I never would have been able to swing this."

"Let's not start with that again, Ryan."

"I'm serious," Ryan says forcefully. His tone isn't aggressive, just frank. "I really don't think I could have managed something like this. Keeping those guys off of our backs for as long as you did and managing to get the money together -- it's impressive. But I don't think it's the type of thing I could handle."

Under his mustache, Nick is scowling. "You're still learning. This was the first time you've been involved in something this ... complex. It's not always going to seem so intimidating. This is business."

"I really don't know." Ryan pauses reflectively and then says, "Dad, I am thrilled that we got out of this as well as we did. But you were the one who did it. And the fact that we were able to get out of it just tells me that I need to quit with this stuff while I'm ahead."

"Ryan--"

"I really mean it. I think I'm going to go legit."

## FISHER HOME

"It--it's nothing," Molly stammers. "I think--I don't know, it's just Sarah being Sarah, and--"

"That was a strange thing for her to say," Claire says softly, placing a hand gently on Molly's forearm.

Molly doesn't say anything.

"Did something happen?" Claire asks after a moment of jumbled thought. "Something with you and Brent?"

"It's--" Molly's explanation is headed nowhere, and it ends with a deep sigh. She waits, gathering herself, and finally says, "Things are really ugly between Sarah and Brent right now. A lot has happened -- and Sarah is really looking for someone to blame. She doesn't want their marriage to end."

Claire tries to read Molly's face. She can tell that something is definitely there -- twisted though it is, it's there, and it's swirling not far beneath the surface.

"Molly," she says. "If something happened--"

"Brent and I are friends!" Molly snaps, her head whipping to the side so that she can face Claire. "Sarah is jealous of that! That's it. Just leave it alone."

Not completely satisfied, Claire continues to study her for a few more seconds, but then backs away and rises to her feet.

"I'm fine," Molly insists. Her gaze has refocused on the door. "Things are just tense with Sarah and Brent, and I feel caught in the middle. That's all."

Claire nods, though it is more in acceptance of the fact that Molly doesn't want to discuss it now than anything else.

## **FITCH MANSION**

"What do you mean, again?" Katherine asks Brent.

"I--" Brent stops himself, realizing that he may have said too much. He tries to determine how much information he wants to share with Katherine -- and, by extension, maybe Nick -- in trying to help Andy.

"I don't know if you were ever fully apprised of the investigation that we conducted into your shooting last year," he says finally. He speaks slowly, clearly proceeding with care.

Katherine shakes her head slightly. "Not especially, no. I woke up so long after the actual incident -- all I was told was that the investigation hadn't turned up anything conclusive."

"That's true," Brent acknowledges. "But we had--we have--a strong focus throughout the investigation ... Your husband."

"What?" Katherine explodes. "That's insane! Nick was right there with me when it happened!"

"I'm not suggesting that he orchestrated anything. But what we've learned--" He pauses, choosing his path in a split-second. "What we've learned is that your husband's business dealings may have led to your shooting."

"Nonsense! This is absolute nonsense!" she cries, without the slightest hint of hesitation.

"It's not," Brent says, trying to maintain a professional calm. "We think that either he was the intended target, or you were shot as a warning to him."

"I'm not going to stand here and listen to this!" She whips around and begins storming out of the room.

"Mrs. Fitch, wait!"

Katherine stops at Maggie's call.

"I know that my place in all this is removed, at best," Maggie says. "But I was here on New Year's Eve when your son was racing to stop your wedding. And when you went

through with it anyway -- I saw the way his heart broke. We stayed up the whole night and he told me all about how things had gone wrong and how he just wanted to fix his relationship with you."

She pauses, allowing the words to hit Katherine and trying to figure out what she is going to say next. It isn't hard: Thoughts are spilling out onto her tongue faster than she can make sense of them.

"I know that you must have deep feelings for your husband," she continues. "But from what he's told me, I can tell that you love your son very much. And I can tell that he loves you. That's why ..." She draws a deep breath and then exhales slowly. "I'm asking you to please, please listen to what Andy and Brent have to say. All Andy wants is to protect you and to see you happy."

Her shoulders drop as she concludes, as the tension of standing up to Katherine begins to fall away.

As for Katherine, she doesn't say anything in response. She simply turns and walks from the room, although this exit is a more somber one than the last attempt.

Andy, Brent, and Maggie stand in silence for a moment, and then Andy turns to Maggie.

"Thank you," he says. "I--You didn't have to do that."

"I just thought she had to hear it," Maggie shrugs, now a little bit embarrassed.

"Well, thank you." Andy slides an arm around her shoulders.

Maggie huddles closer to his body and then says, "I just hope it works."

## **FITCH MANSION**

"No! Absolutely not!" Nick cries out.

"Why not?" Ryan looks like a child who has just been told that he can't have a sleepover with a friend.

"Because! Ryan, I need your help. I'm not exactly young anymore. I need to be sure I have someone to step in for me when the time comes."

"Why? Dad, if you're--if you're dead, is it really going to matter whether or not someone

carries on for you?"

Nick doesn't even hesitate. "Yes! I have invested my life in this. I don't want everything I've worked for to fall apart."

Ryan's voice climbs in volume. "What is it going to matter?"

"Because it does!" Nick fires back. Then he suddenly gets much quieter. "And I want you to be successful. I want to know that you'll do okay."

"I can be successful in a regular job!"

"Maybe. But we don't know that. I don't know that you'd do so well having to play by those rules, Ryan. But this--you can handle this."

"No, I can't! Haven't you heard anything I've said?"

Nick is about to ride right along with the flow of the argument when a thought strikes him. "Does this have anything to do with Claire?"

Clearly caught off-guard, Ryan responds with a perplexed look -- which, to Nick, looks a little bit forced.

"You're so busy trying to convince her that you've changed, that you're worthy, all that nonsense," Nick says. "Is this part of that?"

"No!" Ryan insists, though he isn't able to say it as easily as he would like. "This is about me. I'm ... What am I? I'm pathetic! I shouldn't be living like some 20 year old kid trying to follow in Daddy's footsteps. I'm a grown man and I would like to feel like it at some point!"

Nick huffs into his mustache. He turns to face the window and looks out of it absently, following two men as they climb into a gray car out on the street.

"Ryan," he says gently, "if you want a bigger part in things, then--"

"I don't want *any* part of it! Don't you understand that?"

Nick wants to come back with something sharp, but something in his head won't let him. There's something hanging ... a loose thread ... like something isn't right.

"Dad? What is it?"

Nick just keeps staring out of the window, thinking. He watches the gray car take off down the street and away from the mansion.

"Dad?"

"We've got to get out of here," Nick says suddenly, already moving for the study door.

"What?" Ryan watches Nick's growing anxiety. "What are you talking about?"

"Come on," Nick says, pulling Ryan out of the room. "We need to find Katherine."

And that's when they hear the scream.

"Fire!" Katherine screams from somewhere on the second story. "The house is on fire!"

## **END OF EPISODE #208**

*Do you think Katherine will listen to what Andy, Brent, and Maggie had to say? What might this fire mean for the Morianis and Fitches? Share your thoughts over at the Message Forum!*

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