

"Footprints" Episode #214

[Previously ...](#)

**Andy was devastated when Katherine chose to go home with Nick after the fire.*

**Ryan wondered why Nick wanted him to find out about Brent's condition.*

**During a meeting with their lawyers, Claire and Diane each vowed to fight for custody of Samantha.*

**Molly raced home from the hospital and ran into Jason. She told him how Sarah hired a guard to keep her out of Brent's room.*

MORIANI HOME

Andy's hand cracks the knocker against the front door several times in rapid fire. As he waits for an answer, he again gazes up at the sprawling house. If ever there were a house more suited to a brass knocker instead of a doorbell, it's this one; there's something about the place that is just ... creepy.

A wave of relief washes over him when the door opens and he sees his mother's face. He was dreading coming here and having to face either Nick or Ryan right now.

"Hello," he says coolly.

"Hello." Katherine seems much more reserved than usual. Andy has grown accustomed to her greeting him with open arms each time he visits, hoping that he had given up his objections to her marriage and his residual anger towards her. But her reaction now is anything but enthusiastic.

"Are you busy?" he asks after a silent stutter in the conversation.

"No, no," she says. "Would you like to come in?" As if reading his mind, she adds, "Nick and Ryan just went out."

Andy glances up again at the house. "Sure."

He follows her inside and into the living room, which is just off to the right of the foyer. The decor is precisely what he would have expected from Nick: Dark, muted colors, obviously expensive but not at all interesting. Andy can't picture his mother being at home here.

"You didn't bring your friend along this time?" Katherine asks.

It takes him a moment to realize what she is talking about. "Maggie? No. She had to

head back to Seattle."

"She's from Seattle?" Katherine stands behind a leather burgundy lounge, brushing her hands along its top.

"Yes. She was in King's Bay for business. She's an architect."

"Oh, really?" The cheery but flat interest in Katherine's voice is confusing to Andy. It's almost as though she is trying to pretend that none of what has happened actually happened.

"Then I suppose it's not serious between the two of you," she says. Then, almost as an afterthought: "Is it?"

Andy eyes her with wary confusion but then softens the look as he answers, "No, it's--I'm not sure what it is, actually."

"But you are interested in her?"

"I--" He stops with a huff. "Mother, I didn't come here to discuss Maggie."

Palms held out in front of her, she shrugs. "I'm simply curious about your life, Andrew. Can't we have a regular mother-son conversation for once?"

"I would love to," Andy says, stepping into the center of the room. "I would love to. But I think we need to get back to a regular mother-son relationship first, no?"

Katherine stiffens. "I don't see anything keeping us from that."

"Of course you don't. Because you don't want to."

"I haven't changed my mind about Nick. So until you get over this fixation--"

Andy moves closer to her. "Mother, do you understand the severity of what Brent told you the other night? Do you understand that you are married to a man--" He pauses, glancing around the house instinctively before he begins to speak ill of its owner. "You are married to a man who may very well be responsible for your nearly being killed. And it could very easily happen again."

"Andrew--"

"No! I am not going to have this conversation with you again and again and continue to

wind up back at square one. I am not stopping until my point is made, and I am getting tired of repeating myself!"

The force with which he speaks rattles Katherine. She only swallows in response.

"Did you hear what Brent had to tell you the other night? Nick was a close friend and most likely a business associate of James Robbins, who was definitely involved in organized crime. And do you remember hearing about Tim Fisher's death? He was my friend, Mother. And he died because he was trying to help his wife and me prove what Nick is involved in."

Still Katherine says nothing, though she seems to be shrinking before Andy.

He leans in closer. "Nick has ruined life after life. He's not going to stop until he's completely ruined yours, too!"

WINDMILLS

The restaurant is decidedly less formal than it is during the dinner hour, thanks primarily to the absence of evening dresses and suits. But the touches of glass spread throughout the dining room's decor and the textured beige paint on the walls help maintain an air of sophistication for the customers who have elected to have lunch here today.

Nick and Ryan are settled in at a table towards the center of the dining room. Ryan can tell that the position is not to Nick's liking: He has always preferred to sit near a wall or a corner. In fact, Ryan was surprised when they were seated here that Nick didn't ask to be moved.

"So what's going on?" Ryan asks, placing his drink back on the table.

Surprised, Nick says, "Going on? Nothing. I just thought it would be nice to have lunch out. I know it must be a little strange for you having Katherine in the house lately--"

"Drop it, Dad."

"What?"

"Cut it. Something is going on. I know there's a reason you wanted to take me out to eat. You're acting all ... shifty. So what is it?"

For a moment Nick gives no response. He glances down at the table and brings his drink to his lips for a prolonged sip. Then he sets it down with extra care and seems to ponder

it.

"Dad--"

"All right," Nick says finally. "You're right. There is something I want to discuss -- or at least, something I need to discuss with you. I didn't want to do it at the house."

Ryan waits for more, but nothing is forthcoming. "I presume this has something to do with the fire."

A much more genuine look of surprise than the one before is suddenly splashed across Nick's face.

"Come on," Ryan says. "I can tell the whole thing makes you uncomfortable. You asked me to go check on Brent Taylor in the hospital. And I haven't forgotten the way you were acting before the fire broke out."

Nick draws in an excessive amount of air and then releases it very slowly. Ryan is about to take hold of the conversation when Nick speaks up.

"Very perceptive, Ryan. You're right ... this is about the fire."

"What about it?" Ryan asks, unconsciously leaning in closer.

"There's something you need to know about it. Something that I trust will be kept between us." Nick goes back for another slug of his drink, then exhales deeply. Finally he forces it out. "I knew that the fire was going to happen."

FISHER HOME

The afternoon sun is hot on Claire's bare arms as she settles into the lawnchair. She sits herself in a comfortable position and then reaches for the iced tea that she placed on the small table standing between her chair and Paula's.

"It looks great out here," Claire says, gesturing out at Paula's garden.

Paula nods slightly. "Thank you. I've been putting a lot of time and energy into over the last few months." She pauses, clearly thinking, and then says, "After we lost Tim, I could hardly wait for the spring to come. I wanted so badly to be out here arranging everything and watching it all come alive."

"Has it helped?"

"I think it has ... Apparently crawling around in dirt is therapeutic," the older woman muses with a chuckle.

Claire smiles but it fades quickly. "I wish I had something like that. It would be nice to get lost in an activity or hobby or something and just try to forget everything. Especially when it feels like things just keep piling up."

Paula detects the lead in Claire's voice. "I thought things were beginning to calm down for you," she says, waiting for the contradiction.

"Ever so briefly." Claire sighs. "Something else has come up these last few weeks, Paula. Something bad."

"Oh no. What is it?"

"Diane. I had my lawyer contact her to tell her about Tim -- I couldn't do it myself. A few weeks ago she showed up at my door demanding to see Samantha."

"Oh, dear."

"Yep. It was typical Diane, too. She wanted me to wake Samantha up from a nap and hand her over right then and there. I refused, obviously. So now we're falling into this whole legal mess."

Dread swims over Paula's face. "Diane is suing for custody?"

"Uh-huh. She's out for blood, I swear. That woman is like--God, I don't even know. She's just so determined to get Samantha away from me."

"You'll contest her, I hope."

"Of course. The thing is ..." Claire's gaze drops. She ponders the ground for a moment and then lifts her head. "I know that Travis and I are Samantha's real family. She loves Diane, but it's different than it is with me. I *am* her mother. Her time with Diane is like ... it's special time. I'm the one who deals with all the little day-to-day things."

It is obvious to Paula that there is more coming, so she just listens.

"But I'm worried," Claire continues. "I'm worried that none of that is going to matter just because Diane is her biological mother. They're going to take away my daughter on a

technicality."

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

"Jason!"

Sarah's breath catches in her throat as she watches her younger brother storm into the room. She can see clearly in him an intensity that is very rare for Jason, and it panics her.

"What's going on?" she asks, her voice thinning with anxiety as Jason marches right over to Brent's bedside.

"We need to talk," he says roughly, his face just inches from hers.

Sarah doesn't say anything. He can tell that she knows where this is going.

"What is going through your head?" he demands. "Posting a guard to keep Molly away from Brent? Don't you think that's going a little far?"

She wavers for a moment but then looks him straight in the eye. "No. I'm doing what's best for my husband and my marriage."

His mouth open, Jason just stares at her. Finally he marvels, "Listen to yourself! You sound like--like a total maniac!"

The accusation definitely hits Sarah hard. When she speaks, she is on the defensive. "Why should I let Molly see Brent?"

"Why *shouldn't* you?"

"Because--" The truth, suppressed for so long, instinctively bottles itself again, but Sarah releases it. "Because she's obsessed with him! It's not healthy and it's not going to help Brent and me get our marriage back together!"

Jason inserts a pause before even attempting to speak again, trying to discern how the battle between his sisters could have escalated to this point and how he can be caught in the middle of it.

"Did she send you to change my mind?" Sarah asks. "Tell her it's not going to work. I know what she's trying to do and I'm not going to let her get away with it any longer."

She strokes Brent's arm absently -- completely oblivious to the fluttering of his eyelids.

MORIANI HOME

"Are you going to say anything, Mother?"

Katherine's gaze rises and meets Andy's. For a moment he becomes lost in the almost hypnotic green of her eyes: The eyes that soothed him as a little boy, that twinkled with every victory along his road to adulthood. And he is certain that he can still see the mother he once knew in there.

"I-I don't know what to say," Katherine admits at last. "You've just continued to toss all of this information at me, and ... I'm not certain what to make of it."

"You can't tell me that you're going to dismiss everything Brent and I have told you."

"No. No, I can't." She pauses, teetering on the brink of something. "You have given me a lot to consider. I'm beginning to think that perhaps I did rush into marrying Nick."

Andy's sigh of relief is great. "Finally--"

"However," she says firmly, lifting a palm to halt his celebration, "if there is one thing I know for certain, it's that Nick does love me. He risked his life for me, Andrew, even after I insisted that he save himself. That speaks volumes about how important we are to one another."

Just as the weight seemed to slip from Andy's shoulders seconds ago, now it returns to crush him.

"Perhaps I was foolish not to learn more about his past," Katherine continues. "But we can work through that. Nick would never allow any harm to come to me, I know that."

Suddenly Andy's frustration twists itself into fury. "Why are you being so stubborn?" he blasts. "Why won't you accept what I'm trying to do?"

"Because I know what you're trying to do! You're trying to--to sabotage Nick because you feel guilty about abandoning me for Danielle! You're trying to make everything right by turning back time."

"That is not true!"

"It's far truer than you want to acknowledge," Katherine says. "You refuse to admit that you made a mistake with Danielle, so you're trying to make Nick the problem!"

The wild wheel of emotions that is rocking Andy finally settles on weariness. He doesn't have this argument in him, not now.

"As you wish, Mother," he says. He makes a beeline for the foyer and hears Katherine tailing him. He opens the front door and then turns back. "I'm only trying to protect you," he offers weakly as he slips out of the house.

Katherine stands, arms folded, as her son pulls the door closed behind him and disappears.

WINDMILLS

Ryan's fingers slip from his glass, which thankfully is only millimeters above the table's surface. It thumps back down and Ryan's fingers move uncertainly to the edge of the table. "You what? You knew?"

"Yes," Nick says. He recognizes the horror building in Ryan's expression and adds, "I didn't plan the fire, Ryan. I didn't know that anything was going to happen until moments before it did."

"Huh?"

"Do you remember how I panicked suddenly? It was right after I looked out the window. Something caught my eye -- a car. I saw some men walking away from the house and getting into it."

Ryan clearly doesn't follow. "And?"

"They were Esposito's guys, I'm sure. He set the house on fire. It wasn't enough that I finally paid the money -- he still wanted to have his fun and make what he thought was a very important point."

"Esposito burned the house down?" Ryan asks in amazement. "That--it doesn't make sense. Why would he have a house set on fire? It would be easy enough for the cops to trace it back to him if they started digging, wouldn't it?"

"He's counting on me not letting it get that far," Nick says. "And I suppose he's right. If they start digging, they're going to realize that we were knee-deep in debt thanks to a not-so-legal arrangement. I'm sure he's got it covered on his end somehow anyway,

but ... the point is that I'd be exposed in the process. I think."

"This is insane."

"It is," Nick agrees, rubbing one temple with his forefinger. "But that's why we have to hope Brent Taylor comes out of this all right. The less damage done to him, the better. That way he'll forget about it and move on. The last thing we need is the police commander holding a grudge against us."

FISHER HOME

"No, they won't," Paula says firmly.

Claire is already shaking her head. "How do you know that?"

"Because God wouldn't do that to us. He wouldn't take another loved one away from us."

The mention of religion quiets Claire. It was never a significant part of her life growing up and she never took the initiative to become more religious as an adult, but Paula's reliance on it has always fascinated her. She finds herself hoping that it's true, that someone really is watching over and taking care of them.

Somehow she finds it difficult to accept.

"You are a better mother than Diane, you said that much yourself," Paula says. "Any judge will see that. You have to believe that."

Claire's stare is focused straight ahead, at the sprinkling of colors that fills the garden. Somehow it all seems so organized, so cheerful. Just the opposite of everything in her life.

"I want to," she says. "I've been trying to tell myself that Diane is no threat. But after the meeting we had the other day -- it hit me what an actual possibility this is. I can't ignore that."

"Of course not. But it's a possibility, that's all. It hasn't happened and it won't. I'm sure of it."

This isn't the reaction that Claire expected from Paula and it is unsettling her. She had been hoping to have someone with whom she could worry. The words of inspiration aren't making her feel better -- just more alone.

KING'S BAY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

"Molly didn't send me to do anything," Jason says. "She came home and told me what had happened -- what you did. I was the one who decided to come see you."

"So what are you trying to get me to do? Admit I'm wrong?" Sarah squeezes Brent's arm unconsciously. "I won't do it, Jason. I'm not wrong. Molly's the one who caused the problems."

Jason folds his hands in front of his mouth. He exhales deeply and then speaks. "Look, I know Molly's probably not totally innocent here. But I also know that she hasn't done anything deliberate to interfere in your marriage. You and Brent had plenty of problems by yourselves."

"The problems come from her, don't you realize that? If Molly would just go away -- everything would be fine."

"That's not true, Sarah."

"Yes, it is!" Sarah fires back, upping the volume of the confrontation several notches. "I don't regret blocking her from this room, not one bit. I've had the chance to sit with Brent, to talk to him ... I never would've been able to do that with her floating around. For the first time in a long while I feel a little bit optimistic about my marriage. I'm damn happy I had Molly kept out of here!"

Jason is about to respond when he glances down casually -- and realizes that Brent's eyes are open.

"Brent," he says lightly.

Confusion and a pang of nervousness rattle Sarah. "What?"

"He -- look." Jason points to the bed and Sarah turns, expecting to see something horrible. But it's not something horrible -- it's the miracle for which she has been waiting. Brent is awake.

She smiles warmly at him, squeezing his arm again. But his reaction tells her that something horrible has just happened. There is no warmth in his face and his flesh feels cold now beneath her fingers.

He heard.

END OF EPISODE #214

How will Brent react to Sarah's scheme? What did you think of Nick's admission? Come on over to the Message Forum and share your thoughts!

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