

## "Footprints" Episode #229

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

\*While Molly struggled with her feelings for Brent and her guilt over hurting Sarah, Brent admitted to Danielle that he knows he and Molly can never be together.

\*Stan was intrigued to spy Claire in King's Bay.

\*Andy left town to pursue a new career and a relationship with Maggie.

\*Nick tried to assuage Katherine's doubts about his reasons for marrying her.

### **BRENT TAYLOR'S APARTMENT**

"Well, well, well," Brent says as he holds open the door. "Look what we have here."

"That disgusted to see me, huh?" Molly smiles broadly as she comes into the apartment.

"You got me." Brent closes the door and locks it -- taking extra care with his lightly bandaged hands. Her first instinct is to step forward and do it for him, but she knows he wouldn't want that at all.

Brent turns around and folds his arms in front of him, and for a moment silence sweeps by them. "You look great," he says finally. "You, uh, go on a shopping spree? This looks like a new ensemble you've got going there."

"But of course." Arms held out to the side, she does a turn to show off the new acquisitions. "C'mon, winter's coming. I've gotta keep up, right?"

"Well, yeah," Brent says. "I know *I* wouldn't want to be caught dead in something from last season." A look of mock horror seizes his face. "Can you *imagine*?"

"Shut up," she says with a laugh. The silence revisits them briefly as the tone shifts. "You look pretty good yourself."

He holds up his hands as a sort of protest. "The gauze look is back in this winter?"

"You know what I mean. You look healthier. Having to have your hands bandaged isn't that bad, is it?"

"Considering that I could be dead, no. But ... what a pain in the ass. I really don't like having to be super-careful with *everything* I do."

"Is there still stuff you need help with? Just because Danielle went home doesn't mean

you need to be Superman."

"I'm not being Superman," he replies curtly. "I just want to be able to do normal things without having to worry about them."

She considers what she is going to say for a long moment before actually letting it out. "What you need is a distraction. We need to think of a way to cheer you up."

"Having you here will do the trick, I'm pretty sure," he smirks. Their gazes latch onto one another and hang there, and Molly is sure that she feels that long-absent but always-remembered buzz of electricity shooting through the air.

"It would've be nice to see you a little more the last few weeks," she says abruptly. "But seeing as how I was banned from visiting you in the hospital ..."

"Yeah, what a freaking stunt that was. Just thinking about it absolutely sends me through the roof." And he's speaking the truth -- already his cheeks are growing redder.

"At least she didn't get away with it for too long. You woke up at quite the opportune time."

"Yeah, chalk one up for good luck." A temporary smile flashes across Brent's face. It fades as quickly as it came and his demeanor becomes much more serious. "Listen, there's something going on, and I want you to hear about it first."

## **MORIANI HOME**

His footsteps fall harder and harder on the wooden floor as they near the front door. The second ring of the doorbell makes the steps hit even more roughly, and by the time they reach the door, it's a wonder they haven't pounded their imprints into the floor.

Opening the door does nothing to ease him. "What do you want?" he asks, significantly less surprised that this meeting is occurring than he had imagined he'd be.

"Jeez, nice to see you, too, Nick," Stan says, rolling his eyes.

"I would apologize -- if you were someone actually worthy of respect."

"I see you're keeping up in the class department, huh? Look, I just wanna see Ryan. Can you get him for me?"

"He's not here," Nick snaps. There is a note of satisfaction in his voice. "So scram."

"Not so quick." Stan cuts into the doorway before Nick can close him out in the dreary autumn day. "Maybe you can answer my question."

"What question?"

"I was walking downtown the other day and I happened to see somethin' awfully interesting. Or someone, I should say -- Claire Robbins."

Something that Stan cannot discern moves over Nick, who suddenly seems a lot more troubled.

"Did you and Ry know she was here?" Stan asks. "Is there somethin' going on with the two of them -- her and Ry, I mean?"

"You'd think a real father might actually know something like that about his son, wouldn't you?"

Nick sees what he is sure is a surge of embarrassment swell in the other man's face, and Stan falls quiet. Finally he stammers, "It's just a question, okay? Answer it."

Nick sighs deeply, clearly taking as much time as possible before granting Stan the privilege of having his inquiry answered. "Yes, we did know she was here. But no, thankfully, nothing is going on between them. They see each other occasionally, but they aren't involved, or whatever you'd call it."

"There ya go. Not so hard, huh?" Stan shakes his head. "Damn, never thought the two of them would still be seein' each other after all this time. She dropped him like a hot potato back when they were kids. He was a mess."

That same confusing cloud darkens Nick's expression again. "Why do you care, Stan? Are you out to do some more damage to Ryan? Is that why you've been lurking around again?"

Again, embarrassment threatens to swallow Stan -- but in a flash, rage forces it aside. "What the hell? First Ryan, now you! What's with all the accusing? Is there somethin' I'm missing?"

## **MORIANI HOME**

The envelope is practically searing through Katherine's hand by the time she removes the

letter opener from the desk drawer. When she saw it downstairs in the pile of mail, when she saw that handwriting -- even without a return address anywhere in sight -- she had to read it right away. And that seemed like something better done in private.

The trek up the stairs, down the hallway, and into the study was an excruciating one, as the letter grew hotter and hotter in her hands. Now she can barely control herself in slicing the envelope open.

Her anxious fingers unfold the letter clumsily. What is this about? The Seattle postmark seems strange, and noticing it has sent her heart racing even more.

The familiar handwriting spreads out before her as her hands get a grip on the piece of paper. Her eyes are devouring the words desperately before she even realizes it ...

*Left King's Bay.*

*Couldn't even face you.*

*Will be in touch later.*

*A fresh beginning - hopefully for both of us.*

She picks out clips and phrases, reading them over and over, as if doing so will change the words somehow. But the message of the letter is painfully clear: Andy is gone.

*I drove him away, her minds gasps. This is all because he found out about what I did to Danielle ... and now I don't even really know where my son is or what he is doing.*

"I've lost him," she murmurs, clutching the piece of paper, the only remnant she has left of her son right now, tightly to her chest. "I've really lost him."

## **BRENT TAYLOR'S APARTMENT**

Molly's head tips with concern. "What? Is everything okay?"

"Yeah. Yeah, of course." Brent folds his hands together, rubbing the bandages against each other. "It's the divorce -- I'm going ahead with it. Sarah's getting the papers as soon as possible."

Molly feels a strange wash of relief at the news. "Good for you," she manages, still working through the news in her head. "That's really going to be best, for both of you."

"I think so. It should've happened months ago. Then maybe that whole fiasco in the hospital wouldn't have had to happen."

"Maybe." Molly's slow steps carry her to a shelf next to the entertainment center. There are a handful of framed pictures there: Brent, Danielle, and Josh with their father when they were much younger. Josh's high school graduation picture. Brent with his father at his wedding ... but no pictures of Sarah from that day.

"Maybe this had to happen," Molly says, still pulling her focus away from the pictures. "To really make it clear that it had to end."

Brent seems reluctant to accept that. "Yeah. Could be."

"Seriously. Sarah was fighting the divorce so hard when you tried to bring it up before. Maybe now she'll at least realize it's for the best."

"I hope so. I really do." Brent's chest inflates with an enormous breath and then relaxes as he lets it all out. "This needs to stop. It's been dragging on forever. It's not good for her. It's not good for either of us. It's like I'm stuck in this gigantic rut and I need to haul myself out of it."

"Yeah, tell me about ruts ..."

"What?"

"I know exactly what you mean. I feel like I'm just ... stuck."

"In what sense?"

"In ..." She glances up at him and their eyes catch again. Molly jerks away quickly, almost immediately. "Everything. My personal life. My job. Everything. For goodness' sake, Brent, I'm almost thirty years old and I'm still living with my parents!"

He ponders that for a few seconds. "So move out. It's not like you don't have the money."

"True." With a shake of the head, she lets her whole body drop down onto the couch. "I think I'm avoiding it, I really do."

"Avoiding it?"

"Yeah. If I move out now -- if I put myself back in my own apartment and get back into a

routine that's totally my own -- it's like ... I don't know ... like picking a track for my life. That's going to be the way the rest of my life goes. At least being at my parents' is like limbo. I can keep putting it off."

"I can see what you mean." He eases down onto the couch beside her. "So what would it take to make you feel like you were on the right track -- the track you want to be on?"

"Changes. Lots of 'em," she says wearily, as if the very thought exhausts her.

"Like ... ?"

"Like work. This is not the job I want, Brent. Remember that awesome job I had before the whole Craig thing? That job was my *dream*. Or at least it was a stepping stone to my dream. Working at Willis is like--it's like sitting down at the beginning of some absolutely random path and not caring where it's headed because I have no intention of following it anyway."

"So go for it."

"Easier said than done."

"No, seriously. You've got your parents, so you've got room to go out on a limb." He pauses, meeting Molly's eyes again to convince her that he's not speaking nonsense. "If you want to work in fashion, go for it. Look for a job. If it's meant to be, it'll happen, and if not, at least you'll know that."

"Yeah. You're right." A new light is dawning over her face, as though she's never quite thought of it this way before, and suddenly it all makes sense. "Thanks. I needed to hear that from someone."

He shrugs as the grin returns. "There's nothing I'm good for if not a swift kick in the pants."

"I guess so," she says, her smile radiating as they lapse into a comfortable silence. Just a few words have made everything seem so much freer, so much more possible. Brent was able to do that for her for so long.

Only now is she realizing just how much she has missed that. And missed him.

## MORIANI HOME

"C'mon, Nick, what the hell's the problem?" Stan barks. The weathered skin of his face

tightens into angry bunches. "You 'n' Ryan've both been treating me like I did somethin' horrible. What gives?"

*You raped his girlfriend!* Nick's mind shouts. His boiling blood is reaching fever pitch now. *You animal!* he wants to scream at Stan. *How can you not even remember ruining your own son's life?*

Maybe he really does remember and he's merely pretending otherwise. Maybe the event has blurred together with all the rest of Stan's drunken tirades. Regardless, it takes an unbelievable amount of willpower for Nick to restrain himself from giving Stan the straight truth.

"I'm not going to get into this with you," Nick says, clinging to an uneasy calm. "Just get out of here."

Nick moves to shut the door, but Stan blocks him easily.

"Not so fast, Moriani. You can't keep me away from my own kid like this."

"I'm not keeping you away from him. I don't want to deal with you right now, and he's not here. But frankly, you don't deserve to see him. Ryan would be better off if you'd stop popping up to meddle in his life."

Nick watches the other man's hands contract into fists, but they stay down by his sides as Stan says, "Fine. Stay up there on your Father of the Year highhorse. I'm not gonna disappear just 'cuz you want me to. Don't be putting words in Ryan's mouth."

"I'm through dealing with you, Stan! Get the hell out of my face or, I swear to God, you'll regret it!" Nick slams the door closed.

On the other side, Stan raises a fist to pound on the door, but drops it before he does. He's not going to get anywhere now. He'd do better to come back at a time when Ryan is here -- that's why he came by, anyway.

"Who the hell do you think you are, Moriani?" Stan mutters as he trails back down the driveway. "You're not gonna get away with treating me like this."

## **MORIANI HOME**

"I'm through dealing with you, Stan! Get the hell out of my face or, I swear to God, you'll regret it!"

Katherine hears her husband's voice come rumbling up from the foyer as she descends the staircase. An infuriated slam of the door follows, forceful enough to make her pause on the stairs.

After a stretch of quiet, she resumes walking. At the bottom of the staircase, she finds Nick standing by the door. His breathing is heavy and his eyes stony; underneath his silver mustache, his lips are clenched together in anger.

"What's the matter, dear?" Katherine asks, taking a first step onto the hardwood floor. She finds that her voice comes more tentatively than she would have imagined.

Seeing her there appears to startle Nick, but only momentarily. "Nothing," he replies quickly. "It's nothing."

"Who was that man?" she asks despite the building tension in her chest. "You sounded rather upset--"

"I told you, it's nothing. You don't need to worry about it."

Before Katherine can say anything else, he is gone. He walks slowly towards the kitchen, as though leaving behind his wife is simply another part of leaving behind whatever altercation just occurred with that man.

*Who was that?* Katherine wonders, wanting to follow him and push for more information but knowing that she will get nothing but more dead-end responses. Warnings from her son, from Brent Taylor, the memory of questioning Nick over dinner and receiving his calm reassurances -- it all comes rushing back to her now.

Tightening her grip on the letter from Andrew, she turns and makes her way back upstairs, back to the study. She reads the letter again, all hope of being able to discuss it forgotten for now.

But focusing on the words, even though they've become quite familiar to her in the last half-an-hour, is much more difficult than she would have imagined. Her head is clouded with questions and musings ... and with her own doubt.

*Who was that man?* she wonders again as an unexpected shiver rattles her body.

## **END OF EPISODE #229**

*Is Katherine and Nick's marriage doomed? What does Stan have up his sleeve? Can Molly and Brent ever be happy together? Your thoughts are welcome over in the [Message Forum!](#)*

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