

"Footprints" Episode #240

[Previously ...](#)

- Katherine spied Nick arguing with Stan and wondered that her husband was having a dispute with someone from the mob.*
- Ryan insisted to Claire that he hadn't sent Stan after her.*
- Molly and Brent decided that they cannot pursue a relationship at this point because of the circumstances.*
- Sarah was confused when Paula began to ask her for a favor but then backed off without naming the favor.*

MORIANI HOME

"One year," Katherine says cheerfully as she and Nick clink their glasses together. The slight impact brings the champagne to life and the bubbles jump about, giving the amber liquid a little extra sparkle as the couple drinks.

Nick brings the glass away from his lips slowly. "Do you remember when a year seemed like such a long time?"

"I do," Katherine marvels. "Now it seems almost ... insignificant."

"A year of marriage is nothing to sneeze at."

"No, of course not. But to think that I was married to Raymond for so many years -- that I had my son so many years ago -- it makes one year seem so small."

"I think that means we're getting old," Nick chuckles.

Katherine joins in with light laughter. "No need to remind me, dear." She grows quiet and looks down into the champagne. "Happy anniversary, Nick."

"Happy anniversary, Katherine. May we celebrate many more."

They drink again, and neither sees Ryan enter the kitchen.

"Having a party without me?" he says to announce his presence. "Please, I'm hurt."

"Here, have a glass of champagne," Nick says, choosing not to acknowledge the sarcasm. He sets his glass down to pour one for his son.

"Thanks." Ryan takes the glass from him. "Happy anniversary, you two."

"Thank you, Ryan," Katherine smiles, though it lasts only a moment. Something else drifts over her.

The change is visible to Nick. "What's the matter?"

"I was thinking how nice it would be if Andrew were here to celebrate with us," she says, then quickly adds, "Nevermind, I'm just getting sentimental."

"No, you're entitled. It would be nice if he had enough respect for your decisions to be happy for you." Nick shakes his head in disappointment.

Katherine raises her glass back to her lips and it lingers there. "Perhaps the new year will bring a new beginning for him and me."

"It's possible," Nick says, though his tone makes it clear that he's not so sure about that. "I think we all could use a new beginning. God knows we've dealt with enough this year."

Katherine doesn't see the brief, knowing look that is exchanged between her husband and Ryan.

"Yeah, some year," Ryan mutters into the top of his glass. He spins off into thought as Nick and Katherine continue talking.

Suddenly he puts down his champagne. "I'm going out."

Nick looks at him like he is crazy. "What? Where? You're going to miss the countdown to midnight."

"I have something I need to take care of," Ryan calls out as he leaves the room.

Nick and Katherine share a baffled look as they listen to the front door open and close.

FISHER HOME

"This is certainly a little different from all the New Year's Eves we've had lately," Sarah says as she leans back on the sofa.

"I think that's the point," Bill says from the other couch. "After everything that happened

last year ... having the party seemed a little inappropriate."

"I'd rather we were all here, together, anyway," Paula offers as she enters with a refreshed platter of snacks. She sets it down on the coffee table. "If there's one thing we've all learned in the last year, it's that what we have here is what's truly important."

Murmurs of agreement spring up from around the room, though Paula misses the quick look that goes between Jason and Sarah. They can't completely ignore the corniness of their mother's sentiment.

A question has been burning on Sarah's brain all night, and now she has to ask it. "Hey, speaking of being together ... where's Molly?"

The air in the room seems to grow a little tighter. Bill answers as casually as possible, "She wanted to spend the night getting settled into the new apartment. She said that if she got enough done and she didn't pass out before midnight, she'd try to come over."

The explanation is enough for Sarah. At least Molly's whereabouts are accounted for.

Having the topic of Molly hanging in the air, however, is a little bit too uncomfortable for Matt. "Can we find some better coverage to watch?" he asks, nodding his head at the TV. "These local people are terrible."

"I'll second that," Claire says. She glances around for the remote and finds it on the floor, beside Travis and Victoria, who are playing quietly with several stuffed animals.

While Claire searches for something better to watch, absorbing Matt, Jason, and Bill in the hunt, Sarah leans closer to Paula. "Can I talk to you in the kitchen?"

Paula nods and the women slip away, hardly noticed by the rest of the gathering.

"What is it?" Paula asks, a little cautiously. She'd been hoping for a quiet night and some peace -- hopefully Sarah isn't about to cause some sort of scene.

"On Christmas," Sarah begins, "you said you needed to ask me for help with something. Then Dad interrupted and you totally clammed up." She waits for Paula to take the reins, but when she doesn't, Sarah asks, "So what was it?"

Clearly her mother is wrestling with something, but she does her best to brush it off. "Nevermind. It wasn't important."

"Yeah, it was. The way you pulled me aside to ask me and kept your voice all quiet -- and how you seemed so nervous -- I can tell it was something important."

"Sarah, don't worry about it--"

"Just tell me," Sarah coaxes. "Come on, what'd you want my help with?"

MOLLY FISHER'S APARTMENT

"One sec," Molly calls out as she hurries to the door. She peeks through the peephole and, seeing that it is who she expected it to be, quickly undoes the locks -- trying to brush the slight smile off her face before she opens the door.

"Hey!" Brent says cheerfully when the door opens to reveal him. "How's the new pad coming?"

"I'm having fun getting it together," she says. He comes in and she locks the door up behind him. "I'm just having a few issues."

"Such as?"

"The coffee table, for one. Should I keep it where it is? Or would it look better if I swung it around so it's closer to the chair?"

"It looks fine how you've got it, Martha," he says, grinning.

"Shut up."

"I'm just saying ..."

"I bear little, if any, resemblance to an obsessive 50-something divorcee who makes ridiculous knick-knacks on national television," she says with amusement.

"Point taken. But seriously, the place looks good. How's it feel to have your own place again?"

She has to consider her response for a moment. "Good. Weird but good. It's already a little strange not having my mother floating around, but I think I'll get used to it." She glances over at the newly hung wall clock. "Speaking of which, I told my parents that I'd try to make it over there for midnight."

He shakes his head. "I think you should just hang out here."

"Why?"

"Because it's getting late anyway, and besides, I have no one to ring in midnight with."

"Such a selfless man, Commander."

"Yup, that's me." He reaches for the door. "Plus, you need to be here so I can give you your surprise."

"What?"

"I have a belated Christmas present for you in the car," he says. "Let me go run and get it real quick."

"Why didn't you just bring it in with you to begin with?"

"Because this makes the surprise a lot more fun," he says, opening the door. "You know, suspense and all."

"All right, go get it." As she watches him leave, she realizes that his plan is working -- the suspense is already getting to her. What kind of surprise is this?

MORIANI HOME

"What do you suppose Ryan was up to?" Katherine asks as she seats herself on the love seat, a swirl of tan and burgundy.

"I have no idea." Nick rolls his eyes at the thought of his son's impulsiveness as he flips through the channels for an appropriate broadcast to help them ring in 2002. "I don't understand half of what he does, I'll tell you that."

Katherine hesitates, then proposes, "Do you think it has something to do with that woman?"

"Claire Robbins? Maybe." He settles on a station and sits down beside Katherine. "I wish I could erase her from our lives entirely, I really do. She has done nothing but give Ryan heartache for years and years."

"Why is he still so fixated on her? Do you have any idea?"

"I have some ideas. The whole situation is complex. The way their relationship ended was

very ... messy." Silently he curses Stan Lincoln, someone else he wishes he could remove from their lives. "I think Ryan has to prove to himself that he can make things right with Claire. He really does care for her -- why, I have no idea -- but I think a lot of it might be in accomplishing the goal."

"Like how Andrew had to prove that he could be with that horrid Danielle, even though she did nothing but hurt him in the end," Katherine says, the familiar fury coming to her voice.

Nick knows that there is nothing he can do about her relationship with Andrew, and rehashing it all once more is only going to put Katherine in an upset mood. "It's already our first anniversary," he says in amazement, hoping to swing the topic elsewhere. "Can you believe it?"

"Yes, I can," she says. "Though to be entirely truthful ... I wasn't always sure that we would make it to this point."

"Really?" Nick does his best to appear a little hurt. Truthfully, it does hurt a bit -- but not as much as it worries him. There is something about her tone that is suddenly very unsettling.

"Well, with all the resistance to the wedding ... it was a blessing even to make it past that! Then we had the fire, and that Brent Taylor trying to cause trouble."

"We discussed all of that, Katherine. I thought you trusted me."

"I do," she answers quickly. "I'm simply saying that I'm a bit surprised that we were able to make it through this first year. Pleasantly surprised, of course. I hope it only gets easier from this point forward."

"So do I," Nick says as he clutches her hand in his. Hopefully 2002 will put all of his worries to rest for good -- using Katherine's money, the fire, the shooting. Hopefully.

MARSHALL APARTMENT

Some freaking year indeed, Ryan thinks as he takes careful steps down the corridor. He scans the doors for the appropriate apartment; he's lucky that he was even able to track Stan down at all. When he called the number that Stan gave him weeks ago, Stan was just on his way out. Of course, now Ryan will have to meet this new woman, but at least he'll get to have the chat with Stan that he's wanted to have for some time.

Earlier in the evening, Ryan made a resolution to himself. He was considering this past

year, and in fact everything that has happened since he came to King's Bay, and he promised himself that he would focus his energies on something other than Claire. Even though they've had little contact over the last few months, Ryan knows that he's been harboring some secret hope, or at the very least not making any effort to move away from her.

He had resolved to make a change. But then, thinking about why he did it all, why he was holding out hope -- and how terrified he'd been when Claire told him about Stan's surprise appearance -- he knew that he wouldn't be able to stick to the resolution, even for a day.

He finds the apartment and pauses in front of the door. As much as he wants to do, as much as he needs to do it, he has to pause.

Then he knocks. Hard.

The wait is so long that he is about to knock again when, finally, the door is pulled open to reveal a dark-haired young man. *Must be her son*, Ryan figures as he gathers himself.

"I'm looking for my, uh, my father," he says. "Stan ..."

"Oh, yeah. Come on in." The young man steps aside and lets him in.

It takes a moment for Stan even to look away from the TV and the conversation he is having with Sally. "Oh, Ry. Hey. What'd you wanna see me about?"

"Can we talk outside?" Ryan asks.

"Yeah, sure." Stan stands. "Hey, Sally, this is my son, Ryan. Ry, this is Sally."

"Nice to meet you," Ryan says distractedly. Sally returns the sentiment. He exits to the hallway and Stan follows.

"That's the one I met when I was flying into town this one time," Stan explains. "She's a stewardess."

"She seems nice enough. How'd you rope her into this arrangement?" Ryan spits.

"Hey, kid, what's with the attitude lately? It's what, twenty years since I found you? Never once did you talk to me like this, then I move here and you start copping an attitude. What's that?"

The temptation to offer the entire explanation is there, but Ryan can't follow through with

it. "Stay away from Claire."

"Huh?"

"Claire. She's off-limits, okay?" Seeing Stan's confusion, he adds, "She came by and told me that you went to see her."

"Why the hell does it matter?" Stan asks, a little more fired-up now. "All I wanted was to see if she had any idea why you were bein' such a damn pain in the ass. Not like I could get an answer outta you, since you've been avoiding me for weeks."

"Leave her alone," Ryan orders harshly. "I mean it."

"Tell me what the hell's got you so wound up. I try, Ry, but I'm not a mind-reader."

"Stay away from her and the problem is a lot smaller, all right?"

Stan grunts some kind of response that Ryan takes to be an agreement.

"Hey," he says suddenly, back to his regular tone, "you wanna stay and ring in the New Year with us? You can spend some time with Sally, and her kid's nice -- little bit quiet, but he's a good kid, I think."

Ryan is surprised to find himself considering the offer, but he shakes his head. "No, I'll pass."

"Ry, c'mon, you can't ignore me forever."

"But I can try my damndest," Ryan calls out as he heads back down the hall.

FISHER HOME

Paula's hesitation is enormous. It only confirms Sarah's thought that this must be a matter of serious importance.

"Mom, what is it?" she urges.

"All right," Paula says finally. Her voice has dropped several notches in volume. "Please, could you keep this between the two of us?"

"Yeah, of course."

"Okay. Sarah, I ... You know how hard this last year has been on all of us, especially losing Tim. I've been struggling with this ever since he died."

Sarah nods solemnly.

"I can't have this hanging over me anymore," Paula continues. "I can't go to bed wondering and wake up with the exact same thoughts, and never find any answers. I need those answers."

"Answers to what?"

"To what happened ... to him. To my son."

Sarah is sure that her eyes go wide. "You mean you want me to find out where he is?"

Paula nods. "I need to know who he became, what kind of upbringing he had, what kind of life he's leading. I just need to know. And I figured that it fits in with your field ..."

"Yeah. That's perfectly understandable."

"I don't know that your father would really understand ..."

"So we'll keep it quiet. I work tons of cases that I don't discuss with anyone but the person who hired me. This should be no different."

"Thank you," Paula says. "Thank you for helping me do this -- it means so much to me."

"I'll find your answers for you," Sarah says ... although she knows that unlike most of her cases, the findings here could change her own life, as well.

MOLLY FISHER'S APARTMENT

Molly is distracting herself with Dick Clark's New Year's coverage when there comes a knock on the door.

"Come in," she shouts.

"Special delivery!" Brent's voice announces from outside. She turns as he opens the door -- and carries in a small crate.

"Brent, is that ... ?"

"Yeah. After we found that dog and I saw how good you were with him, I figured it was just the housewarming gift you needed."

There is unmistakable excitement in her expression, which comes as a relief to Brent. He knew it was a risk buying a puppy for her without asking. He closes and locks the door as Molly bends down to unlock the carrier.

A few seconds pass before the tiny pug puppy comes wandering out. He stares lazily around the apartment and finally up at Molly.

"Hey there, cutie!" she says. "Brent, he's--wait, he, she?"

"He."

"Well, he is adorable! Thank you." She leans down and picks up the puppy, who goes to her without any resistance.

"I'm glad you like him. I just thought it'd be nice for you to have some company around here, now that you're living by yourself."

"Oh, he's precious." The puppy gives her cheek a few good lashes of the tongue.
"Thanks, Brent. This is--what an incredible gift."

They play with the pup for a few moments and then Molly sets him down. He trots around the living room, sniffing at everything with his small nose.

"Any ideas for names?" Brent asks.

"I'll have to work on that one," she says. "You can help."

"I could have fun with this."

She smiles. "That's the part that worries me."

"Well, I promise I won't force you to name him Melvin or anything," he says.

"Good." The TV behind him catches her attention. "Hey, it's almost midnight."

"Excellent. You have champagne?"

"Um, I must have forgotten to put champagne on my list of 'moving-in necessities,'" she says with a laugh. "I've got some ginger ale, though. That'll have to do."

"Works for me, as long as we put it in champagne glasses."

They retrieve two freshly unpacked glasses and the bottle of ginger ale, and round up the puppy, who has gone exploring through the apartment. They return to the television, glasses in hand, with barely any time to spare.

Brent keeps his focus on the television as the crowd counts down to midnight. He knows that if he looks at Molly right now, it's going to be awfully hard not to be swept up in the moment.

The countdown comes to a head amidst a flurry of fireworks and cheers, and finally he allows himself to turn to Molly. "Happy New Year," he says, unable to keep from smiling despite the limitations of their situation.

"Happy New Year," she says softly. They tap glasses and drink, and then she pulls him into a hug. Just feeling her arms around him, even for that brief moment, is electrifying.

"I have another toast," he says.

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. To new beginnings." He raises his glass and Molly's meets it. The clink resonates in the air and the puppy makes a squeaking sound.

"Sorry, bud," Brent laughs. "Happy New Year to you, too."

"To new beginnings," Molly repeats. They touch their glasses together again -- more carefully this time -- and take another pair of sips.

END OF EPISODE #240

[Next Episode](#)