

## "Footprints" Episode #264

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

- Sarah asked Matt to look after Victoria for a few days, telling him that she had to go to New York on business -- when in reality, the purpose of the trip is to begin looking into Matt's past.
- When Bill invited Sarah and Matt over for dinner once she returns from her trip, she replied that it had better not be an affair for the whole family, because she does not want to be around Molly.
- Claire had to justify her decision to get closer with Ryan to both Brent and Molly. She shared the full story of Stan and the rape with both of them and urged them to trust her decision.

### **ANDREA YANG'S ESTATE, UPSTATE NEW YORK**

The imposing Yang mansion towers over Sarah, a regal old home sprawling out over the lush grounds of the estate built around it. It is just as striking as Sarah remembers it to be, though from the look of it, she cannot imagine ever having felt comfortable coming and going at a place like this. Yet at one time she did.

It's hard for her to believe that the segment of time she spent here was such a long one. For months, she was headquartered in a hotel just a quick drive away, constantly zipping over here to conduct interviews, make observations, and do an extra bit of digging to try and figure out what it was that was setting off an alarm inside her. Now when she remembers that period, more than anything she recalls a whirl of emotions, a cloud of confusion and determination united in a hazy mixture.

So much of that was because of Matt. From the moment they met, she felt a pull to him, probably a stronger pull than she ever had or has felt to another human being. Almost instantly, it felt as though they'd known each other forever ... and yet, she still knows so little about him, somehow.

And that's why she's here. She forces herself to get out of the car and walk up the lengthy driveway, eradicating that last chance to let it be and move on with Matt with no regard for the past. She knows she won't be able to do that, not for any extended period of time. If it turns out that there's nothing particularly shocking to learn, which might very well be the case, then she'll be more than grateful that Diane convinced her to do this.

At the front door, she pauses, wondering what awaits her on the inside. When she called and asked if she could stop by, Andrea sounded more than happy to oblige the request; but will she have anything to share? Will she want to share it? There's only one way to

find out.

Her finger touches the doorbell tentatively, then pokes it in more forcefully. She hears the chime sound inside the house. It is a complex, royal-sounding call, just the type of sound one would expect from the doorbell of such an impressive home.

It takes only a few seconds for Andrea to answer the door. Before seeing her, Sarah was nervous about what to expect from their reunion; they grew to be fairly close friends while Sarah was here investigating but have mostly lost touch since then. Once Andrea is in front of her, though, that nervousness falls away.

"Hi!" Andrea calls out in an almost-girlish voice. They move into a happy embrace and Sarah is immediately comfortable here again. Now she remembers why it was so easy to be relaxed in what could be such an intimidating setting: its owner. For every bit of untouchable class and pretentiousness that the estate projects, Andrea Yang possesses an equal part of humbleness and sincerity. Despite her diminutive stature, she exudes warmth and ease with every fiber of her being.

When she suggests they go into the living room, Sarah agrees more than happily, now simply excited to catch up with her old friend.

As Andrea pours a drink for each of them, the reunion truly commences. "How have you been? I've been meaning to give you a call for so long, but you know how it is -- you get caught up in the day-to-day things and all of those other intentions sort of lie by the side waiting."

"I do know," Sarah says. "Same with me. I've actually--well, a lot has happened. I'm a mom now."

Excitement practically explodes from Andrea. "You are? Wow!"

"Yeah, I have a little girl. Victoria. She just turned two a few weeks ago."

"Oh, wow! Congratulations. I can see you being such a good mom." She hands Sarah a glass, then adds, "So that means everything worked out between you and Brent once your adventure here was over, huh?"

Sarah quickly sips the drink, feeling the sudden need to occupy herself even as she is speaking. "Not quite. Brent and I--we aren't together anymore."

"I'm so sorry to hear that," Andrea says carefully. "I knew you were having some problems while you were here, but I was so sure you'd work through them."

A bitter laugh escapes Sarah's throat. "So did I. It was stupid of me. Of course I see that

now, even though it was the last thing I wanted to believe at the time." Seconds pass as she looks around the room, never focusing on anything in particular but unable to look directly at Andrea. "After the start we got off to, Brent and I never could have made things work, not in the long run."

Andrea takes a delicate drink, pausing with the glass against her lip to say, "It sounds as though you two splitting up was probably best for both of you. At least you recognize that."

"Yeah. Not that it makes it easy, but at least I know I'm not wasting my life, right?"

"Right. So your daughter ... is she--I mean--"

"Brent isn't her father, no," Sarah says, having anticipated the question from the moment she thought of telling Andrea about Victoria. "Actually ... Matt is."

If enough interesting information hasn't already been given, that news certainly puts it over the top. Andrea's response is one of complete surprise, from the widening of her eyes and mouth to the way she sets her drink down a little too heavily. "Matt?"

"Yeah, he--well, it's a long story, but he and I have gotten really close. He's working at my father's restaurant as a chef now. Speaking of which--" Sarah sets down her own drink. "Did you know what a good cook he is?"

"Of course."

"Strange. He never mentioned a thing about it until one night, my dad was short-staffed and Matt jumped in to help out in the kitchen."

"That's Matt for you," Andrea muses, obviously remembering her own relationship with him fondly. "He never has to brag about or announce anything. When it becomes important, then he lets you know. If not, then oh well."

Sarah has to take a deep breath before she can take the final step; it's the only reason that she's really even here, but it's still so tempting to leave it alone and just get reacquainted with her old friend. She forces herself onward. "That's kind of why I'm here, to tell the truth."

"Matt's cooking?"

"No. Well--yeah, in a way." She pauses just long enough to gather her words, then goes on. "Matt and I share a daughter. And who knows, we might share more someday ... but before I can let myself do that, I need to know who he is. Who he *really* is. I need to know where he comes from, why he pretty much refuses to talk about the time before I

met him. You were engaged to him -- do you know anything at all?"

## FISHER HOME

Paula rubs the soles of her white tennis shoes roughly against the mat that lies outside the back door, hoping to free as much of the dirt that she accumulated while working in the garden as possible. When she sees enough lying on the mat to know that she won't dirty the floors by walking indoors, she enters the back door and goes straight for the laundry room sink so that she can wash her hands before touching anything.

She is drying off her hands when she hears the familiar pattern of sounds indicating that Bill is home: the engine turning off in the driveway; a long pause before she hears the driver's door finally being closed, long enough for Bill to organize the things that he haphazardly scattered in the back seat before leaving the restaurant; and the front door's opening and closing, closely followed by the jingling of his keys as he hangs them on the second peg from the left on the rack they've used for so many years.

Not entirely certain that she's finished with gardening for the evening, she decides to leave her shoes on as she heads out to greet her husband. "Hello," she calls out as she makes her way into the living room. "You're a little later than I thought you'd be."

"It took me a little longer than I expected to escape tonight," he says, a bit apologetically. "The usual chaos."

"I suppose that can be forgiven." She plants a peck on his right cheek. "And now that you're home, do you have any idea what to do about dinner? I was out in the garden and completely lost track of time."

"Give me a few minutes to get out of restaurant-mode before I start thinking about food again, or I might go insane. Did you have a good day?"

"Nothing out of the ordinary. Was yours as hectic as I'm getting the impression it was?"

He has to consider that for a moment before answering. "No, I guess not. It all comes with the territory. Nothing I haven't dealt with before. Besides, it's all part of running the restaurant, and I wanted to do that for how many years? I think I can keep toughing it out."

"Good to hear. I wouldn't want you winding up in the crazy house." She places her hands on her hips, then says, "Do you think we should call the kids and see if they'd like to come over for dinner? I know Jason and Alex wanted to spend the night at the apartment, but maybe Molly or Sarah, or Claire--"

"Sarah's out of town, actually." He says it simply enough but she can tell that it is leading up to more. There is a weight about the way he speaks that gives her sudden cause to be alarmed.

"Where is she?"

"New York. She's working on a case." He pauses, but obviously anticipates her asking what is on his mind, because he quickly continues: "She came by the restaurant before she left yesterday and she had some, um, fairly forceful things to say."

"About?"

He hesitates, as if he doesn't even want to voice the problem aloud. "Molly, of course. Or, rather, Molly and Brent."

Paula feels the familiar pain in the pit of her stomach, a mixture of worry and annoyance. "Oh no. What happened now?"

"Well, I invited Sarah and Matt to come over for dinner one night once she gets back, and she made it abundantly clear that she's only going to come if Molly *isn't* invited. Apparently she's upset that Molly and Brent are still spending time together."

"I was hoping this might end once the divorce went through."

"Me, too. But I'm wondering if this is going to go on forever. I wish Sarah would just accept that she has something potentially great with Matt and stop worrying about Brent."

"She'll get to that point," Paula says confidently. "But right now, Molly needs to help it along. And if she still hasn't gotten over her feelings for Brent--well, then, we have a big problem on our hands."

## **CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT**

"All right, so let me get this Pikachu thing straight," Claire says, leaning her elbow on the back of the couch and propping up her head with her palm. Travis sits beside her, watching the Pokemon video on the television with the utmost intensity while somehow managing to digest every single word that she speaks in that way only little kids seem to possess.

But before she can review the lesson he's just given her -- the one he's given countless times, each time adding a few details that he forgot before and modifying ones that were misspoken so that she can never really get a handle on the whole thing -- the phone cuts in with its shrill ring. Luckily she only has to reach across the sofa, to the end table, to

get her hands on the cordless phone.

"Hello?"

"Claire. Hi." Ryan's awkward greeting comes through as soon as she answers, practically before she even finishes her single-word opening. "How are you?"

"I'm good ... How about you?" It feels uncomfortably like small talk yet she realizes that it is necessary; just because she has been awaiting this call for several days and pondering every step of the conversation -- the meaty part of it, not the chit-chat -- doesn't mean that Ryan has been. Although she's fairly certain that he has.

"Good. I, uh, I'm sorry it took me a couple days to call. I've wanted to, but--I didn't want to rush it, I guess. I didn't want to seem like I was pushing too hard."

"It's okay, really." And it is. She's been anticipating the call, wondering when it would come and what would come of it, but she never feared that he wouldn't call or that he already had grown disinterested. They're already beyond all that, somehow, which is the part that Brent and Molly don't quite understand. Maybe no one else really can understand it, which could be what makes it so meaningful in the first place.

"I want to see you," he says. "Soon. We made so much progress the other night. Let's not just let it linger now."

"I want to see you, too." She casts a glance over at Travis, hoping that he's too absorbed by the video to be listening to her conversation but knowing that probably isn't the case. Maybe it'll all go in one ear and out the other, like so many other things seem to do.

"How about dinner tonight?"

She has to consider the logistics for a moment. "Probably not. I'm hanging out with the little man over here." She hopes that Ryan won't push to be included in her time with Travis. It doesn't seem right, somehow, not yet, not now. Maybe later.

Thankfully he seems to get the message. "All right, we'll do something this weekend, then. But everything's going well with you?"

"Yeah, everything's fine. Ryan, really, I'm okay. I know I was a mess the other night, but it had to happen. I had to get it out. I feel a lot better now."

"Good." He goes quiet briefly, then asks, "So what did Brent want the other morning? Was he coming to warn you about me?" She detects a note of annoyance in his voice, not that she necessarily blames him. But she can't blame Brent, either.

"Pretty much, yeah," she admits, cradling the phone between her ear and shoulder so that can reach out and move the cup of juice that Travis just set down dangerously close to the edge of the coffee table. "But don't worry. I explained. I explained about everything, about how--" She looks at Travis again, then proceeds cautiously, "About how mixed up everything was."

"How did he react?"

"He was surprised, obviously. And he--well, he thinks I should press charges."

"Press charges?" Ryan's voice sounds vaguely panicked. "Against Stan, you mean?"

"Yeah." Did he think she meant against him and Nick? The thought continues to trouble her from the background as she goes on. "I'm considering it. He's checking out the statute of limitations and all that, but I don't know ... it might be time for this. I never wanted to deal with it. I still don't, in a way. But if Stan is still haunting around, if he could be a danger to you or me or--God forbid--Travis and Samantha, then maybe getting it all out could be the best thing."

"And then maybe we could move on," Ryan says, echoing the very sentiment that has been pushing her in the direction of Brent's suggestion since he raised the possibility a few days ago.

"That would be nice," she agrees, although as pleasant as it sounds and as much as she wants Ryan to be a part of it, she cannot help wondering if the concepts of 'Ryan Moriani' and 'moving on' are impossibly contradictory.

## **SALLY MARSHALL'S APARTMENT**

"So I start next Wednesday," Stan concludes proudly before taking another bite of the dinner that Sally prepared for them.

"Well, congratulations," she chimes in. And she does mean it. He needs this kind of focus in his life. Hopefully a job will provide the sense of accomplishment and purpose that he has been lacking since, well, since she met him.

He seems to be reading her mind, because he adds, "This'll be really good. I don't wanna be scrapping together money week to week always trying to make it fit together. And I need somethin' to do here now that I see Ryan's never gonna accept me as his father."

"Let it rest for a while," she says cautiously. She always approaches the topic of his son carefully, having found out in the last few weeks how likely it is to set him off in a horrible direction. "Maybe some time will be good. Then you can try again and see if he

comes around at all."

"I don't see what's the use. He's a miserable little creep -- thanks to Nick Moriani, that pompous jackass."

"You never know."

He contemplates the thought for a moment, then shrugs. "Guess not. 'Nough about that, though. I'm too excited about finally finding work to care about how big of a brat my kid is, at least tonight." He lifts his beer, downs a deep chug of it, then sets it back down. "Looks like we're both getting rid of kids, sorta."

The apartment does feel strangely empty to Sally. It's odd to know that Alex won't be coming home tonight, especially since he's never really been one to spend the night out with friends or at other people's places. The thought of him having his own apartment is bizarre.

"I'm glad he's moving out," she says. "He was spending way too much time in his room. I didn't like it."

"He's kind of a loner, huh?"

"He always has been. In a way, coming to King's Bay was the best thing we ever did. At least he wound up being friends with Don's daughter and those kids she hangs out with."

"I think you coming to this town was good for at least one other thing," Stan says, lifting his beer bottle again.

She smirks, waiting for him to say it. These peaceful, flirty moments are all too rare, but they mean so much to her; each one makes her feel young again, looking out on a life full of possibility instead of trying to salvage something meaningful from the rubble of so many mistakes.

"You met me," he finishes. "I think that counts for something."

"I suppose it does." She raises her own beer and he takes the clue, moving his bottle towards hers as she issues a toast: "To new beginnings."

"To new beginnings," he echoes as their bottles clink together.

They each sit back, savoring a long drink, until Stan suddenly jerks forward again. "You know, that gives me an idea."

"What?"

"Okay, you're gonna be all alone in this apartment now, and I hate my place--"

"Stan." She says his name quickly, hoping to gain control of the conversation, and once she is sure that she has it, she continues: "Are you saying that we should move in together?"

"No," he says, to her genuine surprise. "Not exactly."

"Then what?"

"Sally," he begins with a seriousness that truly forces her to move to the edge of her seat and listen up, "we have something great here. I need you in my life and you need me in yours, I think. And we're not gettin' any younger."

She draws in a sharp breath. "Stan, are you--"

"Lemme finish. I don't wanna move in together like a couple of kids. Let's make it real. I don't have a ring or nothin', but we'll get a real nice one, we'll do it the right way. I don't wanna screw around anymore. Let's get married."

It sounds like such a perfect little idea; the pieces are already in place and the arrangement stands to give benefit both of them. Does she want to spend the rest of her life with this man? She certainly doesn't want to spend it alone, especially now that Alex is getting on with his life. And Stan is right: They're not getting any younger. It's not like marriage proposals are being thrown at her left and right.

"Let's do it," she hears herself say.

## **FISHER HOME**

"You can't hold that against Molly," Bill argues. "She and Brent should have been together all along, from the sounds of it!"

Paula shakes her head vigorously. "No, no, no! It's completely inappropriate. She can't take up with her sister's ex-husband, especially knowing how much it bothers Sarah."

"As far as I know, they haven't 'taken up.' They're spending time together, Paula -- like they always have. Friends have dinner together. She can't stop them from doing that."

"That friendship is in horrible taste," Paula counters, fury suddenly sparking within her.

"Molly and Brent have been friends since nearly the very beginning! Do you remember how opposed I was to Sarah and Brent's marriage at first? It was too rushed, it came out of nowhere. It was a mistake from the very start."

"That doesn't make it okay for Molly to move in on Brent!"

"She's not moving in on him!" Bill fires back. "If something was going to happen between them, it would've happened by now, don't you think? Obviously there are mutual feelings there, but just as obviously they've got them under control."

Paula pauses before responding, hit by the realization that they are now screaming at each other. This isn't going to make the situation any better.

"Sarah's right. We always favored Molly," she says, trying to infuse her words with some calmness but unable to keep a bitter, self-condemning edge out of her voice. "We always tried to hold Sarah up to Molly's standards, even though that wasn't her. And she resented that, she still does."

"We wanted what was best for her. Molly set a good example."

"Yes, she did, but it wasn't the only way for a child to grow up. Just because Sarah wasn't valedictorian and student body president and everyone's favorite student doesn't mean that she wasn't a good kid or that she wasn't accomplishing anything. We didn't realize that until it was much too late."

"You're right," Bill concedes, although she can hear the hesitation that tells her he doesn't quite want to accept it. "Maybe we were too hard on Sarah. Maybe it backfired. But does that mean Molly has to pay for it now by compromising her own happiness?"

"She can find happiness with someone other than Brent. She just has to stop clinging to the idea that they'll wind up together," Paula says harshly.

She can see that Bill disagrees, but instead of arguing further, he makes a move for the stairs. "I'm going up to change," he says, effectively putting an end to the discussion.

She lets him go, trying to figure out how they could have raised the girls together, enforced the same values and ideas, and yet be on such opposite sides of the issue now.

*And if this is bad, she thinks drearily, I don't even want to think about how he's going to react when my son is found. If my son is found.* It's a thought that has been pressing harder on her mind lately; for a few months, it receded to the background, since she knew the process would take some time, but now it's beginning to feel as though it's time for some results to turn up, and she's feeling impatient.

And anxious. Conducting the search behind Bill's back has been easy because she hasn't had to face the fact that he is adamantly against the whole idea. Once something turns up, though, she's going to have to break the news to him. And judging by the way that they're dealing with the children they already have, she's more than a little concerned about how it's going to go over.

## **ANDREA YANG'S MANSION, UPSTATE NEW YORK**

"I was engaged to the man for months and he didn't tell me much of anything," Andrea admits. Sarah can see a certain wistfulness in Andrea's strikingly attractive features; she's clearly remembering a time that must seem like it was eons ago, considering all the twists and turns that her path and Matt's have taken since then.

"I don't know what to make of it," Sarah says. "Or what to do. He's the father of my child, and ... I really think we're headed for something more. He's made it clear that he wants to go there. And he's already my best friend. I don't understand how he can be so completely quiet about his life up to the point he met me. Literally, the only thing I know is that he was once engaged to you."

Andrea smiles, a sardonic little twisting of her lips. "At least you've got more than I had when I was with him, right?"

"Yeah, great."

"To tell the truth, that's probably why things didn't work out with us. He never wanted to open up. He never wanted to let me into his life at all; it was like he wanted to step out of his life and into mine. I felt like I knew him, I knew who he was, but I had no idea why and I had no clue where he was coming from."

"I'll have to look into public records and stuff," Sarah says. "I could have already, I guess, but it just seemed safer to start with you. I was thinking that maybe if he'd told you something, then maybe there really wouldn't be anything too bad hidden back there--"

"I wish I could help you," comes the sad response. "Matt is a good guy, I know he is. I wish I knew why he's so adamant about keeping his past to himself."

They fall into a confused silence, each contemplating the multitude of possibilities of what could be in Matt's past. What he could be hiding.

Hiding. That's what he's doing, Sarah realizes with a start. Matt is actually keeping things from her, things that ... God knows what they could be or what they could mean. For him, or for her, or for Victoria.

"He won't even tell me about his family," she mutters, half to Andrea and half to herself, another random musing that happens to be voiced aloud. "I don't even know his parents' names! The only thing he'll tell me is that he has no living family. I mean, they had to have *some* effect on his life, right?"

"Wait." Andrea halts the musing in its tracks. "He said he had no living family?"

"Yeah," Sarah says slowly, not liking where this is going. "Well, he said he had no family left. That's what I take that to mean."

"That's not true."

"It's not?" A stab of panic rips through her insides.

"No! He has a brother. He admitted that much to me once. He has a brother who's still living, but they don't have contact anymore."

"A brother!" Her mind's snapshot of the one photograph that she actually got to see in Matt's closet comes rushing back to the surface. "One night, when he didn't realize I was awake, I saw him looking at pictures that he kept in a box in the back of the closet. I tried to look at them and see if I could figure anything out, but the only one I got a chance to see was of two little boys. That had to be him and his brother."

"Yeah, it must have been."

"Wow, so you did have one up on me." Sarah feels a strange surge of excitement, although she knows that it's all wrong. She shouldn't be excited to learn that there is something Matt has kept from her; this isn't a regular case she's investigating. This is her real life. "Anything else? Anything at *all*? Like, do you know where his brother lives, what his name is, anything?"

"Nope, nothing," Andrea says, but then she interrupts herself with, "I do know that they grew up in Pennsylvania."

"Yeah, I got that much out of him once. Maybe I can start looking there ... for Grays? Jeez, half the phone book must have that last name."

"If you're serious about him -- and if he's going to continue to be a part of your daughter's life -- then it will be worth the effort," Andrea encourages.

"Absolutely, yeah."

"Just one thing, Sarah."

"Yeah?"

"You have to be prepared for what you might find," Andrea says carefully. "There has to be a reason Matt is so estranged from his family. It may not be pretty."

"I know," Sarah says, but she's still trying to wrap her mind around the idea that he really does have a whole other life out there about which she knows nothing. A shiver of fear courses through her body.

### **END OF EPISODE #264**

*Is something horrible hidden in Matt's past? Should Sarah even be digging into it behind his back? Discuss these issues and more over in the Footprints Forum!*

[Next Episode](#)