

"Footprints" Episode #271

[Previously ...](#)

- Sally visited Don and invited him to her wedding, hoping he would remove her guilt over her past actions. Though he wished her well, he urged her to pay more attention to Alex.
- Stan's efforts to make amends with Ryan failed with Ryan realized that all his father wanted was to have the accusation of rape rescinded. Disgusted, Ryan refused to attend the wedding and taunted Stan that Claire might press charges for the rape.
- Diane's intimate evening with Eric was cut short when Brian showed up at her door, remorseful for having turned her away so coldly in Los Angeles.

CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT BUILDING, PARKING LOT

Sally's fingers linger on the key, trying to decide -- as they have been for the last five minutes -- whether to pull it from the ignition or turn it to start the car again. It would be so easy to drive away and forget that she was ever here.

But she's not so sure that she could do that successfully. She has no idea what set Stan off, but when he blew out of the apartment reeking of whiskey, she knew that she had to find out. She needs to know what sent him into the rotten mood that he's been in for the past few days, what's been making him clam up for hours on end and then snap at her out of nowhere.

So she followed him here. She was sure he'd notice her tailing him just a few cars back, but when he parked and got out of his car to go into the apartment building, he didn't even pause. There was no indication that he had any idea he'd been followed.

She wishes she knew whose building this was. She wishes that she could make Stan calm down, come home, and stop flying into these horrible fits. And those wishes are what ultimately force her to remove the key from the ignition.

Clasping the keys in her palm, she opens the door and sets a tentative foot down on the asphalt, as if it might crack open and swallow her whole at any moment. But before she can remove herself wholly from the car, she spots him.

At first she's not sure that it is even him, but the coincidence is too great and she's almost positive that she recognizes him. It is him -- Stan's son.

Maybe they're just meeting, she attempts to convince herself. Yet she knows that Ryan lives with his adoptive father, the one that Stan hates. So why would they be meeting

here?

Something isn't making sense, and all the questions are bothering her far too much for her to ignore them. So, after watching Ryan go inside the building, Sally pulls herself out of the car and follows him.

DIANE BISHOP'S CONDOMINIUM

"You didn't have to make him leave," Brian says as soon as Eric's heavy footsteps on the stairs have subsided.

"I know." Diane casts her eyes downward, hoping that he'll realize the weight of the decision that she just made.

"Who was that, anyway?" Brian finally asks.

The question jars her. Eric is the last thing she expected to be discussing with Brian now. "My lawyer."

"Then maybe I should become an attorney," Brian says, "because I sure as hell don't get to spend Friday nights in my female clients' apartments in the job I've got right now."

"Well, you did for a little while," she shoots back. She knows that she is probably crossing the line by getting snarky with him, and yet she cannot control the impulse to snap at him now that he's evoked the memory of Serena Scott.

"No thanks to you."

"You said yourself that the two of you split up on your own. I had nothing to do with that. So don't you dare try to pin it on me."

"I'm not! I don't have to. There's plenty else to pin on you, don't you think?"

Her hand darts out and grabs him by the sleeve, yanking him inside the condo and shutting the door before they attract any attention from the neighbors. The last thing she needs is a bunch of nosy old bats butting into her business.

"That was business, Brian, you know it. I don't know when things changed between us, but I assumed that your discovery *was* my discovery."

"For how long? What, was I supposed to stay down at your heels forever? I found a promising author and I wanted to be the one to deliver her. There was a reason I didn't tell you about her!"

"Great, so you just didn't trust me."

"Apparently I shouldn't have! You took it upon yourself to go digging through my things and claim her as your own, anyway. Do you still not understand why that upset me?"

"I guess I just thought we had a different sort of friendship than we actually had," she says, voice cold as ice, hoping it will get to him.

Evidently it does the trick. Before the next link in the chain of the argument can fly out of his mouth, Brian pauses. She sees his demeanor mellow, even if it is somewhat by command.

"I didn't come here to rehash all of this and keep on fighting," he says.

"Good, because I don't have the time or the energy for that."

He takes a step back, breaking whatever remains of the argument's raging intensity and yet somehow not cutting the tension between them at all.

"I miss you," he says.

It's music to her ears.

CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT BUILDING

"Hold the elevator!" Sally cries out as she quickens her pace across the lobby. She struggles to hold her purse still so that it won't keep smacking her in the side as she runs.

The elevator door begins to close, but a hand shoots out and halts it. She breathes a sigh of relief and rushes the last couple of steps.

Ryan is the only person in the elevator and, as she steps inside, she wonders how to approach him. Does he even recognize her? They've only met a handful of times.

"Ryan, right?" she says as the elevator lifts off the ground. She waits for the flicker of confusion in his face and then explains, "Sally. Your--Stan's fiancée."

"Sorry, I didn't recognize you at first," Ryan says. "Odd running into you here."

"Well ... I followed Stan."

His eyes burst wide open and she can practically see every muscle in his body tighten, as though an alarm has suddenly been sounded. "You what?"

"I followed him here," she says, then sputters, "W-was I not supposed to? He was just in such a foul mood, and he'd been drinking--I wanted to see what he was up to. But if the two of you are just meeting--"

"I'm not meeting him."

The confusion of the entire situation swirls around her as the elevator settles on whatever floor Ryan selected.

"Then what are you doing here?" she asks finally.

"Visiting someone," he says, ready to bust out of the elevators even before they part. "Stan isn't supposed to be here. Someone I care about very much lives here, and he--he's an enormous danger to her."

Sally wants to ask more questions but now the doors do open up. Ryan shoots out of the elevator as though it were a cannon.

Holding her purse against her side, Sally rushes after him.

CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT

"We're gonna do this my way," Stan huffs. She watches his hand move to his pocket and emerge, in a painful sort of slow-motion, with the gun.

"No," she gasps, not even realizing that she's said it aloud. She tries to scramble off the couch, but Stan's rough hand darts out and grabs her arm. Her legs fall to the floor with a thud.

"Let go!" she shrieks, but her voice drops to instant silence when Stan raises the pistol over her.

"Take it back." His voice is a determined croak, so intense that it alone would be setting her heart racing. "Tell Ryan that you lied! Tell him that I never--that I never did what you said!" He almost sounds like a child, desperate and furious and so determined to have his way.

She shudders and makes another attempt to jerk out of his grip, to no avail. Her effort is rewarded with a slam against the sofa, deep down into its cushions.

Stan moves closer, lowering himself on top of her. His rancid breath assaults her senses, despite her attempts to keep her nose and mouth sealed.

"Take it back!" he repeats, the words jagged with rage now. "Stop lying!"

She cannot answer. She's too petrified to refuse his command but still can't bring herself to give in and agree that he never raped her. He did it. She's lived with the memory all these years. The bastard might as well have to suffer it, too, she reasons scornfully as his weight covers her.

"Not gonna talk, are ya? Then I might as well show you what it's like!"

She squirms, trying to free any of her limbs enough to battle him, but he reaches up and slaps her hard across the cheek. The sting of his hand resonates seconds later, even as he's begun forcing his fingers through her hair roughly.

"You're a nice lookin' chick," he breathes. She thinks she's going to be sick. "Too bad you hafta be such a goddamn bitch."

"Get off!" she screams. She's not going to let him do this. She's not going to go through that again--

"My way!" he barks. She is about to scream again when she feels the cold metal pressing into her cheek.

"We're doin' this my way," he says as the stale stench of whiskey burrows all the way inside Claire. Her gag reflex kicks in just as one of his hands moves to her breast.

"No!" she cries out, even as she feels him wresting all control away from her.

There's nothing she can do, she realizes as a black cloud takes firm hold of her. He's drunk and he has a gun and he wants to do this. There's no way she can get away. The last thing she wants to do is give in, but she can't stop him--

And then the door flies open. The intrusion is so sudden and so startling that a tremor flies through Claire's body.

"Claire!" Ryan's voice shouts as he explodes into the apartment.

DIANE BISHOP'S CONDOMINIUM

"That doesn't mean I'm not still mad," Brian hastens to add, seeing the glimmer of satisfaction emerging in Diane's expression.

Her lips purse tightly together in a refusal to give in if he's not going to cooperate on her terms. He should have known she'd be so stubborn. Why did he delude himself into thinking that she might make this easy?

"I'm not going to forgive and forget that easily," he says, feeling the sudden need to jump to his own defense.

"Then why'd you come all the way up here?" He recognizes the tone in her voice and the dramatic shift in her demeanor. She's putting up her wall, the same wall that she threw in his way when they battled over these same issues before she left Los Angeles.

"To talk. Diane ... I'm not thrilled about what happened with Serena, you, and me. I probably never will be. Accept that. But after the way I ordered you out of my building--I didn't want to leave things that way. I feel like there's something at least worth trying to salvage."

"Maybe," she concedes after a gaping canyon of silence.

He cannot resist the urge to call her on her game-playing. "Maybe? You came down to L. A. out of nowhere to see if we could magically patch things up. You know as well as I do that you want this to be all fixed."

She shoots him a hard gaze. "I'm not changing, Brian. And I'm not taking the blame for everything that happened."

"Do you really not see anything wrong with the way things went down?" he asks, absolutely confounded by her resistance.

"Oh, something was *definitely* wrong! When in the hell did we stop being business partners? Why was it so wrong of me to say that I had found Serena? You know that meant that *we* had--"

"Except that *I* was the one who discovered her! Do you not see the difference?" He's been waiting for months to spring these questions and accusations on her, and now they fly out of him with all the pent-up frustration of the sleepless nights he's spent worrying about their damaged bond. "I wanted my break, Diane! Did you really expect me to run around being your assistant forever?"

"I gave you a break!"

"Yeah, you hired me. Big whoop. I'm grateful and all, but it's been seven years. It never struck you that I might aspire to something a little bigger?"

The response that he is awaiting never comes. Finally -- somehow -- he's managed to chip a hole in that wall of hers. Something is soaking in; that's what her silence indicates.

"Think about it," he says after a lengthy pause, already opening the door. He wants to leave before she reclaims control and somehow turns this against him. "I'm going to be in town for a couple of days. I'll get in touch with you ... Just think about it."

He exits before she has the chance to respond. Whether or not she was planning on doing so, he has no idea, but with any luck, the meaning of his words will make sense to her: "Think about it." Because if any of this is going to be resolved, someone -- or something -- has to give.

CLAIRE FISHER'S APARTMENT

Action explodes through the apartment in a dizzying frenzy. Claire leaps up at the sound of Ryan's voice, but before she can duck away from Stan, a hand shoves him to the side. She hears the gun go clattering as she scrambles to her feet.

"Holy shit," Ryan gasps. She sees him snag the gun off the floor before Stan can get it, but then a hand takes hold of her and pulls her back to the couch.

"Don't even think about shooting," Stan says. His hands are clamped tightly onto each of her arms, almost to the point of being painful, as he holds her in front of him.

She knows that Ryan won't shoot, but the sight of the gun in front of her is still terrifying. Her eyes plead with Ryan to help. Clearly he's scrambling to figure out a way to end this.

"What's going on here?" comes another shout in an unfamiliar voice. Claire's attention goes to the front door, where a terrified-looking woman is clutching her purse tightly against her body, her fingers and lips trembling.

"This is what I meant when I said that he was a danger," Ryan calls back at her. "Stan-- well, Stan, why don't you tell her what's going on?"

An eerie moment of inactivity seizes all of them. Claire is sure that Stan is eyeing both Ryan and the woman. Every fiber of her being is twitching to break away from him but his hold is too strong. He has one leg pinned in front of hers, pressing her even closer to him.

"Take it back!" Stan screams.

Ryan shakes his head. "I'm not letting you off the hook for this one. It's time to own up to something, Stan."

Claire wants to yell at him to shut up, to stop taunting Stan. But the hatred gleaming in his eyes has clearly overtaken him.

"I'm not going to jail," Stan says, his voice shaky. "I didn't do anything!"

"Jail? What is going on?" the other woman calls out. "Stan!"

Ryan shoots a look of invitation over Claire's shoulder, no doubt a prompt for Stan to explain. But she feels his refusal in the nails that dig into her arms.

"Your fiance here," Ryan says, half-turning his head to address the woman, "raped a teenage girl. My girlfriend. Years and years ago. And he refuses to admit it."

The woman, whose name Claire cannot recall from Ryan's stories, gasps as all color and life seems to drain from her being. She stands by the doorway unmoving, simply staring through Claire, right at Stan, right into the truth that has doubtlessly shattered her entire reality.

"I didn't do anything!" Stan roars. Claire braces for the digging of his fingernails again, but instead feels herself being tossed aside.

She jerks her head upward, desperate to see what is happening, but catches only a blur of action: Stan's body lunges toward Ryan, knocking both of them to the floor. Seconds of struggle among limbs follow -- and then end abruptly.

The gunshot rings in Claire's ears.

END OF EPISODE #271

Was anyone shot? Do you think Diane and Brian can resolve their differences? Please come to the Footprints Forum to voice your thoughts!

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