

"Footprints" Episode #285

[Previously ...](#)

- Molly and Brent enjoyed their new relationship, determined not to tell anyone else just yet.
- Worries about trusting Ryan continued to plague Claire.
- Sarah's fears about Matt grew as she learned more about his brother, Jake, and sister-in-law, Nicole, who committed suicide nearly a decade ago.
- Another argument with Diane sent Brian back to Los Angeles, convinced their friendship was a lost cause.

MOLLY FISHER'S APARTMENT

"Put it down!" Molly orders. Her eyes bulge and her body tenses, ready to pounce, but her opponent doesn't seem intimidated.

"Drop it!" Brent joins in from across the room, to no avail.

He stalks his way over to where Molly is standing, careful not to make any sudden moves for fear of setting some sort of chaos in motion.

"Come on," Molly says. Her tone lingers somewhere between authoritative and desperate, like a child trying to organize her peers into a game when they're all busy running amok.

Down on the floor, Rex stares back up at them, his little pug eyes challenging them to come after the shoe in his mouth.

Molly turns to Brent. "Go on the other side of the table."

"And get him from behind?"

"If I make a move for him, he's gonna turn the other way -- and you'll be right there waiting."

Brent follows the order, keeping his eye on Rex the entire time. The dog's gaze trails him, and it occurs to Brent that somehow this pug must know what they are doing.

"You do realize how much amusement he's probably getting out of this," Brent says as he positions himself on the far side of the coffee table.

"The fun is about to end," Molly says as she gets down lower.

Brent cracks a grin at the ridiculousness of the whole thing: woman and small dog facing off in tense showdown. Over a shoe, no less.

Suddenly, without warning, even though she's been crouched like this for a full minute or more, Molly makes her move. She springs toward Rex in one quick leap, a swoop for the ground.

The dog eludes her completely. And instead of bolting in Brent's direction, he waits until Molly is in midair and then dashes underneath her body.

Brent makes a break, but it is too little, too late. Rex flies around the sofa in a flash of tan and black, the shoe still firmly clenched between his teeth.

Brent doesn't give chase. He stops with a heavy sigh as Molly pulls herself up off the floor -- and Rex sits back down, waiting for the next strike.

But before they can make another move, there is a knock on the door. Rex drops the shoe and strolls over to the door, ready for the next adventure.

With a roll of her eyes, Molly gestures for Brent to grab the shoe before the game can start again and then goes to answer the door.

"Hi," she says to Claire as she opens the door.

"Hey," Claire says. She studies Molly for a minute. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. We were just playing 'keep the shoe from its owner,' actually." Molly fires a glance down at Rex, who is standing by her side looking up at Claire expectantly.

Claire bends down and begins scratching his neck. "Wow, you've gotten so big since the last time I saw you!"

Rex looks up at her with thankful eyes as she continues to scratch. The shoe is definitely forgotten.

"I was hoping you'd be home," Claire says as she stands back up. "I--"

She stops in mid-sentence. She's spotted Brent in the background, Molly knows before she even turns to look.

"Hi, Brent," Claire finally continues.

Molly's thankful that she doesn't say anything else about it. Not that there's anything wrong with him being here, but ... Maybe Claire will keep it to herself for the time being, Molly hopes.

"I was actually just hoping I could pick up that purse," Claire says. "But I'm glad you're both here."

Taking that as an invitation, Brent takes a few steps closer to the women.

Claire's gaze moves to him, then back to Molly. "There's something I need to talk to both of you about."

DIANE BISHOP'S CONDOMINIUM

Diane eyes the video warily. "I don't know," she says, her gaze jumping between the video box and Samantha.

"Puh-leeeeeeeeeeeease?" Samantha folds her hands together and looks up at her mother pleadingly.

"Haven't you watched this enough in the last few days?" Diane asks. Her voice carries more than a hint of coercion.

Samantha shakes her head defiantly.

"One more time won't kill 'em," Sarah pipes in from the couch.

"It's not them I'm worried about!" Diane says. "If I have to listen to these songs one more time ..."

"We'll go sit outside," Sarah says, already rising to take the video from Diane.

Diane consents silently, allowing Sarah to remove the video from her hand and put it in the VCR.

"Do you girls promise you'll be good and watch the whole thing?" Sarah asks as she sets up the television.

Samantha nods enthusiastically as she climbs up onto the couch beside Victoria.

As soon as she hits play, Sarah makes a break for the door to the balcony, where Diane is already waiting to make their escape. They slip outside and shut the glass door behind

them.

"I don't think I can deal with that damn video anymore," Diane says through gritted teeth.

"She'll get bored with it eventually."

"Seems to be the pattern. I just hope it holds this time."

"It will." Sarah seats herself in one of the iron patio chairs. "At least it's something you can put on to quiet her down when she's getting wild."

"Yeah, true." Diane walks over to the railing and rests her elbows on it. She stares out at downtown. It doesn't look so far away from this point of view, she notices, wondering at the same time how it can take her so long to drive such a short distance every morning and evening.

"I guess I'm lucky I even get to worry about stupid things like her watching an annoying video too much," Diane finally says. "That's all the stuff I missed out on for two years."

Sarah hesitates before taking the subject a step further. "When's the custody hearing?"

"Month from yesterday. It's about damn time."

"What does your lawyer think about your chances?"

"I haven't heard much more than a peep from him these last couple of weeks, actually. I need to get in touch with him. But I can't see how I wouldn't get custody -- I've had Samantha for a year, and there haven't exactly been problems."

"No," Sarah agrees quietly, though she can't quite keep her mind from drifting to thoughts of Claire and Travis.

"It'll be fine," Diane says conclusively, moving away from the railing. "How about you? We need to get all caught up."

"What about me?"

Diane drops her chin and lifts her eyebrows. "The Matt thing. You get that worked out yet?"

MORIANI HOME

Ryan feels the familiar surge in his chest as he turns the key in the mailbox's lock. It's been like this for weeks -- ever since he sent out the resumes, even the days right afterward, even though it'd have been ridiculous for someone to have gotten back to him so quickly.

He opens the box and reaches inside, withdrawing the standard collection of envelopes and magazines. Using *Time* and *Architectural Digest* as a cradle, he flips through the rest of the mail. And, just as quickly as the excitement swelled within him a moment ago, now he feels a definite sensation of sinking.

Nothing. Dammit.

He folds up the useless assortment of bills and notices in the magazines and makes his way back up the driveway, clutching the bundle of mail in one hand. Mentally he scolds himself for getting his hopes up -- same as he has been every day since he began wondering if something would come in the mail or if the phone would ring with some incredible offer.

It should be easier than this, he swears, although he also realizes how ridiculously difficult it must be to find a job. He didn't expect this to be easy. Just not so ... uneventful.

He slaps the pile, its contents already forgotten, down on a table in the foyer.

"I'm sure corporations will be scrambling to hire a man in his mid-thirties who hasn't held an official job since he worked in a hardware store when he was sixteen."

Nick's words come tearing into Ryan's thoughts the same way that they have been every day since he started sending out resumes. And even though he always tell himself not to worry about it -- that Nick is just trying to cut him down to maintain control of him -- now Ryan a different kind of swelling inside.

Terror.

Maybe Nick is right. Maybe the rest of his life is going to be a succession of days where the phone never rings and there's never anything meaningful in the mail.

No way, he tells himself, a vow that he's working hard to hold onto even as he thinks it. He has to find a way out of Nick's business if he's going to have any sort of serious chance with Claire. It's just another key to making it work, like proving that he isn't like Stan was. It will work, somehow.

But still, an endless loop of irrelevant envelopes circles through his head.

MOLLY FISHER'S APARTMENT

"That's why Stan really came after me," Claire says. A ceremonial sign escapes from her lungs and she finally leans against the back of the couch. Molly suddenly realizes that Claire has been hunched forward the entire time, her hands bunched together and her shoulders tucked inward.

"My God," Molly mutters. She reaches out a comforting hand to Claire's shoulder.

Molly looks to Brent. He sits quietly, hands on his knees, staring off at the wall. Claire said that he's known about this for months. So has Paula. Molly wonders how Claire could have been dealing with all of this for so long and she didn't know about any of it.

"That helps explain why I've been able to get closer to Ryan, doesn't it?" Claire asks. Her eyes search Molly, awaiting a response.

Still, Molly hesitates. It doesn't seem that simple to her. "Maybe. Yeah. But doesn't it still ... bother you?"

"Yes and no," Claire says, sounding as if she's had this same conversation thousands of times with herself. "I thought it was Ryan for so many years, but--it wasn't. When I realized that it was actually Stan, I had to ... I don't know, shift all of that over to him. And I did. When I remember it, I remember Stan, not Ryan."

Brent folds his hands together and sits up straighter. "We're going to find Stan."

Claire doesn't appear too certain of that. "I hope you do."

"We will," he says, though Molly recognizes a certain something in his voice that she's sure is more stubbornness than it is anything reliable.

Claire sighs again. "I just want both of you to understand what's really going on. I saw the way you were looking at Ryan on Christmas day, Molly. I know you were wondering how I could even bring him into your parents' house."

"I understand now," Molly says. "I just don't want you to be manipulated by the fact that Ryan didn't actually rape you. That doesn't--"

"It doesn't mean there aren't reasons to be careful with him," Brent cuts in.

Claire's voice is suddenly sharp, almost dismissive. "I know."

He maintains a calm tone, even though Molly senses that below the surface he's a

fraction of an inch from shouting. "I'm just saying, there's still an investigation going on."

"It hasn't gone anywhere," Claire says. Then she adds, her voice dropping a notch, "Has it?"

"Not as far as I'd like," he says.

Claire jumps back in before he can say anything further. "I just want both of you to understand where I'm coming from. And to try -- please, at least a little bit -- not to make things so uncomfortable when he's around."

They accept that quietly, until Brent says, "We're just watching out for you."

"I know," Claire says quietly, folding her hands in her lap. "And I appreciate it. But I'm just asking that you both keep in mind that Ryan is an important part of my life now, and that's not going to change."

Molly's eyes slide over to meet Brent's, and they don't have to say anything at all.

DIANE BISHOP'S CONDOMINIUM

"No," Sarah says without even a glimmer of hesitation.

Diane moves swiftly into the chair opposite Sarah. "Why not?" she demands, as if there's no good reason Sarah shouldn't have sorted the whole mess out by now.

"I don't even know how I would."

"A little 'Why don't you explain this crap to me?' would be a good start."

"It's not that easy." Sarah sighs and pushes a few fingers through her dark blonde hair. "I don't even know what he'd have to explain, exactly. I keep finding things out, and ..."

Diane awaits more, but it doesn't come. "And what?"

"I'm not sure. I know he's got a brother. I know he had a sister-in-law who apparently committed suicide. And I know Matt was a pretty important witness when they were looking into her death. But nothing is jumping out at me."

"Like ... that Matt had something to do with her death?"

"No! He didn't." Sarah goes quiet for a moment, then looks back at Diane. "I know he

didn't. None of the reports even suggest that. It was a suicide."

"So is this even important, then? It could just be another thing that happened."

"Yeah, except he left Pennsylvania not long after that and pretty much cut all ties with his brother, it looks like. It has to be relevant."

Diane thinks for a second and then leans toward Sarah. "You have gotta talk to him about this. Your little private investigator game isn't gonna solve the whole thing for you."

"I know, I know. I'm just worried that if I just jump right in--if I start throwing all these accusations at him and it's such sensitive turf--that maybe I'm going to push him too hard and it'll all blow up in my face."

"Well, there you go," Diane says.

"What?"

"You don't want it to blow up in your face. Which means you're hoping that this thing between the two of you stays intact. Which means it's important enough to deal with. So deal with it!"

"I just don't want to blow this."

"Then it's gonna blow itself, at the rate things are going. Give it a fighting chance, at least."

"I know you're right ..." Sarah says. The "but" dangles on the end but remains unspoken.

Diane begins drumming her fingers along the edge of the small table. "I can see where you're coming from, though. I think that's what happened with Brian."

The admission blindsides Sarah. For a minute she tries to figure out how to respond. Finally she settles on, "You really think so?"

"Yeah. I know I've pushed really hard these last few times that we've talked. I don't think he knew what to do besides go back to L.A."

"And it's really that important to have him back as a part of your life?"

Diane nods emphatically, even as her eyes remain down on the table with a kind of uncertainty that Sarah isn't sure she's ever seen from Diane before. "Yeah. I've never pretended it wasn't."

"So do what it takes to patch things up, then," Sarah says, feeling a new wave of confidence swell within herself. "Do what you've gotta do to make it work."

Even though she doesn't say the words, Diane's look tells Sarah that they both know it's the right advice.

END OF EPISODE #285

How can Diane repair things with Brian?

What do you foresee happening with Claire and Ryan now that she's spoken to Brent and Molly about their opposition?

Come share your thoughts on this episode in the Footprints Forum!

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