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If there's a time and place for everything, then there's a time and place for confrontation, right?

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That's just a logical extension of the rule as it is presented. I've heard that expression a thousand times, usually when it came to fundraising. And hey, maybe you can see the logic in that. There's a time to ask for a giant check, a sweet spot in someone's grieving process or panic process when you can still emotionally manipulate them into getting a sum of what you want without outright social condemnation. It's a fine line to walk, and I was never good at it. Not that it was my job or anything like that. We had a department for that, as many research organizations do regardless of their size. It's just practical, really. You need money, you need to be personable to ask for any sum of money from strangers or near strangers, and doctors just aren't that personable. Usually. And then there's the whole getting people to stop being strangers, you know? Because a friend or perceived friend will always give you more. The whole list goes on and on. It's a set of skills not everyone has, so hire those who specialize in it, right? It makes sense. It lines up perfectly with the established norms and best practices of the field.

The thing is I wasn't one of them. Not by a long shot. I was a piece of eye-candy in a less than literal sense. I was the genius's daughter: his representative when he had better things to do. And it was a great thing to know that he had something (quote) 'better' to do, because you could assume what that thing was, even if the exact nature of 'better' went unstated. With all that being said, I still wasn't much of a prize,

particularly in the mind of that department's director, and neither of us put too much effort in hiding our animosity for the other. Or so I remember. Maybe there was a better inciting incident to our dislike than what I remember. But whatever it was, whatever had happened, there was bitterness between us. I had a bit of disdain for her that seeped into her line of work, and it was returned.

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Then again, once again, maybe I had or maybe there was a more legitimate grievance to be had with her field, one that could only be addressed by a larger overhaul of... everything. But you know, we're gonna get there. Eventually. Or not. I've stopped caring about many things.

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But that's all nonsense. At least in this context. This was not the time nor place. And maybe there wasn't really a time or a place for knocking out the window of the car that was following me, but I did that. Oh yeah, I did that.

Once I found Reine through a comedy of random events that might have felt like errors on her end, I found myself caring a little bit less about being seen or found. I don't have much reason to care. Lottie's already dying. My little quest is a last chance or a saving throw on her behalf. And Reine's apparently unharmed despite ample opportunity for her to have been harmed, which made me feel a bit more comfortable in this mess. I mean, maybe she was harmed by my sudden appearance, but you know what I mean. Whatever is in that car isn't going after her, so why should I be afraid that I might lead it back to her? Particularly now that I'm not going to see her again. Per both

of our wishes. Also my starting point is well-known and the end point of this little sidequest. So why not get a little bit of aggression out?

Or that's what I thought when I turned the corner and saw that the car was just sitting there, unoccupied. And I knew it was unoccupied because the driver's side door was wide open, and for the first time I could see inside of it. A complete and unhindered, unfaked and unmanipulated view into the car. So yes, I knew it was empty. But I can't really say that I learned much else. Some cars are lived in. But on the other hand, some cars are kept absurdly clean. Polished, cleared, vacuumed. Completely sterile and so completely incapable of giving anyone a hint on who they are. From a distance this was clearly one of those cars.

But maybe that isn't accurate. Maybe a new angle could have given a new perspective and some shred of evidence I could have run with. But I had to keep my distance. Part of me didn't really want to, sure. I do want answers. There might be some in that car. With that being said, it should have followed, plain as day, that I needed to look closer at it, after glancing around of course. The window of time I would have to look into that car would be short, and consequently, every second would count, and I needed to be absolutely sure that I knew how many seconds I had. Although I would need a level of certainty and absoluteness that no one could ever hope to have. But regardless, that's not what I did.

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Because I was focused on something else. A moment of emotion. A potential catharsis. Which might not necessarily be bad. Um... I'm not a stoic in the accurate sense or otherwise. At least I had the presence of mind to grab an object from the

ground to be the thing that makes contact with the glass, potentially to pick up sharp bits that could hurt and/or be incriminating later. However, the issue of incrimination didn't really come to mind until after the fact. Not great, mind you. Not wise of me. Not the sort of thing you should risk when you're on the run from someone vindictive and powerful let's say.

But I hardly think about Dad nowadays. It's all Lottie, Reine, and car, even if connecting the car to Dad would be obvious, logical, and convenient. That car should make me think of him, even if it is only out of paranoia. But no, it doesn't. Really, if I'm not making this broadcast, I'm hardly thinking about him. I don't know why. I don't know why I feel this weird calm in my life. Maybe it's because I earnestly thought for a not insignificant time that I was going to die if I got away from him or if I didn't. But I did think that distance could kill me because of some secret programming in my head, and even though that didn't happen, it still makes sense to me, deep down. That still seems like something that could have happened to me, considering... everything. My nefarious father is apparently the author of my world; there's no telling what he could write.

So why did I stop worrying about it when I got further away? When I met Lottie? To be honest, it's not just that I trust her, is it? And yet I keep wasting time.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

Although, a quick swing of what was once part of a sofa frame hardly wastes anytime, in my defense. A swing and warped metal met glass in a battle that metal quickly won with surprising ease. Just seems like you'd be better prepared for retaliation considering what you were using that car for. Or was I supposed to be scared this whole time? Too scared to do just that. I don't even know anymore. I don't know how a normal

person would react. I just know that I struck the window and kept walking, ditching my weapon two steps down the way. I only broke one window. Not sure where the restraint came from. You can't believably stage a robbery when someone left their door right open. Heck, the keys might have been inside now that I think about it. I should have been thinking about it at the time. But I wasn't. I couldn't.

Suddenly, this opportunity had just fallen into my lap. The car that was following me was there. Or I was pretty sure it was the car in question. So I took out some of my frustrations. Quick swing, drop, and done. Nothing more grand than that. Then I kept walking. Maybe the neighborhood would give me some cover, parts of it were rough, but I can't pretend I was all that concerned. Hey, I kind of want them to know it was me. Hear that. If you're listening, mysterious woman following me about, I did in fact ruin your day by ruining your car window. Or I hoped I ruined your day. That would be nice for me. Nice little cherry on top of everything. Because I was feeling good about myself at the time. I lost you, found someone, that might have gone poorly, but then I got to bust a window of yours. Net positive all around.

But that was that.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

It's odd going about a journey without any sort of ambiguous map to follow. Or not odd. This is the standard way of travelling. But it's not what I'm used to anymore.

Oh I never thought I would ever say this, but I need to get back to the practice. Except I can't hang around the practice. Or any building close to that practice given that they are all occupied and all the occupants are incredibly close knit professionally. Ethics of recruiting patients either for or from our practice aside, it's definitely a part of

the life out there. Simple as that. So everyone knows me, and who knows why they think I was suddenly gone. I'm not naive enough to think Dad wiped the minds of everyone in that whole area just to avoid explaining my absence. That would be far too convenient. I can see the risk. But I need them. I need that person. That doctor is Lottie's only hope. Even if it's in some roundabout way. Something's better than nothing, okay? And right now, the alternative is nothing.

Lottie is doing better. But better doesn't mean much. Especially when it can't be a guarantee.

But I know where they like to hang out. I know what sorts of things they like to do because they told me about these things in a very pointed way. And hey, I get it, if you're so used to being treated less than just because of how you see yourself, how you present yourself, or how you identify, it isn't hard to think of kindness as something a bit more forward than what I meant it to be. And I was flattered to be asked. I just didn't have time, I said. So many kids, so many duties, so much... Disaster, let's be blunt about it. I get the feeling it was an open offer, though. Or I hope I kept the door open.

I won't pretend they didn't have nice eyes. But it's a hard thing to dwell on when you're drowning.

And that might have been poetic, but I can't say that to them. And I need to come up with something to say to them, to this... other doctor who needs some sort of pseudonym for this context. It's not like the people who can't know won't know. Or then again, these mysterious bodies are the type to ignore pronouns, so I have that going for me, which is nice. I have human decency going for me, and I can hope that it takes me pretty far, but I... I think it wouldn't be unfair to say that I have a certain type of feeling

for Lottie that I definitely never could muster for them. And to explain this, there are a thousand reasons that don't have to be personal, and then there are all those that are.

It's selfish to ask this of them. It would also be selfish to not ask this of them, to avoid the conversation because it's easier for me. And maybe that's why I took the time to bash in that window. It was a small way of stalling. And getting abducted in retaliation for the retaliation would buy me a whole bunch of time, wouldn't it? Maybe too much.

Maybe you should be concerned if I miss my next broadcast.

(Static starts. Music cuts. Static fades out).

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