

(Static fades in. Then cuts.)

If you're hearing this, then I don't know what to tell you. I set it up so that some recordings could still broadcast in my absence. Or I did the best I could. But if I did it right, some things will start playing if I haven't been broadcasting in a while. If I do manage to do something, to say something on this channel, then my new signal will overpower or redirect the old.

(Music fades in)

Or I really messed up. I... There's a chance for that too.

I'm not sure why I'm even trying. (inhale) When I first came up with this idea, it was comforting in a way, but that only shifts the matter rather than answering it. Why am I more comfortable with trying this than... Than doing the easy thing which is not doing anything at all? What's the point of broadcasting to you from the past? If I'm in trouble, you won't be able to help me. If I'm not, then, well, sometimes maybe a silence is less scary than a voice that only comes to you under certain conditions.

If I had to guess, I think I'm still deeply uncomfortable with this idea of disappearing, even if it is necessary. Because this won't be an ordinary disappearance, right? This... This will be a complete and total cleanse of who or what I am off of the global record. Like what happened with my mom. I'm her daughter, but I don't remember her face or her voice. There's a vague memory of her singing in my mind, and that's it. And that has definitely been corrupted. That's all I have. Dad tried to take that away like he took literally everything else. (softly) So it's just a scarp. (Normal volume) Look at it this way, there's the memory you have and the memory of you that

others have. Dad erased the memory in my head, and that seems to be the harder one to purge. But he did it. He really did it. That just leaves the memory of me.

The kids are young enough that they will be spared the procedure, at any rate. You can just tell them that certain things are true, and they just believe you. That's how young they are. Sure, they don't really like Dad, but he'll probably make the new nanny do it. He'll probably use her to wipe me clean off of the slate, which... which will spare the kids some pain. So maybe he has a point. You can't grieve what you don't remember. Or at least, that was my experience with Mom for a long time.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

But then the nanny will get burnt out, and he'll need to get a new one. Or he'll guilt her to stay, and then things will get worse for her. And I... I should care about that, I know. I keep saying that. That I should care, but I don't. Not about her. I... There are things I care about. I care about surviving. My survival. Or at least, I think I do.

Leaving the physical safety of this... mansion, let's be blunt here, is probably stupid. It is stupid, but I do need to do it, even though I don't know what it means to go out on the streets. And it's probably going to be the streets. Because... Well, I saw the place you want me to go to first, Lucent. What once was a stable building has fallen apart to just being a larger than average shack. That's living on the streets, and to argue otherwise is a hair split. And no one in the right mind would ever choose to be homeless; I just don't think I'm in my right mind.

I don't know why I need to do this. I just know that I need to do this. I know I have to leave and get out. Hopefully that will mean finding you, but it might not. Hopefully that means finding someone that can help me, but it might not. Hopefully it means finding

the version of me that was captured in that painting, but I don't know if that's even possible. If it was and I could do it, then no-brainer, right? No pun intended. Maybe... But if it's not possible and I do this, then... then will I be nothing. Not even this less than ideal version of myself.

Normally something is better than nothing, but I don't know if I agree right now. I want to, but is that just my pride wanting to speak? Because I don't have much of that left. The more I think about things, all things, the less of anything I have.

(Pause)

If you're listening to this, that means Dad did not stop the broadcast. He didn't even find my setup. Maybe he never even bothered to look for it. I don't know. He was always more proud than I was, so he would probably have tried everything. Everything to feel like he had won. In this case, he would have tried and failed. Maybe. Possibly. But if you are hearing these broadcasts, it means that I didn't stop them either. Maybe I couldn't not because I'm hurt. Maybe I just couldn't broadcast for some reason. Maybe I just didn't have electricity or the set up or something. I try to make a remote one, but I might have failed. Maybe I wouldn't be able to for some other reason. Some darker reason that maybe your brain jumped to. I don't know. I really don't know what's coming for me. But I don't want it to be nothing. So... So I have to put something out there, right? Something that Dad may or may not be able to stop. Somehow. For the first time in my life.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

So can I say that I'm scared? Is that okay? Is it okay to be scared not generally speaking but about what comes next for me or what that road will look like? I'm scared

of being forgotten, which feels like a dumb fear but is also something you can guess just because of this whole thing. Beyond the obvious, I don't know why that bothers me. Because it shouldn't. Yes some people like or want or hope for recognition, but I've never felt that way. Not at home and not at work or anything like that. I never had it, and it didn't bother me. But the thought of losing it all now does.

(Sigh then pause) The employees! The--the people at the practice, maybe... They--they'll remember me, right? I--I don't think Dad would experiment on them. It's just too many variables he can't control, but they already didn't like me. And that's not even his doing.

I admit I was not the fun boss by any stretch of the imagination. I wasn't mean or unfair, but there was a lot of stuff that needed to get done. There was so much to do, and I couldn't get it all done on my own, and that was their job. Usually. They were brought on to do those things, and they weren't paid that terribly. Salaries weren't great, but I tried to fight for them. With Dad. And arguments about the 'dignity of the worker' never really land with him. Or not the way I intend them to.

But no one at the office ever seemed to understand that. I heard the whispers. They wanted me to hear the whispers. They wanted me to know that clearly--CLEARLY--I was the villain of this tale, and I can't say they're entirely wrong. I mean I wasn't the villain, but I wasn't the hero they wanted me to be. And it made them feel better to put me, who wasn't the hotshot doctor who could save the world, into that position.

I was a pawn. Even to them. To everyone.

(Pause) Maybe I just want my story to be mine, you know? Maybe that's really what this is to me. It's a nice little... Not really a test. This broadcast will prove whether or not things went perfectly, but given that standard, it's really not worth much. For what little these broadcasts, or me... What little they or I may be worth to you, Lucent. Or to anyone. You can have them. Something to hold on to. Something to hold the space that is not nothing. For now not nothing.

I tried to arrange everything in the office to run without me for a few days. Told the receptionist that... I was going on a vacation with my partner. And cue the eyebrow raise because I had never mentioned a partner before and would anyone even want me? I'm not conventionally attractive, and I have a not great personality. Neither of which ever bothered me before, which I was proud of. But maybe it wasn't self-assurance. Maybe I just didn't care about me at all as a concept. But I have started wearing a bit of makeup more consistently, just to sculpt my face a bit. To give me a bit of room should anyone try to find me.

Frankly, I'm worried someone will. There's been this... patient, I think he is, who doesn't seem like a patient. He seems fine, for one, compared to everyone else who comes in, and on the second hand, he comes way too often, and when he's there, he just stares at me when he's here. Not in a mean or classically intrusive way. It's more like he's trying to commit my face to memory. And I try to commit his right back, but it's... It's never stuck with me that clearly. His face just seems painfully generic, which isn't actually a thing faces can be, for the record. But his just won't stick with me.

So if you're hearing this, maybe my fears came true. Maybe he did come after me. Maybe... I certainly wish I could explain myself better, but as it stands I can't. But

right now, as you're listening to this. As you hear me, I'm running. And that means I lived, right?

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

Temporal Light is a production of Miscellany Media Studios with music licensed from the Sounds like an Earful music supply. This episode begins season 1.5. Zaneta's journey is going to be long and full of perils. She's not there yet, assuming she's still running at all. This show is written, performed, edited, and produced by MJ Bailey. And if you like the show, please consider leaving a review, telling many-a-friend about it, and/or buying some merch. Link for the studio shop is in the description. Thanks.