

(Static fades in. Then cuts. Music fades in)

Maybe I should be afraid of going out on the road, but I'm not. Not exactly, anyway. I'm afraid of what might be out there, yes, but that's more common sense. I'll be vulnerable. Who knows what could be looking for me? Or what isn't looking for me, per say, but will take me. For whatever it might be worth. Once again: common sense, but the act of travelling or moving about-- in and of itself-- that doesn't scare me. You know, the prospect of relocating, the action, the movement: that part of it I'm fine with. But I don't think everyone is. Now, granted, I can't tell what everyone is thinking, but considering that's the opposite of stability, which is the sort of thing we're all supposed to want, I'd call that a safe bet.

And yeah, you could chalk that up to my current circumstances. I need to leave. I don't have a choice. Stability isn't even actual stability when you're gradually fading away. All that jazz, as the saying goes.

I think... I think it's because I have a vague memory of travelling and not travelling to any of Dad's presentations or conventions or the beach house. Those things aren't that different than being at home, as far as I'm concerned. The family may be on the move, but it's as a unit, and the unit is the problem, so what has changed really?

Well, it's not even the family that's the problem. It's Dad. One hundred percent Dad. But I remember a trip without him, and maybe that's why I'm not so afraid. Maybe it's that memory. Or I think it's a memory.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

I remember... Vaguely remember... Maybe put that verb in quotes just to fully convey what this is because it isn't a memory. It might just be a dream that I want to believe I can retroactively make true with enough dedication to it. Memories are fickle things anyway. Very easy to lose. To twist. All of that.

But I remember a car ride. With my mom. I'm sitting in the passenger's seat despite feeling way too small for the honor. The window is down, and wind is blowing through my hair. I'm smiling. I look over to Mom. She's... smiling. And she looks more like me than I remember. Which is another reason to wonder if this ever happened. But there were no pictures of her around, and obviously, even the realest of real memories from years ago are going to start to fade. They're going to develop holes that everyday life can sometimes fill. Like with a picture of my mom, something that could always remind me what her features are or were, but I don't have that.

Allegedly, I look like her anyway. That's what I've heard--or what I was hearing for a while--from people who knew her. But then the patient roster and the staff roster both changed over, and I stopped hearing that. Not even Dr. Alexson said it, but I think it's because he got the impression that I didn't want to talk about her, and he was half-right about that. It hurt, and I didn't want to have her, but now I think we should have done it. We should have talked about her. Hurt is necessary sometimes, in some odd way. It can be healing. But not an overwhelming amount of hurt: then it's not worth it. But when a cut on your arm sews itself back up, that itches, right? And not scratching it is frustrating, but you need to not touch it. That sort of thing.

It would have been hard to talk about my mom, but I needed to do it.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

I don't remember where we were going, but I remember the road markers pointing out the next city over. I remember being excited to see that, even though now as an adult I go there once a month at least. My face lit up with that sign.

In the memory, my mom is smiling at me. She doesn't really talk, but I don't like to talk when I'm driving. Focus and all that. But maybe there was nothing for her to say. Her child was happy, only waiting for us to get wherever we were going. And that was going to take time. No matter what.

I remember turning around and seeing a black case in the back seat. I remember seeking it out because I had to check it. Like it was my job to make sure it was okay. But it wasn't really a job, more like some supposed mission to give a child to keep them busy, to make them feel important. But I think that case was--in fact--important. In some way.

It looked like a music case. I spent some time at work trying to piece together what kind of instrument it might have held. I even had a backstory prepared and everything. I was going to say it was something a patient had said to me. That they had mentioned a case of some kind. Maybe say it was Rebecca's mom. Maybe she was the one who said it to me. Or not her but Rebecca. I called her Rebecca, right?

We were starting to get close, and I think she was too tired to remember every little thing we talked about. I could have probably convinced her that she had mentioned something of the sort to me. Hypocritical nature of that notwithstanding.

No, it would have been something far worse than simply hypocritical. Not when it came from me. I shouldn't have even considered it. That in and of itself is a horrible thing on my part, but that's where I was. I needed to know, and I was willing to sacrifice

even myself and my integrity for some small scrap of a memory. A small scrap of a piece of who I became. A small scrap of myself that was taken away. Desperation may not offer absolution, but it doesn't even begin to cover what I'm feeling.

But it didn't come up. No one noticed. And now, I'm pretty sure it was a flute case.

There were no other suitcases. Not in this memory. I don't know what to make of that. Maybe I would have wanted Mom and I to run, but because I know the story ends with us going back, there would have been something tragic about the attempt.

And I remember telling her I want to play... music. The words are garbled, but the feeling lingers. I wanted to have music in my life. In my fingers. Not because I knew what it was but because... Because of her. Because it was in her hands. I don't remember what her hands looked like, though. I don't remember what it actually means to say she had music in her hands. She just did. And there's that memory of her singing too. She loved music. She did love music. No matter what anyone says. And I think she loved freedom. Independence too. That's what it felt like in the memory. Out on the road with her. With the wind blowing through my short hair. There was a promise made by the act of moving. Of flowing. Of fleeing, I think. I see that.

Come to think of it. Dr. Alexson did say, once, that I have her eyes. An I'm pretty sure he's right.

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

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