

(Static fades in. Then cuts. Repeat.)

I wasn't a great employee.

(Music fades in)

I wasn't terrible, but I wasn't great. There was no passion there, obviously. But there were things that needed to get done, I could see them, and there was a certain momentum that I couldn't ignore. I didn't want to do that stuff, but I felt compelled to do it, somehow. In some way I don't understand.

I always thought that was just how life with young children somewhat went. You just get caught up in their life, in their... in their movement, and then you can't slow yourself down. You're too tired to put up the effort and physics, and all that. But now, I don't know.

Anyway, I was usually the first one into the office every day. By an accident of fate. The kids needed to be woken up fairly early, fed breakfast, helped with any final homework problems, and dropped off at school. The fancy private school, of course, which starts a full two hours earlier than the public one, but apparently, it's the good one. Or that's what I kept hearing. It's a great experience for the kids with better teacher-student-ratios and better after school activities. Also Dad loves to point out that I went to the public school, and I know what he means by that. It's pretty obvious what he means by that.

But anyway, after I drop them off, I seldom go back home. Or back to the house. It feels like a hair split to present it that way, but that's what I'm going to do. That building has never been a great place for me, what with a chore list seven miles long

and a bunch of bad memories that I can't easily access but I know are there. I know they are there. It's the details that are a bit lost on me.

Normally, I go to the park. I'm physically anywhere else, any somewhat unfamiliar place that's mentally or emotionally neutral in some way. The park's a great place for that. You just see a bunch of runners there, and they don't always judge you for your weight. Or for being the weight you are and sitting on a bench, but it's like 'dude, I take care of a gaggle of small kids, a medical practice, and a jerk. I'm on my break. Get over it.'

(Sigh) Whatever. It's a fraction of what Dad usually subjects me to, so there's that.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

But the park being an outdoor space, there are days when I can't do that. Like when the weather is bad. So sometimes I go for a coffee or something, but I did not do that one day. It was a couple years ago. Before the painting, before everything went awry in my... life-ish. There was a day when I went straight to the office after dropping the kids off, and I don't know why. It was too long ago and not important enough of a detail to remember.

Because whatever it might have been, it meant that I went into what should have been an empty office, but it wasn't an empty office.

When I went in, the lights in the front reception area were off. Which was expected, but there was a single light on in one of the examination rooms. And I mean a single light. You see, the--the examination rooms have multiple switches; it's a very localized control system by design. But I never understood the why behind the design. It

just was what it was. And that 'was' always seemed super impractical for me, considering the kind of work we were doing. We didn't need vaguely localized light, which is all those switches could give you. You might want concentrated light or all light, but a single light that was firmly stuck in place that may not be where you actually want it? That seemed... Not like my dad.

I never... I--I hadn't thought about it that much before. But then I had to. That first thought was that someone was breaking in, someone who needed only a little bit of light to do their searching, though why it was the examination room and not any of the other rooms, I don't know. From a robbery perspective, that's the least appealing room. There's no valuables, money, or drugs. Or patient records if, for some reason, that's what you were looking for. Whatever you could want, it wasn't there. Nothing was there. And it should have been a 'no one was there' but clearly that wasn't the case.

And the lights in the office have a timer, Lucent. Yes, I know what you're about to say, someone just forgot to turn it off when they were leaving, so why was I being so dramatic? There was clearly a good reason behind it, but no, the lights automatically shut off at midnight. We had a power surge once that caused extensive damage, and the timer was one of the many proposed solutions from the electrician. There was absolutely no reason that light should have been on. Absolutely none. Or not a good one.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

So I started walking, slowly at first, and interwove the many keys I had to carry into my fingers, kind of like makeshift brass knuckles, which I've heard is actually not a

great move if you want to not break your fingers, but at the same time, if you're only going to get one punch in, then I guess it makes sense to go all out.

After maybe three steps, I... heard something. Something vaguely familiar. A feminine sounding voice. Once again, you might be saying to me, that's not a big deal. We have female-identifying and female-assigned doctors, staff, everything at the practice, and women can commit crimes, so yeah not a great detail. Or it shouldn't have been. But it wasn't-- But it wasn't the voice that stuck with me; it was what the voice was delivering or conveying or singing. It was the song: a sweet melody that seemed weak compared to... Compared to the other times I had heard her sing it. Heard my mother sing.

It was my mother.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

And I know that sounds, and I knew even then, and I thought I was losing my mind. I really did. And maybe I was but in a different way. I couldn't ask Dad about it because I knew what he was going to say. It... It was like... It was like he had trained me to preemptively dismiss my own thoughts and fears and hurts and memories. He didn't need to verbally beat my perspective out of me if I'm inclined to do it myself. Efficiency and all that. That's a big thing for him. And I... I was ready to listen, even though he wasn't speaking right then. But not anymore.

I have to be honest with you. I did have a reason for these broadcasts: these little things in my absence. If Dad was listening to these recordings, if he did find everything but didn't stop it out of curiosity or to see if I revealed anything, he would have given up now. Enough time has gone by. He's not looking anymore. He's not monitoring it. IHe

would have lost interest. And so, this... This moment, this memory I have, is safe from him and safe to be told. I have to make sure somebody knows because something might happen to me. And if I--I tell you, I won't matter anymore in this. I can tell you about this now, Lucent. I can... Why is this so scary? I hope you're listening. I really do. I need to just say it.

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

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