

(Static fades in. Then cuts. Repeat.)

I... I had always wanted to see my mother again.

(Music fades in)

Or that's what I thought. And it's an easy thing to think when you don't have the details. Because the complications always lie in the details, you know?

(Pause) Bear with me. Right now. I... I know I had a super juicy story to tell you, but these recordings aren't going anywhere. They just come out every so often. And really, what are you going to do about it? Right? You think you have a plan. You're going to do the same thing I did. Absolutely fricking nothing. Because what can you do? What could I have done? What could anyone do or have done against Dad?

I told you before that he's some big shot scientist. He's a leader in a field that's essentially a battle against a class of diseases that is outright terrifying. And he's... And he's actually making progress. More than anyone else. Plus, he has the sense to appear to be benevolent, taking on the cases that no one else will touch. What else could you ask of him? To actually not being evil, perhaps? Bit of a stretch, all things considered. After all, he's never going to have to face a deterrent or consequence or anything like that. Everyone's too afraid that they one day might need him to ever go against him.

Most people know or know of someone who has a neurological condition of some kind, and some of them are more frightening than others, but the mere possibility of the mind running amok and to our detriment that can set people on edge. And I mean, anyone. All people. Never mind the local police chief who has.... Quite the family history. Let me leave it at that. His grandparents and both his parents died rather

gruesome deaths that even the best institute and nurses could not mask. The reporters, who for some reason decided that all of that was news, did not even try to sensationalize any of the deaths; the facts of it all already did that for themselves.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

In particular, I do remember his mother. And I'm pretty sure this is an authentic memory because... Well, no one could make that up: to get that dark would require way too much creativity, and you could get the same point across with a lot less. It was a scary sight. The sort of memory that burns in your mind and forever clouds your judgment. Fear is a pretty powerful motivator, for better or worse and for whatever your morals might have been otherwise.

Dad is that guy's last hope at preventing that fate because genetically, he's getting it from both sides. Dad's research might have just the right breakthrough at the right time, but Dad needs to be around for that. He needs to be overseeing his work for that to happen. He needs to be unbothered, untouched, and not arrested for anything that couldn't be easily overlooked. And even if that wasn't the case, even if this guy in a fairly important position didn't have this fate looming over his head, maybe he'd still give Dad a pass because... grand scheme of things. That sort of argument. Dad is helping a lot of people. Or he would be if he's successful. So cue the long track record of being a genius and all that. It gave Dad credibility, the credit he would need for a bargain written by the devil himself, it seemed.

I always assumed Mom just left because there was never any sort of ongoing police investigation. No other relatives coming by to ask about her. No friends. No one seemed to care. It wasn't just my memory. I--I had other things to draw from. My

memory was constantly validated by the way things just were. There were so many more pieces at play than just me. So it had to be true. Even when I had reason to think otherwise.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

In some ways, I do feel guilty for what I did. Or I should say, I feel guilty for what I did not do. Not just then. With mom. But Well, there's a lot of stuff happening in that practice that shouldn't. In the books, anyway. There are some numbers that do not make sense. They don't add up, or they aren't for procedures that are happening that day, or there are transactions potentially missing. The books aren't what they're supposed to be. But it's not money laundering, right? Or I don't think it's that.

(Pause) My least favorite part of the job was taking inventories because the medical supplies we had never lined up with the ones we were supposed to have. We were always missing some, and it was apparently my fault. I would try to push back and say it clearly was a theft of some kind. Or someone was really bad at keeping track of their usage. But stocking the exam rooms and procedure rooms was also my responsibility. So that left theft, but Dad and I were the only ones with keys to that room, so no matter what this had to be my fault in some way. Or that's what Dad would always point out.

And for the longest time I believed him, even knowing--or thinking I knew--what had seen in the office that day. Because if there were procedures that were happening without my knowledge, that would explain everything. Missing supplies, missing drugs that could never serve a recreational purpose just because of the way they work, and the money in the books not adding up. If there are patients I don't know about and

records I don't have, all of that can fill in those gaps. And I feel fairly confident that I know why I don't have them. Dad doesn't want me to. It's the why to that why... It's Dad's reasoning, I mean, that I don't have, I don't entirely want to have, and in many ways, doesn't matter because it's not going to change anything. Dad's got his protection. I don't. He was my protection, technically. And if these recordings are still running, then maybe I needed it more than I thought.

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

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