

(Static fades in. Static cuts.)

I almost want to ask you something. Not because I think it's true but I think there's something poetic about it.

(Music fades in)

And it's the poetry that I like. In fact, I think I like poetry. Full stop. I'm not sure why, but I think I do. So even if it might not make sense, I'll go ahead and kick this out into the world. Is it a universal rule, somewhere or somehow, that children can't forget their parent's voice? Especially the voice of the parent that provided them some level of care throughout their life. Or the only care they ever knew. And sure, I don't remember my mother being the most attentive sort of parent. I don't remember a lot about her. But I like my odds, and I've spent so much time recently learning the hard way that my memory is dubious at best with faint slivers of a blurry reality popping up when I least expect them.

It's been complicated. There's a part of me that doesn't want to accept this is my reality, but I have to. Accept it or not, it's what I'm dealing with. The only comfort I can find for myself is thinking that there are things he can't take away from me. Which is where this inaccurate musing came in. Because believe me, I know it's dumb. I've met people who have a secondary or tertiary grieving experience after they forget the voice of their deceased or deceased in a technical sense parent. And I worked in a practice built around memory loss. I know all too well that nothing is sacred. There's little to no dignity in that field of medicine, really.

You know, fun fact, one time a missionary came by the house, and... Well, instead of slamming the door in his face which is what I usually do, we had a

conversation, and at some point, this came up: the idea of human dignity in medicine. And it's a really fun thing to talk about, I say sarcastically. Look, at some point, I stayed in that conversation only because I was mad and didn't want to take it out on the kids. Sure, medical professionals should make nothing worse. But there are situations that are outright incompatible with dignity. I don't care what anyone's religions say. I've been in the trenches. Those opinions mean nothing to me until someone jumps down there with me.

(Music fades out and new music fades in)

But look, I... Well, I was in a particular kind of trench, right? I saw the other side of it. I saw the doctor who didn't have any respect for the concept of human dignity and what it's supposed to represent. Which is why, I guess, he had the woman who gave him so many children strapped down to a table. The same way I vaguely remember being strapped down.

I never went into the treatment rooms if I could help it. And I don't think that was programming. Or I don't think that anymore. I think it is a self-defense sort of muscle memory. Like a, 'this didn't go well last time, so don't do it again,' sort of thing. Because once upon a time, it was me. Then it was my mother. And I didn't help her.

She was strapped down the way I remember being strapped down. Her entire scalp was covered with the typical medical cap but it had plenty of wires coming out from underneath it. Thick ones, too. Much too thick.

We never did any sort of invasive or open medical procedures. I've said that a thousand times, and honestly, my opinion on it keeps changing. I know a lot of patients found that comforting and so did their families. But I don't agree anymore.

Worse yet for my mother, because it can get worse somehow, she was wide-awake. That's how she was able to sing. She was awake going through this procedure, and I don't think I had that curse. But beyond that, or more important than that, her being awake with no open wounds to be concerned with meant that I could have saved her. Dad was by himself, in the corner with his back to the door and huddled over the computer. No one was supposed to be in the office, so his guard wasn't even lowered so much as it was nonexistent. He wasn't a monster in that moment. Or I mean, he was a monster. But he wasn't an unconquerable one. He was a monster within a man. A man I could easily destroy. Or at least wound.

There's a thousand ways that could have gone. Bash his head in, bash something against his head, or other body parts currently unspecified. I had options is what I mean to say. And I took none of them. Sure, you... You want to look at the bigger picture and point out how impractical an escape was at that point. Like, I did everything right so to speak, right now, on this trip, and if you're hearing this, there was still a devastating problem somewhere. Something happened to me, and you've figured that out by now.

So no, maybe I couldn't have saved her. Maybe it wasn't as simple as I think it was. But I think it... wasn't simple but necessary. And Mom agreed. I could see it in her eyes, which locked onto mine. And there was another message there, but I didn't stick around long enough to find out. I just left her. And tried to tell myself that whole thing never actually happened. But I know it did.

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

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