

KAI

Lyssa just left. She and Jess kept coming over this last week. She called out of work and slept over the first few days. And, uh, insisted on helping me clean up. I'd been letting a few things go but she knows I'm messy. I always have been. Everything's clean, it's just...messy. Well, it was, it's not anymore. She almost found the last tape too. I managed to get her out into the kitchen before she got into my desk and while she was handling something out there I hid the tape.

I haven't checked if it's still where i put it. I hadn't had time, I've barely had 15 minutes to myself in the last week between Lyssa being here, Jess stopping by, Mom calling, and just the three of them trying to get me out of the house, and not letting me be alone.

But I'm pretty sure she didn't find it. If she had, I'm sure she would have said something. Let me take a look.

(There is a quiet shuffling sound before a relieved sigh)

Oh good. It's still here.

So that means this is it. The end.

I can finally figure out what's going on. Why this was sent to me. What they were telling me.

(a phone rings)

Lyssa just left. Why is she calling me again? She doesn't...she can't know. Can she? Did she set up cameras? I-I need to answer.

(the call is answered)

KAI

What is it?

LYSSA

Uh, Hi to you too.

KAI

Sorry. I just- Hi.

LYSSA

Are you okay?

KAI

I'm the same as when you left a few minutes ago.

LYSSA

Sorry, you weren't trying to sleep, were you? I didn't wake you up? You mentioned you might try to take a nap after I left.

KAI

No. I- I hadn't gotten that far. I was uh, finishing up some things around the place. What'd you want?

LYSSA

Oh! Um, Jess reminded me that her work was having a get-together tonight and I wanted to know if you wanted to come.

KAI

Let me guess, you want me to come because that means neither of you can babysit me.

LYSSA

No, I want you to come because I think it would be nice for you to go out and meet people. Some of her coworkers are really nice and I think you'd get along with them.

KAI

God not- not this again Lyssa. I've told you and mom plenty of times that-

LYSSA

I didn't mean to date, Kai. I just meant as friends. I know you're not into that. I just meant that...I ran into Rielly at the store. She said you hadn't talked to her in a while and..well we were worried and- well, if I'm being entirely honest, Kai, you've always struggled with friends.

KAI

Will you take no for an answer?

LYSSA

No. We'll be around to pick you up around 5.

KAI

Okay, fine. What type of dress?

LYSSA

Just casual. It's a hangout, not a meeting.

KAI

Fine. I'll see you at 5. Was that all?

LYSSA

Yeah. That's all. Oh wait, actually, Jess isn't going to be able to stop by after work like she normally does.

KAI

What a bummer.

LYSSA

Look I'm just saying, you're going to have the rest of the afternoon to yourself. So if you need anything, if anything happens. Please call me. I told the Head Nurse that stuff was going on, so I'll have my phone on me. I'll even be looking out for texts.

KAI

I- If something comes up I will.

LYSSA

You promise?

KAI

I promise.

LYSSA

Okay. Love you. I'll see you later.

KAI

Love you too. I'll see you then.

(the call hangs up and there's a beat of silence)

I have the rest of the afternoon to myself. Until 5 at least. That's a few hours. I can...I can figure this out before then. This can all be over.

(the tape is inserted and play is pressed)

(Everything on this tape is vaguely distorted and poppy but still clear and intelligible, every so often the tape stops and starts again as denoted as //)

TAPE KAI

Something is wrong. Something...things are wrong. This place it's...wrong.

//

TAPE KAI

I can't focus. There's people. Watching. My office had windows installed. They're watching me. I can feel them. I'm not one of them. I won't be one of-

//

THE SUPERVISOR

Client Retention, sleeping while on duty is strictly prohib-

TAPE KAI

My name is Kai. I am not one of...of you. I am me. I..am...me.

THE SUPERVISOR

Perhaps your initial assessment was not entirely inaccurate.

THE DIRECTOR

It surely wasn't. I've been at this longer than you've been around. I know what I'm doing. They are so close.

//

TAPE KAI

Please. Help me. I can see you watching me! I know you're listening. Help me. Help me get out. Please. I want to go home.

THE SUPERVISOR

And where do you think that is, Client Retention?

TAPE KAI

Where'd you- It doesn't matter. I told you. My name- my name is...I want to go home.

//

TAPE KAI

I don't have a home anymore. Or is this my home? I can't remember. I don't know. I- what do you want with me? I can see you! I know you're there. I can't...I can't leave. I can't. They're there. They're watching. They- I- I don't remember home anymore.

//

TAPE KAI

I tried to run. I ran to the front door. There wasn't...there isn't a front door. No windows to the outside either. I could see other offices. I ran past mine and...it was packed. Someone at every desk. Maybe it wasn't my office. It could have been another one. I...I don't know. I saw it a few times. I was running in...in a circle. But in the hallways, I'd turn right and end up as if I turned left. It's not...possible.

I opened one of the doors I passed. It...it didn't have any windows so I...I went inside. It...it's just a small cupboard but no one can see me here. No one can find me here. I'm safe.

(Muffled footsteps pass by and Tape Kai goes silent)

They're looking for me, I know they are. I can stay here as long as I need.

//

TAPE KAI

How did- I was just...there's other people in my office and...they're just staring at me.

THE ASSISTANT

You are interrupting their work. The Supervisor is not pleased with that.

TAPE KAI

I...I don't mean to. I don't. I-I'm sor-

No. I shouldn't be here. I need to leave. I need to.

//

THE DIRECTOR

How have you been holing up these last few weeks, Client Retention?

TAPE KAI

What? When did.. I'm okay I guess it's...my head it's...no. No, I'm not okay. What is going on? Who are you?

THE DIRECTOR

No need to worry about that. I'm just here to see how you're coming along. The confusion, it fades with time, you know. And I must say you were exceeding my expectations there for a while. I'm right proud of you,

TAPE KAI

You're the director. You're why I'm here. I want to go home I-I don't

THE DIRECTOR

It's alright, Client Retention, you are hom-

TAPE KAI

No! I'm not... I'm
(footsteps quickly run away before they stop)

TAPE KAI

..how?

THE DIRECTOR

Ah, bless your heart. I thought you might be ready, but don't fret. Every time, you're getting a tad closer. Perhaps next time, you'll do even better.

TAPE KAI

No. I- Help me. Please. I know you're listening. I know you're there. Help me. Please.

THE DIRECTOR

Just rest now, Client Retention.

(the sound of someone collapsing into another's arms)

You're putting up quite a fight, Kai. You're one of the clients with the most potential at the moment. I've got faith in you. We can give it another go, no rush at all. I can be mighty patient.

(quiet chuckle before the tape is stopped)

KAI

I- uh-

I don't-

I-

I don't...feel good.

How can I help? I'm out here. I...

What do they want from me?

Another go?

I...

Oh god...

(soft exhale and the sound of fainting)

(There is extended silence and a quiet meow before the recording stops and starts back up)

LYSSA

Kai you didn't answer my call, or the door, so I let myself in. Are you ready- Kai?! Jess, get in here!

JESS

What's going on? Oh my god. Are they okay?

LYSSA

They're breathing. No pupillary reaction. Steady but slow pulse. Do you see anything that might have caused this? Sorry, no more important, call an ambulance.

(phone ringing)

JESS

Lyssa.

LYSSA

What?

(there's a moment of silence before the tape is taken out of the player)

Oh no, Kai.

(overlapping and getting quiet as Jess walks away)

JESS

Hi, my name is Jess, we have a medical emergency. We found my wife's sibling unresponsive in their apartment.

KORI

Slowly Unspooling is a podcast licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share-Alike 4.0 International License. Today's episode was written by Aspen Rayne and featured Aspen Rayne as Kai, Celeste as The Assistant, Haze Peers as The Supervisor, Kat Hatherlee as The Director, Lumi Oakes as Jess, and Simon Brooks as Lyssa.

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