

Kaiden Seeker

Backstory

Name: Usually goes by "Kay"

Species: Human

Sex: ♂

Age: 31

Height: 5ft 9in

Weight: 185kg

Siblings: None

Profession: Logical security auditor

Kay is an original character from the *Indicators of Compromise* story. He has had a few very difficult trials during his life and as a result is a quiet, thoughtful, and analytical character, but he still enjoys the warmth and kindness of others, and is prepared to give that to those with whom he feels safe.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Kay was very welcome to his parents when he was born by virtue of the fact that they had been trying for a baby for months. When they became pregnant with Kay they were delighted at their success!

His parents were a working class couple who sometimes struggled financially, however that wasn't to an extreme degree. At times they had to cut back on certain expenses to ensure that

they could afford the necessities, but when they did, they achieved their objective of providing themselves with the food, warmth, and clean house that they needed.

His parents found ways to cut corners that did no harm to Kay or themselves: accepting hand-me-downs from neighbours and family, and buying many of the things Kay needed from charity shops. Overall this 'only just coping' vibe meant that they gave Kay what he needed over the years, but he got the impression early on that he couldn't be too forward in making demands to get what he wanted. There was enough for him to survive and he came to feel comfortable living within those means.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Given that Kay was so welcome into his family, he became a happy and curious toddler, eager to explore his environment and everything in it. His parents also found this a fun phase (although of course, not without its trials as any parent could attest), and they supported Kay in his learning about the world. When he showed them things he had found they would delight in his discovery and explain what it was.

They read to him from an early age, including childrens' books about the sciences - how electricity works, space, early maths, and anything else. Kay loved being read to and listened avidly to those stories. At this early age, he simply enjoyed the lull of being read to but he developed a taste for the more familiar stories.

However, Kay also had a difficult experience as he approached the end of toddlerhood. He got plenty of support and enjoyment from his parents, but occasionally he experienced something to lead him to feel more tentative about showing off his findings. As Kay became a more capable and habitual talker, occasionally he would talk for extended periods of time and his parents would become weary of this. From time to time, when he was most fascinated by a subject, they would tell him to stop talking. He felt very hurt and ashamed when this happened - after all, he had only been enthusiastic, and that seemed like a good thing.

Aside from this he also had some difficulty with one of his grandparents. Occasionally either Kay and his parents would visit his grandparents, or the grandparents would visit the family. Kay's

grandfather could be friendly enough for most of the time, but if Kay had a meltdown (like all toddlers sometimes do) then his grandfather would talk sharply at him, even shout, to make him go quiet.

The end result of this was that Kay would often feel unwilling to put himself forward spontaneously or creatively, feeling shame at the idea of doing so in case he displeased his parents or grandparents again. This experience led him to hone his desire to gather information. As a small child he was most interested in how to read the people around him to better understand their intentions so that he wouldn't be shouted at again. He found this rather hard, but he did his best and became quite successful at it.

He also found that talking about facts, about the things he'd read about in books but keeping his observations factual and unemotional, gave him an outlet to talk for at least a while. He sometimes got carried away and talked more than his family liked, so at times this led to a recurrence of the above, but he gradually found a state of equilibrium with talking about the facts from his favourite books, or his observations of the world.

Ambition

(young childhood)

Kay became a relatively quiet child. The fact that talking with his parents about things he was passionate about could become a game of Russian roulette prompted this to a degree, but so did his parents' mild poverty. They couldn't afford to buy him flashy toys so instead they made things out of cardboard boxes and other cheap and easy-to-obtain items, and Kay played with those. He honed his imagination to get the best out of these toys, and he had rather a lot of fun with them.

Having cheap and/or beaten up old toys made for a better play environment than it may first appear. Many children who are given expensive toys intuit the value of those toys from their parents' behaviour. If their parents want them to 'look after' or 'respect' the toys, or worse, insist that they stay in their packaging to become collectors' items in a few decades' time, play can quickly lose its spontaneity. For Kay, none of his toys were too good to be knocked around, and they weren't so over-designed that he couldn't use his own imagination to bring them to life. A cardboard box could be a medieval castle, a space station, or a deep, dark set of caves.

He also came to enjoy drawing and reading for similar reasons.

Kay had fun when he played, and he learned to get the best out of playing quietly by himself.

As he started going to pre-school he found himself among a lot of new people, including people his own age. So many young children meant a lot of chaos and energy around him, and a lot of new personalities to get to know. He found them a little bit too much, and did his best to keep to himself so that he could keep the chaos - ultimately inevitable as it was - to a minimum.

He also met several new adults, mainly his teacher. Kay already knew how to be around adults: reserved, cooperative, and to listen and watch for their reactions. She seemed friendly and this helped him to relax somewhat, but her friendliness didn't undo Kay's reticence entirely.

Perhaps some adults at around this time might have noticed that Kay showed signs of high-functioning autism, and they would be right. But this didn't happen. Unlike some autistic boys, Kay was easy to manage and kept himself entertained, and that meant that he passed under the radar of the adults who cared for him. The fact that he was a young child during the 90s may also not have helped, as autism awareness was still relatively lacking at that time.

Productivity

(older childhood)

Kay's classwork in school became more in-depth, and Kay enjoyed this. He got to learn more detail about the things that interested him, and the more difficult material implied that he would be allowed (even seen positively by his teachers) for actively taking an interest and asking about the study material.

However, as with his earlier years and his parents, that was not always the case. Sometimes Kay would stay on a certain point (or small area of study) for long enough that a teacher would decide that enough was enough and that they would need to ask Kay to stop asking. Again, Kay found this painful and shameful, especially as it happened in front of his classmates.

He continued to feel a desire to ask about these subjects so did his best to balance satisfying his curiosity by asking (or studying and then asking his teachers for more information when possible) and simply keeping quiet and letting the moment pass by.

Kay's quietness meant that he wasn't the most popular of children (not least because he was a studious classmate more so than a fun one), so had fewer friends than most. He wasn't directly bullied, but could be the subject of a certain level of neglect or cold-shouldering by the other kids. However, he managed to get along well enough with enough of his classmates that his interpersonal skills weren't a big problem.

At around this time Kay had a few, vague thoughts about what he wanted to do for a career. He didn't know exactly what he wanted to do, but he liked the idea of knowing what he would want to do so that he had peace of mind. He remained at this stage of planning out his life for some time.

Child to Adult Transition

(adolescence)

Kay found adolescence particularly difficult, not least because he realised that he was not heterosexual. He went on a date with a girl, but this ended badly, and in the aftermath, rumours circulated that he was gay.

This was during the early 2000s, which was a difficult time for a gay teenager. Although the AIDS epidemic had been brought to light some 15 years previously, some parents were still suspicious of homosexuals, so when rumours of Kay being gay reached the ears of some of the parents of kids in Kay's class, the parents responded with ignorance, fear, and anger that Kay presented a risk to their children. He got harassed a lot by his classmates for this and for being gay generally.

Overall, the population, including the scientific community, had moved on from this stance and Kay used this as a way to feel safer. He learned what he could about HIV/AIDS and corrected his classmates whenever he felt he could. Correcting adults came as more of a challenge.

With his classmates also becoming teenagers, the culture of his class became a more socially-invested one. Most of his classmates became more interested in one another, of experimenting with how they wanted to present themselves, who their friends were, and who their enemies were. Kay found this overwhelming, and it was one of the most extreme examples of his autism holding him back socially.

Throughout all of this, Kay had the challenge of working out his true orientation and this became very difficult for him. He struggled generally with the turn his life had taken and his grades plummeted.

Kay's home life started to suffer too. His parents saw his grades suffer and Kay himself became withdrawn. They suspected that something was wrong but Kay instinctively kept his troubles to himself. For him, it felt natural to withdraw when under stress. He took to spending a lot of time on his laptop.

Gradually he started to consider contacting the Samaritans. He felt highly apprehensive about being heard making a phone call to them so instead he emailed them. It didn't feel like the best route of contact for him - he would have preferred to be able to talk directly to them - but he felt that email had to suffice.

The years passed by and Kay managed as best he could. In time he finished secondary school. Having left the toxic environment of school he began to feel better, and made the decision to go to college. For this he had to re-sit his exams. He did so, passed, and got into college.

Kay met many new people in college, but more importantly than this, he learned that these new people were far more accepting of people of different orientations, and eccentrics. He slowly opened up to this new crowd and learned new ways to own the things that had happened to him, and to cope with them if they ever came up again.

He had numerous short-term boyfriends (usually from the same fields of study as his own), and the few months-long relationships he had ended amicably. Aside from this he had a few drink-fuelled one-night stands.

He discovered that alcohol could help him to relax, and used this whenever he needed to take the edge off his anxieties. At times one drink could turn into three or four.

Closeness in Relationships

(young adulthood)

Kay graduated from college and got a job as a logical security auditor on the 12th of August 2014. He enjoyed the challenge that this job presented and it, along with his nearly learned lessons of 'to thine own self be true' that he'd developed in college, meant that he could at last use his naturally inquisitive and investigative mind to full effect. Finally, asking questions to get to the heart of the matter was exactly what he was supposed to do!

He also met Max Williams during this time. Max had joined a few months prior to Kay and they got along immediately. They got talking, and swapped stories. Kay learned from Max about how best to do his job and soon, Kay had new perspectives to show Max in return.

Their line manager noticed how well the two got along and assigned them to work as a pair on assignments on a trial basis. This was only for a few months, and five years afterwards they were still regularly put to work together.

Kay rediscovered his confidence and learned how to hold his ground against aggressors, and this became not only a strength for him but one that he was able to bring to his teamwork and friendship with Max. Max was far less likely to stand up to bullying.

One of Kay and Max's assignments led them to visit a business called KilTech for a five-day audit. One of the Directors there, named Eric, rubbed Kay up the wrong way from the very

beginning. During Kay's time at KilTech he met Daniel, and the two got talking and drinking. They became intimate together and during these times, Daniel would take the dominant role.

Max had a medical emergency during the KilTech assignment and this shook Kay for a while afterwards. This cemented his dislike of Eric, and he became certain that Eric was responsible for Max's emergency. He watched over Max, and on one occasion, walked into their hotel room to find Max in tears. He rushed to Max's side to ask what was wrong, the two had a very authentic heart to heart, and Max confessed that he had feelings for Kay.

Kay was astounded by this, thought about it, and found that he was very fond of Max too, so they became a romantic couple. Their relationship rarely took a sexual turn as Max was asexual. Kay respected this, although it took patience on both his own, and Max's part.

Kay had kept Daniel's contact details and longed to have more encounters with him. With his and Max's relationship being founded on honesty he suggested to Max that if he had the freedom to hook up with Daniel from time to time, then this would relieve the tension in the sexual side of their relationship. At first Max found this painful to hear and Kay understood this, but Max saw that this option made sense, allowed himself the time to digest the information, and gave Kay his blessing to meet with Daniel. Over time it became an unspoken - or seldom referred to - elephant in the room.

It should be noted that Kay and Max's colleagues had assumed long before this that the two were a couple, given the ways they behaved around each other. Their relationship (whether assumed or real) was welcomed by their colleagues.

Settling down together like this led to a discussion between Kay and Max about Kay's exploration of his sexuality.

With Max continuing to be in occasional poor health, Kay kept an eye on him for the sake of his well-being, and sometimes Max's health got into a poor enough state that Kay lost sleep over it, however he could get overly anxious about Max's health.

Four years after they became a couple, Max and Kay went for another external audit, this time at a young company called Callsail. They discovered that Eric was there. At the end of that day Kay felt enraged and told Max that he thought he could put Eric behind bars once and for all, by

hacking Callsail and framing Eric for the crime. Max talked him down and Kay reluctantly agreed that it was a bad idea.

Kay had another reason to feel unsettled during the Callsail audit: Max revealed that Carl, their manager, had offered him a management role and that Max was considering accepting it. If this were to happen, Kay would no longer work as Max's auditing partner, and that wasn't a change he wanted to happen.

That night, Callsail was hacked. As soon as Max heard about it he asked Kay whether he had done it, and Kay swore he hadn't. However, Max was never quite sure of Kay's honesty about this, and he never quite trusted Kay again. This, plus Kay's ongoing dalliance with Daniel, caused the two to split.

Kay continued to hook up with Daniel, and one day Daniel offered him a job at KilTech, which he accepted.

Some time after this, Kay met up with Max again. He was annoyed with Daniel on that day and remembered Max fondly, so asked if he had considered them getting back together. Max told him that he had gotten married, so there was no reconnection.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Kay has no intention of becoming a father.

He is aware that when he inevitably begins to slow his pace of work, he can be replaced by a younger worker. He is currently only 31, however, the sense that 'the clock is ticking' plays into his tendency to withdraw when under stress. With that said, it doesn't bother him to a strong degree and as far as he is concerned, his eventual replacement is a simple fact of life that he must accept.

End of Life

(old age)

During Kay's adolescence he sometimes considered suicide or had intrusive fantasies about death by accident, so thinking about death is familiar enough to him that he isn't unduly frightened of it.

Credits

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy