

## **MAG – 084 - Possessive**

### **Content warnings:**

- Child abuse
- Abduction
- Infestation (worms)
- Compulsive behaviour (hoarding)

**Discussions of:** food, graphic injury

**Mentions of:** knives, death, gunshots, murder, poverty

**SFX:** low drone, static

**[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]**

**JONATHAN SIMS**

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode eighty-four. Possessive.

**[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro – Continued]**

**[Tape clicks on.]**

**MARTIN**

Right. Er, Martin Blackwood, Archival Assistant at the Magnus Institute, recording statement number... 9900112, statement of Adrian Weiss, given December 1st 1990.

Statement begins.

**MARTIN (STATEMENT)**

When I was about ten or eleven, my parents moved us from Ipswich out to a small village in Suffolk called Cratfield. I'd tell you what the nearest notable town was, but there really wasn't one. Nothing much near us at all. It was open and rural and, the way I saw it, absolutely filthy. I was used to the dirt and grime of a city, so all that manure and rot that gave the countryside its particular odour made me feel like I could never quite get clean.

Still, I was happy enough to be living there. My school in Ipswich had been very difficult, for reasons I'd rather not discuss, and I had no friends to speak of that I was leaving behind. For all the isolation and muck out there, I still felt like I appreciated the fresh start.

The village kids were an insular lot, but they accepted me much quicker than I had expected. I guess they couldn't really be picky – a place that small, you end up hanging out with all sorts of kids that you wouldn't normally look twice at.

That's how I met Gordon. Gordon Goodman. He never really felt like he fit the name. He was about fourteen, a bit older than most of the other kids by a couple of years, but still one of the smallest, barely five foot two and scrawny as anything. His hair fell over his eyes, and you always had to ask him to repeat himself, because whenever he started talking it was so quiet that you'd miss the first part. I liked him, though. He wasn't someone who'd judge you; he just took everything in stride.

Now, near the edge of Cratfield, at least as much as it had a clear edge, was a field of about three acres that pretty much everyone avoided. It wasn't the sort of place that gets named on a map, so everyone around just called it 'The Dump', or occasionally 'Maggie's Dump' on account of an old woman called Margaret Carnegie, who owned the place and lived in a small bungalow right in

the middle of it. Now Maggie was a classic recluse: hardly anyone had seen her for years, and those that had would only spot her in and around her little house, carefully piling up newspapers or stacking bottles.

Maggie was a hoarder, you see. No-one really knew where she got most of it, you didn't get much home delivery in those days, but she seemed to have a never-ending supply of food wrappers and magazines and old clothes. At some point she'd clearly run out of space in her bungalow, and started to store stuff outside. She never weighed it down or tied it up or anything, so when the wind picked up it got spread all over the place, and so, gradually, the area became Maggie's dump.

Cratfield was a good ways away from the nearest actual rubbish tip, so it wasn't long before local families started to use it as well. Anything too big for normal collection got thrown out there: fridges, sofas, broken electrics. By the time I moved there, the area around Old Maggie's house was covered in junk, with stained white, broken appliances, dotted all over like blisters on grimy skin.

I learned all this from the other kids when they made fun of Gordon, who they called Maggie's 'little pet' or sometimes her 'rat butler'. You see, he was the one who delivered her food. I've no idea why his parents had taken on the responsibility of providing for her, she was probably a distant relation of some sort, but it was Gordon's job to bring her groceries every few days, winding his way through the filth that surrounded her isolated home.

Now Old Maggie fascinated me. Or rather, the stories about her did, because obviously there were stories. The two most common were that she was a witch, or that she'd killed her husband and chopped him up, keeping the land

as messy as possible so nobody would think to dig him up. I never met anyone in town who remembered her actually having a husband, or course, but there were plenty of kids who claimed to have seen her creeping past their houses at night, or staring into their windows. Davey Morgan even said that she'd chased him through the woods with a knife, but we all knew he was a liar. Even so, the stories terrified me, and I loved them.

I never wanted to actually meet Maggie. I was far too scared of her for that. But, I used to love walking with Gordon while he took groceries to her. I'd see how close to her house I could get before I got spooked and ran home. I used the bigger bits of rubbish as markers. After a few weeks I could always make it past the broken red sofa, and the bravest I got was the washing machine without a drum, all the while picking my way past sodden newspaper and rusted cans.

Gordon, for his part, never seemed to mind. I reckon he was thankful for the company, as he would chat away softly to me as we walked, either ignoring or oblivious to my fear.

Whenever I ran back to the fencepost that marked the start of Maggie's Dump, and was therefore, in my mind, safe, I would turn back to watch as Gordon reached the bungalow. He'd press the little doorbell, and stand there waiting as the door swung open. I could see a figure stood there: long, white hair and a dressing gown the colour of rust. They would lead Gordon inside, and the door would shut behind them. I would never see him come back out.

I tried to convince myself he just needed to help her with chores, but deep down I knew she was doing something dreadful to him. My mind would conjure grotesque images of knives and bubbling cauldrons full of rotting food,

and I'd generally scare myself so badly that I never ended up waiting for more than ten minutes.

Which, thinking about it now, is probably why I didn't see him come out. But, he was always at school the next day, alive and unharmed. He'd just smile when I asked him what he did in there. He'd shrug and say she just wanted to ask him to stack stuff, but on those days I would notice that his fingernails were always stained, and slightly caked in dirt.

Then, one day in early October, Gordon didn't show up at school the next day. I'd walked with him the evening before, but I hadn't even made it to the washing machine. I'd seen him go inside, and now he was gone. Nobody seemed bothered, and one teacher said his parents had called him in sick, but I was certain: this time Old Maggie hadn't let him go.

I ran over to his house as soon as school finished, and knocked on the door. His father answered, and when I asked him where Gordon was, he told me he was up in his room with a fever. I asked to see him, but was told very firmly that he was asleep. I looked Gordon's dad in the eyes as he said this, and I knew that he was lying to me. If anyone was going to save him from Maggie's knife, it was going to have to be me.

The sun had almost set by the time I reached The Dump, and the bungalow seemed much taller, silhouetted as it was against the darkening purple sky, surrounded by the filthy, white corpses of unwanted electricals. But that wasn't right. Maggie wanted them. Maggie didn't want anything to be lost. She wanted them to stay, and rot.

You know, for all the fear Maggie inspired in me, I was completely unprepared to be right about her. Not the knife, I got the knife wrong, but I do think that

she was a witch. In the years since then I've tried very hard to convince myself that what I saw that night was a dream or a false memory or something, but... it wasn't.

I was past the washing machine before I'd even registered what I was doing, and when I realised where I was, I felt my legs begin to seize up. The lights in the house were on, dim through the filthy windows, and they cast a diseased yellow glow that refracted off a pile of clear glass bottles stacked outside. I don't know how I'd never noticed the smell of that place before, but now the stench of it hit me like a wave. I gagged, and fell to my knees, not wanting to put my hands anywhere on the litter-covered ground.

As I looked around desperately for a patch of actual grass which I could use to support myself, my eyes fell on something that seemed out of place: A pristine, unopened can of baked beans. The absurdity of it overcame my fear for just a second, and I steadied myself enough to get a closer look.

It stood upright, about two feet from a fallen grocery bag. One of the bags that Gordon always brought when he went to see Old Maggie. Behind it was another bag, and another, and another, until I saw, propped up against the back of the house, dozens, if not hundreds, of shopping bags. Some seemed to be almost new, while others had clearly been there for months. And all of them were full to the brim with unopened food.

I found myself reaching for the tin. I just wanted to touch it, to feel something clean and real to make sure I was still in the world. But as my fingers brushed against it, the can began to shake violently. The metal bent and warped, like something inside was growing rapidly, bursting to be free. I fell backwards, now fully panicked, and started to crawl away as quickly as I could. The

throbbing tin was nowhere to be seen now, but as I tried to get away, I felt the ground give way beneath my hand, and it was sucked down, up to the elbow in clinging muck.

Somehow, I managed to choke down a scream, and pulled my arm free, ripping soil and dead grass out in clumps. It was covered in a wriggling mass of earthworms, squeezing and pressing their slimy bodies against my skin. Still, I didn't scream, as I shook my arm wildly, flinging them away from me. My head was swimming, searching for something I could focus on, something normal, if only for a second.

What I saw instead was Gordon's face, staring at me from the mud, from the hole I had torn in the ground. His eyes were vacant, and his skin was marked and discoloured. Then I realised with a start that it was a mask, old newspaper and wet cardboard formed into a perfect recreation of my friend. A fleshy knot of worms slithered through the hole of its mouth. And then, all at once, my mind snapped back to Gordon's plight, to why I was there in that awful place.

The light was still shining through the grime of the bungalow windows, as I gingerly placed my foot on a pile of old newspapers and lifted myself up to get a look inside. My fingers gripped the edges of a windowpane slick with some sort of dark oil. It took a moment for my eyes to focus on the figures inside, and even then they were blurred by the slime-encrusted glass.

I could see Gordon, sat in a thick, threadbare armchair, motionless. Bent over him was the thin, hunched form of Old Maggie. Tiny shapes moved over my friend's still form, as her thin hands smoothed pieces of ancient, yellowed paper over his face. Her dressing gown was wet, and her wrinkled skin glistened with a pale fluid that dripped from her fingers as she smoothed the

strips in place. I could hear her singing a soft, crooning song, and as her voice got louder the things crawling over Gordon got faster and more agitated.

Then my foot slipped, and a glass bottle fell from its pile. It wasn't loud. It didn't even break. But that was all the excuse I needed to run. I don't know if she heard it, the mere idea that she might see me was enough to send me sprinting all the way back home to safety. When my mum saw the state of my clothes, she sent me to bed without dinner, which was fine by me. I crawled under the covers and lay there until sleep finally came.

Gordon was fine. He was in school the next day like nothing had happened, and we never spoke about it. He stopped delivering to Old Maggie, though. At least, I think he did. I lost touch with him about a year later, when my family moved again, this time to Liverpool. And I tried to convince myself that it had all been a dream.

I'd almost managed it, as well, until I found myself in Ipswich last month on business. My drive home took me near to Cratfield, so I decided to pass through for old time's sake. I stopped at the White Hart for a coffee, and ended up chatting with some locals.

We talked about nothing for an hour or so, until someone mentioned offhand about having to swing by the dump with their old mattress. I asked him when Cratfield had gotten a dump, and he explained it was actually just a patch of old waste ground where folk tossed their rubbish.

Did it have a name, I asked, and he nodded, casually, like he had no idea that what he was saying mattered in the least. Sure, he told me, it was named for the weird recluse who owned the place. They called it "Gordie's Dump".

Statement ends.



**MARTIN**

Well, I, er... I think that was okay. Er, yeah. To anyone listening, sorry about the change of tone.

John, the, uh, Head Archivist is... absent, so I'll be trying to fill in as best as I can. Um. Maybe Tim as well, if he... if he feels like it. It, It doesn't matter, I suppose. Just as long as it gets done.

Erm, I fol– We followed up on the address provided by Adrian Weiss, and... it... is a pretty unpleasant piece of land, owned by Gordon Goodman. Records show he was bequeathed it by the last owner, Miss Margaret Carnegie, upon her death in 1982. Er, in fact he was her sole beneficiary, it looks like.

Miss Carnegie's death was listed as 'natural causes', most likely pneumonia, but it was apparently hard to be sure given the state of her body. Her lungs seemed to be full of newspaper pulp, and her back and sides covered in... you see, well, the report lists them as "cancerous growths", but the description... I mean, I mean, they sound more like insect legs. It also describes them as having "significant post-mortem autonomous motor function", which I'm guessing means they were somehow still moving.

Gordon Goodman is on record as the one who identified her body, and the corpse went missing the following night. Which leads me to wonder if maybe he didn't want to let her go, either. I mean... maybe he, um...

Oh, er, h-hold on.

**(Away from the microphone)** Er, excuse me? Excuse me!

**[The door opens.]**

**MELANIE**

Oh, yes, hello?

**MARTIN**

This is... The Archives aren't actually open to the public.

**MELANIE**

Er, I know. There, there wasn't anyone on the door, though. I'm... I'm looking for the Archivist?

**MARTIN**

Ah. You're Miss, er... Richardson?

**MELANIE**

King.

**MARTIN**

King! Yes. Right.

**MELANIE**

Melanie is fine. Is he here?

**MARTIN**

Are, are... Oh, are you alright?

**MELANIE**

Oh, um, no. Not really. Got shot. Sort of. In India.

**MARTIN**

What?

**MELANIE**

Oh, it's, it's mostly fine now. I can walk on it, at least... It's what I wanted to talk to John about.

**MARTIN**

That's... not really... I mean, I guess I could take your statement?

**MELANIE**

Oh. Er. I suppose. You mean, you mean now? Right.

**[The door closes.]**

Um, well... I... I flew out and I've been, well, that is, before that I was, I was looking at some books. Er, there were history books that were talking... Look, are you sure I can't just talk to John? You know, Jonathan Sims? He still works here, right?

**MARTIN**

Er, that's actually quite a good question.

**MELANIE**

Oh, okay. Look, I'm sorry, I've... I've obviously missed something here. What's going on?

**MARTIN**

**(Sigh)** John's missing. And they... they think he killed someone.

**MELANIE**

**(Laughs)** What, he finally snapped, did he? Or did he accidentally bore them to death?

**MARTIN**

I'm serious.

**MELANIE**

Oh. Oh right. So, who'd he kill?

**MARTIN**

He didn't! It's just everyone – Look, it was, it was an old man. No-one here knows him, and the police still can't actually identify the body, so...

**MELANIE**

So... what? He's supposed to have suddenly just murdered some stranger?

**MARTIN**

With a pipe.

**MELANIE**

What, like burned him to death, or...?

**MARTIN**

A metal pipe.

**MELANIE**

Oh! Sorry, I just pictured him with like a smoking... y'know? I mean, that, that doesn't sound like him, does it? I've only met him a couple of times, but beating an old man to death with a pipe seems kind of out of character.

**MARTIN**

Right? But everyone just seems totally convinced he did it. I mean, they think he did something to Sasha too.

**MELANIE**

Jesus. Which one?

**MARTIN**

Oh, uh, she was, um, another one of the research assistants, like me and Tim.

**MELANIE**

Yes, I know that, I meant –

**MARTIN**

She vanished around the same time as the murder, I think.

**MELANIE**

Oh, you know what, I am not doing this again.

**MARTIN**

You sure you're alright?

**MELANIE**

Yes! I just got... God, I'm kind of at the end, you know?

**MARTIN**

The end of what?

**MELANIE**

Everything. Friends, clues, savings. Everything. Options. There's nowhere left for me to go. I don't know why, but... I just, I just felt that perhaps coming here might help. And talking things out with John. I mean, I mean he's awful, but at least he listens, you know?

**MARTIN**

Yeah. I'm... sorry. Um, is there anything that I could, like, maybe do for you?

**[The door opens]**

**ELIAS**

A friend of yours?

**MARTIN**

Oh, er, it's okay. She's, um, er, she's giving a statement.

**ELIAS**

I see. Well, good to meet you. Elias Bouchard, I run the Institute.

**MELANIE**

Melanie King.

**ELIAS**

Ah, you're not the Melanie King who runs Ghost Hunt UK, surely?

**MELANIE**

Used to.

**ELIAS**

Ah, of course. My apologies.

**MARTIN**

You used to watch it?

**ELIAS**

I'm sorry to hear it's no longer running. Your techniques were rudimentary, but you showed surprising promise. On occasion.

**MELANIE**

Thank you... I think.

**MARTIN**

Melanie was actually just leaving. Erm, I think we were done.

**MELANIE**

Uh, yes... yes.

**ELIAS**

One moment, Miss King. Martin has filled you in on recent events, I believe?

**MELANIE**

I mean, a, a bit.

**MARTIN**

Not everything.

**ELIAS**

Then you are aware there is currently a vacancy for an archival assistant?

**MELANIE**

Yes. And an archivist.

**ELIAS**

Oh, I don't think we need to worry about that just yet. But the assistant role...

**MELANIE**

Hang on, are you offering me a job?

**MARTIN**

What?

**ELIAS**

You have some experience in the field, I believe.

**MELANIE**

Well, yes, but...

**MARTIN**

I mean, that doesn't actually, er, make her qualified.

**ELIAS**

Formal qualifications aren't everything, Martin. Do you want the job, Melanie?

**MELANIE**

Oh... Um, I... Well, it's, it's rather sudden, but... er, I mean, sure. Yes. Yes, I do.

**MARTIN**

Melanie, I'm really not sure that you actually want to –



**ELIAS**

Problem, Martin?

**MARTIN**

No, er, no, no, I-I guess not.

**ELIAS**

Good. Well, if you want to come on up to my office and we'll have a proper interview. Hopefully get all the paperwork signed.

**MELANIE**

Lead the way.

**[Elias and Melanie leave]**

**MARTIN**

Great! Great.

**[Tape clicks off.]**

**[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]**

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