

## MAG – 142 – Scrutiny

### Content Warnings:

- Coercion
- Claustrophobia

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

**JONATHAN SIMS**

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode one hundred and forty-two. Scrutiny.

[Tape clicks on. There's a consistent ticking of a clock.]

**MARTIN**

Uh...uh, right. So... w-what happened?

**BYSTANDER**

I don't— Uh, look, I just need to, to, to talk to a, a, a manager or something.

**MARTIN**

Okay. Uh, well, I— Yeah, actually, I'm, I'm a manager. Go on.

**BYSTANDER**

Okay, well... (**long exhale**) I'd like to, to talk to you about one of your staff.

**MARTIN**

Go on.

**BYSTANDER**

There's, uh, there's been—

I'm being harassed.

**MARTIN**

Okay. Um... Just, uh, just let me grab a form... uh, one second...

**[Paper rustles]**

Okay, okay. Um, what— Would you mind telling me what happened? What they did?

**BYSTANDER**

He.

**MARTIN**

Ah, alright. Um, dd he... **(Sighs)** Did he look like he hadn't slept in like a week?

**BYSTANDER**

Mmmhmm. Yep. Uh, he's been— Yeah, I think he's been, uh, following me.

Kind of.

**MARTIN**

Yeah, I see. Well he's not here at the moment so... I mean— Yeah, why don't you tell me what happened.

**BYSTANDER**

Look, it's, uh... I don't know. I-It's just kind of weird.

**MARTIN**

Well, you know... (**forced cheerfulness**) Weird is what we do!

**BYSTANDER**

Okay.

**MARTIN**

Just, just tell me what happened? Um, please? I won't judge.

**BYSTANDER**

Alright. Uh, so you... you've, you've got to understand my job, okay? I work for Thames Water, uh, mainly pipes and stuff. Like, I mean, I mean, I'm a qualified engineer, but, you know, mostly it's, it's just manual stuff, like digging and replacing pipe. Sometimes I've got to— You know, there are actual sewers involved. It's not really where I saw myself ending up, you know, yeah, but who does? We don't all get to build Formula One engines. Anyway, look, it's fine. I actually get paid quite a bit more than the rest of the crew cos, you know, if there's— if there's something that goes wrong or, or needs an engineer, here I am. Sorry. Uh, and the point is, uh, I do some work underground. Did some work underground.

Look, I know, I know, this doesn't have anything to do with— Just— About five years ago, we were doing some work under Kentish Town. It was pretty nasty. Do you know what a fatberg is? No, uh, it— Don't worry. Don't look it up, seriously. Don't. You know it was just... It was a bad job. I had to spend a while down there. Look, now I don't know if there's something with us and the work we were doing or maybe just the brickwork wasn't right anymore. Maybe it

was rotten or, or unstable or the place kind of— The place kind of collapsed on me. You know, just one moment I'm stood there torch in hand, and the next I've got a shooting pain all up my arm and I can feel god knows how much rubble on top of me and it's absolutely pitch dark. I mean... yeah.

**(Nervous chuckles)** I don't need to tell you, look, I-I'd never been so scared. It was like the world went away. Must have been a full five seconds I thought I was dead.

Excuse me.

**MARTIN**

It's alright. Just... take your time.

**BYSTANDER**

Yeah... Yeah.

Well, I don't know how long I was down there. Well, well, I do, it was three hours, they told me. After. But it felt like... God, it felt like it could have been weeks. Never had a, a great sense of time and just— Gone. Everything, every bit of light or sound or, or anything that changed, that said time was passing. There was nothing. Before that I never really thought about time, you know? But now... Yeah.

But I was lying there, panicking, screaming, just trying to make any noise, any movement that didn't hurt like hell. And I... Okay. I felt something. No, I felt someone, grab my ankle. At first it was great, I had this, this huge wave of relief, right? Someone had found me, they were getting me out.

But no, it didn't feel right. It wasn't— It was cold, right? Like... like old stone, or wet sand. It felt, like, rough, and, and like the fingers weren't... I don't know, it felt like they, they weren't in the right places. And then I started thinking and I realised something. The way it w— it was grabbing me, holding my leg, there was— it had to have been coming upwards. From below me. And there was no-one else down there when that tunnel collapsed. Absolutely no-one. I'm sure.

So then I start screaming again. And kicking, thrashing about. It hurts but, I mean, I'm scared out of my mind, but the, the hand, it just grips tighter and I can feel its fingernails just... It-It-It started pulling. It was pulling down, dragging me down. Into the earth. And I— I-I don't know. I just— This close to just breaking, just absolutely shattering. And... and then this slab of stone came away in front of me and there was daylight, and, and Abby, one of the work crew, was staring at me. And, and, yeah, just like that it was... gone.

But the bruise stuck around. Horrid, muddy bruises where the fingers had grabbed me.

So, it, it took a long time to get over that. I mean, that's not weird, right? I me— It was a bad time. You know, it, it stays with you. Was signed off, what, I think about six months with the injuries. Had pretty bad, uh, nightmares, claustrophobia, I mean, obviously, right?

But, uh, but, but I did my physio, and, you know, talked, talked with the counsellor they gave me. Look, I did everything I was supposed to and, and yeah, I... I guess I was fine. You know, once the bruises were gone I— Well, it's easy to blame memory, right? You know, ha-hallucination, coincidence, all the classic shite you tell yourself. Life went back to normal. I— I was fine.

Until about two weeks ago.

**MARTIN**

That was when you met Jo— one of our employees?

**BYSTANDER**

That's when he showed up.

Y-You know the coffee shop, uh, just next to Pimlico? Uh, the, the nice one.

Well, I a— I actually had a date there. You know, cute guy I met online.

Seemed sporty, which, I kind of like and— Look, it doesn't, it doesn't matter.

Anyway, I get a latte and sit down waiting for, uh, Grant? I wanna say Grant. Or Ga-re... Gareth? Gary? Anyway, look, he's running late, and, and, and I'm just reading. There's this creep in, in the corner. Your guy. He just... keeps staring at me, like, like properly staring. Like, it is super intense and, and real weird. Like he knows me, but I sure as hell do not know him. I— I try to ignore him, look, I just, I just read my book, and every time I look up there he is, watching me.

You know, I'm about to say something, you know, like, when in comes Gary? Gareth? Gavin? and suddenly, hey, it's a date. And I really didn't want his first impression of me to be, you know, me yelling at some creeper in the corner. So I just swap chairs so that I've got my back to your 'colleague', and get on with it.

Didn't really matter, you know, in the end, Gareth was a, was a bust. You know, not like, you know, I mean... He, he was fine, I guess, it's just there was nothing really there between us. You know? Just a nice, boring coffee with a kinda dull man. Took about an hour and he clearly wasn't feeling it either, so

we, you know, we just called it. I mean, we actually shook hands when he left, which... I mean, tells you something, right?

So... Look, I'm packing up, all done and, and I just, I just sorta turn, you know, just, just to check if he's still there and he is standing right behind— Like, like a few inches from my face. Look, it's messed up!

And I start to ask him, you know, what the hell, man, you know? Like— But he just starts talking. Slowly. But real intense. He says, he works here, at the, the Magnus Institute, and I say, what even is that and he says, he wants my story. He says he needs to hear what happened to me. And I— I want to tell him to j-just go away. I want to, to, to kick him and run. But I— (long sigh) I sit down. And I start to tell him everything. About the job, about the collapse, a-about the hand. More than I told you, even, and, and as I do— it's like I'm there again. Like I can feel it grab my ankle, th-th-that cold, dead hand and I just... I just can't stop talking. I cannot shut up.

### MARTIN

Are you alright?

### BYSTANDER

**(Distressed)** No! No I'm not! Of course I'm not. It felt like, like I was throwing up all those feelings again, and I wanted to, to scream but instead I just sat and calmly told him my life story. And he just watched me, his eyes like... His eyes were, were like drinking in every fragment of my misery. I can't— It—

And then it was over. And he looked— He looked at me like he'd just eaten, like a perfectly cooked steak. You know what he said? He said, "Thank you." "Thank you." Just like that. Like, like reliving the worst parts of my whole life

were just a bit of a... a favour that I'd done him. And then he left and I— I just sat there and cried for a while.

[Sniffs wetly]

That wasn't the end.

**MARTIN**

You... You've seen him since?

**BYSTANDER**

No. Not— Kind of? I feel like I do.

I've been... dreaming of that tunnel again. Nightmares. Oh godawful nightmares. Nightmares where the, where the hand keeps pulling and I go deeper and deeper and, and deeper into... It takes me places I do not want to go. And he's there the whole time, just... watching me. Watching me scream and thrash and... He's all eyes. He's all eyes.

Look, I know that's not— That's my brain. I'm not blaming him for being in my dreams. You know, I guess I can't— (**sniffs**) That's absurd, right? It's not—

But I feel like I'm seeing him when I'm awake as well. I've been... I've been having a lot of problems since he talked to me. Since I talked to him. Since I told him my story. The, the claustrophobia, it's back, worse than it ever was and I can't do my job. I have these, these screaming panic attacks every time I try and—

What am I supposed to do? Like, feels like, like every time I'm even slightly underground I— Can't even go into a shop basement more without feeling

that... (**sniffs**) hand. Every time I do, every time I get that panic just rising up my throat, I see him. He's there. Not when I look properly, but just at the edge. The corner of my eye. Then he's gone.

I mean, maybe, maybe it's just me. Maybe, I'm— Maybe I just— I met him once in a coffee shop, and he was a creep, and it messed me up. But that's enough... right? That is enough. So... So I want to put in a complaint. Like a proper complaint. I don't want to go to the police. I mean, I doubt that they would— They wouldn't even, you know, let me get this far, would they? But— Sorry.

So thanks, I guess.

### **MARTIN**

Okay. Um... Right. Well, firstly I'm, I'm really sorry that this happened. Um, in, in terms of next steps—

### **BYSTANDER**

Just— I just— I don't know. You know? Talk to him, I guess, just tell him— Look, I mean that's not okay! You know, right? I'm not— I don't know what he did, but it's— You know, he can't just go around and well— y'know, just keep doing—

### **MARTIN**

I, I understand.

### **BYSTANDER**

Good. Well. You— I just— I don't want to see him again, alright? Ever!

**[Footsteps]**

**MARTIN**

Well, hold on, hold on, I just need to—

**BYSTANDER**

No I— No! That's it! That's my complaint. You know, I, I, I can't—This place, I—  
I can't be here. I have to— Bye!

**[Door opens]**

**MARTIN**

But you didn't give me your—

**[Door closes]**

—name.

**[Martin sighs a couple of times, rustles paper]**

What the hell do I do with that? I mean, Christ John, that's not okay!

Oh, that can't, that can't... I mean it's not him, is it? Not, not really. Is it... what, addiction? Instinct? Maybe mind control, something like that. I can't believe he'd choose to do something like that.

No, no. I can't think like that though. I can't let myself, cos I mean, if, if he's already gone then all of this is just—

**(Long sigh.)**

The, the worst part is I don't even want to talk to him about it. I'm just—I suppose I'm just getting comfortable with the distance. Cut off. (**Scoffs**) Lonely.

Mind you, Peter's not wrong. It really is easier than actually just trying to communicate with people. I should probably try to get him this tape. Let him know what happened, that someone came in to— But then, heh heh, would that just come across as an accusation? Like, cos I don't want to— And then, then I guess... he'd hear this bit as well so—

[Exhausted exhalation]

What do I do?

[Three knocks on the door]

**MARTIN**

(Sighs) Go away.

[Three knocks on the door]

Come in!

[Door opens and closes]

**DAISY**

(Softly) Hey.

**MARTIN**

Um... Hi?

**DAISY**

You mind?

**MARTIN**

Ca-can I help you?

**DAISY**

I, I saw someone come out, so I, I thought that, you know...

**MARTIN**

Do you want something?

**DAISY**

No, I'm ju— Just ignore me. Continue with... whatever.

**MARTIN**

Are you alright?

**DAISY**

Yeah. Just a, a bit empty round here. You know?

**MARTIN**

Not really.

**DAISY**

Melanie's out, and John and Basira are still off. Bit worried, but they can take care of themselves, you know?

**MARTIN**

Again not really. No-one really talks to me anymore.

**DAISY**

Cos they reckon you're working for the bad guy?

**MARTIN**

Pretty much.

Don't you?

**DAISY**

Oh, I mean, you're definitely working for something evil. But so are we.

**MARTIN**

Yeah. Seems there's plenty to go around these days.

It doesn't bother you?

**DAISY**

Didn't used to.

**MARTIN**

And now?

**DAISY**

Bothers me less than trying to go alone. At least now it's on my terms. Better than being blackmailed into it.

**MARTIN**

Pfft. I mean, yeah, I guess...

...

They told you about Elias, right?

**DAISY**

Yeah. Basira said. Don't like him being alive. Trying not to think about it too much. Don't want to get too angry, start to hear the blood.

**MARTIN**

Sure.

**DAISY**

Can't hear his lies from prison though. So that's something.

**MARTIN**

I thought you believed him? You were doing all of his dirty work.

**DAISY**

Well, wasn't willing to call his bluff. Not the same thing as believing. Just too big a risk.

**MARTIN**

Not for Melanie.

**DAISY**

Well, maybe she was the only one with any sense. Even if he was telling the truth, if we all... died... There are worse things.

**MARTIN**

How was it?

**DAISY**

Don't want to talk about it.

**MARTIN**

I listened to your old statement. Wasn't your partner down there?

**DAISY**

Yeah. Didn't find him.

**MARTIN**

You don't want to get him?

**DAISY**

I'm not going back.

**MARTIN**

Huh. I'd have thought you'd've at least tried—

**DAISY**

(Sharply) I said I don't want to talk about it.

**MARTIN**

I know. Not nice being interrogated, is it?

**DAISY**

I... Oh.

**MARTIN**

Yeah.

**DAISY**

...

I'm sorry, Martin.

**MARTIN**

It's alright. It wasn't you. Not really.

**DAISY**

No, it was. I hate a lot of what I did back then. Doesn't mean I'm not responsible for it. Doesn't mean it wasn't me.

**MARTIN**

Anyway... So what's this field trip they're on?

**DAISY**

They, uh, they didn't tell you?

**MARTIN**

No, I— What? Daisy, where have they gone?

**DAISY**

You know that town in Norway?

**MARTIN**

What? No... Wai— Wh-What? You don't mean Ny-Ålesund?

**DAISY**

Yeah. They reckon there's a ritual they need to... you know.

**MARTIN**

Yeah, but Peter didn't even me— I don't believe this.

**DAISY**

Sorry. Shouldn't have said anything.

**MARTIN**

No, no, it's— Thank you. I just—

**[Agitated clatter]**

For god's sake, can he not just stay safe for like, like ten minutes?!

**DAISY**

I don't think that's an option for him anymore.

**MARTIN**

Yeah, I mean, sure. But he just... he doesn't think! He always just immediately charges straight off into danger with whatever, whatever half-arsed plan occurs to him at the time! I don't get it!

**DAISY**

What's to get?

**MARTIN**

What?

**DAISY**

I, I mean, it's pretty standard stuff.

**MARTIN**

What?

**DAISY**

Used to see it all the time back in the force, especially with the sectioned. Not like there's 'normal' trauma, you know, but it's pretty common. The most important thing becomes control, engaging on your own terms. Even when it's stupid or dangerous. Anything to not feel helpless.

**MARTIN**

Oh god...

**DAISY**

And of course for John's there's survivor's guilt in there too. He thinks he's not human. Makes him very... self-destructive.

**MARTIN**

Yeah, well, we've all had trauma.

**DAISY**

And everyone's changed.

**MARTIN**

Yeah.

I suppose.

You're... You're pretty observant, you know.

**DAISY**

Detective, remember.

**MARTIN**

Yeah, you did mention. Would have thought Basira would have had more sense, though.

**DAISY**

When Basira and I were partners, I'd see this happen sometimes. She can read a situation like no-one I know, always seems to know the right move, but for all her research she never wants to put a plan together. I think she just hates all the unknowns, the variables, contingencies... If she spots an advantage she'll grab it and trust herself to figure out the details as she goes. It's worked so far.

**MARTIN**

I mean, I guess. It still sounds really dangerous.

**DAISY**

Yeah. Wanted to go with them. Protect them, but... (**Sigh**) Life's always more complicated than that, isn't it?

**MARTIN**

Not really.

**DAISY**

...

You recording, or...?

**MARTIN**

Hmm? Oh! Oh, no, there was... Hang on.

**[Tape clicks off.]**

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Today's episode was written by Jonathan Sims and directed by Alexander J Newall.

It featured: Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Evelyn Lockley as the Bystander (Jess Terrell), and Fay Roberts as Daisy Tonner.