

MAG – 154 – Bloody Mary

Content Warnings:

- Murder
- Physical violence
- Domestic abuse
- Self-inflicted wounds

[The Magnus Archives theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode one hundred and fifty-four: "Bloody Mary."

[Tape clicks on.]

ARCHIVIST

(sigh) Hm. (sharp inhale) I've, uh, I've been doing a lot of thinking after what happened with Daisy last week. About- what I can do. What I am. What feels-right.

I found a- erm, I went back to Eli- Peter's office, to that box of tapes, started rifling through. And I started to pay attention to the ones I.... wasn't drawn to. The tapes I instinctively wanted to discard.

There was one, this one, that my hand.... pulled back from. I dropped it, twice, when I went to pick it up. Even now, I'm... (slight quaver to his voice) struggling to hit play.

I am the avatar of awful knowledge and revealed secrets, so what does it not want me to know?

(Long sigh.)

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on.]

GERTRUDE

(sharp sigh) Right. No use putting it off further.

[We hear the rustle of paper.]

GERTRUDE

(Reading from the page.) "When he opened his eyes, he saw nothing, but he heard her breathing, slow and steady and focused, and he immediately knew that she was finally going to- (slight stumble) -kill him. When the garden shears plunged into his chest, he was surprised by how little actual pain there was- just the sudden feeling of moisture on his chest and the realization that his body was growing weak, fading away.

He wished she would say she was sorry she was doing this, that she loved him, that she would miss him. But he knew better, and his final thought was a gentle sadness at how little he was surprised."

[As she reads, a static begins, first a relatively standard crackling, that soon evolves into a deeper, more whooshing sound.]

GERTRUDE (Cont.)

(Reading) "And so Eric Delano ended."

[The whooshing sound forms more clearly into a shaking breath.]

GERTRUDE

Eric?

ERIC DELANO

Gertrude, I- Wha- What am I doing here?

[Following every word he speaks is an echo.]

GERTRUDE

Mary. She gave me your page.

ERIC

She!- Oh.

GERTRUDE

Yes. Well. I'm sorry.

ERIC

Wasn't even hard for her, was it? Handing me over? No sign of regret.

GERTRUDE

(Still a bit shaky) No.

ERIC

No.

GERTRUDE

I'm sorry, Eric; I know this must be hard- I just read your death. I didn't realize it would quite so...

ERIC

You should have seen what she did to my body afterwards.

GERTRUDE

Did you?

ERIC

Oh, yes. She bound me afterwards and made me watch. Don't know why.
Wasn't really in the best state to ask. Maybe she just wanted some company.

GERTRUDE

While she disposed of your body?

ERIC

God, I was a mess. I mean, part of me kind of suspected she'd killed before, but clearly she hadn't done it enough to be a decent hand at chopping up and dumping bodies. She was having a real hard time of it. My legs were all over the shop. (**Long inhale**) Would probably have been funny, if it hadn't been me.

GERTRUDE

What's it like? Being bound to the book?

ERIC

I don't know how to describe it. Never was great with words. Bad. It feels bad. All the time. I know that I'm not really Eric. I'm just a memory someone wrote down. It hurts, most of the time. I don't like it.

GERTRUDE

But, you're still here.

ERIC

I suppose. Mary used to get me up to bounce ideas off of. Talk through her thoughts and theories. Never listened to me, obviously, but (**light, pointed**) nothing new there.

GERTRUDE

Well, it's good to see you. I suppose.

ERIC

You too. (**beat**) You got old.

GERTRUDE

Better than being dead.

ERIC

(**Short sigh of a laugh**) Fair enough. To be honest, I'm impressed, more than anything. Hard to get old in this business. You either die, or you, uh, stay young. (**short, uncomfortable pause**) How did Mary look?

GERTRUDE

(**same sort of short laugh**) She got old, too.

ERIC

S'pose that makes sense. And Gerry? Have you seen my son?

GERTRUDE

No; I've never met him, I'm afraid. Mary talks of him a lot. Well, she seems very proud.

ERIC

That's...not as reassuring as you think it is.

GERTRUDE

I see your point.

(Short pause.)

ERIC

Why did she give me to you?

GERTRUDE

I- I don't know. She seemed to think it was a gift.

ERIC

Mm, charming.

GERTRUDE

She said she had one final mystery to explore. With the book.

ERIC

Oh. Oh. You know what that means, don't you?

GERTRUDE

I have a pretty strong suspicion, yes.

(Eric makes a small noise.)

GERTRUDE

What?

ERIC

Oh, just thinking. Five years as her husband, god knows how many as her possession, and she just couldn't stand being bound in the same book as me.

GERTRUDE

Hm. I'm sorry.

ERIC

Yeah, it doesn't feel great. But being dead, I s'pose you don't feel things quite as strongly. Little bit- flat.

I'm aware of the heartbreak, but I don't know if I actually feel it. It's strange, really.

GERTRUDE

Yes. Yes, it sounds it.

(Eric takes a slow, deep breath.)

ERIC

So, what now?

GERTRUDE

I'm not entirely sure. I was probably going to burn you, if you're amenable to the idea.

ERIC

Yes. Yes, I think that would be for the best.

GERTRUDE

I'm just trying to figure out if there was a reason she gave you to me. The way she was smiling... as if she was handing over a secret.

ERIC

I don't know. (**sigh**) Do you have any questions? Any unfinished business?

GERTRUDE

(**heh-hm**) Of course. When she killed you, there were plenty of outstanding cases and such, but nothing that would still be relevant.

ERIC

Sorry, what do you mean?

GERTRUDE

Well, you were working on quite a few statements when she killed you.

ERIC

Gertrude, I left the Archives months before she killed me.

GERTRUDE

What? No. That's- That's not possible.

ERIC

Of course. They didn't tell you. Why would they? Mary probably thought it was funnier if you didn't know, and Wright would have preferred you not to know.

How is he, by the way?

GERTRUDE

James? He died about twelve years ago. Elias is Head of the Institute now.

ERIC

Elias? Elias Bouchard, seriously?

GERTRUDE

Hm, he's changed a lot.

ERIC

Must have!

GERTRUDE

So. What did they not want me to know?

ERIC

I quit.

GERTRUDE

You- Sorry, you quit?

ERIC

Yeah. I figured out how.

GERTRUDE

I- I just assumed-

How?

ERIC

Well, that's it, isn't it? I suppose that's why she gave me to you. One final screw you to the Eye.

GERTRUDE

Eric. How did you quit?

(Eric holds back.)

GERTRUDE

(warning) Eric.

ERIC

(short laugh) Sorry. I just- (laugh) I don't mean to be a dick, but- well, it's been a long time since I've had any sort of- leverage, I guess? Just a- little bit of power.

It's kind of nice.

GERTRUDE

Are you going to tell me?

ERIC

Thinking about it.

GERTRUDE

Think harder.

ERIC

You know, you were never actually all that nice to me when I worked for you, Gertrude. Not like Michael, or Emma.

GERTRUDE

Eric.

ERIC

What, you gonna threaten me? Look at me. Best I can currently hope for is to be burnt to ash. (**inhale, sharp sigh**) I'm going to tell you, just- maybe there's a price?

GERTRUDE

What do you want?

ERIC

I don't know- I haven't had a chance to think.

GERTRUDE

Eric.

ERIC

Fine! (**short pause**) I want two things.

GERTRUDE

(**impatient**) I'm listening.

ERIC

I want you to find my son. If Mary is- if she's gone, or worse, I want you to make sure he's alright.

GERTRUDE

(**amused**) Hm. I'm not exactly a mother figure.

ERIC

You could hardly do worse than her.

GERTRUDE

Hm. Fine. But I don't know what growing up with Mary has done to him. If he's... gone rotten, I can't promise anything.

ERIC

I understand.

GERTRUDE

I suppose he might be useful.

ERIC

(Dryly) Oh, sentimental as ever.

GERTRUDE

Hm. And the second thing?

ERIC

I want to make my statement.

GERTRUDE

Is that really necessary?

ERIC

I don't want to disappear on her terms. Or yours. I want to speak my piece, have it recorded.

GERTRUDE

Fine. Tape's running.

Subject is Eric Delano, recorded 21st of July, 2008, regarding...

ERIC

What else? Me, Mary, and the Archives.

GERTRUDE

As you wish. Begin whenever you're ready.

ERIC

(exhale) I'm almost not sure where to start, now it comes to it.

I always loved ghosts. They fascinated me. Not the rattling chains and horror part of it, of course, but the mystery, the promise of secret knowledge, of seeing something that no one else was privy to. A secret world that gripped my imagination.

So when I finished my Masters in library science and saw a vacancy at the Magnus Institute, of all places, I jumped at the chance. The chance to pursue my passion and my career at the same time seemed like too good an opportunity to pass up!

It was only an assistant archivist position, of course, but that was fine. A good entry position- I'd, I'd soon move on, I told myself.

Heh. Yeah.

And for the first few years, it was pretty much exactly the job I'd expected. Longer hours than I'd hoped, and the Archivist seemed less interested in doing her job than I was, but all told there were worse places to work.

Then I met Mary. She was like no one I'd met before in my life. She was beautiful, like a- like a shark is beautiful. Every moment she made was deliberate, sharp, and her eyes were always focused on something, always watching. And when she looked at me, I always felt afraid.

But there was something else. Something under the fear. Something that made me feel very aware of all my blood.

(Exhale) I don't know what she saw in me, not really. But when she walked up to me and told me that I was taking her to dinner, I couldn't help but nod.

I've always been- (**sheepish laugh**) Well, now, I wouldn't call myself a coward, but I've never been in a fight. Never even been punched. Maybe it's- luck. Maybe it's the fact that I can never really bring myself to push back from people.

And Mary pushed so hard. Harder, even, than you. And I let her, because she gave me something I had never before experienced: Danger.

The things she taught me, had me do- I'd never known anything like it. Whenever I kissed her, it tasted like blood.

I knew what she was, I, I think. What she was capable of. But I convinced myself that I was safe, that she loved me. It made me feel special. That I was somehow protected from all the cold cruelty that she tried to keep hidden, but leaked out in so many ways.

I remember visiting her, shortly after she'd started her books business. I found her sitting opposite a corpse, a well-dressed middle-aged man who sat in a huge armchair she kept in the back office. She looked me in the eye and told me he was her uncle, prone to drink, making an unexpected visit, and had passed out in the chair.

(**Amused, wistful hm**) I knew she didn't have an uncle. I knew the man was dead.

She didn't lie to me because she expected me to believe her; she lied to me because she expected me to obey her. And I did. We rescheduled our date to the following day.

But d'you know what the strange thing is? Despite the violence, death, even my own murder, I still don't feel like she... betrayed me.

She was what she was. And I knew that. And even though I told myself that she would never harm me- of course not! I was her husband, her true love- even then, the only one lying was me.

She never promised anything, not even in her vows. She never betrayed me. Not like you. She never played dumb when I was stalked by bloated, blood-soaked things, or told me I was imagining it when your friend Adelard dropped a screaming box into the Thames. She didn't try to keep me in the dark just so I wouldn't stop being useful; she never made me complicit in a thousand different nightmares, and lives ruined for the sick joy of some otherworldly voyeur.

Compared to that, I suppose a few murders were easier to stomach.

But I couldn't be part of it. Not once Mary told me what was really going on.

I know what you say, what you think you're doing, saving the world one poor doomed soul at a time- I mean, I understand; I do. (**Exhale**) But I couldn't be a part of it. Not when I saw what happened to everyone else you involved.

I had to get out, to escape this place. I had a son to look after; he needed me!

Or so I thought.

And that's when you turned nasty, isn't it? When all your resources, they no longer want to serve your purpose. I suppose you didn't know there was a way out, a way to escape. But if you had, would you have told me?

Mary, at least, played straight with me. She knew all about the Institute. And when we were married, when she was sure I could handle it, she laid it all out

for me: the rituals, the Powers, all the messy little cogs of the games you play with the universe.

She laid out her own plans as well, her dreams of power. In many ways, I suppose they were no better than yours. But at least she didn't bother to hide behind noble aims.

Maybe that's why I chose her, in the end. At least she was honest. Or perhaps I actually was afraid. Terrified of the crossroads where I'd found myself, and I chose the option I thought might keep Gerry safe.

At least if I was home with him, I could perhaps soften the edges of his mother.

I suppose I never really understood. No matter how clear the situation was, how well it was explained to me, I just couldn't see the parts of it that I didn't want to.

Two years, I tried to figure out how to quit, how to leave this place. And when I finally did, when I felt the Watcher's grip slip away, it left me in such a state I was no longer useful to Mary, and... she did what Mary does. (**Short laugh**) It was fitting, I suppose. Even after everything, she made me taste blood one last time.

GERTRUDE

Well, thank you for that. I'll make sure it's stored somewhere- safe.

(Eric inhales shakily.)

ERIC

Right.

GERTRUDE

Something wrong?

ERIC

I just- (**small sigh**) I thought it would be more of a relief.

GERTRUDE

Mm. I'm sorry it wasn't as cathartic as you were hoping. But we had an agreement.

ERIC

Yeah. I know.

GERTRUDE

So. How did you do it? How did you quit the Archives?

ERIC

It was actually really simple. Not easy, but simple. You'll kick yourself when I tell you.

GERTRUDE

Okay...

ERIC

You were almost there, you know, with your theory that James could watch us from any eye, even an illustration. What did you do? How did you sever that link?

GERTRUDE

My God!

ERIC

I left to avoid dragging my family, my son into this life, to try to look after him. But Mary decided that a newly blinded husband was simply too much of a burden.

GERTRUDE

Did you need to do anything special? Any... ritual, or...?

ERIC

Just as long as they're useless. I went the extra mile, destroyed them completely, but- I'm sure you'll find something (**inhale**) neater. A strong acid, precisely applied? That sounds more your style, if you decide to do it, that is.

GERTRUDE

(Conflicted sound) Well, I don't know.

ERIC

No. It's not an easy sacrifice to make, is it?

GERTRUDE

I still have work to do.

ERIC

Don't you always.

GERTRUDE

Yeah. Well, (**exhale**) I think I'll rather do some research of my own, before the rather extreme step of blinding myself.

ERIC

It's the only way. Trust me, I tried them all.

GERTRUDE

Yes. I remember.

ERIC

So, was there anything else?

GERTRUDE

No. No, I don't think so.

ERIC

Then if you don't mind? I think I'd like to go away now.

(Pause.)

GERTRUDE

Yes. I think that's probably for the best. You're certain burning will work?

ERIC

If it doesn't, I'm sure you'll figure something out.

GERTRUDE

Then let's get it over with.

ERIC

If you see Mary again, tell her- (**beat**) No. I guess there's not really anything else to say.

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on.]

(The Archivist sighs heavily.)

ARCHIVIST

Fuck.

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks off. Typing sounds: the sounds of Martin working.]

MARTIN

(Still typing) Oh. Hi. Hello again.

[He keeps typing.]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Small laugh) Sorry pal, false alarm this time.

[He stops typing.]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Sigh, voice darkens dramatically) Unless... Peter.

[The clock ticks in the background.]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Look, Peter, I-

[The door is thrown open. The Archivist bursts in.]

ARCHIVIST

Martin!

MARTIN

(Overlapping) Oh- (quieter) John! God, don't do that!

ARCHIVIST

Sorry, I just-

MARTIN

No, it's fine! I j- you just surprised me, that's- (**surprised**) Jesus, you alright?

You- You look like hell.

ARCHIVIST

Oh! Uh, Ri, Right, I um, God, I get weak. Hungry, I guess, sort of. I,I've been trying to avoid, being, um- sticking to old statements? Thank you for your little intervention, by the way.

MARTIN

Look, I wouldn't have to if you'd hadn't been-

ARCHIVIST

(Overlapping) Yes no, I know, I know; I'm sorry; that didn't come out right; honestly, thank you. It's been hell, but- I, I did need to hear it.

MARTIN

(Pleasantly surprised) Oh, um. Uh,h, good. Are the others- helping?

ARCHIVIST

Oh. They've been keeping a, um, very close eye on me. **(Half laugh)** Well, that's not important- no, well, it is important, but it's, it's not why I'm here, I-

MARTIN

John. Calm down. What do you want?

ARCHIVIST

I know. I know what you said, but I just- **(inhale)** I think I've found a way for us to leave the Institute.

(Pause)

MARTIN

Okay?

ARCHIVIST

Yeah. But it's- **(heavy inhale)** It's pretty drastic.

MARTIN

What, you going to gouge your eyes out, or something?

(Beat.)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Fuck off.

Right. Uh, uh, right, uh... (**groping for words**) Erm... like, I mean... permanently? Or...

ARCHIVIST

I, I, I don't know; I suppose. I, If your vision comes back, the Beholding probably does as well- probably. But i-it's not like it's easy to only blind yourself temporarily anyways i- I-

MARTIN

(**Weak**) Uh, y, yeah, yeah, uh... H-Have you told the others, or?..

ARCHIVIST

No, you're the first.

MARTIN

Why?

ARCHIVIST

Uh, because... because, because I trust you. I, I'm trying to think about what to do, and I... (**exhale**) If I did try this, I don't want to do it alone. But we could leave here, you and me. Escape.

MARTIN

(**Weary**) John. Don't do this.

ARCHIVIST

Do what?

MARTIN

Make it my decision.

ARCHIVIST

I'm not-

MARTIN

I mean, **(mirthless laugh)** Could you even survive at this stage? Is there anything else keeping you alive?

ARCHIVIST

Uh, I,I don't know. I don't- know. But... maybe it's worth it? The risk- y,you and me, together, getting out of here-

(Martin sniffs.)

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

-one way or another.

MARTIN

John.

(Martin sighs.)

ARCHIVIST

(Sharp exhale) No. No, o, of course, this was stupid; you have your own plans going on, don't you?

MARTIN

Just- Look, I need to see this thing through with Peter to the end. If, If what he's saying is even half true, I need to be there.

ARCHIVIST

But what if you don't? **(Small exhale)** We could just leave. I mean, whatever their plan is for me, I am damn sure that doing that isn't it. I'd derail everything- we could derail everything, and then just- leave!

(Martin laughs, humourlessly)

ARCHIVIST

What?

(Martin keeps laughing.)

MARTIN

Nothing; It's just- **(one more laugh)** It's just ironic, that's all.

ARCHIVIST

Martin...

MARTIN

Who are you kidding, Jon? You're not going to do any of that.

ARCHIVIST

I, I could.

MARTIN

(Still brimming with false laughter) But you won't. That's why you came to me, isn't it?

(The Archivist exhales.)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You know I can't do it, not now; you don't want to blind yourself; you don't want to die; what you want is a reason to not do those things, so- you come to me. Well, you're welcome. B,Because I can't follow you on this one.

ARCHIVIST

The Lonely's really got you, hasn't it?

MARTIN

(No hesitation) You know, I think it always did.

(Small pause.)

ARCHIVIST

(Quiet) Maybe. **(beat)** Well, I'll be here, if you ever need me.

MARTIN

(Also quieter, softer) I hope so.

ARCHIVIST

(Faster) Just-don't-wait-too-long, okay?

[He moves towards the door, sighs.]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

If you haven't already.

[He opens the door, leaves. It shuts.]

MARTIN

Yeah. (**Wearier**) Yeah.

[Tape clicks off.]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

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