

MAG 170 — Recollection

Content Warnings

- Isolation
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Depersonalisation & self-disorder
- Self-hatred
- Financial distress
- Elderly neglect
- Emotional / Caregiver abuse (mentioned)
- Neurological impairment / Mental deterioration
- Instances of memory loss
- Funerals (mentioned)
- Perceived abandonment
- Persistent droning (SFX)

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and seventy: "Recollection."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[A ticking antique clock reverberating in a large room; the distant sound of a surf against shore]

[Leather and wood creaks as Martin shuffles and fidgets in a chair]

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN

(Pleasant) Oh! Hello. (unsure laugh) ...What are you?

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Do I, do I know you? Heh, can't...

Can't tell through the, fog, sometimes.

[Plastic and mic noises as Martin handles the tape recorder]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You feel... n-not friendly. Familiar? Shape of you in my hand. I talk to you, don't I? We talk. What do we, do we say? (**under breath**) Can't quite...

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Th-there's something there, but I just can't see it.

Anyway. Ni-nice to sit down. Take a load off.

[Chair scrapes on the floorboards]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Not comfortable chair, of course. No-none of them are, here, I've-I've been all over this house looking for a nice place to sit. (**unsure**) I- think. Is that what I was looking for? Um. Ei-either way, this place is so huge... so... empty, by the

time you find your way to anything at all, you've probably earned a sit-down.

(unsure laugh)

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I don't think there's anyone else here—

Pro-probably never has been. Not that I can remember, at least.

Is it my house? It must be, right? It must be my house, because, why else would I be here? You don't just wander around other people's houses alone; you don't just.... You don't just... just wander.

(under breath) No...

(Dazed) What, what was I saying? I don't...

[Chair creaks; tape recorder handling]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Do you remember? You store them, I suppose. Keep, keep stuff locked up in those little wheels. That's memory, isn't it? Computers used to be like you. Big, whirring things with loads of, uh, tape. They called that memory. But it's not, not, not really; it's just numbers and...

Maybe you're blank as well, same as me. Are you? Can you remember what I've already said, cause I... I, I can't; the words keep creeping away? Like, like-like, when I when I, when I try to think back, to focus, um, focus on, um...

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Pleasant) Oh, oh! Oh. Hello!

[Hissing static ends]

[Tape recorder handling]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

What are you; I can't quite, see. You feel... familiar. Do I know you, do we talk?

I hope so. (**slight laugh**) It's good to talk with people. It's, hm.

Oh, I, I met someone; did I tell you? He's, I, I don't know. I like him. He doesn't like me, though. Not really. I don't blame him. I don't like me sometimes, and I am me. Plus he's, he's my, my boss? Is that right?

E, ei-either way, it's probably for the best. (**adorkable**) Wouldn't really be appropriate. You don't need to worry, I'm not doodling his name on my desk or anything, heh, his uh, his, his, um. His... name....

Wait.

[Chair squeaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Wait, what is his name? (**distressed**) I don't, wait, wh-wh-why can't I remember his name? His, his face, I don't...

[Martin gets up from the chair; his unsure footsteps on the floorboards echo; he heads towards the shore sounds]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Wh-where am I? This, this isn't my house! H-hello? I-I don't like it here. I can't see anything with all this—

[He pushes back a curtain]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

—fog, there's, there's nothing out of the windows, and it's, it's so cold.

[Footsteps head away from the window and shore sounds]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

The fireplace is dead and the curtains... there are mirrors but no... No. Not mirrors. Someone's standing in them but I don't —

[He takes a step closer]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I-I don't know who. That face, who is, who is that?

(Quietly) I need to sit down.

[He walks back to the chair; it creaks as he sits]

[Hissing static starts]

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Pleasant) Oh! Oh, hello. (small laugh) Who are you, then? Hmm. Hm.

Can't quite make out a, a tape recorder?

[Tape recorder handling]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hah, can't remember the last time I used a...

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hm. Blast from the past! Familiar... Well, it's good to have someone to talk to. Otherwise you can go strange, you... I, I don't... Hm. What was I saying? This... this chair—

[Chair scraping back]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

—really isn't comfortable. I had a look round for better places to sit, did I tell you that? But it's, it's big house. My house, I think, heh, nowhere comfortable. So I suppose this is it. It is my house, isn't it? Must be. Must be. But I don't really remember. Just... so tired. It's hard to think when you're this tired, hard to... to focus. No, no, no, not, not tiredness, it's the, fog. I, I can't see through the fog, and it, it smells!

(Sniffs) What— (sniffs) what is that? Damp, sort of, chemical, almost. (large sniff) I don't like it. Why does my house smell like that, It, it can't be my house. No, no, no; my, (sniff) my, (sniff) my house doesn't smell like this! My house smells... s-smells different.

It's sort of weird, isn't it? Smell can trigger memory so... powerfully. Like this one, it, it makes me think of, (long sniff) Hm. (sniff) Hm. I, I don't know. Is it a person? A place? No, no; people-people don't smell like that. Besides, I'm all alone.

I'm all—

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Distressed) I'm all alone. Why-why am I alone? I shouldn't, I shouldn't be alone; there should be people! It's such a, such a big house, my house, there mu—there must be other people? People who care!

Unless...

[Martin gets up and walks slowly and unsurely]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hello?

[A door creaks open, as he walks into another room; a ticking clock is here, with the same tick-tock sound as the one in the first room]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

He- Hello?

[He keeps walking]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

All these rooms.... I think they're the same as this one. I, I don't know why I'd decorate my house like this; I don't like it, I like...

Wh, i-it's not my home; it can't be. Do I have a home? This-this place feels like it's all for me, I think, but I don't...

[He sits in a chair that sounds identical to the previous one]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Shaky) I don't like it here.

It-it can't be cheap living here, house this big. I really need a job. **(animated)** Started lying on my CV; did I tell you that. I didn't want to. I-I mean I tried to be a good person, but we're really up against it, and I, and I know they're going to find me out; I just know it. **(anxious)** They'll ask something, or I'll say something stupid, and then, and then they'll know. They'll know, and then...

(shaky exhale) (under breath, unintelligible) Oh... **(agitated)** What am I doing, I can't afford a place like this! I need money, not ju— not just for me, but for, for...

(Calmer) Wait. Wait, no; it is, it is just me, isn't it? It's always been just me.

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

No... No, no, no, that's not right! I, I'm not alone, no! Not alone, there's, there's, J-J-John? John. **(remembering)** John! John!

[Martin stands and takes a few steps]

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Calling) John? John, I'm here, can you hear me? I can't, it's, it's this place, I, wh-where are you, I need you, I nee— **(humourless laugh)** I need you, John. Where, wh-where did you go?

[A couple more steps]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Near tears) Please don't leave me. I can't do this on my own. Please. **(sob)** I'm not enough on my own. Alone. All. All alone.

(Shaky breaths)

[He walks to the chair and sits down]

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Pleasant) Oh. Oh, hello, huh, what's this?

[Hissing static ends]

[Brief tape recorder handling]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Wow, retro! What are you up to, little buddy, just listening? Ah, that's okay. It's nice to have someone to talk to.

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Maybe you can keep a better handle on things than me. It's this fog, you know? Makes it so hard to see.

(Quick, quiet) What was I saying?

(Normal) I feel like there's somewhere I need to be, but... but no, no, this is my house, huh, where else would I need to be? I just—

[Chair scrapes against the floorboards]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I wish I had more comfortable chairs. Would be nice to have somewhere relaxing to sit down. Rest a bit when Mum's asleep. Did I tell you about my mum?

(Hushed) We should try to keep quiet actually, you know. Make sure not to wake her. The drugs they, they hit her pretty hard, but if you make enough noise and she wakes up, and... and yeah, it's not good. **(bravado)** Not a good time! **(unhappy laugh)**

I-I know she loves me, I, I know she does. But that doesn't make it easy. There's always so much to do, and I'm always forgetting something. I do try, you know? I mean, I really try to keep on top of things, but I'm just, I'm just so forgetful, and she-she...

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Sometimes I wonder if I forget things on purpose. Easier not to think about them, I guess. Easier to just let them slip away. They can't hurt you if you don't think about them, they can't shout at you or call you names. **(emotional)** And I, I always think of Mum's face when I've done something wrong, and I... wait.

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Wait I don't, her face, I. I don't remember her face. Did, did she have a face?

(berating) D-don't be-don't be stupid, Martin; of course she had a face!

(agitated) You just can't remember it 'cause, 'cause you're a bad son; because

you left her to rot in... (**despondent**) Wh-where did she go? She didn't like it, I didn't like it. S-smelled. It smelled like... (**sniffs**)

Where am I? This isn't right I shouldn't be here; I should be— Somewhere, someone that— there are there are people who trust me, people who love me, so why can't I remember them? Why, why can't I see them? Sasha. Yeah! Yeah, yeah, I remember; there was, there was Sasha! I can see her face! No, no, wait, no; not, not Sasha, some, something else. The thing that isn't Sasha, that, that took her, and, and made her something else, and her, her face, her, her face, I can I can still see it, it's, laughing. Telling me that there's, there's nobody else. I'm alone. The only people who could ever stand to be around me are gone. Even from my mind.

(**Tearful**) What is this place? So cold. And I can't see anything through all this fog. Huh, I must have left the window open. (**stuttering**) Let it, I-I-let the fog in. Oh, my heating bills must be through the roof. Stupid! I can't afford that! At least I've got a job now; did I tell you I've got a job? (**normal**) I mean, the interview was weird, I, I don't really remember the man who talked to me. Just his eyes. They stared at me, th-through me, and, and-and I knew that he knew what I had done. God I was, I was so scared, (**more upbeat**) but then he smiled, and shook my hand. What was his name? He said I 'had the job,' heh, that he 'looked forward to working with me'. I was still so scared (**slight laugh**) I could barely move my arm. I was so terrified I'd let him down.

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

And then I met John, and I— (**remembering**) John, John! John! John? John, I'm here!

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

John, I, I think I'm lost, I think, I don't— (**whispered**) John.

[Chair creaks]

(Beat)

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Pleasant) Oh, he-hello! Huh, what are you?

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Huh. Didn't even know I had a tape recorder. Do you still work, or...

[Tape recorder handling]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hm, yeah, seems like you're running all right.

Hey, I should do some poetry! You could give it a little, little bit of that funky lo-fi goodness! All the cool poets love a bit of tape hiss, right? Maybe find somewhere different to sit, though.

[Chair scrapes on the floorboards]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hate these chairs. Don't even know where I got them. Did I tell you I've been writing poetry? N-nothing much really, just fragments, thoughts. Haven't

written anything like it since I was a teenager but, my new job is a lot, and, I don't know. Something about that place, it just, it makes me feel weird? Th-the sort of weird you just have to get out somehow. Maybe I, Maybe I should do some open mics, or something. I dunno. Just for me, really, I think. Oh! You-you want to hear some? Heh.

Uh, yeah! Yeah, okay, sure; well, I can... no. No, wait, no they— Hm, they're gone, that's weird. I thought— I, I can feel them, but the words, they just... just wash away. Hm. I, I m— I suppose that's quite poetic actually, isn't it, but... there's... nothing else there.

I don't like this place. It-It's so cold and, and the logs in the fireplace are damp from the mist. I don't know how I'd even light them, and they-they smell really bad, like, like wet dirt. Makes me think of... hm.

When I was nine, my grandad died. Did I tell you that? I went to the funeral, and the coffin was so (**small laugh**) shiny. It was already sealed. But on top there was a photo of a young man. Someone who looked almost like my grandad, but, it-it wasn't him. It wasn't... finished? Not yet. No, and, and I suddenly began to panic, because I-I was trying to remember what he looked like, his, his face, but I couldn't do it. And I knew I'd never see him again. He loved me and I couldn't even remember his face! It was, it was a horrid, drizzly morning, that day, and they put him the ground and he, he smelled like earth. Cold, damp soil.

[Chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

What was I saying? Ah, s-sorry... (**exhales**)

[Chair scraping forward as he adjusts how he sits]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

It's just this chair, it's so hard to concentrate when you're uncomfortable, isn't it? (**small sigh**)

[Chair creaks]

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Now, I think— Hey, hang on. Where did you come from? Tape recorder. Heh, what, you want me to give you a statement, I—

[The static gains more volume]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(**Flat**) But why. The Eye has won. It can already see everything; it wouldn't need a, w— wouldn't need a...

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(**Stumbling**) Huh-w-huh, well, it's just, nice to talk to someone, I guess. No one real ever really listens to me anyway. Oh, they, they nod and respond and say 'No, Martin,' or 'Not now, Martin,' or 'Leave it, Martin' but, funny thing is, (**false bright**) I-I didn't ask them to do anything! I just, just wanted to see if they needed a hand, heh. Is that me? Is-is that me? Martin? Martin. Maartin. Martin. Doesn't sound right. But who else would I be? Hm, whoever owns this house, I guess. It certainly doesn't seem like the sort of place that someone called Martin would live. Martin. It feels like a small name. One that wants to be warm and happy. Not like here.

You know I've wandered around all these rooms and, they all just make me feel alone. They scare me.

Even when I find someone else, I feel alone. Did I tell you? I found someone else wandering around. They were all thin and grey. Faded. Like they'd been here for ages. I think they'd been crying, but it's so hard to tell through the fog. I tried to talk to them, but it was just, just difficult. I asked who they were, and they, looked at me like they had no idea what I was talking about.

'What's your name?' I said, 'Your name? You must have a name!' but they just shrugged, and I, and, and they gestured at me. Like they wanted to know my name, and I—th— I co— I couldn't tell them! I couldn't remember!

'Is this your house?' I asked, and they said, they said yes. But, then they stopped, a-and shook their head. A-and then then they started to laugh. Quietly, for a bit, and then they cried. And they wouldn't stop. I, I—
(emotional) They asked me who they were, if there was anyone looking for them. If there was anybody left who even cared, but I, I didn't know. I, I didn't know, and I— I ran away, I had to run away! **(sob)** I, I had to go and have a sit-down, okay? I just—

[Chair scrapes on the floorboards]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

—I just wish I'd thought to buy some nicer chairs. Still. It's not like I've got guests coming, is it? **(shaky breaths)** The house is empty, and, and honestly? I, I can't think of anyone in the world who would care if I lived or died.

(Sobbing, quiet) I'm, I'm scared. I think this fog is doing something to me, I can't... I'm losing myself, and I, and I don't know if I mind? Maybe I deserve it. So much of what's behind the fog hurts. So much of it just makes me wanna

curl up with pain and embarrassment and— Maybe the fog's here because I want it here. Is that why I opened the windows? Maybe I asked the fog to come.

No. No, no, n-no, no, that's not true, I, I remember! Hundreds, thousands of lost souls, wandering the halls. Hollow memories, with eyes full of tears. I've seen them. They're all trying to remember. T-to recall, to picture someone, anyone who loves them, and their hearts are all full of fear. Afraid that those people are gone forever. That maybe, maybe they never existed at all.

(Distressed) Why am I here? I, I fell behind. I was, I was too slow, and, and, and the fog caught up; I was, I was following, al-always following, never leading. Never leading.

Why did he leave me behind? D-did he? Who are, w-who are you? Who am?

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Remembering) J- J- John. John, John. Yes. John, I remember him. I need to, I need to keep him here. If he can find me, I, he, he knows enough; surely he Knows enough to find me, but I can't...

[Hissing static ends]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Agitated) If I forget him, if, if I forget, me, maybe-maybe there's nothing left to know. No one to find.

[Martin gets up from the chair]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Talking helps. Thank god you're here to listen, just, just don't stop talking. You, you are Martin Blackwood. Yes. You-you didn't choose to be here. John is coming. (**stronger**) I am Martin Blackwood, and I am not lonely anymore—

[Martin strikes hand to chest several times]

[Hissing static starts]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

—I am not lonely anymore. (**emotional**) I want to have friends; I, no, I have friends. I'm, I'm in love, heh, I am in love, and I will not forget that; I will not forget. I am Martin Black—

ARCHIVIST

(distant calling) Martin!

MARTIN

Wha— John?

ARCHIVIST

(A little closer) Martin! Martin?

[Static louder]

MARTIN

John! John, over here!

ARCHIVIST

(Closer) Oh! Martin, hold on, I, I, I'm coming; I just—

[Footsteps coming closer]

ARCHIVIST

(Relieved) Oh, Martin; thank god, I, I was—

[They embrace]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

I, I thought you were behind me.

MARTIN

I thought you'd left me behind. Gone on without me.

ARCHIVIST

No, never. N-never, I, I just—

[Hissing static ends]

[They stop embracing]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

I, I didn't want to, look too hard I,I,I promised I wouldn't Know you, and, and with the fog, and, and all the rooms, I, I just, I lost y—, I'm— I'm sorry.

MARTIN

It's okay.

(They steady both their breaths)

ARCHIVIST

No, I, I tried to use the— to Know where you were, but, it was, you, you were faint. It was so strange, i-it took me so long just to find you.

MARTIN

John, it's okay. I promise, it's okay. This place tried; it really did, and honestly, I— (**breath**) I wanted to believe it. But I didn't.

ARCHIVIST

This... place, i, it—

[Hissing static starts]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

My god.

MARTIN

Yeah.

[Hissing static ends]

ARCHIVIST

M-Martin, if you did. I-if you wanted to forget a-all of it, stay here and just, escape.

I, I would understand.

MARTIN

...N-no. It's comforting here, leaving all those painful memories behind but, it's not a good comfort, it's, it's the kind that makes you fade, makes you dim and distant.

ARCHIVIST

(Whisper) Okay.

(Normal) Okay, good; I, I just... I wanted to make sure that you knew what this place was.

MARTIN

It's the Lonely, John. It's me.

ARCHIVIST

Not anymore.

MARTIN

Hm. No. **(long inhale)** No, not anymore.

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

JONATHAN SIMS

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