

MAG 186 — Quiet

Content Warnings

- Depression & Sadness
- Isolation
- Emotional manipulation
- Guilt & self-blame
- Mentions: mild body horror, emotional abuse, parental death, dysfunctional/toxic relationships (including family), grief, ableism, discussion of suffering, death, murder & potential suicide.

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and eighty-six: "Quiet."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[A light rain falls; in the distance a rolling thunderstorm that never comes closer]

[Footsteps on a muddy outdoors track that come to a halt]

(Martin sighs)

MARTIN

So this is it, then.

...How dreary.

[Walking resumes]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Calling) Hello!? Anybody!?

John?

Hello!

(Beat)

[Walking stops]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Big surprise.

Well at least I can still remember everything this time. And no more bloody chairs.

It's weird, though. Never actually been anywhere like this. That said, it is kind of... huh...

[A static with faint squeals starts]

[There is reverse reverb on Also Martin's first words as he appears;
his tone is tinged with sadness throughout]

ALSO MARTIN

Wuthering Heights.

MARTIN

Yeah. God, I hated studying that. It was all just so...

ALSO MARTIN

Overblown.

MARTIN

Yeah...

ALSO MARTIN

But that cover... those wide empty spaces. It felt right, didn't it?

[Static ends]

MARTIN

So what? That's where we are?

ALSO MARTIN

Right down to the monochrome.

MARTIN

Hm.

D'you have an umbrella?

ALSO MARTIN

No.

But you don't want one. We like the rain.

MARTIN

True.

ALSO MARTIN

Because it makes the sadness feel at home. It turns it from a burden into–

MARTIN

(**Sigh**) –an indulgence.

ALSO MARTIN

That's right.

[They start walking]

MARTIN

So what is this? You're part of me so you know everything about me? Is that it?

ALSO MARTIN

Yes.

MARTIN

Because you're part of my domain?

ALSO MARTIN

Also yes.

MARTIN

Some sort of cosmic joke about ‘being alone with my thoughts’ I assume?

ALSO MARTIN

I'm here because you're trying very hard *not* to be alone. To resist the comfort.

MARTIN

So, instead I get to talk to myself?

ALSO MARTIN

Apparently.

[Walking continues until they reach a place to sit on the ground]

(Both Martins sigh as they sit down)

MARTIN

Okay, so if I'm so desperate not to be alone, why isn't John here? Hmm? He can find me anywhere.

ALSO MARTIN

I don't know.

MARTIN

(Dubious) Oh yeah?

ALSO MARTIN

Look, I know what you know. Maybe I'm just a bit more... open about it.

MARTIN

And what do you mean by that?

ALSO MARTIN

Like how you don't actually want him here? Maybe that has something to do with it?

MARTIN

You've no idea what you're talking about!

ALSO MARTIN

I mean, you can argue with me if you like. Seems like a bit of a waste though.

MARTIN

I— No, a—

ALSO MARTIN

It's alright. It's hard to be vulnerable.

MARTIN

(Resigned) No its— It's not that.

ALSO MARTIN

No?

MARTIN

No, I just... I'm ashamed to let him see this place, alright. To see what— I don't know, what *feeds* me?

ALSO MARTIN

Sure, that's part of it, but... it's not the whole thing, is it? Not really.

MARTIN

What do you mean?

ALSO MARTIN

Well, if you don't count 'memory manor', when was the last time you were even on your own?

MARTIN

Well I... hmm.

ALSO MARTIN

It has been a **very** long time since the Institute.

MARTIN

That's... a good point.

ALSO MARTIN

It's okay to want a bit of space now and then. New romance is hard. And Armageddon makes it even harder, never mind the fact that you're metaphorically joined at the hip thanks to the whole 'eye-lord' thing. It's okay to want some space.

MARTIN

(Suspicious) Ohhhhh, I see.

ALSO MARTIN

See what?

MARTIN

I get it. So that's your deal. You tell me what I want to hear to try and get me to stay.

ALSO MARTIN

(Wearily) Seriously? Fine. If you don't want to engage, if-if you want to pretend I'm just some... temptation ghost, you go ahead. Knock yourself out. Like I said, I'm not your enemy.

MARTIN

(Archly) Oh really? I thought you said you were me?

ALSO MARTIN

Right, yes. Very clever.

MARTIN

We have our moments, I guess.

ALSO MARTIN

(Half chuckle)

Look, if you want to leave, you can. It's not a problem.

MARTIN

You won't try stop me?

ALSO MARTIN

I mean, it *really* doesn't matter to me. You leave and I'm just you again. It's all the same to me really.

MARTIN

So why do you want me to stay then? Hmm?

ALSO MARTIN

Because **you** want to stay. Because you want to have a real *rest*. To just breathe and... **(sigh)** be quietly sad I guess.

[The rain gets a little heavier]

(Long beat)

MARTIN

It's not healthy.

ALSO MARTIN

Maybe not, but I'm not entirely sure what healthy options are even left at this point.

MARTIN

We *could* talk to John about it.

ALSO MARTIN

We could. But we both know that loved ones make the worst therapists. They're too wrapped up in trying to stop you hurting, to actually help. But hey, we know all about that, am I right?

MARTIN

There's nothing wrong with comforting people.

ALSO MARTIN

A cup of tea isn't a resolution. At best it's a... a plaster. At worst... a muzzle.

MARTIN

Yeah, yeah.

Even so, I could murder a cuppa. I doubt you've got a kettle out here though.

ALSO MARTIN

As a matter of fact, I do have a thermos.

[Also Martin unzips his backpack]

MARTIN

You're joking?

ALSO MARTIN

This is our domain. You're not supposed to suffer here. Well, not like the others... you know what I mean.

[A metal flask is unscrewed]

[Elongated sound of tea pouring]

ALSO MARTIN (CONT'D)

Here.

[Flask is resealed]

(Martin sighs deeply as he sips)

MARTIN

Wait that's... wait, is that...?

ALSO MARTIN

Yeah, sorry about that. There's only so much we can do, what with the new world and everything. Even the good things get tinged with memory.

MARTIN

Eurgh. Oolong. Of course. Of course! Whenever I asked a question she didn't like or she wanted to stop the conversation—

ALSO MARTIN

Off you'd go to put the kettle on.

MARTIN

And it always had to be that bloody oolong. Eurgh.

(Another sip)

Blergh.

(Beat)

ALSO MARTIN

It wasn't your fault.

MARTIN

Yes it was.

ALSO MARTIN

That's just the guilt talking.

MARTIN

Oh, you think?

ALSO MARTIN

She was awful.

MARTIN

She wasn't well.

ALSO MARTIN

Both things can be true.

MARTIN

She was still my mum! Op-our mum. Whatever!

ALSO MARTIN

(Emphatically) And we're glad she's dead.

MARTIN

Jesus...

ALSO MARTIN

Too much? Like I said, I'm a bit more open.

MARTIN

I—

ALSO MARTIN

Don't lie. You don't need to. Not here. It's just us.

(Heavy sigh from Martin)

MARTIN

If we're glad, why do I feel so...

ALSO MARTIN

Guilty?

Because you feel *guilty* about *everything*.

MARTIN

That's... That's not—

ALSO MARTIN

Your mother.

MARTIN

Stress is a proper factor in a stroke—

ALSO MARTIN

Everything that's happened to John.

MARTIN

I brought Jane Prentiss to the Institute!

ALSO MARTIN

The end of the **entire** world?

MARTIN

If I'd done what Peter had asked... If-If I'd not chickened out, and just killed Elias when I had the chance...

ALSO MARTIN

Really? **Really**, that's how you're choosing to remember it? Chickening out?

MARTIN

I remember it was the wrong choice.

ALSO MARTIN

You **choose** to remember it that way, and so the guilt—

MARTIN

I get it, alright? But I need it. I-I choose the guilt, because...

ALSO MARTIN

(Leading) Because...

MARTIN

Because it motivates me to do better!

(Beat)

ALSO MARTIN

Does it though? Or... does it just keep paralysing us, make us shrink back and wait, hoping things work out? Like with John when we thought the worms had got him.

MARTIN

Hey, to be fair, he still kind of hated me back then. I'm *really* not sure it would have been the time to take my shot.

ALSO MARTIN

Fair. He was projecting hard. Between us that guy's got some real issues.

MARTIN

Hey! Pretty sure we love 'that guy'.

ALSO MARTIN

Yeah, and all his many, many problems.

MARTIN

Fine.

ALSO MARTIN

But also, you know that's not what I'm talking about. It's this, this fantasy that you have, that, that whatever you find at the top of the Panopticon is just going to **solve** everything.

MARTIN

I don't—

ALSO MARTIN

You do though. You daydream about it! The big climactic showdown with Elias, and then the two of kiss, and push a button that just magically saves the world and makes everything better.

MARTIN

It's actually not a button, so—

ALSO MARTIN

Stop. Deflecting.

MARTIN

(Angry) S-So what, okay? We should just give up? Hmm? Just stay here and curl up into a ball and just accept the world as is? Hmm? That's your big solution?

ALSO MARTIN

I'm saying there **aren't** any easy solutions. We have **no** idea what's going to happen. Even if we make it to the tower, we don't know there'll be a fix. And if by some miracle there is, we both know the price will be awful. Just look at Melanie.

MARTIN

I—

(A resigned sigh)

ALSO MARTIN

We are completely out of our depth. We're responsible for everyone everywhere, and we have no idea what we're doing. The last thing we need is self-indulgent guilt on top of that.

MARTIN

I can be a real manipulative prick, you know that?

ALSO MARTIN

Oh yeah.

(Beat)

(Martin sighs)

[Martin finishes his cuppa]

MARTIN

(Grimly) Tea. Please?

[Flask is unscrewed and tea poured]

[Martin takes a sip]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

So, this price. What do you think?

Are we going to have to kill John?

ALSO MARTIN

I don't know because you don't know. But it seems like something we should at least consider.

MARTIN

I... have thought about it. And... I won't. I don't think I could.

ALSO MARTIN

Mm-hmm.

MARTIN

But anything else? Any other price? I'll pay it.

ALSO MARTIN

Even dying?

MARTIN

Yeah!

ALSO MARTIN

John's as bad as we are. He wouldn't let it happen.

MARTIN

It's not his decision.

ALSO MARTIN

Fine. So flip that round, then. What are you going to do when he tries to sacrifice himself, because you *know* he's going to try?

MARTIN

I don't know all right? I don't know.

ALSO MARTIN

And that's okay for now, but I just want us to have thought about this stuff properly before it comes up. Because even if that's not it, chances are it'll be something else you don't want to do, and we need to make a proper choice. We can't just react out of shame or fear or whatever.

MARTIN

What, like with Peter and Elias?

ALSO MARTIN

Yes.

MARTIN

That was a proper choice?! I chose wrong!

ALSO MARTIN

But you *made* a decision. Your own decision. Regardless of the outcome.

MARTIN

I... I'll think about it.

ALSO MARTIN

We'll think about it.

MARTIN

Sure.

(Another sigh)

[Martin sips his tea]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

What about the people here?

ALSO MARTIN

What people?

MARTIN

I don't know. My... 'prisoners', I guess?

ALSO MARTIN

What about them?

MARTIN

Why haven't we talked about them?

ALSO MARTIN

Because you didn't want to think about them. So, we didn't.

MARTIN

Yeah? Well, I want to now. Consider it a 'proper choice' if you like.

ALSO MARTIN

Okay.

MARTIN

Can I see them?

ALSO MARTIN

No. This place is about hidden, unnoticed suffering.

MARTIN

I can feel them though.

ALSO MARTIN

Sure, you're aware of it, dimly. A sort of far-off, lonely terror. But there's no way for us to actually see or hear them.

MARTIN

Hmm. But... if this is *my* domain, can I fix that? Like, can I change things?

(Small sigh from Also Martin)

ALSO MARTIN

If you wanted to start actively tormenting them, I'm sure this place would oblige. But 'fixing' things? Making it easier on them, or freeing them... probably not.

MARTIN

Fine.

(Beat)

Can you tell me about them?

ALSO MARTIN

I can. Deep down we do know what's happening to them.

MARTIN

Do we know who they are?

ALSO MARTIN

We never met them in the old world. Although one of them *is* named Tim. Just a coincidence, I think, unless it was a subconscious thing on our part.

MARTIN

Tell me. Please. Like John would.

ALSO MARTIN

Why? Just so you can torture yourself?

MARTIN

I want to know the exact limits of my guilt.

ALSO MARTIN

Fair enough.

I can't tell you their names, because we don't know them. Who they are, who they were, these details are lost to us. But they're also lost to them.

Sometimes they get flashes, moments of people they might have been.

Phantom pasts, the ghosts of happy futures, but they're empty, and vanish if they try to hold them.

One of them is young, though he has always felt old. He has always felt tired. He has stood apart from everyone who ever cared for him and never felt the distance. His family were cold, and so to keep that coldness at bay, he built a towering wall between them and him. He hid it in jokes and practiced smiles,

but on a cloudy day they could see it. And when he was able to leave his family behind, that wall came with him, following him, keeping out the world.

He would walk the streets of the city at night and wish the world away, so it could be just him, with no-one to know him or judge him or hurt him.

Sometimes, when the emptiness inside began to bite, he reached out for people, and took a friend or a lover. But when he did it was only to watch them beat themselves again and again against that wall until they finally relented, and he was alone once more. He told himself it was for the best. He told himself he liked it like that.

And now he is here. The wall still surrounds him, though now it encircles all the fields where he staggers, wet from the rain, and cold from the wind. He calls out for somebody to see him, for somebody to *know* how achingly hollow he is. He walks and walks and walks, desperate for another voice, for someone to know where he is and what he's going through, but he can't shout too loud. If he does, he feels the thick grey mulch rising from where it has settled in the hollow of his chest. It pushes up his throat and streams from his mouth instead of words. It is clouded and so bitterly cold that where it lands the scrubland grass turns brittle and crumbles away, leaving only ice, pulled from the deepest parts of him, hardened and crusted into a smooth, dark mirror, reflecting his lined and careworn face against the clouded sky. The rain pricks his skin though there is no comfort in it. Because he knows he can never be warm and dry again. The wall is too high.

But still he keeps walking, keeps crying out, though quieter now. Nobody knows he's here, and even if they did, they wouldn't care. He has driven them all away, kept them so far from who he is that there is no-one now to see his suffering. No-one who cares.

He falls to his knees, icy mud clinging to his legs, soaking through his threadbare trousers as tears and rain fall from his cheeks in equal measure. Next to him, a woman lies on her side, curled tight around herself, head tucked to her chest. He does not see her, cannot hear her wracking sobs, so close to his. She could reach out her hand, touch his arm, his face, his heart... and would feel nothing. Neither would ever know. Because at their core they are alone, and nothing can release them from that absolute knowledge.

She stands, legs shaking from the cold and from the effort, her muscles locked in place, and joints protesting at the shift. How long has she been lying there? How long have the fingers of despair locked around her throat? She doesn't know, and she feels in her bones that no one else does either. Nobody knows she's here, and she misses them all.

She tries to picture her friends. A warm and smiling procession of faces, a technicolour memory that only makes the iron-grey sky that much duller, the misty drizzle that much colder on her face. What is she recalling? There was music once, lights, laughter— a-a birthday, maybe, or a pub lunch? They sat around on old chairs, comfortable chairs in the warm. The taste of wine was on her tongue, and her mouth was curled into a smile. The carefree chatter of her friends surrounded her and soothed her. Or did it?

She wasn't talking, wasn't engaged with any of the bright and happy people. Her smile was fixed and deliberate, and it didn't quite match her eyes. She was among this joy, yes, these sparkling friends, but she was not a part of it, not really. She tried to be, wanted so desperately to be a part of their easy warmth, and maybe they thought she was. But they hadn't known her, not really. They hadn't seen the empty ice that filled her, that kept her apart from

them, that she desperately tried to thaw with each and every friendly face that smiled at her.

The memory fades, and she shivers as her mind returns to the rain and the wind, tinged with the sting of salt and the slight stench of rotten seaweed, though there was never an ocean here. She feels the ice within her still, and knows she never found anyone to melt it. And now? She never will. Those who tried she gripped so tightly that they couldn't breathe, and so she lost them anyway. Now nobody remembers her name. If they should stumble upon an old photograph, some half-remembered birthday party that still brings up a smile, and then see her face, sat there amongst the revellers, they will frown, just for a moment, as they try to remember her name. Then they will shrug, and forget they were even curious. They will not think to wonder about her.

And it is this that she is so deeply afraid of. Not the ache of her flesh from the bitter cold, not the cloying dampness of the rain or the crushing fatigue from uncounted days or weeks or years without sleep. It is the sure knowledge that nobody remembers her existence enough to even wonder idly where she might be, or ponder at her suffering.

She screams her fear to the open air, but none beside her hear it.

(Long beat)

MARTIN

Thank you.

ALSO MARTIN

I'm sorry. I know it's hard.

MARTIN

Yeah.

(Beat)

ALSO MARTIN

So? What are we thinking?

MARTIN

I'm thinking that I didn't ask for this. It's not my fault they're here.

ALSO MARTIN

True.

MARTIN

But I can't keep existing like this at their expense. It's not... it's not right.

Whatever happens with Elias, W-with the rest of the world... I can't live on the misery of others.

ALSO MARTIN

They'll suffer either way.

MARTIN

I get it, okay? I-I can't decide what happens to them. But... I just might be able to decide what happens to me. And... And if it comes down to it...

I'll get John to destroy me like the others.

ALSO MARTIN

You don't really believe he'd do it?

MARTIN

I don't know. Maybe?

ALSO MARTIN

...This took a dark turn.

MARTIN

Yeah. But... this time it doesn't feel like despair.

It feels like resolve.

ALSO MARTIN

Well, hopefully it won't come to that.

MARTIN

Hopefully.

[Martin takes a last sip of tea then passes the cup back]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Thanks for the tea.

ALSO MARTIN

Ha. We're welcome.

MARTIN

Ha.

[Remaining tea is splashed out; the cup is screwed back onto the flask and packed away]

[Martin stands up]

So, how do I leave?

ALSO MARTIN

I think we just keep walking.

MARTIN

And John?

[Bag is zipped up]

ALSO MARTIN

I kind of expected him to have interrupted already.

[Also Martin stands up]

MARTIN

I'm sure he'll find us eventually.

[Footsteps head off]

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

JONATHAN SIMS

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