

## The Red King's Tragedy

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## The Red King's Tragedy

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

#### [GRIAN]

Statement of... Martyn Littlewood, regarding his involvement in a certain stage production.  
Recorded direct from subject-

#### [MARTYN]

Oh. You're recording this?

### Notes

This is a collision of several different plot threads! I would recommend reading [The Not Deer](#), [Immersive Storytelling](#), [Golden Eagle](#), and [Camera Obscura](#) to have all the setup for this one.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

## Statement:

[Click]

**[GRIAN]**

Statement of... Martyn Littlewood, regarding his involvement in a certain stage production.  
Recorded direct from subject-

**[MARTYN]**

Oh. You're recording this?

**[GRIAN]**

Well- yes? How else am I meant to archive it?

**[MARTYN]**

I don't know. I wasn't really expecting a whole... thing. I just feel like it's... I don't know. It doesn't matter. Suppose I'm just all jumpy still. This whole thing...

**[GRIAN]**

*(Eagerly)* Yeah?

**[MARTYN]**

...Don't really know how to describe it, if I'm being honest.

**[GRIAN]**

Try starting from the beginning? And don't spare the details, please.

**[MARTYN]**

Well...

It started after I picked up this new job.

I've been doing contract A/V work mostly- um, since graduation. Guess you wouldn't know that. Which mostly means I've been running cameras and sound and whatever else for a lot of different independent productions around London. Short films, pilots, vlogs, that sort of thing.

I've built up a pretty solid resume, and a good number of contacts and old friends who call me up whenever they need production work done, so it's a pretty steady living.

It was one of them who put me in touch with Ren.

**[GRIAN]**

*(Alert)* Ren?

**[MARTYN]**

Yeah. He was like a friend of a friend- I'd heard of him a bit before, mostly in the form of some really incredible anecdotes. He moved around in some local theatre circles, and he happened to be looking for sound and lighting help for a one-man show. At the time I had a lot of space in my schedule for the next month or so, so I called him up.

Ren's a very... enthusiastic guy. Charismatic. You know how sometimes people get described as having 'star quality'? Ren's sort of like that. I could tell even over the phone. He was delighted to

hear from me, told me all about his project. It was a self-written show in the style of those old Elizabethan revenge tragedies- you know, like Hamlet, or, uh, the other one- Titus Andronicus? It was obvious it was a pet project to him; he'd been working on it for a long time, and he was really excited about it. He was a real creative guy, dabbled in a bunch of stuff- I guess he also has a podcast? He said he'd helped with a few productions before, but this was his first time trying to stage something he'd written.

Like I said, it was a one-man show, which meant he'd be the only actor. He said he was working on convincing a friend of his- I later found out it was his roommate- to help him with costume changes, but other than that he just needed somebody to run sound and lights, plus setting up a camera to film one of the performances. It was going to be a lot of work, but it seemed like a fun project, so I said I was on board. I didn't have much professional experience with stage performances, but I had a little, and I did tech for school shows in high school, so I was confident I could handle it.

He was ecstatic. He sent me the script right away, and we made plans to meet at his house the next day to run through it.

So that night I sat down and read it.

It was called *The Red King's Tragedy*. It was about a king- I mean. Obviously. I don't think Ren ever gave him a name in the script. He was only ever called the King, or later the Red King. He ruled a small kingdom that had recently had become more unstable, with bandits attacking and ambushing people along the roads.

One day, the king goes down to visit the village just below the walls of his castle. But on the way home, without warning- he's assassinated. A sword strikes his head clear off his shoulders from behind, and the murderer steals his horse and purse and flees. The king never even sees who did it.

His corpse lies there, headless, until the moon rises. And then it stands up, and walks over to pick up its own head and set it back on its shoulders. And then the Red King, undead, animated only by a desire for revenge, returns to the castle.

*(Pause)* Sorry, I'm being a bit dramatic about this, aren't I? I guess Ren must have rubbed off on me.

Anyways, that's the first act of the play. The rest of it is about the king becoming less and less human and more and more tyrannical as he basically burns his own kingdom to the ground looking for the man responsible for his death. Sort of like... if Macbeth was about the king, instead of the assassin? That's how I thought about it, anyways.

And in the end, he finds the man who killed him, who it turns out is just a simple bandit, but realizes in doing so he's lost everything and everyone else he cared about. And just before they fight, he goes blind from the blood in his eyes from all the people he's killed, and maybe also from his body starting to, like, break down, and can't even really land a hit on the bandit or defend himself at all. And he dies unrevenged.

A bit grim, obviously, not exactly a bedtime story, but I got really absorbed in it. Once I was finished reading it, I was terribly excited to see what it would look like performed on stage.

So the next day I went over to his house. It was a bit of a mess- he'd cleared out his living room for a makeshift rehearsal space, so everything was all shoved up against the walls.

I also met his roommate, the one who was going to be stagehanding. She was... sort of terrifying.

The way she sized me up while we were being introduced, I felt a little like I was about to be killed. But she was nice enough, really. I guess she and Ren had known each other a pretty long time, and she'd been crashing on his couch for a few months after some prior apartment situation fell through? Her name was False.

**[GRIAN]**

You're *kidding* me.

**[MARTYN]**

What?

**[GRIAN]**

False *Symmetry*?

**[MARTYN]**

Er... maybe? I don't think I ever got her last name.

**[GRIAN]**

It's got to be. How many Falses can there be in London? And *Ren*...

**[MARTYN]**

Sorry, I feel like I'm missing something. You know False?

**[GRIAN]**

She's been in here before to give a statement. Ren has as well. And, well, obviously you, too. What are the *odds*...

I wonder if there's something about past encounters that makes people more likely to run into the supernatural again? That would... explain some things.

...Continue. Please. (*Tape crackles*)

(*Pause*)

**[MARTYN]**

...Well, we sat down and went over the script together. Ren had a printed-out copy that we went through with a highlighter, planning out where all the different cues would be. It wasn't a terribly effects-heavy show, obviously, since it was meant to be performed with such a small crew, but False and I were certainly still going to be busy.

Ren also told me about the venue he'd secured.

It was- I mean, it was really lucky he'd gotten it, because it was an amazing place. Designed by some famous architect. Construction had finished around the start of the year. Normally he never would've been able to afford it, but there had been, um... an incident, apparently. Ren wasn't able to tell me much about it, just that something had gone very wrong during opening night of the first show ever played there, and now most big productions avoided the place like the plague.

When he talked about it... well, he didn't seem too bothered. I'd picked up by then that he was the sort of guy who wasn't really fazed by much. And I know actors are superstitious- you know, 'break a leg', 'the Scottish play', all those- so it wasn't really that weird that they'd avoid a stage where something bad happened, even if it was just a freak accident.

But False... had a look in her eyes. It was hard to read, but it was obvious she had *some* sort of

opinion, so before I left that day, I pulled her aside and asked about it.

She frowned, and said, 'It's weird. It's really hard to find out what happened. It's like nobody knows. I've been trying to look into it. But from what I've heard, it was almost like the whole audience just... lost their minds. Like a mass hysteria, or something... people got hurt.'

I asked if she knew what had caused it, but she shook her head. She said apparently the theatre was inspected for gas leaks after, or anything else that could explain it, but everything was in perfect order. The owners had sworn to Ren up and down that there was nothing wrong with the theatre.

I could tell she didn't feel good about it, though. I didn't either, really. I asked her to let me know if she found anything else out, and she said she would. And I went home.

So, uh, an important thing to understand about a one-man show is that it's exactly what it sounds like. One actor plays every role, facilitated by a bunch of costume quick-changes between scenes. So the number of characters in a show like that is usually pretty limited. In this show there were just a few. There were one or two scenes with the bandit and a couple monologues from a right-hand man in the king's court, but the majority of the scenes Ren was going to be playing the Red King, and any other characters would just be implied.

But it was a really big theatre, and like I said, Ren is *such* a showman. He really wanted to have the audience feel as involved as he could in the events onstage, so it would be like there were way more people involved in the show than there actually were. He told me to try and design the lights and sounds with that in mind, to make it as immersive as possible.

That'll... be important later.

Ren already had a rehearsal schedule mostly worked out. At this point we were... oh, about a week and a half out from opening night? There was only one cast member and he already knew all his lines, so we were able to skip over a bunch of the ordinary stuff.

We'd start with a designer run- that's one where he just ran through the whole show while I sat there and figured out what I wanted to do with all the light and sound cues, and then once I had my soundboard and stuff all set up, we'd do a couple more runs with all the cues on the following days to work out any problems. And then we'd have a full dress rehearsal in the theatre the day before opening night.

Things started to get a little weird at the first full run we did in the theatre, which would've been the Monday before opening night.

It didn't... go *wrong*, exactly. Nothing went wrong. The theatre itself was... huge. And empty. It was pretty, don't get me wrong, but it felt so weird just having three people in that massive space. Once we started going, I actually fumbled my cues once or twice because I kept thinking I could see movement, like people in the seats, out of the corners of my eyes. When I turned to look at them straight on, though, they were gone. It was empty.

Other than that, though, the rehearsal went great. Ren hit all of his lines, didn't miss a beat.

One thing that was weird, though- I mean, you said he's been in here to give a statement before. So you know his accent- it's kinda distinct, right? Pretty recognizable. And I'd only known him for a few days at that point, but... when he was reading on stage as the Red King, there was something *different* about his voice, I swear. Like he was putting on a slightly different inflection, but he didn't stumble over it at all like you'd expect. Sorta wish it'd occurred to me to record it, but at the time I was just trying to stay on top of my cues.

And then... afterwards, when we were done, and he stepped off the stage...

It hadn't been a full dress rehearsal, but he and False were practicing the costume changes, so he had like his prop crown and torn-up cape on, and when he was playing the Red King he'd have this big dark red line drawn around his neck to show the decapitation line.

At first I thought the makeup was just particularly stubborn, you know? Even after he packed his costume up and washed his face, the line around his neck stuck around. It was faded, but not blurry around the edges- it *looked* like an old scar.

At the time, I only made a note of it at all because I thought it might make the costume quick-changes look weird if they weren't able to wipe the makeup off quickly. Blur the lines between the different characters, you know? But I didn't think anything more of it than that.

After he and False left that day, I stuck around for a bit longer to mess with the lights. So I was alone, backstage, just testing different gel filters and stuff. I knew I wanted a lot of red in the lighting, especially for the later acts, but I wanted to see if there was a way to make the color of my regular filter just a little browner- rusty, almost, like drying blood.

I taped the red filter to a green one and then held that up to the light, angled it at the stage, and flipped it on. It looked decent- not really as red as I wanted, but I was getting there. I was just getting ready to turn it back off and try again when I noticed there was something... weird about the boards of the stage where the light was hitting. At first I thought it was an optical illusion or something, like the light and the pattern of the boards were just confusing my eyes, but it *looked* like the stage was *bleeding*. There was something oozing out from between the cracks, all dark and viscous, slowly *pooling* there on the stage.

I turned the light off as soon as I could think to, and everything went dim. I couldn't see the blood anymore at all- the stage looked normal again, for all I could barely see it.

I guess I just assumed it was blood. It could've been... I don't know, oil, or even dirty water from a busted pipe or something, the lighting was weird enough, but-

I packed my things up and got out of there pretty quick after that. I hadn't finished up everything I'd meant to do, but I didn't even care. I just didn't want to be in that place completely on my own.

I had to cross the stage to leave. I'm not ashamed to say I ran- it wasn't like there was anyone there to see me make a fool of myself. Maybe it's my brain distorting things, but I would've sworn it felt... *sticky* underfoot. As soon as I was out of the building and into daylight, I checked the bottoms of my shoes, and I didn't see anything, but- the memory of my shoes sticking against the boards followed me all the way home.

I didn't know what to do about it. Nothing had actually *happened*- nothing really inexplicable, at least. I wasn't sure if anything had happened at all, or if it was just a combination of a few weird coincidences and my brain blowing everything out of proportion.

Either way, I was anxious about going back for the next set of run-throughs the next day, but I did.

And everything went... fine, for that second day. We ran through the show twice, I got all the lights and sound effects mostly finished up, Ren was great as ever. I was sort of on edge the whole time, waiting for... I don't know, for the stage to cave in or the walls to start bleeding or something, but there was nothing. I started to wonder if maybe I'd just imagined it all after all.

After we were done and I was packing everything up, though, False came and stopped me before I

could go. And... she asked me if I'd noticed anything strange in the theatre.

I was tempted to not tell her, honestly. Didn't want her to think I was crazy, or anything, when I wasn't even sure myself what I'd seen. But the way she looked at me... she was dead serious. I could tell, when I met her eyes, that whatever I said she wouldn't laugh at me. So I told her about the shadows, about the blood, even about the line I'd noticed around Ren's neck.

She listened to most of it without any reaction, but when I mentioned the line, she frowned. She told me she'd noticed it when they were leaving home that morning, and when she asked Ren about it, he'd looked confused for a moment, then said it was from an old accident.

We both knew he hadn't had it a week ago.

I asked her if we should try and convince Ren to call the show off.

She said she'd already tried to suggest that, but Ren didn't want to hear it. Partly because of financial reasons- all the costs for the space and everything were already paid, and if the play didn't at least open there wasn't going to be any money coming back in. But she also said she just hadn't known what to tell him. She couldn't point to anything *actually* wrong besides a vague bad feeling.

She admitted it was the main reason she'd agreed to help out with the show at all. She said she was sure something was going to go wrong. The exact word she used was a 'presence'- she felt like there was something *present*. In the theatre, around Ren's neck. If I hadn't... I don't know if you read my old statement, if you remember it at all, but- you know. I believed her.

But there was nothing we could do about it by then. Opening night was three days away, and neither of us had any concrete evidence of any real problems. It wasn't like Ren could get his deposit back. So we talked about it and came up with- not a plan, exactly, but... contingencies. Just in case.

The next day False and Ren did a few more run-throughs on their own at Ren's place, and then Thursday was the final dress rehearsal.

That day... there was something in the air. I could feel what False meant- that there was something *present*. It was like the air in the theatre was... *thick*, like it was... bubbling with some sort of tension. And when Ren climbed up onto the stage, it was like- uh, have you ever tuned a guitar? Or any other string instrument- how you twist the pegs and the strings just get tighter and tighter and tighter until they snap. That was what it felt like when Ren stepped on the stage, like someone had grabbed the tuning peg for a string that was already taut and just *wrenched* it.

I was so tense for the entire rehearsal I could barely even move. I was like I was just waiting for something to happen. Nothing *did*. Everything went fine. But I couldn't look away from the stage. I don't know if I blinked through the entire show. It felt like I was waiting for something. For-marching orders.

The feeling didn't go away when the show ended. Ren finished his final scene and I was supposed to put the lights up. Part of me thought when I did, the tension would finally break, but it *didn't*, even as Ren climbed down from the stage and False started gathering up all the props. It felt like nothing was... over. Like whatever I was waiting was still to come.

I guess talking about it now, it feels obvious that everything was going to go wrong on opening night. At the time, though... I don't know. I wasn't in my right mind, I don't think. Ren walked out of the theatre without bothering to change out of his costume, and False and I just... fell into step

behind him. I don't know why. I don't really know if I could've done anything else. I still felt that *tension*- it made my muscles feel like wound springs.

I don't think I slept at all that night. I'm kind of glad I didn't, honestly. I don't think my dreams would have been... good. I just laid there and stared at the ceiling until my eyes hurt, and then it was morning.

I was at the theatre earlier than I needed to be. I got there earlier than False or Ren. I got everything set up perfectly, double and triple-checked that all the lights and speakers and cues were working. And then... I just waited. I left for a bit to try and have a walk around, but I was back within minutes, just pacing. I just couldn't concentrate on anything other than the play.

False and Ren showed up right on time, two hours before showtime. Ren looked awful, like he hadn't slept at all either- though to be honest, I'm sure I didn't look much better. I asked him if he was feeling alright, but he just mumbled something about nightmares and said he'd be fine.

He perked up a bit once he was in costume, though.

False was on ticket-taking duty, so he and I were together backstage, watching the audience start to trickle in. It was a big theatre, and we were never expecting to sell it out, but it was a pretty good turnout. I hadn't really seen any of the marketing or anything, but I guess Ren had a lot of friends. I guess I should've been excited about that, but I couldn't really bring myself to be anything other than anxious. I was so wound up I almost felt sick.

I was watching the seats fill up through the curtain when Ren grabbed my shoulder and turned me around.

He didn't say anything for a moment. He looked... scared, I think. It was dim backstage, and the shadows made him look very small. The scar around his neck had gotten darker, and it stood out against his skin like a fresh wound.

Then he laughed a little, quietly, and said, 'I think I've got stage fright for the first time in my life.'

That faint accent- I'd gotten used to it, since it hadn't gone away after I'd first noticed it. It wasn't until he said that, and sounded *normal*, that I realized it was the first thing I'd heard him say in his own voice all week.

There's a lot of things I could've said, I think, to try and stop things right there. Maybe if I had, a lot would've been avoided. I'm not sure. I think maybe it was already inevitable at that point, that something was going to happen. I don't know if the doors would've opened for us if we'd tried to leave, you know?

I didn't say anything. I didn't tell him about the conversation I'd had with False, or the blood on the stage, or the line around his neck. I just told him it would be fine, he'd do great, and I told him to break a leg, and he grinned, and the moment passed.

He shoed me off to do final sound checks, and then...

And then it was showtime.

I brought the house lights down and the stage lights up, and Ren stepped up onto the stage, and the show began.

The crowd was silent. Dead silent. I mean, I've been to plays before, I've helped with plays before. There's *always* someone whispering or hurrying in late or getting up to move seats or something-



but not here. It was like the whole crowd was transfixed.

The first act went as planned, right up until the Red King was supposed to be murdered. But then-

Okay. So, the way the Red King's death was staged was that he would have his back to stage left, and False would swing a prop sword at his neck from behind the curtain, and he would collapse and there was a prop head False would kick out from backstage- it was all *fake*. It was all fake. It wasn't even supposed to be super convincing- just communicate the idea of what was happening.

But on opening night, it was *real*.

It was- the sword flashed out from backstage right on cue, and Ren's *head* came *off*.

I was watching. I couldn't look away. He dropped like a corpse.

And then- just like in the script. Ren's body stood up, and shuffled over, and picked up his head, and set it back on his shoulders.

There was blood splattered all over the stage, *real* blood, splashed over his costume and soaking his shirt. The crown had slid halfway across the stage, and it was painted in red. He walked over, picked it up, and put it on.

The world... *tilted*. The whole theatre was washed with red. I could see the faces of the people in the crowd, all cast in red and black, staring.

I was still doing my job. I couldn't stop. I don't think the possibility of- stopping, of leaving, was even in my mind at that point. There was only the soundboard and the lights and the stage.

The show kept going. Like nothing had happened. Like his *head* hadn't-

If not for the blood, I would've almost started to doubt what I'd seen. But the blood stayed. Ren tracked through it every time he crossed the stage.

And then he started to go... off script.

It was always meant to be a dark play, obviously. It's a tragedy. But towards the end of the second act, Ren- the Red King- started... addressing the audience directly. Acting like they were part of the show. Which... the plan was for it to be immersive, like I said, but- not like *this*. He treated them like they were citizens of his kingdom, ordering them to help him find the murderer or there would be *consequences*.

And the audience was *responding*. They weren't- they didn't act like they were frightened, like they realized they were in the audience for a show that had clearly gone off the rails. They would shout up to him, calling for mercy or pledging their help in his search for the killer. At one point, he jumped down off the stage and walked down the aisle, and the people in the nearest seats knelt. It was like it was *real* to them.

It started to feel real to me, too. I think if he'd looked at me, I would've knelt, too.

And then- somewhere in the fourth act. There's a scene in the original script where the Red King is searching a village where he thinks the bandit is hiding in one of the homes, and he orders the people to give him up or he'll have the whole town razed to the ground. He gives them three chances.

The scene ends with him giving the order and walking off, and then there's this sound cue of the

fires starting and- the people screaming.

He ordered the audience to give up the killer- once, twice, three times, with no response, as the crowd got more and more agitated, all shoving each other and muttering frantically. And then, just as he was about to give the order-

There was a commotion in the back of the crowd. It sounded like a fight breaking out. Someone screamed, and then two audience members came down the aisle, dragging a third between them. A woman, I think. She was crying.

They hauled her up to the Red King, kicked her feet out from under her and made her kneel. I tracked the spotlight to follow them- I couldn't *do* anything else. It was like I couldn't control my own hands.

They said they'd found the killer, and the king could take his vengeance. It wasn't- it was just some random audience member! The bandit wasn't even a woman in the script. The bandit wasn't even *in that village* in the script, that's the whole *point*. But it didn't matter. The Red King nodded, and smiled, and drew his axe from his belt.

It was meant to be a prop. It should have been a prop. I remember *buying* it. It was *plastic*. But the way the light caught on it- it was real. And it was sharp.

I needed- I needed to stop the show. I was staring at the master switches for the lights and the sound system. They were right *there*. But I couldn't make my hands *move*.

The Red King lifted the axe above his head, and then-

The curtain moved, and there was a bolt of movement too fast to track in the darkness, and the spotlight caught on False's hair, in her eyes, as she tackled Ren to the ground.

Something shifted. *Loosened*, just a bit.

I slammed the lights off.

The pressure that had been crushing down on the room vanished instantly- I felt my ears pop- and in its place there was instant pandemonium. People were screaming, shouting, scrambling for the doors.

Fortunately, theatres are designed for fires. There were emergency lights along the aisles to guide people to the exits, and the doors all opened outward. The audience flooded out. I have no idea what they thought had happened. I still don't know what I think happened.

My heart was still pounding.

It was probably only a minute or two, but it felt like hours before my hands stopped shaking enough for me to find the switch to put the house lights up again.

When I did, finally, the theatre was empty. Ren was on his back in the aisle, and his neck was bleeding. False was kneeling over him, trying to stem it- when she saw me, she shouted for me to call 999, and I did. Her eyes were blue- I don't know why that struck me. They've always been blue.

Ren's still in the hospital. He hasn't woken up yet, but they're saying he should recover. The injury went all the way around and he lost a lot of blood, but he's stable. He's going to have a nasty scar, though.

A few audience members got hurt, but nobody died, which is what's most important. If False had been a moment slower-

I don't like to think about it.

The owners of the theatre gave us a refund on our rent for the rest of the run when I told them I'd go to the papers if they didn't, so at least there's that. So far as I can tell, the building's closed now. I don't know what they're planning on doing with it.

So. That's that, I suppose.

**[GRIAN]**

You wouldn't happen to know the name of the architect who designed the theatre, would you?

**[MARTYN]**

No. Why, is it important?

**[GRIAN]**

Might be. Do you remember what the building was called?

**[MARTYN]**

Oh, uh- Dogwood Center? I think? Something like that. I figured it was named after someone. Ren liked to joke about how it fit his name.

**[GRIAN]**

Good enough. I'll look into it and let you know if I find any connections. You're free to check the library as well, of course- there's a few specific statements that might interest you, if you give me-

*(Chair slides out)*

**[MARTYN]**

I might come back some other time for that, actually. Gotta... get home. You know how it is.

**[GRIAN]**

Of course. Are you-

**[MARTYN]**

I'll see you around.

*(Slightly hurried footsteps, retreating)*

*(Door closes)*

*(Long pause)*

**[GRIAN]**

Well, that was odd.

Fortunately, I still have contact information for both Ren and False- it sounds like Ren won't be answering any time soon, but False might. I admit I'm *fascinated* by this. False's reappearance especially.

It also has some similarities to-

Well.

*(Pause)*

It sounds like it's very fortunate that False was there, and that she intervened when she did. I'd really like to speak with her again.

It's too bad Martyn was in such a hurry to get out of here. I was going to tell him about the Tek buildings. This Dogwood Center- obviously I'll have to look into it, but feel like I have a good guess who that famous designer was.

*(Longer pause)*

That was *amazing*.

[Click]

[Click]

*(All somewhat muffled)*

**[FALSE]**

You went to the Institute? Are you sure that was a good idea?

**[MARTYN]**

Well, this *morning* I thought there couldn't be any harm in it. Now I'm a little less sure. It was definitely... strange. I meant to just give them the bullet points of what happened and then see if they had anything in the library that related, but I sat down and I just couldn't stop talking.

**[FALSE]**

Weird.

**[MARTYN]**

Definitely weird. And seeing Grian was... I knew him in college, I mentioned, right?

**[FALSE]**

Yeah. You said you hadn't spoken to him in a long time, though.

**[MARTYN]**

I hadn't. Hadn't seen him in years, not since he dropped out. He seems, um... a bit different now. Which. I *know* it's been awhile, and people change, but it just... set my hair on end the way he looked at me. Sort of reminded me of-

**[FALSE]**

Stop. Hold on.

**[MARTYN]**

What?

**[FALSE]**

Do you hear that?

**[MARTYN]**

Hear what?

**[FALSE]**

It sounds like... can I see your bag?

**[MARTYN]**

Sure?

*(Fabric rustling; sound clarifies after a moment)*

*(Long pause)*

**[FALSE]**

Guessing this isn't yours.

**[MARTYN]**

...No.

*(Pause)*

**[MARTYN]**

May I?

**[FALSE]**

Sure.

*(Impact; crunching of plastic being smashed against the ground. The recording ends.)*

## Supplemental:

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

[Click]

*(Phone rings once, and then stops)*

**[GRIAN]**

*(Delighted)* Martyn! I was starting to think you were avoiding me!

This is *fantastic*, I can tell you about Tek buildings now! You ran out before I could, and it's even more relevant than I'd thought it would be- I don't know if you've heard of Tango Tek? He's this fairly well-known architect, which, I *know*, take it or leave it with famous architects, but I swear he really is brilliant.

He has this *incredible* grasp on- well, I guess it would be the supernatural? Every single one of his designs I've seen or heard about, even just the blueprints, they all have some kind of *effect* on the space inside and around them. I don't know how he *does* it- it has to be something about the ratios? the proportions? the design theory? *(Frustrated noise)* I've been tearing my *hair* out about it, Martyn, you don't even *know*.

Especially since I found out that Impulse - that's one of my assistants, I don't think you saw him when you were here - *met* him and didn't *tell* me. And *especially* now that you've told me about the Dogwood Center! Most of the time, from what I can tell, it's the buildings themselves that have the effect- that matches my experience at his Astra Library and the various accounts I've found in the Archives as well as online. I guess the one incident closer to what happened to you, with something *inside* the building triggering the supernatural effect, would have to be that concept for an escape room his-

*(Pause. Grian laughs briefly, a little surprised)*

I *wish* i'd known about him in uni, are you kidding me? Maybe I'd have actually managed the willpower to stick around and get my degree. Oh, speaking of, have you heard from Big B lately? I've been stalking his Instagram, but that only gets me so much...

*(Defensive)* Hey, it's not like that! I just- Never mind. I'm just glad he's well, that's all. Um.

Oi, *you* called *me*. What'd *you* want to talk about, then?

*(Instantly enthralled)* Oh, you *know* I love a little gossip.

*(Longer pause)*

Well, tell me *who*. Come *on*, Martyn-

I *won't* laugh. Okay, maybe I'll laugh a little, but only if it's Timmy. *(Pause)* Tell me anyway.

*(Pause. Then Grian snickers)*

*(Utterly unapologetic)* Sorry, I lied. Ren, *really*?

[Click]

## Chapter End Notes

don't you hate when you call up your friend despite the fact that he's turning into a spooky monster to complain about your love life but he won't stop infodumping about haunted buildings at you

also this one is for Lew. kisses

## End Notes

author sixteenthdays exposes her favorite scp story ([it's 701](#))

THIS REALLY DID TAKE A MONTH TO WRITE HUH. the next one will hopefully be out... a bit sooner than that. knock on wood etc. however im VERY proud of this one, its one of my favorites yet in many many ways. i hope you enjoyed as much as i did!!

ALSO. IF YOU'RE NOT FOLLOWING [THE PODFIC](#). GO DO THAT!! we just posted [end condition](#) and you ABSOLUTELY need to hear the voice actor. they're so delightful. we are gonna be posting statements every two weeks!!

finally, shout out to zeph, who works in theater, for answering all of my questions as a guy who has never been involved in a single stage production in my life.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!