

Remnants, Episode 22: Who?

Content Warnings:

- Sounds of a character in physical and mental distress
- Descriptions of sexual acts
- Depictions of a character experiencing paranoia and delusions
- Descriptions of deliberate acts of poisoning (with morphine)
- Descriptions of abduction, with use of morphine to facilitate
- Strange psycho-sexual fixations
- Discriminatory language used against the mentally ill
- Mentions of abuse facilitated by drug misuse
- Depiction of murder

Transcript

DUST POURS DOWN

A GASP OF PAIN

APPRENTICE
Christ.

THE SOUND OF ROARING FLAMES.

APPRENTICE
Can he-- can he see me?

SOUNDS OF EFFORT. WHEN THE APPRENTICE WALKS, IT'S MORE OF A SHUFFLE.

APPRENTICE
Jesus, my head. Ugh. Mmmff.

HE CLANGS INTO SOMETHING METAL.

APPRENTICE

Some kind of a... a vent.

HE HEAVES OPEN THE DOOR AND CLIMBS INSIDE.

APPRENTICE

(panting, voice echoing)

He--- he can't see me. He can't see me in here.

MOVEMENT AGAINST METAL, ECHOING AND LOUD

APPRENTICE

This goes somewhere, I-- *ah!* – my *head*. Mmff.

HE LIES PANTING ON HIS BACK

APPRENTICE

No. Not yet. Not yet.

HE SWALLOWS HARD, PANTING MORE.

APPRENTICE

Okay, okay. Okay. He's. He's wiping my memories, he's--- ah. Christ. He's done something to me. To my memories, to my-- my *soul*. I-- ahh good lord it hurts, it hurts to think. He wants to-- he's done this before, so many--- ahhhhh – but this time it didn't work. It didn't work. Why? Why?

Why can I remember what he's done but I can't remember the-- *arghh*-- the rest of me--- *mmnnhh*. It's like-- the opposite of light. It-- it hurts. It *hurts*.

RUMMAGING

APPRENTICE

The vial. In my pocket. He didn't want me to see. He didn't-- *ahhh*. Why?

MOVEMENT

APPRENTICE

Can I still-- will it-- oh, no, christ, please, my head – let me read this, let me. It's cold, cold when I , roll it between my finger and my thumb, so soft. It smells like dust and-- *ahhhh*.

WHOOSH

Charlotte sits down opposite Edward. His smile is warm, revealing nothing.

Is she imagining the duplicity in his eyes, because of what she knows?

It's impossible to say.

It's been almost a year since she first worked out he was a fraud. She's paid half-attention to him since, trying to focus on other things, but like water circling the drain, her thoughts have returned to him.

Even husband number five barely caught her attention, and if she's honest with herself, it was this conversation she'd had in her mind from the moment she'd entangled herself with him. She'd chosen him for husband number five for his wealth, the fragility of his health, and the fact his estate was managed by Cratchet and Pocket.

Edward shifts through the paperwork in front of him. 'I'm flattered you asked for me specifically, though, obviously I'm not a lawyer, I'm just an assistant, so—'

'I am aware,' says Charlotte, smoothly.

Edward's gaze flickers between each of Charlotte's eyes. He clears his throat. 'Well. I'm not exactly sure what it is you wanted to discuss, as it seems like everything is in order in terms of the inheritance.'

Charlotte nods. 'Yes. It is.' Charlotte smiles. 'Champagne?'

Edward glances at the clock on the wall in the Savoy's tearoom, where they've met. His mouth, slightly open, slowly closes. He looks back at Charlotte. His head tilts slightly, minutely to the side.

'Champagne at ten on a Tuesday. What an excellent start to my day,' he says. His tone is different. Bolder. He straightens his jacket.

Charlotte sits up, too. She smooths her hands over her skirts and calls over the waiter.

Less than two hours later, they are tumbling into Charlotte's townhouse. Edward's mouth is hot and eager against hers. She has never felt like this, the rush, the thrill. They've been dancing around his knowledge of her killings, her knowledge of his subterfuge, drinking champagne. The heat has built and built and now he's raggedly yanking her underwear to the side, on his knees, his head between her legs.

It is all so much, and when he's done, Charlotte is liquid on the rug in the hallway, and the phone on the ground, the table knocked over.

Edward, sweating through his sensible shirt, finishes himself off with his back to her. He turns around.

'Not bad, for a man who died years ago,' says Charlotte.

Edward's easy smile falters at the edges. 'I'm sorry?'

Charlotte hums, sitting up. 'Oh yes. First night of the blitz. Edward Pocket and his parents were killed when a bomb landed on the house next door. He's buried next to them in the cemetery.'

Edward is perfectly still, like a statue. 'I can explain.'

'No need,' says Charlotte. She reaches into her little bag, still across her torso, and takes out her cigarettes.

Edward's gaze flickers to the door.

'Oh it locks automatically when it shuts,' says Charlotte. 'My late husband was dreadfully paranoid. You can't get out without the key.'

Edward hesitates. He looks at Charlotte's bag, where her key is.

'Clever boy,' says Charlotte. 'But come now, you know my *modus operandi*. What use would I have in killing you? We're not married and if we were, you've hardly a penny to your name, and we both know that.'

'I don't trust you,' says Edward.

'I am sure I can earn that trust from you in time,' says Charlotte. She peels herself up from the floor and gets to her feet. She hands Edward one of the cigarettes, and her key. Her heart is racing in her chest now.

'I actually have something interesting you might like to see which I hope would go some way towards laying those... more *trusting* foundations.'

Edward follows her from the hallway into the drawing room.

Charlotte lights her cigarette with the apple-shaped lighter she has sat on her desk. She throws it to Edward. He catches it deftly and lights up, too. He takes a long draw on his cigarette, and frowns.

Charlotte opens the drawers on her desk. She takes out the files about Theodore du Perier.

WHOOSH

Charlotte's losing Edward. She's been feeling it for weeks. She *knew* things would change as he was legitimised as the heir to the du Perier fortune. It fills her with an odd sense of panic.

She should have married him. That's what she should have done. She should have married him before she helped.

No, madness. Hubris. He wouldn't have. Look at how he looks at her now, across this soiree. So few of the society people met him before he started wearing his contacts, and the ones who had had met him briefly enough that the change in the colour of his eyes could be put down to poor memory. Only Pearl Grenville had spent more than an evening with him, and she hardly counts as a society person. She's hardly been seen at all for decades, not since her sister disappeared and her brother was born.

Though, Stephen isn't her brother, not really. The rumour mill has been grinding that story out for years, but Edward confirmed it. The boy is Eliza's. Which, *fascinatingly*, means he's not a real Grenville, as according to Pearl, she suspects her sister was a product of her mother's affair. However, Pearl Grenville notoriously loathed her sister in a quiet, contemplative sort of way.

Charlotte never liked Pearl, on the few occasions their paths crossed. Pearl didn't seem to like her either.

Did Edward sleep with Pearl, like he slept with Charlotte? Did he go down on her, too, finish himself off without letting her lay a hand on him, the way he did with Charlotte?

Maybe he let Pearl touch him.

Charlotte shakes her head. She squeezes her eyes shut. She can't think of this.

She can't lose him.

She checks her box of cigarettes again. She shakes them out of the box, checks that one is marked with a small smudge of pink, something that would look like an accident, lipstick she smeared on it from the edge of her finger.

They're lavender cigarettes. Edward's never smoked them before. He won't know there's anything wrong when she gives him the morphine laced cigarette. She's made sure of it.

She can't lose him.

She tucks the cigarettes away and walks to the bar.

WHOOSH

A miscalculation. It was a miscalculation, *again*.

Six weeks, Edward had been at her home.

Doctors have been in to see him. They've diagnosed him with a brain fever of some kind.

She's been feeding him puree from spoons, helping him swallow, tipping water down his throat. On Tuesdays, she has Gabrielle help her bathe him. Every day, twice a day, she injects his morphine between his toes, where the doctors will not see the track marks.

It's so straightforward. He's safe. He's not going anywhere. She just has to stay on schedule. But she's made a miscalculation.

The play started late. There was a rush on cabs. She didn't get home until *two hours later* than she should have.

She calls his name again, following the trail of destruction. Vomit on the ground, broken vases, discarded bedsheets.

'Edward?!'

Something shoves into her, hard. He was in the dark parlour, waiting for her. He's lost so much weight since she's been keeping him, but he's still a foot taller than her, and she is no longer a young woman. He grabs her purse and runs.

'Edward!' Charlotte screams after him.

She hears the door unlock, and slam.

Charlotte sobs.

A miscalculation.

WHOOSH

Charlotte is taking tea with one of her so-called friends when she sees an announcement in the paper. She gasps at the sight of Edward, staring in print at her. His eyes are the unmistakeable piercing blue of the contacts she gave him, the ones she had specially commissioned from her friend who works at a film studio. He'd only made such things once before.

It's a wedding announcement. Edward, as Theodore du Perier. To Matine de Vallée.

Charlotte bursts into a laugh that is too loud and fraught to be polite. 'Matine de Vallée,' Charlotte says to her friend, pointing at the image. 'She's mad, isn't she?'

Charlotte's friend shrugs. 'I don't recall.'

Charlotte stares at the grainy photograph. Did Edward let Matine kiss him when he was conscious? Did he let her touch him when he was awake? Did he?

When she gets home, she lies on the bed where she'd cared for him those weeks.

She thinks of carefully pouring warm water down his back to wash away the soap residue, towelling him off and sliding him into bed on clean towels, spritzing him with Chanel, which he loved so much. Holding him when he stirred, smoothing his hair to soothe him, promising it would be alright.

She just wanted to keep him. He was just so tired.

WHOOSH

Charlotte writes Edward letters, sends them to the de Vallée residences. That must be where he is, at one of them, with Matine. He's not at the du Perier house, or the apartment in London, or the rooms he'd been living in when she'd found him.

There was a new man, living in his old rooms. The landlord let her in to see it anyway. The bed was rickety. She could feel a draft from the windows. How had he managed to look so clean and tidy, so presentable, when he'd been living like this?

That trip had been enlightening. The landlord had so many letters other people had sent to Edward. Some of them were from people he'd worked with, others apparently lovers he'd taken. He used a variety of names, though mostly variations of the same; Edward; Eddy;

Ned; Teddy. Some of the more recent ones are addressed to Basil, though, and a few other names appeared too.

There is no sign amongst any of them of who Edward *really* is.

The lack of sign or evidence of this feels as though it is beginning to drive Charlotte mad. She can't stop thinking about him. It's like her mind can't put him down.

She goes to Paris, to the de Vallée apartment, there. It's well-kept, but the master is away, the butler tells her. 'And what about the mistress?' asks Charlotte.

'Resting with her parents, she is having a difficult pregnancy.'

Charlotte lies awake in her hotel, staring at the ceiling. A child. He put himself inside of her, inside of Matine. Charlotte had only ever touched him there when she bathed him, when she lay with him after on the bed and told him stories. Had he fucked Matine willingly? Did she coerce him?

Charlotte takes out of the photograph of the two of them, clipped from the paper. She's pretty, Matine. Very pretty. With an absence in her eyes. Psychotic, that's the rumour Charlotte has heard about her. She speaks with the devil or demons, or something. Did he know that, when he married her? Did they trick him?

Did he choose her on purpose so that there would be little resistance from the family?

The de Vallée family would have ended with Matine if he hadn't married her. None of their other children had lived to adulthood. Edward stood to be a very rich man indeed with the du Perier fortune and the de Vallée's combined.

Charlotte gasps.

Maybe that's it. Edward had learned this from *her*. Chewing up Matine as fast as he could so he could move on to the next one. Yes, that must be it. And the baby, a form of insurance for the family.

Yes, yes. It must be that, it must.

He's so clever, so smart. Just like her.

That must be it. That must be why he left. It's a dance, a careful waltz. Of course it is. Of course.

WHOOSH

The PI is not what Charlotte expected. Everyone who recommended him said he was not afraid to use force. He was brutal, violent. Charlotte needed that.

This man does not seem violent. This man does not seem brutal. He's like a still pool of water, but now and then, she catches something flickering, deep in his eyes. Elio, that's how he gives his name. She has it on good authority that he's good. But he seems young, to Charlotte, for someone who could be so skilled in such a profession.

What does he think when he looks at her, though?

He has dark eyes. They make her think of Edward. His curls are tighter than Edward's, his skin a rich, warm tan, not like the pale expanse of Edward's skin.

As Elio sips his espresso, Charlotte pictures him naked.

She lodges herself nearby. She's heard rumours that du Perier has been visiting Venice a lot, but she ends up in Milan because that's the only place where he seems to have been photographed.

She can see the appeal of Milan, she supposes. There's an air of excitement, here, and he's on the run, in a way. From what she's hearing about him from other people. He doesn't seem like a man on the run. He seems wealthy, smooth, confident. He's interested in art.

This intrigues her. She wonders why. She recalls him mentioning paintings to her. He always liked the ballet, preferred it to the opera, especially Tchaikovsky. She has turned her mind over every little detail she can remember him sharing, cross-referenced it with his letters. Misaligned ideas of this man. Overlapping stories. He's similar in each person's account of him, but never quite the same. So many faces. So many lives. Especially for so young a man.

She meets with Elio again some days later. He has discovered that du Perier has made a connection with a local portrait artist. Elio has met with him, the artist. He shifts, when he says that. How curious, thinks Charlotte. She spots, then, a mark on Elio's neck. A bruise, she wonders?

No. A *lovebite*.

'What did the artist say?' says Charlotte.

'Not much,' Elio admits. 'But enough for me to work with.'

Charlotte wanders the streets of the city. She daydreams about living there. She wonders how she'd spend her time, if she were Edward. If she were with him. If she were not feeling so very, very old.

She catches sight of herself in a window. She is older now than her mother ever got to be.

Elio is waiting for her at her apartment. He's panting. 'The artist was not the artist,' he says.

They go to the real artist's home. Elio is nearly shaking with fury. He storms about the place, his reputation finally on full display. He hands Charlotte a sketch. There he is; Edward. Naked. His eyes are dark, in the picture. Brown, then. He's not wearing his contacts.

The artist doesn't cooperate. Some weeks later, Charlotte hears that he is dead.

She fires the PI. She considers jumping off a bridge, but decides against it.

She goes back to Paris. Matine de Vallée is dead too.

WHOOSH

Charlotte sips her tea, looking out of the window of the cafe onto the busy Paris street. There, Stephen Grenville is gaunt as he appears in the window, a ghost of himself. This is her first thought.

'Thank you for agreeing to meet with me,' says Stephen. He looks uncomfortable. His chin is covered in pale blonde stubble. It catches in the light.

'I was sorry to hear about your wife and children,' says Charlotte, quietly.

Stephen clears his throat. He shakes his head.

'And your aunt, too, so soon afterwards,' Charlotte continues. 'Who is looking after your baby, without her?'

'I pay someone,' he says, gruffly.

Charlotte hums. 'With what, pray tell?'

Stephen shifts. 'So you know, then.'

'Oh yes. I know,' she says, softly.

'My wife's parents send a monthly stipend which covers her care.' Stephen squeezes his eyes shut. He looks just like his mother. 'This isn't why I wanted to meet.'

'Oh?'

'The-- the man responsible for what happened with my aunt,' says Stephen. He sniffs hard, shakes his head. 'I believe you knew him, in some capacity.'

'How so?' asks Charlotte.

Stephen takes a deep breath and sits up straighter. 'He goes by many names.'

At once Charlotte's heart flutters. There are butterflies in her stomach. 'You're looking for Edward.'

Stephen pauses. He studies Charlotte carefully. 'Edward Pocket. That's the name he used when he meddled in my family affairs.'

'Theodore du Perier now,' says Charlotte, softly.

'Not exactly,' says Stephen.

'No,' Charlotte agrees, 'not exactly.'

'He was never Edward Pocket. Not really. Did you know?' asks Stephen.

Charlotte sits up. The butterflies in her stomach have turned to moths, huge and slamming into the walls of her chest as though her ribs are full of light. 'Please. You need to tell me what he did. I need to know.'

Stephen is quiet for a moment. 'I am not Pearl Grenville's brother. I'm her nephew,' Stephen admits, haltingly. 'The son of her sister.'

'I know,' says Charlotte. 'Tell me about Edward.'

A look of quiet rage crosses Stephen's face. 'He put an idea in Pearl's head. About her sister, Eliza. That she wasn't really her sister, not a full sister. That she wasn't a true Grenville. When Pearl died. With her will, in a locked box at the solicitors. There it is. All the insinuations. Father was having affairs. Perhaps mother was, too. She was a flirt, notoriously. And she spent so much time out dancing. So much time at the ballet. And didn't little Eliza so love to dance? Didn't she?'

Charlotte gasps. Her chest is tight. The emotion is caught between lust, envy and delight. She needs more, more details, more stories. She needs to know what Edwards face looked like as he was manipulating Pearl Grenville. She needs to know. She needs to know.

'So Edwards was right,' Charlotte whispers.

'They raised me as their own!' Stephen shouts. A few people go quiet on the tables around them. 'I am their son, on my birth certificate that is what it says! Their SON. My father's name is on Eliza's birth certificate, too. Whether we're Grenvilles by blood does not *matter*. We're Grenvilles by *LAW*.'

'So why didn't you get the money?' asks Charlotte.

Stephen opens his mouth, closes it again. 'Stipulations in my parents wills about blood relatives.'

'Even if Eliza was not--- if they can't *prove* you're hers, then—'

'She's dead,' says Stephen.

Charlotte's heart clenches. 'Dead?'

Stephen nods. 'Yes. Dead.'

'And there's a—'

'Death certificate? Yes. Haemorrhage. The day I was born. Apparently.'

Charlotte covers her mouth. 'Oh god.'

Stephen shakes his head. 'Pearl would never have done this on her own. She knew what my parents wanted and she'd have never gone against them. She never did, not once her whole life, even though their mother always gave Eliza so much more time and her father was so checked out it hardly mattered.'

Charlotte lets out a shaky breath. 'Stephen. Do you – do you know? Who was he before he was Edward Pocket?' she whispers.

Stephen Grenville runs a hand over his face. 'He's nobody, really. His birth name was Edwin Peterson. Far as I can tell, he stopped using it in the war, after his dad died overseas.'

'The mother?' Charlotte asks, her voice a shaking whisper.

'Died not long after he was born. German Jewish immigrant, fleeing the mess that was happening there at the time, as the war was building up. Name was Frieda Weiss.'

'You both took your mothers when you entered the world, then,' says Charlotte.

Stephen is perfectly still, as he looks at her.

WHOOSH

Charlotte is in the bath, some days later, sipping a glass of champagne, warm cloth over her eyes. She has spent days mulling over what Stephen told her of Edward. Or Edwin. Whoever he is. Whatever he is.

She hears the bathroom door open. 'Gabrielle?' she calls.

No answer.

Charlotte sits up, but she feels hands on her shoulders. Large hands. Warm hands.

'Edward?'

No answer, still.

'May I finish my champagne?' she whispers. Her heart is trilling.

The hands do not move. They do not push.

Charlotte drinks. She finishes, sighs, sets her glass down on the ledge.

'Alright,' she says.

The hands on her shoulders push.

The water is warm. It stings the inside of her nose. Alas, another miscalculation. She has made so many of those.

She is distantly aware of her body thrashing uselessly under the relentless grip of the hands on her shoulders. Mostly she can feel the sting of the frozen ground under her bare feet as her mother sets her down in front of their burning house. 'Remember to cry, Charlotte,' her mother tells her. 'I'm counting on you.'

THE APPRENTICE SITS GASPING, ECHOING IN THE VENT.

APPRENTICE

It's me. He's me. Edward. Edwin. Theodore. Teddy. He's me.

MOVEMENT IN THE VENT. HE SCRAMBLES OUT, TO WHERE THE FIRE IS.

HE THUDS ONTO THE GROUND.

THE APPRENTICE LETS OUT A WITHERING SIGH.

APPRENTICE

I just need to sleep. I just need to sleep.

END