

MAG 190 — Scavengers

Content Warnings

- Cults
- Self-recrimination
- Emotional manipulation
- Mentions of: Therapy, innuendo, paranoia & anxiety, instances of memory loss, mild vicarious embarrassment, explicit language, ableism, death, mass suffering, physical violence, murder, apocalypse

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and ninety:
"Scavengers."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[A humming indoor sound; as individuals speak their voices reverberate against concrete walls]

CELIA

(Anxious) I don't like it. They've been gone too long.

LAVERNE

They're fine. Sometimes they take a while. It's hardly the longest they've been gone, is it?

CELIA

How would I know? It's not like I have a watch, is it?

LAVERNE

Then how do you know what's too long?

CELIA

How do you know what isn't?

LAVERNE

Celia... just trust them. "They walk this world above the nightmare. It will not take them."

CELIA

Yeah, you're, you're right. Of course. You're right.

[Chair scrapes, Celia stands and starts pacing]

LAVERNE

Besides, you know that they sometimes go to a side tunnel for "private contemplation". I think it's sweet.

CELIA

(Petulant) They can contemplate privately here...

LAVERNE

Can they? There's not exactly many doors down here.

CELIA

No, I guess...

LAVERNE

And the tunnels do have a tendency to echo...

CELIA

Yes, alright, fine! Fine!

Excuse me for caring.

LAVERNE

We **all** care.

CELIA

Yeah... well...

[Celia nervously fiddles with supplies – bottles clink, paper rustles]

[Celia's voice starts to sound closer]

CELIA (CONT'D)

Laverne?

LAVERNE

Mmm?

CELIA

Has anyone been messing with the supplies?

LAVERNE

Don't think so. Why do you ask?

CELIA

There's a tape recorder here.

LAVERNE

Oh.

(Warily) Should there not be?

CELIA

I-I don't know. I haven't seen it before.

[More plastic rustling]

CELIA (CONT'D)

It's running.

LAVERNE

How odd.

CELIA

Yeah, I don't like th—

Hang on, listen.

[Distant sounds of echoing tapping and footsteps; Celia runs to the door and opens it]

(Relieved) Oh thank god.

LAVERNE

That them?

CELIA

Yeah. And they're with a couple of new people! I don't recognise them!

LAVERNE

Well, that explains it, doesn't it?

[Walking and tapping louder]

CELIA

(Whispered shout) Georgie! Melanie! Over here!

ARCHIVIST

(Faint, amused) First name terms with the prophets? Bit disrespectful.

GEORGIE

(Faint) John.

ARCHIVIST

(Closer) Sorry.

[Sounds of a group entering the room]

LAVERNE

Glad to see you're okay. We were getting worried.

ARCHIVIST

(Quiet) After you.

GEORGIE

(Teasing) Oh, were you? Both of you?

CELIA

(Plaintive) I'm allowed to care!

[Footsteps and small movements as folks settle themselves]

GEORGIE

Where're the others?

LAVERNE

I think Arun's off writing. The rest are sleeping.

[Someone sits on a wood chair]

ARCHIVIST

You can sleep here?

MELANIE

You don't have to, but it does pass the time.

[Melanie folds her cane and settles into a squeaking armchair]

MARTIN

This place is pretty nice.

[Martin puts down backpack]

MELANIE

Yeah, I reckon it used to be the hideout of, um, of you-know-who, uh, when he was living down here. It had supplies and everything.

CELIA

Sorry, we haven't been introduced, you are...?

GEORGIE

Oh, um, of course, sorry. This is—

ARCHIVIST

Jonathan. John. Sims.

MARTIN

Uh, Martin. Hello!

GEORGIE

And this is Laverne.

LAVERNE

Good to meet you.

GEORGIE

And Celia.

MARTIN

(Puzzled) Celia?

CELIA

Probably. The, um... place I was trapped in, they took my name. I never got it back. But I like Celia, so... yeah! Celia it is.

MARTIN

Uh... H-Hello... Celia.

CELIA

So, where **were** you two then?

ARCHIVIST

Er... Pardon?

CELIA

They saved you, right? From one of the nightmares? So, what was it?

ARCHIVIST

Oh...

LAVERNE

Celia, don't push. They can tell us when they're ready.

(Discomfited sounds from Martin)

GEORGIE

Uh, no, they're, they're not um—

We didn't rescue them.

CELIA

Huh?

LAVERNE

No? So where did they come from?

MELANIE

(Pointedly) Great question. John, do you want to field that one?

(Chuckle from Georgie)

ARCHIVIST

Uh, right, okay. Well, um... We were... We're from out there. We've been wandering the world. Seeing... all its horrors.

LAVERNE

God, that sounds awful.

MARTIN

Er... Yeah.

ARCHIVIST

But we're old friends of your... uh, prophets.

CELIA

(Embarrassed) Oh, um... they don't like it when you call them that.

MELANIE

(Emphatically) We haven't prophesied anything.

ARCHIVIST

Well, that's a fair point. I suppose, technically, 'saviours' would be the correct—

MELANIE

Oh shut up! John!

GEORGIE

Anyway... they're passing through. They won't be staying with us long.

MARTIN

Oh, er, right. Yes.

LAVERNE

Hang on... Sims...

Melanie, this isn't your old boss?

ARCHIVIST

I- What?

MELANIE

I used to talk about you in therapy.

ARCHIVIST

Oh. Oh! Oh, I- I suppose that makes sense.

GEORGIE

Hmmm.

LAVERNE

Small world... Nice to finally put a face to the name.

ARCHIVIST

Uh, yes.

Yes.

CELIA

(Drawn out) Right.

Oh, Georgie, I mean to— Sorry, um, just—

[Plastic rustles]

[Close handling noises as she picks up the tape recorder]

CELIA (CONT'D)

Do you know what this is doing here? I haven't seen it before, and you're always saying to tell you anything weird so...

(Sharp breaths from some ex-Institute members)

GEORGIE

I see...

Thank you Celia. Could you turn that off, please.

[Footsteps]

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

(Brusquely) John, a word?

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[A tunnel location near muffled running machines]

GEORGIE

Yeah, look and I understand that, but you've got to realise this isn't just—

ARCHIVIST

Uh, Georgie?

GEORGIE

Oh, seriously? For fu-

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Tunnel location continues]

GEORGIE

No, they can piss off! No! I refuse.

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Tunnel location continues]

[Repeated sounds of enthusiastic tape recorder smashing]

GEORGIE

I can do this all day!

(The Archivist sighs)

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Tunnel location continues]

[Pacing sounds for a short time]

GEORGIE

(Breathlessly) For god's sake!

ARCHIVIST

Georgie, it's not going to make a difference.

GEORGIE

I'm not going to let us be spied on, John!

ARCHIVIST

Look, the tunnels offer some protection, but clearly not enough to stop whatever is manifesting these recorders. If you smash this one, they'll just make another one. Trust me on this, you need to let it go.

(Disgruntled sound from Georgie while taking moment to recompose)

GEORGIE

There are seven with us now.

(Sigh) It used to be more, a lot more. But... um, we got greedy, pulled too many out. We... attracted attention. And... well, now there are seven.

ARCHIVIST

I'm sorry. I didn't know.

GEORGIE

Martin said you knew everything now.

ARCHIVIST

Not everything. Between the tunnels, and your and Melanie's... position relative to The Eye... I'm a bit in the dark here.

GEORGIE

No pun intended.

ARCHIVIST

Sure.

GEORGIE

...So what? You, just, want me to just leave the tapes running and hope?

ARCHIVIST

I want you to accept that trying to stop them listening is only going to frustrate you.

GEORGIE

Just promise me these things aren't going to harm my people.

ARCHIVIST

I promise... I promise that they're not here for you. They're here for me. And maybe a bit for Martin. They seem to like him.

GEORGIE

That'll have to do, I guess.

(Beat)

It's good to see you.

ARCHIVIST

You too.

GEORGIE

I, um... I think I owe you an apology.

ARCHIVIST

Oh?

GEORGIE

I didn't realise how bad things were for, well, all of you. I mean, I kind of knew, but seeing all this for myself, I... I cut myself off and... I'm not so sure that was the right thing to do any more.

ARCHIVIST

You had every right to.

GEORGIE

Yeah, but it didn't exactly help, did it?

ARCHIVIST

Georgie, you couldn't have stopped this, believe me.

GEORGIE

...Melanie reckons you're the reason... all this happened, whole apocalypse thing.

ARCHIVIST

She's... not wrong.

(Long exhalation from Georgie)

I was the catalyst. I-I didn't— Elias— Jonah Magnus used me.

GEORGIE

Well, obviously. Even Melanie doesn't think you'd have been stupid enough to do this on purpose.

ARCHIVIST

Oh. Good.

So... this is it? You and Melanie sneak into nearby fearscapes, rescue someone and hide them here?

GEORGIE

Well, it's a bit more complicated than that, but... yeah, basically.

ARCHIVIST

And then you just... stay down here?

GEORGIE

These days that's enough. We still need to eat sometimes, and drink. Found some supply caches down here—

ARCHIVIST

Jurgen Leitner.

GEORGIE

Yeah, that's, that's what Melanie said too.

Also, uh, we found a pretty convenient nightmare that's essentially just an endless supermarket. Turns out if you take stuff from it, it stays pretty much fine. Not *nice*, y'know, but...

ARCHIVIST

I did wonder about the 'Ennui'-brand coke bottles.

GEORGIE

Yeah, it's convenient not subtle.

ARCHIVIST

...Georgie... Where's the Admiral?

GEORGIE

(With difficulty) He's, uh... he's fine. I guess. He's enjoying himself at least. He wasn't immune, not like me and Melanie. And he's a predator, pampered piece of fluff that he is.

Turns out, there's a place full of cats. And their prey.

ARCHIVIST

Poor thing.

GEORGIE

I go to see him sometimes. I think he's happy, in his way. But, um... It's hard to see him like that. He didn't even know I was there.

ARCHIVIST

I'm sorry.

(Beat)

GEORGIE

John... How do we turn it back?

ARCHIVIST

I don't know.

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Humming of the tunnel meeting room, where Melanie's chair is located]

MELANIE

Was that the recorder?

MARTIN

Yeah, it just started.

MELANIE

By itself?

MARTIN

I didn't do it, if that's what you're asking!

MELANIE

It wasn't an accusation.

MARTIN

Do you want me to turn it off?

MELANIE

That depends. Will it **stay** off?

MARTIN

Not if it wants to be a part of things, no.

MELANIE

Then let it run. It's just the two of us and, it's not like we can attract any more attention to ourselves at this point, inviting the snoop-god's favourite kid down for a chat.

MARTIN

Hey, that's not fair.

MELANIE

And? I guess the end of the world must've left me all snappy.

MARTIN

Well... I mean, y—

MELANIE

Don't. Don't say it. I actually did a lot of work on my anger, you know? Tried to put all the supernatural bollocks behind me. And now my therapist thinks I'm 'the chosen one'.

MARTIN

Yeah, the apocalypse does seem to bring out the weird in people.

(Melanie makes a sound of assent)

MELANIE

Speaking of... uh, you and John, eh?

MARTIN

Hmm?

(Martin makes some small assent and chuckling noises)

MELANIE

Congrats, took you long enough.

MARTIN

Oh god! I totally forgot I haven't even seen you since... well...

MELANIE

Yeah. Not... not since before John woke up.

Before you, uh... cut yourself off.

MARTIN

Yeah, sorry about that.

MELANIE

Look, I, I get it. I was still full of ghost bullet at the time, remember?

MARTIN

Oh yeah. I suppose, when you think about— I mean... Do we actually **know** each other? Really?

MELANIE

Huh.

Uh, Melanie.

[Reaches out for a handshake, which is reciprocated]

MARTIN

Martin.

(Playfully) So... what do you do?

MELANIE

(Playing along) Oh, um... **(chuckle)** I'm ah actually one of the prophets chosen to walk the end times unscathed.

MARTIN

Mmm. Mmm.

MELANIE

Yourself?

MARTIN

Oh, I'm the Antichrist's plus one.

(Melanie chortles)

MELANIE

Oh, that... that sounds like a rough gig.

MARTIN

(Smiling) It has its perks.

Seriously though, how the hell did you and Georgie fall into the 'prophet' thing?

(Melanie sighs)

MELANIE

Okay, um... It wasn't exactly a choice. It just turns out that since I... severed my connection with The Eye, y'know, ah and Georgie has no fear, we're kind of...

invisible? To all the nonsense out there. We only realised when we finally went out to see what was going on and... saw how bad it was...

MARTIN

Yeah. It's the same outside London. Worse, in some places. Though I guess that's down to personal taste these days.

MELANIE

Yeah.

Well, we were, we were out, and we found this Spiral maze, uh, and who did we find inside but Laverne, my therapist. I wasn't exactly going to leave her there so, we grabbed her and legged it. And... that's when we discovered that we can keep others hidden as well.

MARTIN

Hm.

MELANIE

Not completely and, and not for long, but it's enough to get them here to the tunnels. So once we realised that, we started doing it for more people.

...Have you had to explain any of this stuff to somebody who just doesn't have the first clue about any of it?

MARTIN

Not often. And it never went great.

MELANIE

Yeah, well, tell you what, you sound like a doomsday-ing tarot reader.

Hours talking about The Eye's 'ascendance', and how it's, y'know, transforming the world into a fearful 'psychoscape' and...

MARTIN

They didn't believe you?

MELANIE

Oh, I wish, y'know No; they believed us, but a few of them took it in a bit more of a... religious direction. And here we are.

MARTIN

Mmmm. Okay but I still don't get the whole 'prophet' business — what exactly are you meant to have predicted?

(A heavy sigh from Melanie)

MELANIE

Okay, um...I... (**sigh**) I said I'd had a vision that it would end.

MARTIN

Oh. Right. And er... *have* you had a vision or...

...Right.

MELANIE

Look, I know, alright.

(Sigh) It was a shitty thing to do, but... if you had heard how, how hopeless they all were, like, when we told them all this. That everyone is trapped in, like, never-ending torment, forever... I had to tell them something.

MARTIN

I guess.

MELANIE

I hate it. They just keep trying to *interpret* everything I do. And they keep calling me “The Blind Prophet”, which is a whole other thing!

MARTIN

Er, yikes.

MELANIE

Yeah, uh-huh!

(Sigh) It’s why we head out so much. Sometimes we actually are scouting or gathering, but half the time... I just need to get away.

[Several clinks from Melanie’s folded cane]

MELANIE (CONT’D)

If I didn’t have Georgie, I think I might just snap and beat them all to death.

MARTIN

Sounds like they’d probably just thank you for your wisdom, if you did that.

MELANIE

(Chuckle) Stop! We shouldn't talk about them like this. They, they are good people.

MARTIN

Sure.

MELANIE

It's just... hard not to look down on people when they put you up on a pedestal like that.

MARTIN

So how **are** you and Georgie doing?

MELANIE

Huh, honestly? Er, well, these were not the early relationship hurdles I expected.

MARTIN

God, tell me about it.

MELANIE

But don't get me wrong... Georgie's incredible. And-and she's far, far too good for me. And I, I only hope she doesn't realise that while there's an apocalypse on.

(Heavy sigh)

Yeah.

And what about John?

MARTIN

Oh, you know John. He's a complete mess. But, so am I and... I think we're making it work. Communication can be... difficult when you're on an unholy pilgrimage. **(short chuckle)**

MELANIE

Modern dating, eh?

MARTIN

Nightmare.

(Melanie chuckles, then exhales loudly)

MELANIE

Um... Did you meet anyone else out there?

MARTIN

Yeah, I-meets actually. In fact we... we saw Basira and Daisy.

MELANIE

Are-Are they alright?

MARTIN

No. Not really.

MELANIE

Oh.

MARTIN

Daisy had kind of gone full monster.

MELANIE

Ah.

MARTIN

And Basira kind of... had to kill her.

MELANIE

Oh. Oh... Oh that's, ah...

MARTIN

Yeah. (**Sighing**) So, now Basira's on her way, but she's taking her own route. I think she needed some time to process.

MELANIE

Well, I mean that, that makes sense, though I'm, I'm not sure how much 'processing' she'll manage out there surrounded by ah...

(**Martin makes an agreeing sound**)

Oh— oh, I nearly forgot! Careful of Helen, if you see her.

(**Martin makes a questioning sound**)

Ah, she turned up a while back and tried to eat Celia.

MARTIN

She was **here**?

MELANIE

Yes... a few times.

(Sighing) Looking back, I was stupid!

MARTIN

Because you kind of liked her?

[Several clinks from Melanie's folded cane]

MELANIE

Yes. Yes...

Honestly I had started to think she was on our side.

MARTIN

Yeah.

(Melanie sighs)

John killed her.

MELANIE

Uh, sorry, what?!

MARTIN

Yeah, she tried to— I wasn't there, but they got into a standoff and he... he destroyed her.

MELANIE

He can do that?

(Sound of assent from Martin)

Well. I mean that's... that's interesting to know. Ah—

[Approaching footsteps]

MARTIN

Oh yeah, it's a who— ah.

[Wooden knocking]

MELANIE

Oh, oh god, I forgot. I-I promised I'd listen to some of Arun's latest stuff.

MARTIN

No worries, do you want some company?

MELANIE

(Quietly) I wouldn't put you through that.

(Martin snorts)

[Melanie gets up and opens the door]

MELANIE

(Quietly) I swear, if it's another hymn I am going to break something!

[Footsteps fading away as Melanie leaves]

(Martin pauses, sighs)

[Martin makes himself comfortable on Melanie's chair]

MARTIN

Ooooooh. Mmm, that's nice.

[Approaching footsteps, and door creak]

LAVERNE

Careful, she's very possessive of that chair.

MARTIN

Oh sorry! Didn't mean to sit on the prophet's throne.

(Laverne chuckles)

LAVERNE

I just wanted to check if you were joining us for dinner?

MARTIN

Oh, food! Huh! What's on the menu?

LAVERNE

Cold baked beans.

MARTIN

...Maybe later.

LAVERNE

It's there if you want it.

MARTIN

Do you actually believe all that stuff?

LAVERNE

About them being chosen?

MARTIN

Yeah, the whole ‘prophet’ thing.

LAVERNE

Are you asking me personally, or do you want me to speak for the group?

MARTIN

Either. Both.

LAVERNE

Hmm. Personally, I don’t know what I believe. I saw Melanie every week for months, and if you’d asked if I thought she was a ‘holy person’, I’d have laughed. She always behaved understandably, even if her problems were sometimes... odd.

MARTIN

But...?

LAVERNE

But. The world is... w-well, I mean, it’s hell, isn’t it? Whether it’s a capital H hell or not, I don’t know but, that’s where we are. And Melanie and Georgie, they can walk through it completely untouched. They can... rescue people, even if

they can't always protect them. I've listened to their own explanation of it, and I've listened to Danielle call them "prophets" or "angels" or "the chosen". Neither of them really makes any sense. But... you've got to have hope in something, otherwise there's no point to anything. So, I choose to have hope in them.

MARTIN

I guess that makes sense.

LAVERNE

It doesn't *need* to. Times like these, it just helps to believe. I'm not sure it really matters what.

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Voices reverberate in a different, larger tunnel space than previous; chairs creak as people fidget]

ARUN

(Earnest) So what do you think?

GEORGIE

(Awkward) Um...

MELANIE

(Awkward) Oh, okay, um... Right ah, so... Arun, I just think that the...

GEORGIE

I don't think either of us is particularly comfortable with your use of the word "redeemers".

MELANIE

Right.

ARCHIVIST

I thought it was quite a good rhyme.

MELANIE

(Aside) Shut up, John!

ARUN

I-I, I realise you dislike that k-kind of thing, your humility is... humbling.

(The fragile line of Melanie's irritation is audible)

But... I've been considering your words last week, when you talked about how the world we're in... feeds on fear, how—

GEORGIE

Mm-hmm...

ARUN

—how it, how it's powered and shaped and moulded by it.

MELANIE

Ahh.

GEORGIE

Right...

ARUN

And, well, maybe your powers feed on hope? On trust and faith and... and hope. I want to inspire that. So, I'm sorry if it's maybe a little... florid, but I think it's right.

MELANIE

That's...th-that's not how it works. Ah, is it? John?

ARCHIVIST

Hmm? Oh? No. (**smugly**) That's not how it works.

ARUN

(**Sharply**) And what would you know about poetry?

(**Georgie giggles**)

ARCHIVIST

Oh, well, uh... I, um...

ARUN

Wh-who even is this? Are you a new follower?

GEORGIE

Um...

ARUN

I thought you said it was dangerous for the flock to get any bigger?

GEORGIE

Ah, no. He's... like us. Able to travel through the world.

ARUN

Another nightmare strider?

ARCHIVIST

I do not want a poem.

(More soft giggles)

ARUN

But... Are, are, are you sure, Prophet?

MELANIE

Uh... yes. Yes he is.

ARUN

He doesn't *seem* holy...

ARCHIVIST

(Archly) And what would you know?

GEORGIE

John.

ARCHIVIST

...Sorry.

ARUN

I— Apologies, I meant, I meant no offence. Oh, I— Please forgive me!

[Footsteps as Arun quickly leaves]

GEORGIE

You didn't need to scare him like that.

ARCHIVIST

I didn't mean to.

MELANIE

Hmm.

[Chairs scrape on concrete as they stand to leave]

GEORGIE

Look, we're all tired, and you still seem a little disoriented by the tunnels. Let's get some rest. We can talk about next moves tomorrow.

ARCHIVIST

And how do you know when tomorrow is?

GEORGIE

We generally err on the side of caution and sleep in.

ARCHIVIST

Sounds good.

GEORGIE

Oh, John.

ARCHIVIST

Hmm?

GEORGIE

Your tape's running again.

ARCHIVIST

Oh, sorry!

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

JONATHAN SIMS

The Magnus Archives is a podcast distributed by Rusty Quill and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial ShareAlike 4.0 International licence. Today's episode was written by Jonathan Sims, produced by Lowri Ann Davies, and directed by Alexander J Newall. It featured: Jonathan Sims as The Archivist, Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Lydia Nicholas as Melanie King, Sasha Sienna as Georgie Barker, Lowri Ann Davies as Celia, Helen Gould as Laverne, and Anil Godigamuwe as Arun. To subscribe, buy merchandise, or join our Patreon, visit rustyquill.com. Rate and review us online, tweet us at TheRustyQuill, visit us on Facebook, or email us via mail@rustyquill.com. Join

The Magnus Archives – MAG 190 – Scavengers

our community on the Discord via the website, or on Reddit, at r/TheMagnusArchives. Thanks for listening.