

MAG 191 — What We Lose

Content Warnings

- Cults
- Arguments
- Paranoia & anxiety
- Discussions of: death & sacrifice
- Mentions of: instances of memory loss / mental deterioration, scopophobia, self-hatred, therapy, explicit language, murder, food

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and ninety-one: "What We Lose."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[Sounds of light breathing in sleep in a quiet chamber in the tunnels]

[Some agitated movements; sleeping bag zipper and bedding rustles]

[Martin sleep-mumbles, then awakes with a start]

MARTIN

John?

[Turns over to check]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(Surprised) Ah! Argh! Stop it! John!

[The Archivist wakes up]

ARCHIVIST

(Muzzily) Mm, what? What? What is it? What...?

MARTIN

Sorry. Sorry, I— It's fine. I was... I was just startled. We've not been many places you can sleep, so I—

ARCHIVIST

So, what?

MARTIN

You were sleeping with your eyes open again.

ARCHIVIST

Ah. Right.

MARTIN

J-just took me by surprise.

ARCHIVIST

Sorry. Not something I can help, I'm afraid.

MARTIN

No, I, I, I know, I know, um. I'm sorry. It's okay.

(Martin and the Archivist sigh)

[Fabric rustles]

ARCHIVIST

Bad dream?

MARTIN

Is there any other kind?

ARCHIVIST

Fair.

MARTIN

Speaking of, how are your dreams? I know they used to be... y'know, *complicated*.

ARCHIVIST

I don't know. I don't really remember them anymore. Honestly, it's not really even *sleep* these days. I can only do it when I'm disconnected from... well everything, and it's more like... You know that feeling when you're right on the edge of falling asleep? Not quite dreaming, but not aware of stuff either?

MARTIN

Huh. So, like, standby mode then?

ARCHIVIST

(Soft laugh) I suppose.

What was I like at Salesa's?

MARTIN

Oh, you'd just completely conk out. Eyes open, obviously 'cause, god forbid the creepy ever stops entirely, heh, but—

ARCHIVIST

Thank you.

MARTIN

—you'd just be dead to the world. I actually got a bit worried, once or twice, but you always woke up fine.

You said you didn't dream. Sounded pretty happy about it too.

ARCHIVIST

I imagine I was.

(Beat)

MARTIN

Hey, I meant to ask. Do you recognise that woman, Celia?

ARCHIVIST

Um... no, I, I don't think so. Why?

MARTIN

I'd- I *swear* she gave a statement once.

ARCHIVIST

What statement? I don't... I don't remember anything. Wh— Not down here at least.

MARTIN

It was... **(mumbles something softly)**

I thought she was making stuff up! Heh. I gave her some money.

ARCHIVIST

Why?

MARTIN

Sh-she asked.

ARCHIVIST

Right. Do you think she remembers?

MARTIN

I mean, she doesn't seem to remember her own name, so I'm guessing... No?

ARCHIVIST

You could ask?

[Faint echoing footsteps]

MARTIN

Well, no, that'd just be weird. I mean—

[Soft knocking on a flimsy door]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hello?

[Door opens]

UNNAMED

Sorry. Didn't wake you, did I?

(Small huh noise from Martin)

They asked me to check in on you.

ARCHIVIST

No, it's fine, we were up.

MARTIN

Don't think we've met. I'm Martin, this is John.

[Rustling and sounds of sleeping bag zipper opening]

ARCHIVIST

Hello.

UNNAMED

(Suspicious) Right.

MARTIN

And you are...?

UNNAMED

(Firmly) No.

MARTIN

“No”? As in your name’s No?

UNNAMED

No, as in ‘you don’t get to know my name’. I’m not stupid.

ARCHIVIST

Is that so?

[Sound of shoes being put on]

UNNAMED

Names are how they see you; the-they’re how they find you in the files. You can hide all you want, but if they know your name, they can see you. And take you away.

ARCHIVIST

I see.

UNNAMED

I tell people my name, then maybe **they** learn it. Then **they** come for all of us. You shouldn't have told me yours. I keep telling the others! Only the prophet names are safe.

ARCHIVIST

That's not how it works!

MARTIN

(Warning) John...

ARCHIVIST

What? She's talking complete rubbish!

UNNAMED

(Angry) Have you been there, then? Have you fled through the endless cabinets, the, the labels that cut you? The things that 'put you in your place'?

ARCHIVIST

No...

UNNAMED

So you don't know!

ARCHIVIST

But I've seen it!

I *know* it.

UNNAMED

Oh, you know it, do you? Did it bleed you?

ARCHIVIST

No, but that's not actually—

UNNAMED

Then you don't know it. And you're not getting my name.

ARCHIVIST

Fine.

Sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

...So... Georgie and Melanie, are they...?

UNNAMED

They're gone.

(The Archivist makes a small noise of surprise)

Out.

They, they often go out. Sometimes they bring people back, but usually they just go, for a while.

MARTIN

O-kay, huh. Do you know when they'll be back?

UNNAMED

No. They walk their own path.

ARCHIVIST

Course they do.

(Beat)

(Unnamed sighs)

UNNAMED

Would you like some food? We have... tins. And biscuits. Although the biscuits are really old.

MARTIN

What's in the tins?

UNNAMED

Food.

MARTIN

(Irritated) What food?

UNNAMED

Depends. Most of the labels are gone. Yesterday, I got black beans.

MARTIN

Oh right. And that's... good?

UNNAMED

Mm-hmm!

(Martin exhales slowly)

MARTIN

Right. Well, I could probably go for a... tin. John?

ARCHIVIST

Any chance you could bring me something back? I'm feeling a little bit shaky.

MARTIN

Do you need to make a statement?

ARCHIVIST

Actually no, I... I haven't since we got down here. Suppose it must be the tunnels. Nice to be a bit more in control, although, it does feel... odd.

MARTIN

Well, it's good to hear. I'll see what I can find.

[Door creaks]

UNNAMED

Are you coming?

MARTIN

Yes, yes. Lead the way... you.

[Footsteps as Martin heads for the door]

UNNAMED

Of course.

[Door rattles as they leave]

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[An echoing room in the tunnels]

[Sound of Arun handling the tape recorder]

[Footsteps]

ARUN

(Close) Uh... Martin?

MARTIN

Yeah? Oh, s-sorry, I-I didn't catch your name.

ARUN

Arun.

MARTIN

Hi Arun, what's up?

ARUN

Sorry, ju... um, just, um, did you lose a tape recorder? I found this—

[Tape recorder handling noises]

ARUN (CONT'D)

Oh... Huh.

MARTIN

Yeah, it wasn't on when you found it, right?

(Slight chuckle)

ARUN

No. Is it yours? I haven't seen it before, I thought it might be.

MARTIN

Kind of, I guess? They follow us around a bit.

ARUN

Really?

MARTIN

Oh, y-you don't need to worry. It's been happening for ages. Before the world changed, even. You can just ignore them.

ARUN

Since before the end?

MARTIN

Yeah, it's... it's kind of a long story. Ask the prophets, if you want, they'll explain.

[Martin turns and starts to walk away, then stops as Arun continues]

ARUN

You don't believe in them, do you? In their power?

MARTIN

I... knew them in the old days.

ARUN

So did Laverne.

MARTIN

Yeah, I, I realise that. Just—

Look, it's complicated, okay? It's just a big pile of stuff that no-one understands.

ARUN

(Pointedly) I understand they are able to walk through this world without fear or danger.

(Martin exhales his irritation)

I understand they saved us.

MARTIN

Cool.

...Look, y-you should really talk to them about it, okay I, I don't want to say the wrong thing.

ARUN

They said... you also walked through the nightmares. That you 'share their power'.

MARTIN

Ooh, I'm not sure...

It's different, alright? W-We're different.

ARUN

Yes. You are.

When I look at them, I see a future. I see *hope*. I don't know what I see when I look at you.

(Noises of disbelief from Martin)

MARTIN

Okay, well... You're rude.

ARUN

I'm a poet. I speak the truth.

MARTIN

Yeah? Well... your truth is rude! You don't know anything about us. Who we are, what we're doing.

ARUN

I know you look at us like we're idiots.

(Martin snorts)

You pity us.

MARTIN

That's not true.

ARUN

Liar! **(raised voice)** Who are you?

(Noise of annoyance from Martin)

Just appearing from nowhere with... phantom tape recorders just scuttling in your wake? Why are you here?

MARTIN

(Agitated) We're here to save the world, okay? Right? If you want more than that, go ask your prophets, okay? Now just... Give me that!

[Martin grabs the tape recorder]

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[The tunnel room where Martin and the Archivist slept]

[Door opens as Martin returns; tins and other items placed down]

ARCHIVIST

Any sign of them?

MARTIN

No, but the others say it's pretty normal for them to be gone this long.

ARCHIVIST

Right.

[Cutlery placed down]

MARTIN

That said, the, uh, 'locals' are getting restless.

ARCHIVIST

Mmm.

MARTIN

I-I get the impression our welcome isn't exactly unconditional.

How's the, uh, fuzziness?

ARCHIVIST

It's alright. Comes and goes.

MARTIN

Yeah, you don't seem as bad as you were at Salesa's. Hopefully you won't forget everything as soon as you leave the tunnels.

ARCHIVIST

I don't *think* I will. It was worse there, though, obviously...

MARTIN

(Crosstalk) You don't remember.

ARCHIVIST

(Crosstalk) I don't remember.

...So, what do you think? You reckon they're going to help?

MARTIN

I mean, they've got to, right? You-you're basically humanity's only hope, huh.

ARCHIVIST

I mean... okay, um... **(nervous chuckle)** I hadn't really—

MARTIN

O-oh s-sorry! That's probably a bit too much pressure, yeah?

ARCHIVIST

A-A bit?

MARTIN

I-I-I just meant that, look, either they help or they just sit down here and hope it all magically works itself out. And they can't **really** think that's an option.

Can they?

ARCHIVIST

I don't know. I know how Georgie gets about people in her care. If she thinks helping us will endanger them...

MARTIN

Yeah. Melanie too.

ARCHIVIST

Mmm.

MARTIN

And you're sure we can't find the way up on our own?

ARCHIVIST

Probably not. I'm cut off down here, and the layout seems... different to before.

MARTIN

The Eye isn't, like, calling you, or something?

ARCHIVIST

Oh, no it is. But I can't get a clear reading on it down here. It's kind of maddening, actually. Like being on a street you almost remember but can't find on a map.

MARTIN

We might have to just try anyway.

ARCHIVIST

Yeah but, without a guide we could be wandering a long time. And apparently there are things wandering about there as well that...hm... might put up some resistance.

MARTIN

Yeah, Laverne mentioned. Do you know what they are?

ARCHIVIST

Yep. They're, um... They're Archivists.

MARTIN

Come again?

ARCHIVIST

Did you ever listen to Gertrude's interview with, uh, Sergeant Heller?

MARTIN

Oh... that's a blast from the past. Uhhh, I think so? Uh, World War Two, right?
Under Alexandria? Saw some monster with a wei—

ARCHIVIST

Mm-hmm.

MARTIN

... eye. Right.

ARCHIVIST

I'm not the first Archivist. Not by a long way. Most of the others died like Gertrude, but some... lingered, and, well, let's just say I'm not the only one that feels the Panopticon calling.

MARTIN

Right.

(Long beat)

John. If... **When** we defeat The Eye, the fears...

What happens to you?

(Beat)

ARCHIVIST

Nothing good.

I think it depends on what actually happens. If we figure out a way to defeat them, banish them somehow, kick them out of our reality, and back to where they came from, I might... survive. I think I'd stay more or less like this. Weaker, but fundamentally still an avatar in a world where the fears are once again lurking on the edges.

MARTIN

But I assume that's the best case scenario?

ARCHIVIST

Depends on your point of view, I guess. In the long term all we'd have done is bought some time.

If, however, we find a way to destroy or, uh, eliminate the powers... I'm not going to be okay. There's too much of me that's part of The Eye now. I don't... know what would be left of me without it. Maybe I just die. Maybe I survive, but I lose... something. My identity. My mind. My... memories. I don't know.

[Fabric rustles as they embrace for a moment]

(The Archivist sighs as they step away from one another)

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Martin, when the time comes, I need you to promise me that you won't try to stop me.

MARTIN

I promise.

I love you, John.

ARCHIVIST

I love you too.

MARTIN

But I'm not going to doom the world over it.

ARCHIVIST

Thank you.

MARTIN

And you have to promise me that you're going to do everything in your power to live. That you're not gonna sacrifice yourself at the first opportunity, just because you feel guilty about what happened.

(Beat)

ARCHIVIST

I promise.

MARTIN

Good.

God, I hate these conversations.

ARCHIVIST

Yup.

(Sighing) Heavy stuff.

MARTIN

I miss small talk.

ARCHIVIST

We could talk about the weather for a bit i-if you like?

MARTIN

Ha. Bit difficult underground.

ARCHIVIST

True. In that case I might see if I can get a bit more sleep. Rest up a bit before ah... you know.

MARTIN

Sure.

ARCHIVIST

Wake me if they get back?

MARTIN

Of course.

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Surveillance sounds of above ground London: distant helicopters and drones, with some closer camera iris sounds; every so often a drone flies by at speed, not lingering in the location]

[Distant footsteps, mobility cane taps and talking that gets closer as Melanie and Georgie walk]

MELANIE

I do wonder how healthy it is, going to see him like that.

GEORGIE

I know. But... it helps me. I think.

MELANIE

It certainly sounded pretty nasty.

GEORGIE

Well, it didn't look too much better. Uh, there's a, a bench here, to your left. Do you mind?

[Walking stops]

MELANIE

Unoccupied?

GEORGIE

For now. Come on.

MELANIE

Sure.

[Cane tapping as Melanie locates the bench]

[They sit, with Melanie folding her cane]

GEORGIE

It always tickles me. Coming up here for privacy.

MELANIE

I'm sure I don't know what you mean. Personally, I think a city full of snooping cameras and staring eyes really sets the mood.

GEORGIE

Of course you do.

[Fabric rustles]

MELANIE

Everything's a bit... shit. Isn't it?

GEORGIE

Not everything.

MELANIE

...How did he look?

GEORGIE

He's happy, I think. Does that... Does that make him evil?

MELANIE

It makes him a cat.

GEORGIE

And, I mean, sure it's not a great look for Battersea, but watching it... It's just the gorier bits of a nature documentary on repeat.

MELANIE

There's nothing natural about this though.

GEORGIE

No.

MELANIE

...We could still pull him out, y'know, like, like the others.

GEORGIE

No. No. It... It hurts to see him like that, but he's safer there. If we took him, we'd just be putting him in danger. We might even be putting the others in danger **from** him.

MELANIE

You're not still going on about that dream of a giant, murderous tunnel-cat are you?

(Georgie snorts)

You know you're not actually a prophet, hon?

GEORGIE

Sure... But, by this point, it wouldn't be the most unlikely thing that's happened to us.

(Melanie makes a sad agreement sound)

And it's not like the tunnels have got any safer with **them** hanging around.

MELANIE

It just feels crap, you know? Doing nothing.

GEORGIE

We're surviving. And trying to help others do the same. That's not nothing.

MELANIE

True.

[Melanie squeezes her folded cane]

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Even if it feels like it sometimes.

(Beat)

(Georgie sighs)

GEORGIE

I still care about him, you know. But getting involved will only make things worse.

MELANIE

We'd better still be talking about the Admiral.

GEORGIE

John's... doing his best.

MELANIE

Yes. Well, his “best” is us hiding from nightmares in a damp tunnel.

GEORGIE

It's not his fault. It's... not like he wanted it to happen.

MELANIE

I know that, right! I know. I know, but the... the truth is, I just don't *like* him. I never have... and I'm sick of people acting like I should feel so super-sympathetic towards him, just because he's had a rough time of it. **I've** had a rough time of it from the second I met him! We all have! And he doesn't—

GEORGIE

Oh, honey. I—

MELANIE

Okay. I can still hate him, even if I don't, y'know, **blame** him but...

(Melanie exhales frustratedly)

GEORGIE

You know, you're actually quite similar.

MELANIE

Well then at least I hate consistently.

GEORGIE

You should really talk to Laverne about that.

MELANIE

Oh trust me, it came up. Day one I think.

(Sound of understanding from Georgie)

But all that said, we should still help them.

GEORGIE

What could we even do for them if John's some kind of... all-knowing demigod?

MELANIE

Not down there. Martin says they can't find a way up into the Institute.

GEORGIE

Too risky. I told you about the things down near the stairs, right?

MELANIE

Oh, ah, yeah.

GEORGIE

We can't afford to attract their attention.

MELANIE

You're doing it again.

GEORGIE

(Frustrated) Argh.

MELANIE

Look, you-you've been doing so much better recently. I, I know it's really hard to judge risk without a, a sense of fear—

GEORGIE

But I'm still overcompensating.

MELANIE

Well, I mean, not, not necessarily. It **is** dangerous. But... I, I don't see another way out of this. An-And I don't intend to spend the rest of eternity sleeping in a tunnel playing 'mystery tin'.

GEORGIE

Not even if it was just the two of us?

MELANIE

Oh, okay. Yes, well... maybe... I, I could handle that for a bit. But if there's even a small chance we could put things back...

GEORGIE

You're right. I know you're right. I just hate getting involved.

MELANIE

We've **always** been involved, right?

GEORGIE

Yeah.

MELANIE

A-A-At least now it's on our terms. This way you can get back to podcasting about monsters—

(A small chuckle from Georgie)

—rather than hiding from them.

GEORGIE

(Sigh) Urgh, don't. I was just thinking about that yesterday. How much I legitimately **miss** those shitty ad reads. You know, everything *happened* just as I was recording one?

MELANIE

Oh god, yeah! Um, what was it, uh—

GEORGIE

(Podcaster voice) “Slaughterville: The Town of a Thousand Corpses.”

MELANIE

(Happily) Yes! **(chuckles)**

GEORGIE

Some god-awful true crime thing based in a, a Colorado town where there were meant to be, like, three serial killers or something.

MELANIE

Jesus.

GEORGIE

I was so proud of the script I did for it as well! Thought I'd really nailed that schlocky pulp vibe without it being *super* obvious that I was making fun of them.

MELANIE

Maybe you could do a rendition for the others.

GEORGIE

Not sure how well that would sit alongside Arun's latest hymn.

(Exaggerated sound of despair from Melanie)

MELANIE

Come on, we'd better head back. It's probably not a great idea leaving that lot with John and Martin unsupervised.

[Melanie unfolds her cane as they get up to leave]

GEORGIE

Yeah.

MELANIE

So... we help them.

GEORGIE

Well, we're not going up the tower, but... yeah. I want my cat back.

[Melanie's cane taps as they walk away]

[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, Marguerite Kenner as the Unnamed Follower, Anil Godigamuwe as Arun, Lydia Nicholas as Melanie King, and Sasha Sienna as Georgie Barker. To subscribe, buy merchandise, or join our Patreon, visit rustyquill.com. Rate and review us online, tweet us at [TheRustyQuill](https://twitter.com/TheRustyQuill), visit us on Facebook, or email us via mail@rustyquill.com. Join our community on the Discord via the website, or on Reddit, at [r/TheMagnusArchives](https://www.reddit.com/r/TheMagnusArchives). Thanks for listening.