

## **MAG 183 — Monument**

### **Content Warnings**

- Altered reality / Spatial disorientation
- Futility / Inconsequence
- Self-injury
- Body horror & wounding
- Physical violence / Graphic injury (including SFX)
- Mentions of: blood, murder, falling, isolation

**[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]**

**JONATHAN SIMS**

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

**[Theme finishes]**

**[Tape clicks on]**

**[A wasteland wind swirls, while in the distance is the faint sound**

**slow stone grinding and metal groans]**

**[Feet shuffle to turn on a gritty surface]**

**MARTIN**

Oh bugger off!

**ARCHIVIST**

Everything alright?

**MARTIN**

Oh, no, w-w-what even *is* that? I-It's like Escher ate a bad cathedral and threw up everywhere.

**ARCHIVIST**

It's a building. A tower, in a sense.

**MARTIN**

Oh yeah? And what sense might that be?

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Faintly ominous)** The Tarot sense.

**(Martin splutters with laughter)**

**MARTIN**

Really?

**ARCHIVIST**

What? No. Sorry, it... felt like a good line.

**MARTIN**

No, no, it was. I just... I dunno, I... you did the look and... It's fine, sorry.

What, what's the deal, though? Parts of it almost look like—

**ARCHIVIST**

The Institute.

**MARTIN**

Yeah.

**ARCHIVIST**

Yes.

It makes sense. After all, it was built on the ruins of what Robert Smirke constructed.

**MARTIN**

Smirke?

...What? No. But, but, surely he's—

**ARCHIVIST**

Dead? Yeah I mean yes. Very much so. This place is... an homage, shall we say. A monument. To him and those like him, who tried to... categorise the world with themselves at the centre. In so doing, constructed the architecture of its suffering.

**MARTIN**

Bit of a mouthful.

**ARCHIVIST**

Would you prefer I described it as a ...cascading recursion of shifting arrogance and hubristic dead-ends?

**[Door opens and footsteps]**

**HELEN**

I would.

**[Hissing static rises and falls with Helen's entrance]**

**[A high-pitched tone starts]**

**[Door shuts]**

**MARTIN**

**(Weary)** Hello Helen. Might have guessed you'd be into weird architecture. Very much your area of expertise, no?

**HELEN**

Hmm, depends. Would you describe 'petulant poet' as your area of expertise? I **am** weird architecture. Anyway where have you been? I've been looking for you but you both just vanished.

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Realising to himself)** Ah. Right. I see.

**HELEN**

I was so looking forward to catching up after that whole Basira and Daisy thing, but then pfft! You both disappear. I'd be **very** keen to know how you managed that little trick.

**MARTIN**

Why, it caught us by surprise too. I mean, w-we actually we ended—

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Firmly)** We found somewhere to rest. That's all.

**MARTIN**

Oh, yeah. Ah. Yes. Hm.

**HELEN**

Fine. Be like that. I can appreciate the particular pleasure of a kept secret.

**ARCHIVIST**

I'm sure you can.

**HELEN**

Anyway, such a shame about Basira and Daisy. I was really rooting for them to make up.

**MARTIN**

**(Splutters)** Since when? What happened to— I mean, how did you put it, ah...  
“A quick shot to the back of the head, and then back in time for tea”, or  
whatever?

**(Helen gives an exasperated sigh)**

**HELEN**

Oh give over. I was obviously just prodding her, trying to make a point. She didn't want to kill her.

**ARCHIVIST**

What we want doesn't matter much these days.

**HELEN**

Oh- (**raspberry noise**)

Nonsense. What we want is the **only** thing that matters these days. And Basira wanted to join Daisy.

**ARCHIVIST**

She made her choice.

**HELEN**

With your assistance.

**ARCHIVIST**

It was still *her* choice.

**HELEN**

**(Sighing)** What a waste.

**ARCHIVIST**

No.

It wasn't.

**MARTIN**

Basira is...

She's going to be okay.

**HELEN**

Oh, is she? Do you want me to tell you what she's been up to while you were 'resting'? Where she is right now?

**ARCHIVIST**

You don't need to. I already know.

**MARTIN**

I don't.

**[Faint hissing static starts]**

**ARCHIVIST**

She's currently moving through the, "The Void." Hungry shadows drifting in the dark.

**[Faint hissing static ends]**

**ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

She's been there a long time, now, struggling to find the path.

**MARTIN**

But she will.

**ARCHIVIST**

I think so.

**HELEN**

Yeah, she does always seem to manage, doesn't she? It's impressive, although a little bit... tempting at times.

**MARTIN**

Look, Helen, what do you even want? Okay you keep turning up like a bad penny, and, honestly it, it seems like it's... it's just to be a dick!

**HELEN**

Gasp! I am *trying* to be *friends*, Martin. Forever is a long time. And I occasionally like to have some company that isn't screaming.

**MARTIN**

What do you even think friendship is?

**HELEN**

I dunno, do I? The only personhood I have is from someone I ate.

**MARTIN**

You always said you were Helen.

**HELEN**

I am. I also ate her. It's very simple, as long as you don't think about it.

**MARTIN**

Look. Listen okay I'm getting really sick of all of th—



**ARCHIVIST**

Leave it, Martin. She's just trying to get under your skin.

**MARTIN**

Yeah? Well, she's really good at it!

**HELEN**

Aww. Thanks sweetie. But to be honest, I'm mainly just here to see which path you choose.

**MARTIN**

What do you mean?

**HELEN**

Well, you know, I need to know how much of a welcome mat to roll out.

**MARTIN**

Hang on...

**ARCHIVIST**

Martin, I'd prefer we talk about this alone.

**HELEN**

Oh, I bet you would. You were probably just going to bypass it entirely, weren't you? I can't believe you would deny him the choice to see his own domain.

**MARTIN**

My... my wha— John, my **what**?

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Sighing)** I was going to bring it up at the crossroads. Inside. I only just realised we would be going this way.

**MARTIN**

I have a domain?

**ARCHIVIST**

Yes.

**(Helen makes a cringing noise)**

**HELEN**

Awkward! Right, well. Well this seems very much like a conversation the two of you should be having alone. So I'll, I'll be off, then.

**ARCHIVIST**

Watching from a distance?

**HELEN**

The Eye rules everything, Archivist. We're all snoops now!

**[Helen walks to her door and opens it]**

**HELEN (CONT'D)**

Ciao!

**[Her footsteps echo in a corridor as she leaves, closing the door  
behind her]**

**[The high-pitched tone ends]**

**(Beat)**

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Apologetically)** Martin...

**MARTIN**

Are there people, John?

**ARCHIVIST**

What?

**MARTIN**

Are there people in my domain?

**ARCHIVIST**

Not many.

**(Inhale from Martin)**

**(Beat)**

**MARTIN**

Do you need to do your... your thing? Make a statement about whatever's going on in there?

I could use a moment to think.

**ARCHIVIST**

Sure thing. Yeah. I'll...

Yeah.

**[Martin walks away]**

**[Hissing static starts]**

**[The sound of shifting, sliding, stone becomes clear and from all sides, accompanied every so often by the sound of large mechanisms and gears]**

**[Hissing static starts]**

### **ARCHIVIST**

They scratch and scrape and scamper down the halls of icy granite, fingers that end in jagged nailss probing—

**[Hissing static ends]**

### **ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

—eager, desperate for the wide and stately passages of marble they are so convinced are just around the corner. This corner? No, the next one? Surely soon, it must be soon, yes, I have simply misplaced it for a moment.

They scrabble over smoothly shifting steps that grow and shrink to hidden whims, and argue about the angle with nobody. If they are feeling very confident, they may lean down and stretch a curious tongue beyond their chipped teeth and rotten gums, desperate to add another sense to their observances, more evidence to support their declaration of what the world must be. Their beards are long and matted with their prevaricating spittle, and their hair is kept loose, hanging over their faces to hide the looks of confusion and fear.

There is a way out of here. There *must* be a way out of here. There is a pattern to the movements, an unseen system to the shifting of the doors and the

opening of the tunnels. It simply takes observation and thought and patience and, above all else, intelligence. And that is what these men have in abundance. Intellects sharpened to the keen edge as a chef might sharpen their knife. They have spent their lives in holy objectivity, cleaving one Gordian Knot after another in the arena of publication and debate. They must simply study and learn if they are to escape the labyrinth. They will be the first to escape.

The one who sits in the central chamber cannot remember his name. But he knows that people called him ‘doctor’. He made sure of that — to ignore it would have been the greatest disrespect and he will *not* be disrespected. Doctor...uh, something, has been waiting here for a long time, observing, timing the rotations of the passageways above him. He knows for a fact that this is the central chamber because *he* is the one sat here. For his observations to make any sense they must be made from the centre of this place, and this is where he is observing from, so it stands to reason that it is the centre. The only firm and solid place in a cacophony of undulating architecture; the only point from which it may be solved.

How long has he been watching now? Scratching his notes and formulae into his skin with a fragment of splintered obsidian. It does not matter, time means nothing in the pursuit of knowledge, and he has no concerns except the solution. And he has cracked it. His mouth breaks into a smile, lip splitting in the grin, spilling a drop or two of scarlet onto skin so pale as to now be near-translucent. He has seen the others pointlessly wandering the halls, of course. Simpering pretenders claiming to see patterns when they are only being led by the siren call of their pathetic little biases. Their ridiculous pet theories. Not

like him. They'll remember him forever, the first to escape the Monument. His name will be hallowed with the greats: Doctor...uh... Doctor...

It doesn't matter. There will be time enough for names and gloating and awards once his achievement is secured. And now is the time to put it to the test, to prove once and for all that his peers are ignorant amateurs beside him, who can finally boast that he has found the key to the system in which they all struggle. He begins to walk, calmly, and with a measured certainty, to the east.

Figuring out which way *was* east was the first step, and the most simplistic one, for the central chamber in which he had positioned himself received a ray of light from above at regular intervals that could only be sunlight. And thus it was a simple matter to track the course of the light to determine which direction was east and which was west. Once he had noticed that, it was all about keeping a close eye on the timing of the shifts, cross-referenced with the compass-point. In a westward direction, the corridors would invert every forty-seven seconds and shift incline every twenty, as well as growing a door to a staircase every two minutes. The staircase would always be descending except for every fifth door, which would go up and twist to the north. And just like that, he had plucked order from what would, to any of the other charlatans that wandered this prison of geometry, appear to be true chaos. It was east that he travelled now, however, because every eighty seconds, the second corridor to the east made a sharp upwards inversion, leading to a full minute where every seven seconds a door would sprout from the ground. Only the first of these doors would lead you to the true path that will—

A dead end. Wait. No. This... wasn't right. The first of the doors would lead him... Maybe that wasn't the first of the doors. But it, it was, it was the first door. But that would mean... No, he, he was right, he was certain, he had

factored in all the timings. This didn't make sense. It, it wasn't fair! He had the answer! He—

**[Close sound of stone moving]**

**ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

The ground opens up below the poor, panicking doctor.

**[Sound of a body falling a long way, hitting stone and cracking  
as it goes]**

**ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

He barely has time to register before he is tumbling, falling, smashing bone and cracking skull on the stairs and columns he impacts on his descent, one after another. But it is not the fall that terrifies him, not the pain of the impacts, but the fact that none of them should be there. That it doesn't make sense. And it must make sense. There must be a system. There must be, because if there isn't...

**[The body lands wetly and solidly]**

**ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

He lands with a heavy smack onto rough limestone and lies still, his body twisted and broken. He knows it will knit itself back together, slowly, painfully, as it always has before. But the thought of starting over, of composing yet another theory, fills him with a deep dread.

**[Sounds of the body continuing to knit itself together]**

### **ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

The broken doctor is not alone in the room where he now lies. Another figure, stooped and mumbling, staining bloody notes into a torn and discoloured robe glances over at him. A sneer passes across the cracked face of the doctor — he knows this man, a ‘professor’, at least he puffs himself up to be. His curled lip is reflected in the face of this pretender who scampers over to where he fell, chunks of stone clutched tight in pink and bloody hands.

‘I told you,’ the professor gloats, ‘that your precious compass-point rubric is nonsense. It’s all about the stone, the rocks that make up this place.’

**[Rocks scraping]**

### **ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

You see, here we have the limestone, here the granite. Taste it. No? Your loss. I have also identified basalt and slate in various qualities shot through the staircases in veins. Now, if we ascribe a hierarchy of spiritual purity to these stones with the hypothetical, but inevitable, marble at the top, then it will be a simple matter of following the current of these stones through the—’

The doctor that lies on the floor has recovered just enough to laugh.

‘You’re still working on mineral theory? How painfully outdated.’

A flash of genuine fear crosses the face of the professor at this dismissal, before he picks up his chunk of granite, and begins to smash the doctor’s head in, yet again.

**[Sounds of brutal peer review via three thwacks with a granite slab]**

**[Hissing static starts]**

**[Sounds of the wasteland return; footsteps as Martin returns]**



**MARTIN**

Finished?

**ARCHIVIST**

Yes.

**[Hissing static ends]**

**MARTIN**

Good.

**(Beat)**

I need you to explain something to me.

**ARCHIVIST**

Alright.

**MARTIN**

How do I have a domain? That doesn't make any sense.

**ARCHIVIST**

It's like I said. Everything here is either watcher or watched.

**MARTIN**

Subject or object, yes, I know, we've been over this.

**ARCHIVIST**

Well, you're a watcher, Martin. You worked for the Institute, you read statements. The Eye is... fond of you. You're not getting thrown into your own personal hell, which means...

**MARTIN**

**(Quietly)** That one of them belongs to me. But that's... H-How can I be a 'Watcher'? I didn't even know it existed!

**ARCHIVIST**

But you've suspected for a while now, haven't you?

**MARTIN**

Maybe. But that's not 'watching'!

**ARCHIVIST**

Do you want me to tell you about it?

**MARTIN**

No.

Yes.

N-No. No. I don't know. I dunno.

**[Hissing static starts]**

**ARCHIVIST**

It's a small domain. A swirling mix of The Eye and The Lonely. Inhabited by a few lost souls whose fear is not of their isolation or their agonies, but that no-

one will ever know of them. That they shall suffer in silence, and be mourned by nobody.

**[Hissing static ends]**

**ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)**

That's why you can't really see it. It's why even if we do travel through it, you won't be able to see any of the people trapped there.

**MARTIN**

But I'm not an avatar.

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Heated)** Avatar isn't a *thing*, Martin! It's not—

It's just a word. A word used by... fools like Smirke to try and sort everything into neat little boxes, to reduce the messy spray of human fear into a checklist: Human, avatar, monster, victim. Only now, **now** there's a binary. There's finally a clear dividing line and, well, I'm sorry you're not happy with which side you've ended up on.

**(Beat)**

**MARTIN**

What about Daisy? Or Basira?

**ARCHIVIST**

Daisy carved through the domains of others. Basira, well... in a very real way she was a sufferer in Daisy's domain. Maybe the only one. Hunting, following,

hurting. Now Daisy's dead... she's free. Sort of. She's inherited something of Daisy's ability to move through the other domains.

For now, she'll feed off what she sees in them. As to whether the Eye ultimately gives her a domain of her own... I don't know yet.

**MARTIN**

You didn't tell *her* any of that.

**ARCHIVIST**

I didn't think the metaphysics of her place in the fear ecosystem was something she'd be particularly interested in at that moment.

**MARTIN**

Fair. But you seem very reluctant to tell *anyone* any of this stuff.

**ARCHIVIST**

I did try, right at the start, but you didn't seem to want to talk about it, so I didn't push it. It's hard, I have so much knowledge but... how do I decide what people want me to share, and what they never want to know?

**MARTIN**

I guess that makes sense.

**(Beat)**

So what did you mean about the crossroads? When you were talking to Helen?

**ARCHIVIST**

It's a maze in there. Something between a, a Rubik's Cube and a Magic Eye picture. I can find us the way through easily enough but, well, for us, there are two ways out. Two paths to London.

**MARTIN**

What are the choices?

**ARCHIVIST**

One would be a long, winding route — we'd see a lot of horrors, but remain personally untouched.

**MARTIN**

And the other is my domain?

**ARCHIVIST**

Eventually. It's a shorter path. With faces we know along the way. Including Helen.

**MARTIN**

I thought Helen **was** her domain, with all the doors and that?

**ARCHIVIST**

She is, but she has a position within this pseudo-landscape like any other.

**MARTIN**

O-Okay. So, so, I mean, I suppose we've got to do that one, right?

**ARCHIVIST**

We don't **have** to. W-We could just—

**MARTIN**

What? What? We could, we could dodge around it? Take the path of denial? I guess. But... what is it you keep harping on about? 'The journey will be the journey'?

I mean... It's pretty obvious that this one is my journey.

**ARCHIVIST**

If you're sure.

**(Beat)**

**MARTIN**

I'm sure I love you.

**ARCHIVIST**

I love you too.

**[Fabric rustles of an embrace]**

Let's go.

**[Tape clicks off]**

**[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]**

**JONATHAN SIMS**

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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, and Imogen Harris as Helen. To subscribe, buy merchandise, or join our Patreon, visit [rustyquill.com](https://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](mailto: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.