

MAG – 128 – Heavy Goods

Content Warnings

- Body horror
- Human remains
- Attempted suicide
- Spiders
- Knife violence
- Dismemberment
- Cannibalism

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode one hundred and twenty-eight. Heavy Goods.

[Tape clicks on]

BREEKON

Don't say a word.

[Door opens]

BASIRA

John. Don't turn on the light. Go get Melanie, quickly.

ARCHIVIST

It's alright, Basira. I know he's here.

BASIRA

So what are you doing?

ARCHIVIST

I imagine he's here to deliver something. Thought it might need signing for.

BREEKON

That's right. Just wanted... to... to drop off a package.

BASIRA

Right. Look, what the hell is this? Did you bring him here?

ARCHIVIST

No.

BASIRA

Is he here for revenge?

ARCHIVIST

I d— I don't know. Ask him.

BASIRA

Like he's going to answer me.

ARCHIVIST

Fine.

(Compelling) Are you here for revenge?

BREEKON

Yeah, just like when we... when I... fed the copper to the pit.

[Basira exhales sharply]

ARCHIVIST

Easy, Basira.

(Compelling) What pit?

BREEKON

In 'ere.

[Two knocks on wood]

Realised that I'm not tied to it anymore. Not on my own. Thought you could have it. Pay your respects, like.

BASIRA

Daisy's in there?

BREEKON

That's its name? Then sure. 's in there. Whatever's left. Find out, if ya like.

ARCHIVIST

Would you please drop that ridiculous voice?

BREEKON

(Broad Russian accent) Apologies. Is preferred like so?

ARCHIVIST

Christ, that's worse.

[Breekon chuckles]

(Compelling) What is your real voice?

BREEKON

(Laughs again) Nikola said you were funny. Didn't believe it.

BASIRA

What do you want? Why are you here?

ARCHIVIST

(Heavy sigh, Compelling) Why are you here?

BREEKON

Dunno.

's not right on my own. Not right. No point in doing it on my own. Dunno what happens now.

Thought I might kill you. Missed my chance. Thought I might just deliver something. So, here's a coffin. In case you want... to join your friend.

BASIRA

Get out.

ARCHIVIST

Basira...

BASIRA

Get out!

BREEKON

Make me.

[A whooshing noise starts to rise with Breekon's words, but immediately ceases when the Archivist speaks]

ARCHIVIST

Stop.

[Heavy static rises]

BREEKON

What're you doing?

BASIRA

John, what are you doing?

BREEKON

What're you— Stop it. Stop it!

ARCHIVIST

No.

[Breekon winces in pain]

BREEKON

Enough! Stop looking at me!

[Breekon lets out a final cry and flees, a door is hear distantly. Static diminishes]

BASIRA

John?

ARCHIVIST

(Panting) It's fine. Get me a pen. Please.

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on]

ARCHIVIST

(Breathes deeply and clears his throat) Statement of the surviving half of the being calling itself 'Breekon and Hope', regarding its existence. Statement... extracted from subject 3rd March 2018. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims, the Archivist.

Statement begins.

ARCHIVIST (STATEMENT)

We started in a plague. Not like the nasty crawlers, but like bringing any other doom. We had a cart of corpses, faces twisted, screaming, leaking pus. Knock on doors and cry roughly to bring their dead to us. I tended the shrunken,

mangy mule, and he took the remains on shoulder, slinging them onto the stinking pile. I remember it clear, the fear on their faces as we rolled towards their hovels. Mud-caked peasant or bloated lord, every one of them saw us coming and trembled. It wasn't the plague they feared, it wasn't the death that waited in our wagon, it was us. Two strangers rolling towards them, unstoppable and uncertain, wearing faces they would only half remember, bringing a fate they would beg their god to forget. They could not hate us any more than they might have hated the rock that falls on them from a crumbling cliff. They did not know us, but they knew what we might do to them, what we might bring them.

And we did. Villages that might have no bodies for us when we arrived would pile high our cart before we left. We did not kill them, did not lift a finger. We were the bringers of their awful fate, not its executors. They knew this and feared us in kind. And we drank it down, the taste of it sweeter than the food that now rotted on our plates or the drink that curdled in our cups. And we both tasted it together.

When we left our destination, the mule whining at the new weight behind it, he would reach behind us and find a face, sagging, sloughing off its skull, and he would pull it to him. He'd place it over the one he wore already and he would laugh and laugh and laugh. Sometimes it fell off. Sometimes it stayed for weeks. I kept the face we chose, but I loved him for our levity. And the corpses piled ever higher.

We served aboard the *Robert Small*, bodies of the time crammed into uniform as sloppily as any would expect. Enlistment wasn't needed, nor was drafting, we were on the list for any crew that deserved us, and we were fitting deckhands for the *Robert Small* as it made its slow and mournful passage to

Australia. The quartermaster was too precise, though, and in counting out the rations saw us for what we were. I ate the quartermaster's pen; he ate the quartermaster's tongue. And that was that.

The journey was magnificent. No waiting; no searching for a delivery. Every moment moved us towards, towards the completion of the task and the culmination of our charges' terror. Poor wretches who emerged from Millbank with tales of Australia and its cruelties on their lips, bundled into the cramped and creaking ship that would drag them away from everything they loved and towards everything they feared. That was the first time we saw what would become this place, The Eye's pedestal, but we were drunk on the dawning horror of transportation and took no heed of it.

A young man named Jack tried to leap overboard. When he caught the lad, there was such begging and pleading, as you've never heard, to just let them drown, allow the sea to take it's due. But he just laughed and laughed, and Jack died on dry land as they had always been meant to.

We were conductors on a train, prim suits and scowls, a relentless beast of steam and iron that never seemed to get you exactly where you wanted to be, unless there was something dreadful waiting for you. We punched tickets, ignored questions, and threw off those that looked like they were having too fine a time of it. We didn't like this job, too many sat aboard dreaming sweetly of progress and the future, too few alive to the truth of dirt and struggle in front of them. We woke those we could, but too many stepped off with a smile.

We had some luggage once, a thrumming, silk-wrapped thing of the Spider, hiding away in an old steamer trunk. We stepped heavy through the dining car

and found an old woman near the caboose. “Something strange in the luggage car,” he said, and I finished as was our way, “You should come and see it.” She stood and walked with us readily enough, though tears flowed silent down her cheeks and patterned onto the faded carpet. The Spider’s always an easy job, no fuss, no complications, everything planned and prepared. It knows too much to truly be a Stranger but hides its knowing well enough to endure. We knew she wouldn’t scream as she was hollowed out and drunk, but still he thought best to cover the sounds with a laugh. He was always our humour.

I remember our first automobile: black and reliable, just about presentable for the London auction houses we served. He squeezed its first owner until they stopped, and dumped them in a river, and I stayed with the second until they didn’t know who they were any more than they knew what they were. And then we had a car. It was noisy and it juddered, but the name on the wooden siding was respectable, and now it was ours and good enough for Sotheby’s. We moved a lot of things in those years, some of them even harmless.

My favourite was the old knife, rusted from the trenches and lied about by a barking auctioneer. We delivered it to a leering banker, who knew the second they saw us what they’d done. Sweat dripped from under their bowler hat as they took the knife from its dented metal case and screamed. They lunged at me, stabbing me over and through, then moved on to him. But he just laughed as the blade went in and out, and no blood flowed from the holes they cut. And when the banker had screamed all the curses they had learned from German gas attacks, the knife turned back again and cut them piece by piece by piece. We delivered it back to Christie’s, and that was the end of the auction jobs.

Then were the good times, the circus times. We always take what jobs are before us, deliver whatever will bring that fear and misery, but there is no joy in carrying meat, in shifting writhing spiral things. But with the circus, we were among our own kind at last. They all had names, true enough, but none would dare pretend that names were real. Faces changed more often than clothes, and nobody truly knew who anybody was, save for their function within the show. We carried and lifted and helped the circus move towards its next destination, the next doomed town. Sometimes we joined the show, lifting weights and things that looked like animals. Sometimes we lifted members of the audience. Sometimes we even put them down again.

Even in our stillness, people were afraid. The winter in Russia was cold, and in the icy air the absence of our breath was clear for all to see. I could taste their discomfort, but none ever mentioned it. We didn't like the puppet when Orsinov began to carve it. It seemed wrong to us to try and bring one like us about, to create or remake it in such a solid, static shape. We were wrong, of course, and when Orsinov carved into the thing that had once called itself Grimaldi and fed the pieces they didn't need to the shuddering organist, even we found ourselves impressed. And when the faceless puppet peeled its creator and moved itself with their tendon-strings, he looked at me and laughed and laughed.

We followed her a while, but she was unpredictable, while we are things of point and purpose. When she lost the ancient skin, we went our separate ways, and found ourselves a lorry, long and dirty grey. We drove the motorways and country roads and took great crates of nothing to and fro, driving towards a different sort of terror. It wasn't our cargo that brought fear then. We brought fear to our cargo. Smiling, waiting, patient by the road, with

cardboard signs of gentle hopes. In they went to the back, that silent heavy place with boxes that seemed too big or too warm. They usually screamed as we drove and drove, fear thick in the air, and sometimes they died. Some tried to leap from the back into the road, and one even made it through. Most stayed, getting weaker and weaker, their cries fading away as hunger and thirst and despair took their final hold.

But we were not content. He didn't laugh like he used to. Driving aimless, waiting for the call, sat badly with us, who were meant to know our destination. We were meant to have a cargo and an address. So it was, we found a man named Breekon, and we took everything they were until there was nothing left but the sweet taste of a broken soul's disquiet and confusion. We took the van and started to deliver once again, but we were reckless, desperate for the surety we had not felt since leaving the circus.

And so, we took the Casket, a hungry thing of the earth, a crushing, choking tomb that will not let you die because it is too much what it is for death to find you there, within its mocking shape. Buried alive.

It was one like us that found it, a thing of shifting names and *déjà vu*. A fool that believed that because it found the coffin in chains it was an easy thing to control, to bargain with. But there was no remorse when the test finally failed and it fed on the thing that considered itself the master. No face to change in the cold, dark earth; no eye to fool where it is now. But there was no mention of us in the deal, no thought to what might happen should a victim pass the test. And what happened was we were stuck with it. It was still our cargo. Nowhere to take it, no address or destination, so back in the van it went. A long time we've carried it, keeping it as close as it wants, not listening to it sing in the rain. Even when the mannequin that now called itself Orsinov came back

for us, told us we could help the world unknow and fear again the coming of strangers, still we had to drag it with us. An unclaimed package.

But I suppose it was worth it in the end. When that Hunter killed him, when she took her violence of mindless instinct and unleashed it on us, it was there. It was waiting. I fed her to it. She took him from me, made us a me, and she doesn't get to die for that. She gets to live, trapped and helpless and entombed forever. No prey. No hunt. No movement.

We failed, but I have at least that comfort. I am without him now. I am. I can feel myself fading, weak, no reason to move, nothing to deliver. But I am no longer tied to the Casket. So, you can have it. You can stare at it, knowing how your feral friend suffers, knowing how powerless you are to help. And when you can't bear it any longer, knowing that you can climb in and join her.

I have never known hate before. I have never known loss. But now they are with me always, and I desire nothing but to share them with you.

ARCHIVIST

(Weakly) Statement... ends.

[The Archivist collapses. Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on. Clink of a glass on wood.]

BASIRA

Here.

ARCHIVIST

Thank you.

BASIRA

Was it worth it?

ARCHIVIST

I, I don't know. Maybe?

BASIRA

Did you at least learn anything?

ARCHIVIST

...

Daisy's alive. In there.

BASIRA

Right.

ARCHIVIST

Basira, we, we can't o—

BASIRA

Yeah, I can read.

ARCHIVIST

Right.

BASIRA

So, why give it to us?

ARCHIVIST

I don't... I don't know. T-To taunt us? To lure us in as well?

BASIRA

Hmm.

ARCHIVIST

I, I saw that... 'thing's' mind. It's lost on its own. No partner. No purpose. I honestly think it just wanted to do another delivery.

BASIRA

And there's no chance more of the circus survived the explosion?

ARCHIVIST

I don't think so. A-At least... Breekon didn't think so.

BASIRA

Where does the coffin lead?

ARCHIVIST

The Buried.

BASIRA

Right.

Right, keep it safe. I'll be gone a few days. I have some leads I need to follow up.

ARCHIVIST

Sorry?

BASIRA

You heard me. Don't ask about them. And don't 'Know' about them either.

ARCHIVIST

I can't exactly control that.

BASIRA

Learn!

ARCHIVIST

I'll do my best. You can trust me, Basira.

BASIRA

Stop saying that.

...

Do you know how I survived that— the Unknowing?

ARCHIVIST

I... No. No, I don't.

BASIRA

No powers, no magic or... help. I was trapped in that place and so I tried to figure it out, and I did, a little. So I kept doing it. I kept going through until I got out. I... reasoned my way out of that nightmare.

ARCHIVIST

Good lord.

BASIRA

Then everything ended and Daisy was gone. And you were gone. And Tim. And then I got back to the Institute and Martin sent me to meet the 'new boss'. Then I stood alone in an empty office for more than an hour. I can trust **me**, John, that's it.

...

I'll try to be back in a week or two. Don't think about me.

ARCHIVIST

Right.

BASIRA

And don't open the coffin.

ARCHIVIST

It is addressed to me...

...

Yes, alright. You're right.

[Tape clicks off.]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

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Today's episode was written by Jonathan Sims and directed by Alexander J Newall.

It featured: Jonathan Sims as the Archivist, Frank Voss as Basira Hussain, and Martin Corcoran as Breekon.