

MAG – 119 – Stranger and Stranger

[Calliope Music - Intro]

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Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode One Hundred And Nineteen
Stranger And Stranger

[Calliope Music – Intro - Continues]

(Click)

(Faint, rolling sound of a calliope organ)

(Everything sounds distorted)

ARCHIVIST

H-hello? I, uh, anyone? Um, w-what's going on? What is this place? Where is...
H-help! Please!

(The dance continues around him)

ARCHIVIST

Anybody!

SARAH

I'm somebody.

ARCHIVIST

W-w-what, uh... Who are you?

SARAH

What an excellent question.

ARCHIVIST

Stay away from me!

SARAH

Sarah, Daniel... Sometimes I think I'm just not built for names. A hundred puppets, a hundred pointless names.

ARCHIVIST

I don't understand.

SARAH

Of course *you* don't. You can't. Not anymore.

ARCHIVIST

What? I don't... Who are you?

SARAH

(Small laugh) It's me, John. It's Tim.

ARCHIVIST

J-John... John?

SARAH

Yes. That's your name. And I'm Tim, your friend.

ARCHIVIST

(Relieved) Ah, Tim!

SARAH

(Faux sweet) Yes, John. You can relax. Everything is going to be okay.

ARCHIVIST

No. No, Tim, we've got to stop it.

SARAH

Stop what?

ARCHIVIST

I...

SARAH

And how are you going to stop it?

ARCHIVIST

I have, uh... I thought that I, uh... This!

This... I don't know.

SARAH

Well, don't you worry. I'm sure we can work it out together.

ARCHIVIST

Yes. Yes, Tim, I'm just... I need a second to, uh...

SARAH

Of course, John.

ARCHIVIST

John! Yes, that's, that's me.

SARAH

Give it to me.

ARCHIVIST

Yes, yes, if you could, um... I'd, I'd value your input on it, uh...

SARAH

Tim.

ARCHIVIST

Yes, Tim. Tim.

SARAH

Now let's take a look at this.

ARCHIVIST

Please.

SARAH

Right, now what we have here is a handheld remote detonator.

ARCHIVIST

A-a-a what?

SARAH

It talks to a bomb.

ARCHIVIST

Wait...

SARAH

I imagine if you'd used it, we'd all have come to quite a nasty end.

ARCHIVIST

No, that was... That was...

SARAH

(Laughing) Don't you worry, Archivist. It's all in good hands!

ARCHIVIST

I don't understand!

SARAH

And you never will again.

(Sarah dances away)

(Music swells, then fades)

BREEKON

Hello, Daisy.

HOPE

You all right?

BREEKON & HOPE

Daisy?

DAISY

No.

BREEKON

I'm sorry?

HOPE

Don't follow you.

DAISY

Leave. Now.

BREEKON

Come on, Daisy.

HOPE

Don't be like that.

BREEKON

It's me.

HOPE

Basira.

DAISY

(Calm) No, you're not, because nothing is anything. Leave.

BREEKON

And if I don't?

HOPE

What'll you do?

DAISY

I'll kill you.

BREEKON

Will you now?

HOPE

Ooh, pretty scary.

BREEKON

If you can, that is.

HOPE

You don't even know what a gun is.

DAISY

I don't care.

(Daisy starts snarling)

(Daisy lunges at hope. In one motion, she reaches up and tears out his throat)

BREEKON

No!

(Hope gurgles pitifully as he falls to the floor)

(Daisy laughs, elated, as Breekon charges at her)

(The music swells)

(Musical swell fades)

TIM

Get away from me!

BASIRA

It's alright. I'm not, I'm not one of them.

TIM

Everyone is, this isn't... Just get back!

BASIRA

Okay. Okay. Who, who are you?

TIM

I don't know, do I!

BASIRA

W-what can we do?

TIM

It's too late. There's nothing.

BASIRA

There must be. We just need to figure this out. I, I know I'm me.

TIM

So what's your name? Huh? Who exactly is 'Me'?

BASIRA

It doesn't matter... Names don't matter. I just... I know, I know I'm me, and I know I'm here.

TIM

Bullshit. 'Here' is...

(Tim makes a frustrated noise)

BASIRA

(Trying desperately to reason) There are things that are not me. They want to... to hurt me. But I... I don't want to hurt you.

TIM

I don't believe you.

BASIRA

I don't want to hurt anyone...

TIM

Get back!

BASIRA

No, we can do this. I, I can do this. I just need you to—

TIM

I said, get away!

BASIRA

No, don't—

(Tim throws a wild punch, then turns and flees)

BASIRA

(Quiet) No... wait... I don't, I don't understand.

(The music swells)

(Musical swell fades)

ARCHIVIST

It isn't... It isn't real.

NIKOLA

What isn't real, John?

ARCHIVIST

I don't... None of it. None of this is real.

NIKOLA

Oh, but it is! Just because you don't understand, doesn't mean it's a lie.

ARCHIVIST

Who are you?

NIKOLA

Why, I'm... Tim, of course! Who else would I be?

ARCHIVIST

You're not... you're not Tim.

NIKOLA

Oh! You caught me! I'm Sasha.

ARCHIVIST

Shut up!

NIKOLA

No, really, it's me, Sasha whatever-her-name-was, back from the dead, just like you wanted!

ARCHIVIST

Get away from me! Or, or I swear, I'll, I'll—

NIKOLA

You'll what? Hit me? **(Laughing)** Go on then, try it. Make a fist.

ARCHIVIST

I, I—

NIKOLA

Do you even know which of these hands is yours?

ARCHIVIST

Stop. Stop it! Stand still!

NIKOLA

Do you even know what a hand is?

(Archivist tries to steady his breathing)

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

Pathetic.

ARCHIVIST

Wait, I-I-I know you.

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

I would hope you do.

ARCHIVIST

How are you here?

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

Don't be obtuse, John. I'm here because you failed.

ARCHIVIST

I, I, I tried. I almost—

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

You almost what? You almost didn't doom the world? **(Laughs as Nikola)** No. You almost left reality to be the plaything of a lazy, foolish voyeur.

ARCHIVIST

No, no, no. I wouldn't— I could have stopped it.

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

How? You didn't even know what it was. Do you know how many people I killed to keep the world in one piece? The sacrifices I made? And you didn't even know what you were fighting.

ARCHIVIST

N-no, I-I d-didn't—

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

I suppose it's of no consequence now. It's far too late.

ARCHIVIST

What can I do?

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

You could scream, I suppose. Weep, maybe. **(Laughs as Nikola)** Have you considered curling into a ball?

ARCHIVIST

Why are you doing this?

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

I'm not. **(Pause)** You know, it's probably for the best I'm dead. Can you imagine how much I'd hate having to watch you fumble around as my replacement. I really cannot express how much of a disappointment you are.

ARCHIVIST

I, I'm sorry. I, I didn't even—

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

I fought for years to stop the Stranger in its tracks, and you didn't even notice when they desecrated my corpse. And now look at me. You've made me part of their ritual. This is your fault.

ARCHIVIST

It is not. I didn't know... It's not my fault you died.

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

No, I suppose not. Me, on the other hand... That one is very much your fault.

ARCHIVIST

No, not... Not you as well.

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

Oh yes.

ARCHIVIST

You told me... Why, why didn't you warn me it would be like this?

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

I hardly had the chance, did I, before you left me to get my head bashed in? I understand of course. You needed a cigarette. I suppose you should have remembered that smoking kills. [Laughs as Nicola]

ARCHIVIST

That's not... I don't know.

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

Come now, Archivist. Surely you still know what a cigarette is? Or a pipe?

ARCHIVIST

It's h-hard to think.

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

If our earlier conversation was anything to go by, I hardly think you can blame your thoughtlessness on the ritual. Your problems go far deeper than that.

ARCHIVIST

Just give me a moment, Jurgen, please...

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

You think that will help? Honestly, if I wasn't so dead, I'd be impressed. I always thought my own hubris to be quite exceptional, but you've somehow been able to fit more bad decisions into two years than I managed in a lifetime. But by all means, take your moment.

ARCHIVIST

What do you want?

NIKOLA

I already have what I want, little Archivist. Now I just want you to join me for a dance.

(The Archivist cries out)

(The music swells)

(Music swell fades)

(Daisy snarls)

BREEKON

You killed him!

(Breekon hits Daisy in the stomach)

Do you even know what you've done?

(Breekon kicks Daisy, breaking some ribs)

(Daisy begins laughing, which builds to hysteria)

(Daisy leaps at Breekon, but he grabs her by the throat)

BREEKON

You stupid animal!

DAISY

(Snarling) Kill you!

BREEKON

No.

(Breekon opens the lid to the cramped casket; it creaks eagerly. Daisy continues snarling)

Almost a shame you don't know your own coffin. But you will.

(Breekon throws Daisy inside the coffin. Daisy continues laughing as the coffin lid slams shut)

Oh, you will.

(The music swells)

(Musical swell fades)

BASIRA

Don't panic. Don't panic. Just close your, uh... Ignore it. Ignore the, uh... Don't listen. Focus. Think. This is a place. You are you and you are in a place now. If... if it's a place and it's a now then... then it... then it has an end. The other things, the... they are... too much, too much. There's too many and they want to hurt me, so... So you leave the place, leave the place and the now. No place is forever. You know how to move, so do it. Pick a where, then... then move. Good! Then... then keep moving. Keep moving until you find another place, a place you know. Just keep moving... keep moving.

(The music swells)

(Musical swell fades)

(The Archivist staggers from the dance, exhausted)

NIKOLA

Do you feel it, Archivist? It's almost there. A new day...

GERTRUDE (NIKOLA)

A terrible new world. And it's all your fault.

LEITNER (NIKOLA)

Though I suppose you never really had a chance.

ARCHIVIST

(Quietly) I see you.

NIKOLA

Do you now?

ARCHIVIST

Yes. Yes, I see the sad clown, bitter and hateful. I see him finding his way to a circus where nobody knew him. I see him torn apart, becoming the mask, remade by a cruel ringmaster. Sometimes a doll, sometimes a mannequin, always hiding in somebody else's skin, somebody else's name.

NIKOLA

Not always. And it's far too late for any of that. Nothing you see can help you.

SARAH

Not without the detonator.

NIKOLA

Really, Archivist? After all this preparation, all your research, all this magnificent grotesquery... and you were just going to, what, blow it up?

SARAH

Probably the Hunter's idea. She killed one of the Couriers.

NIKOLA

(Not sad) Oh dear, how sad.

SARAH

She was also the one that damaged this shell.

NIKOLA

You have hundreds of shells, “Sarah”, and soon you will have tens of thousands. You can have your little lures in every dark corner of the whole world.

SARAH

Not until you finish the dance.

NIKOLA

Oh, just let me enjoy myself for a moment! This is a once-in-eternity event, after all.

SARAH

This in-between is not as comfortable for all of us as it is for you.

NIKOLA

Oh fine. Archivist, it’s been a pleasure, but I really must be—

(Tim runs in, screaming in rage)

TIM

Arghh!

(Tim tackles Sarah, knocking the detonator from her hand. It clatters to the floor, and he picks it up)

ARCHIVIST

Wait, no!

(Tim slaps the Archivist across the face)

TIM

I'll kill you! All of you!

SARAH

Will you now?

NIKOLA

(Laughing) No, let them fight. It's adorable...

(Tim kicks the Archivist in the ribs)

ARCHIVIST

(Desperate) Tim! What do you see?

TIM

(Immediately) I see my asshole boss. Oh, wait, wait...

NIKOLA

Spoilsport. Tim—

TIM

Grimaldi...

NIKOLA

Once. A long time ago. Before Orsinov made me. And sometimes even now, for special occasions. Like your brother. [Distorted, deeper voice] Shall I?

ARCHIVIST

(Desperate) Tim, what's in your hand?

TIM

It's... I don't... The, the... the detonator.

NIKOLA

That's quite enough from you, I think.

(There is a sudden spike in the music, The Archivist cries out and collapses)

NIKOLA

And now you.

TIM

Go on. I'll race you. See if you can do it again before I can squeeze.

SARAH

It's too late.

NIKOLA

The world is ours. That toy won't help you now.

TIM

So come and take it.

...

That's what I thought.

NIKOLA

I am losing my patience!

TIM

Back! Get back! That's right... **(Pause)** John, I don't know if you can hear me, but if you can—

ARCHIVIST

Tim...

TIM

—I don't forgive you, but thank you for this.

SARAH

You idiot. Do you really think the world will fare any better under the Watcher?
You think you're saving anyone?

TIM

I don't care.

NIKOLA

You can't even save him—

TIM

But I can hurt you.

NIKOLA

It will not end like this!

TIM

(Bitterly) You sound stressed. You know, I hear the great clown Grimaldi is in town. You should go see him. Cheer yourself up.

NIKOLA

That's. Not. Funny.

TIM

I know.

(Tim squeezes the detonator and there's a loud boom)

(The tape recorder cuts out, instantly destroyed)

(Click)

[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, Mike LeBeau as Tim Stoker, Frank Voss as Basira Hussain, Fay Roberts as Alice 'Daisy' Tonner, Alice Adzowa as Sarah Baldwin, Martin Corcoran & Steven Violich as Breekon & Hope and Jessica Law as Nikola Orsinov, with additional voices from Sue Sims and Paul Sims as the Illusions of Gertrude Robinson and Jurgen Leitner.