

MAG – 118 – The Masquerade

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Intro]

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Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode One Hundred And Eighteen
The Masquerade

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro - Continues]

(Click)

MARTIN

Are you listening? Good.

(Paper rustling)

MARTIN

Case, uh, 0071304, statement of Ivo Lensik.

(Martin flicks open lighter)

Alright.

(Martin sparks lighter and sets the file alight)

(Martin sighs)

Statement ends, I guess.

Uh... Harold Silvana, number 0020406, you'll probably do.

(Martin sets the file alight and again listens to it burn)

Alright, then.

0140207, Dylan Anderson.

Yeah?

...

Okay.

(Martin sets the file alight)

There's plenty more on the pile.

(Knock on the door and someone rattles the handle)

ELIAS

(Muffled) Martin? Martin, open the door.

MARTIN

Sorry, Elias, I can't hear you. There's a door in the way.

(Impatient banging on the door)

ELIAS

(Muffled) Martin, I do not have time for this.

MARTIN

Then maybe you should make time.

ELIAS

Unlock the door. Now.

MARTIN

I thought you had a key?

ELIAS

Martin...

MARTIN

I'm not going anywhere.

(Elias kicks the door in frustration and then leaves. Martin flicks open the zippo again)

I would hurry, though, if I were you.

(Click)

(Click)

(Splintering wood as a door is forced open, sound of rain increases slightly, and footsteps heard as Daisy enters)

DAISY

Come on.

TIM

Right.

ARCHIVIST

(Spluttering) Ah.

DAISY

(Hisses) Shut up!

BASIRA

Just cobwebs.

ARCHIVIST

There's no such thing as "just cobwebs". I don't like it.

TIM

Tough. Is this it?

DAISY

Yeah, we plant the last of it here, and this place'll go up nice.

ARCHIVIST

What's the range on the detonator?

TIM

(Testy) Same as the last time you asked.

BASIRA

Where is everybody?

ARCHIVIST

Preparing, I guess. Haven't seen any of them since the last of, uh, well, whatever the hell that was went inside.

BASIRA

It's too quiet.

ARCHIVIST

Could be a trap.

DAISY

And? If it is, I give this a squeeze... no more trap.

BASIRA

And no more us.

DAISY

Hmm.

TIM

Don't fret it. And anyway, it's not like we're alone in here. Look, there's Prince Charles!

BASIRA

Eugh.

TIM

Well, if he'd been in an accident. Or the Beatles, if they'd all been in separate accidents. Like, like, Ringo was in a horrible fire, or, or Paul was a car crash—that's a classic.

ARCHIVIST

Yes, Tim, I remember them. The waxworks are... bad. Just keep an eye on them and if they start moving—

TIM

Hit them with an axe?

ARCHIVIST

Sure.

BASIRA

John?

ARCHIVIST

Yes?

BASIRA

When you were, uh, kidnapped, did you leave a tape recorder here?

ARCHIVIST

What? I don't think so. Why? Is there— Oh.

BASIRA

Yeah.

ARCHIVIST

For God's sake.

BASIRA

So, where did it come from?

ARCHIVIST

Not important right now.

TIM

Turn it off.

ARCHIVIST

Yes, I'm way ahead of you.

(Click)

(Click)

(Paper burns softly. There's a click at the door as Elias unlocks it and pushes it open.)

MARTIN

Hello.

ELIAS

What are you doing?

MARTIN

That one? That one was Benjamin Hatendi. You weren't fast enough with the key.

ELIAS

What. Are. You. Doing?

MARTIN

Oh, I'm sorry, can you not just look into my head? Read my mind?

...

What's wrong? Too busy trying to keep an eye on everything?

ELIAS

Tell me what you're doing, and why.

MARTIN

I just thought I'd, you know, drop a couple of ideas in the old suggestion box. Turns out my suggestion is... fire.

(Martin flips open zippo)

ELIAS

And yet you haven't set the whole Archives alight. So I assume this is, what's it's called, a cry for attention?

MARTIN

Maybe I just thought it might hurt.

ELIAS

No more than you're hurting yourself by acting out.

MARTIN

Oh, that's it, isn't it? Martin's just acting out. I mean, Daisy's a rabid dog and Melanie's a potential killer. Tim's a, a rogue element, but Martin? Well Martin's just, just "acting out". He'll have a cry and a lie down and feel much better.

ELIAS

And if you're trying to convince me otherwise, then you are failing. Now, if you're quite done, I am very busy.

MARTIN

Oh, sorry, sorry, I'm not keeping you from the show, am I? Well, you head back; I'll keep myself busy here. Albrecht von Closen is next, I think. That's quite an old one, should go up very quickly.

ELIAS

Did John put you up to this?

MARTIN

You think I'm doing this for him?

ELIAS

No? It's just the sort of half-baked scheme he'd come up with, and I am well aware that you'll do just about anything for him.

MARTIN

I—

ELIAS

And I don't need to read your mind for that one.

MARTIN

Do you really— Is it so hard to believe that I hate you as well?

ELIAS

No, it's just hard to imagine that you would act on it.

MARTIN

You think I'm, what, bluffing?

ELIAS

Oh, no, you've made that quite clear.

MARTIN

So, what, I don't get to be angry? I don't get to burn things, just run around making tea while everyone else gets to actually have feelings?

ELIAS

Please get to the point, Martin.

MARTIN

Maybe there isn't one, alright? Maybe—

ELIAS

Maybe you're just wasting my time.

MARTIN

Yeah. Yeah, maybe.

ELIAS

I see. That puts me in a difficult position.

MARTIN

Good.

ELIAS

You might want to turn the tape off, Martin.

(Click)

(Click)

TIM

How much longer?

DAISY

I don't know.

TIM

The others didn't take this long.

DAISY

The others had clear structural weaknesses. This room doesn't.

TIM

How hard can it be to blow up one building with all this stuff?

DAISY

It depends. Lots of other buildings close around and I was told to be careful.

TIM

Right. Fine.

BASIRA

So, would you say this was supposed to be Churchill or Alfred Hitchcock?

ARCHIVIST

Jowls like that could be either. I mean, the suit is— Tim! Leave it.

TIM

We should know what's going on, how close they are.

ARCHIVIST

We are not ready yet. If you start opening doors and they see you...

TIM

You're sure it's through there?

ARCHIVIST

I, I'm pretty sure. I saw it a few times while I was here. They've knocked through most of the middle, hollowed it out, made a sort of auditorium.

BASIRA

How big?

ARCHIVIST

I don't know, big.

BASIRA

I mean, it's not a huge building.

ARCHIVIST

I don't know. Tonight was my first time seeing it from the outside, at least in the, uh, flesh. I guess it does seem... smaller?

BASIRA

You're sure this is the right place?

TIM

I am.

ARCHIVIST

This is definitely where they kept me, although I don't remember quite this many waxworks...

BASIRA

Alright. Just don't want to get this far just to find we're in the ...

(Calliope chords start)

ARCHIVIST

This is the place.

TIM

We need to see what's going on in there.

ARCHIVIST

Just ignore it. We have a job to do—

BASIRA

Jesus!

DAISY

What?

BASIRA

It moved.

ARCHIVIST

Right, okay, if they're starting to— We've got to go.

BASIRA

No, like, just... It was just, like a, a flicker in his eyes. Look at this.

ARCHIVIST

If waxworks are coming alive, we need to go.

BASIRA

Just shut up and look.

DAISY

Huh.

ARCHIVIST

Oh God.

Oh God, they're not waxworks.

TIM

What do you— Christ.

ARCHIVIST

Tim, I think— I think maybe we had better see what's going on in there.

TIM

Alright. On three... Three!

(Door opens and the calliope music gets more intense and weird atonal singing begins to filter through)

TIM

Holy...

ARCHIVIST

(Awed) Yes. I suppose it is.

DAISY

Done.

ARCHIVIST

I, um... I think we might need all of it, Daisy. The place is, uh, it's bigger than we thought.

DAISY

(Looks over, snorts) Roger that. Give me a couple of minutes.

ARCHIVIST

S-sooner would be better.

TIM

What is it?

ARCHIVIST

Fear fuels everything; of course they'd need it for a grand ritual.

BASIRA

What the hell is that thing? What's it doing to them?

ARCHIVIST

I think... I used to call it the Anglerfish. It's... I knew it took the skin, used it to coat people made of sawdust and stuffing, but... I suppose I thought it just... ate the rest. But no. It had a museum to fill with waxworks. And I guess you don't need skin to sing, to join the choir.

(The music intensifies)

(Click)

(Click)

MARTIN

(Bitter laugh) Sorry, looks like it wants to know what's going on.

ELIAS

Hm. A pity. You know John listens to all of them?

MARTIN

What? You don't want him hearing your big evil speech?

ELIAS

Just wanted to spare you the small amount of dignity you have left.

MARTIN

Dignity!? Right, yeah. Like the dignity of being trapped in your flat by worms or sleeping in the archives clutching a corkscrew? Or-or fetching drinks for the thing that murdered your friend without you even noticing, laughing at their all their little jokes then being left to wander impossible corridors for weeks!?

ELIAS

Are you done?

MARTIN

Not even close, because I've... I've been thinking. It's not like you got this whole all-seeing thing recently; you've had it the whole time. I remember the way you looked at Sasha after the attack. You knew it wasn't her. And I reckon you knew Prentiss was lurking under the Institute too. And you did nothing. Why?

...

(Shouting) Why?

ELIAS

Let's just get this over with, shall we?

MARTIN

What, like with Melanie? Just that perfect bit of information to leave me a wreck?

ELIAS

Yes.

MARTIN

Well, I hope you've got something better than that pathetic dig at my feelings for John.

ELIAS

Hm. It's baffling really. Such loyalty to someone who, really, treats you very badly.

MARTIN

Is that supposed to be, what, a... revelation?

ELIAS

(Chuckles) You know, I really should have gone for that, found something that would finally manage to shatter that precious image you have of him. But, as you say, I am... very busy, at the moment. So, I suppose I'll just have to go with what I had prepared.

MARTIN

Do it.

ELIAS

Your mother.

(Martin inhales)

She's always been... difficult, hasn't she? You take care of her for years – feed her, clean up after her – and now, with her condition degrading even further, she is the one that asked to move into a home, to have it left to the nurses. She's the one that refuses your visits.

MARTIN

She's always been—

ELIAS

Strong-willed? Stubborn? No. No, Martin, you know the reason.

...

Your mother simply hates you. You just don't know why.

(Martin tries to keep his breathing steady)

It's not your fault, though I know that isn't any consolation. It's just bad luck, really. How old were you when your father left? Eight? Nine? When your mother began to sicken and he decided he was done with you both? Not old enough to remember him with any great clarity, especially when your mother refused to keep any pictures of him. She never recovered from that betrayal. He just tore her heart right out and took it with him. The thing is, though, Martin, if you ever do want to know exactly what your father looked like... all you have to do is look in a mirror.

(Martin emits small noise of despair)

The resemblance is quite uncanny. The face of the man she hates, who destroyed her life, watching over her, feeding her, cleaning her, looking down on her with such pity—

MARTIN

Shut up!

ELIAS

Do you want to know what she sees when she looks at you?

(The tape hisses and Martin begins to weep. He takes shuddering breaths before finally collapsing to the floor, weeping. Elias just watches)

Don't burn any more statements.

(Door closes, then reopens)

MARTIN

Did you find anything?

MELANIE

Yes, I fou— Jesus, are you okay?

MARTIN

Do we have what we need?

MELANIE

I think so, yes. He didn't even have a safe, just a few locked drawers. It was easy.

MARTIN

We, we need to leave.

MELANIE

We need to kill him. Look at you. He needs to die.

MARTIN

No. No, I knew... I knew what this was going to be.

MELANIE

It's not just for you. If we leave him alive—

MARTIN

(Softly) Melanie, Melanie please.

MELANIE

(reluctantly) Alright. Let's get these somewhere safe.

(Click)

(Click)

(The singing and calliope is muffled)

BASIRA

So, what do we do?

ARCHIVIST

We can't help them.

TIM

What, so we're just going to leave them to be skinned alive?

ARCHIVIST

Well what do you want me to do?

TIM

You brought me in as a distraction, right? Let me do it. Go in; maybe you can get some of them out.

ARCHIVIST

Tim, contrary to what you think, I did not bring you here to indulge your death wish!

TIM

That's not what this is!

ARCHIVIST

No?

TIM

No. You knew I might not be coming back.

ARCHIVIST

I knew none of us might be coming back, but I'm not going to let anyone get killed for nothing!

TIM

Well, except for those people in there.

ARCHIVIST

They're already dead.

TIM

Not all of them! I can—

ARCHIVIST

I am not losing you as well!

BASIRA

Look, whatever we're going to do, we need to figure it out. Now.

TIM

Fine. Look, John—

DAISY

Done.

ARCHIVIST

What?

DAISY

It's all ready. Here.

ARCHIVIST

Oh, I thought you would want to, uh, do the honours.

DAISY

Safer with you. You know when it needs to happen.

ARCHIVIST

Right, okay, come on. Let's go.

Tim, come on.

TIM

This isn't right.

BASIRA

At least it'll be quick.

ARCHIVIST

Tim... Please... We have to g—

(The door opens and the music and singing gets louder)

ARCHIVIST

Get back!

DAISY

Behind me!

NIKOLA/GERTRUDE/LEITNER

Will the audience please take their positions!

The show has begun.

**(The noises crescendo and tape distortion drowns out almost everything.
Then, all at once, all distortion disappears and the music is clear)**

BASIRA

Get the hell away from me!

TIM

Where is... No!

DAISY

Don't move.

ARCHIVIST

Daisy, D-Daisy, it's me!

TIM

No!

DAISY

I said, don't move!

ARCHIVIST

Daisy!

(Gunshot)

(Music continues and then fades)

(Click)

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]

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 and directed by Alexander J Newall.

It featured: Jonathan Sims as the Archivist, Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Mike LeBeau as Tim Stoker, Frank Voss as Basira Hussain, Lydia Nicholas as Melanie King, Fay Roberts as Alice 'Daisy' Tonner, Ben Meredith as Elias Bouchard, Jessica Law as Nikola Orsinov, with additional voices from Sue Sims and Paul Sims.