

MAG 165 — Revolutions

Content Warnings

- Loud / Discordant SFX
- Mass Pain
- Character Death
- Body horror
- Impostors
- Dissociation

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and sixty-five: "Revolutions."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[A wasteland wind blows; in the distance the ‘Unknowing’ music
plays and large metal gears creak; faint screams are peppered
throughout]

MARTIN

Wow.

ARCHIVIST

I told you.

MARTIN

I mean, yeah, but when you said big—

ARCHIVIST

I meant *big*.

MARTIN

Yeah, but, I mean, how big is it, actually?

ARCHIVIST

I-it doesn't really work like that.

MARTIN

Yeah, figures.

ARCHIVIST

If you tried to measure the diameter, I, uh, probably only be a half mile or so.

But the curve doesn't work quite right, and if you stayed at the same spot, just, hopped on a horse or let it carry you round, it... might be days before you passed the same spot, or, uh...

MARTIN

Or you might never see the same spot again?

ARCHIVIST

Exactly.

MARTIN

Mm. Yeah. I think I'm starting to get it.

ARCHIVIST

Good.

MARTIN

But — you said we needed to go *through* these places. Is that even gonna work here?

ARCHIVIST

(Squeaky breath) Uh- We need to go through them... metaphorically.

(Small confused sound from Martin)

Psychologically we need to experience them.

MARTIN

Hm. **(slowly)** Y-you think we could... get... that experience just, walking along the edge? Because, uh, I really don't like the look of those riders.

ARCHIVIST

Would you believe me if I said they were the victims?

MARTIN

At this point, I'm not even surprised.

ARCHIVIST

Either way, best not to actually climb onto the thing if we could help it.

MARTIN

Fine by me. (**small laugh**) Never really liked merry-go-rounds anyway.

ARCHIVIST

No? You gone on any recently?

MARTIN

What? Ah, no I don't think so, not since I was a kid.

ARCHIVIST

Heh, I actually, uh... There's one at London Zoo, uh, was one at London Zoo. Big old thing. Went quite fast, actually. Su-surprisingly thrilling.

(**Martin lets out a laugh**)

ARCHIVIST

What?

MARTIN

Seriously?!

ARCHIVIST

It was years back, before the Institute. I... I was in a weird place. Had a good time, though!

(**Martin laughs in surprise**)

MARTIN

Well.

ARCHIVIST

I mean, obviously I wouldn't want to ride this one; we've got quite enough thrills already.

MARTIN

(Teasing) You-you sure? I could speak to an attendant—

ARCHIVIST

(Serious) I would advise against doing that.

MARTIN

So you said the riders were the victims... where's the monster?

ARCHIVIST

I'm hoping if we're quick we can avoid her notice.

MARTIN

Her?

J-John please don't tell me there's an evil clown doll down there, because—

ARCHIVIST

No. N-No, Nikola died with the Unknowing; it's, uh... **(shaky inhale)** an old friend.

MARTIN

...Oh.

ARCHIVIST

Yeah. I'd really rather not deal with her if we can avoid it.

MARTIN

Yeah, good call, um, in that case, do you want to... do your thing now then, before we start moving? But are we, close enough?

ARCHIVIST

Yes. Yes, I-I think so. Good idea.

MARTIN

Thanks.

ARCHIVIST

You, uh. You might want to take a bit of a walk. This feels like a strange one.

MARTIN

What does... strange mean, with something like this?

ARCHIVIST

Don't think you want to know.

MARTIN

Good point! Um, okay, well, uh, good luck; I'll be, uh, o-over there.

[Martin walks away]

ARCHIVIST

Right.

[Hissing static starts]

[The ‘Unknowing’ music, metal groans and gears, and screams
becomes clearer and louder]

ARCHIVIST

Your face is not your face is not your face
around the curling carousel it twists

[Hissing static ends]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

in place to take from you and all the tattered stolen souls
who sense of me is swollen and distended into nothing.

Round and round and round it goes
and when it deigns to stop who you might be you cannot know
so touch and feel the skin atop your skull to test
the limits and extremities of where this canvas comes to rest
in robbed identities and peeling names that you could swear were never yours.

The music swells through you.

The music vomits from you.

The music calls a name that through the tears of half-grasped memories seems
almost and eternally familiar.

So dance.

Dance to the beat of the thump of the chase of the still and plastic horse
hooves

which cannot break from where they are secured by bolts and glue and
eggshell-thin reality
that paints a visage of sense almost enough to tell you that the nausea that
swells
and pushes at the limits of your mind is incorrect.

There's nothing wrong.

The world in which the carousel will twirl is not the hollow hell you fear; it is
the world.

Just the world.

A world where if you'd wished to have a name it must be stolen, carved and
pulled full-bloody
from the frame of others who would wish in vain to hold their selfness close.

You want a face? Take it. There are so many here, and those who cannot hold
them, well, whoever chose to give them such a gift must take the blame,
knowing they could never keep it in a world of so much thieving strangeness.
And soon enough they will forget they ever even had one, rest assured; it's
best to step the dance and keep your face secured as much as you are able.
Just. Keep. Running.

Your feet (or are they just the shoes with emptiness within?)
will pound upon the creaking wood of carousel-top (or perhaps the only
ground there's ever been?)
so struggle not to look behind (though can you trust your eyes to tell you quite
what it might be that dogs your steps?)
and see the poor procession of those gory, faceless wretches who have lost

possession now of all their treasured once-identities to those who are now them? Like you.

You tire of the chase of course, the fire and all-relentless pace of competition reaching for a name, identity, and face that has long since worn through all reserves of hard-enduring vigour in you yet still you only stay a self while willing on your aching legs that feel like breaking just to keep you forward of the frenzied fray of hazy clawed who are yous.

So run. Just run.

And listen to the music of your panicked flight from those who long to take what you have stole from those no longer worth a name.

Ever onwards, forward on the curling path of merry-go-round that's twisted, wound, and spinning in its harrowing sound of organ piping circus tunes that merrily hound the steps of your escape. Could you turn a thought and burn your lead on your pursuers, an ankle change a charge now perpendicular to your intended line of best retreat, and stake it all on one last hope, your bruised feet pounding to the edge? The boundary. Don't stop the ride. But you still want to get off.

But no, for all the dreams of bounding, leaping off into the great unknown, you see the ring of broken mewling wretches who have shown the sting that comes with such rejection of the truth, so seldom spoken yet inside you all that there is no way off the merry-go-round.

And so perhaps the twirling round that pushes all who passenger the carousel
might help you stay ahead, and so you seize the rough and peeling pole of
ancient wooden horse, ignore
the sloughing, screaming wood that comes away in clumps, and grip the saddle
hard, in hands that should be clean but now have never seen a day they were
not caked
in glue and slaked with blood of all the robberies existence deems the only way
to live.

Ride away. Just ride away.

Up it goes. Down it comes.

Hold fast to the joy of the rise. Despise all thoughts you might descend.
And in the end, protest against that fall back down to painted wooden spinning
earth
with all the tear-streaked grasping of the mass of gasping still unnamed
oppressed.

Cry to the horse, Go higher! Faster! offer painted apples that you think
perhaps it might desire
but the frozen face is still the same, the simple cast of equine terror framed
and caught in wood and plastic bulging eyes of fear. Its pace remaining as it
ever was
it does not care for coming pains as you are torn. Doesn't it know who you are?

No. And soon, neither will you.

Although to call it ‘all is lost’ is more dramatic, yes, than has been earned for those upon this carousel who have not been you already; perhaps they know without a memory how good it is to have a face and name. It's not the

same as what you had when first you climbed the brightly painted stairs but not the worst who you have been. And as the horse drops through the air into the

crowd of eager, waiting thieves you are unbowed and, yes, afraid, but still the music

plays, and turns the world upon its gaudy axis.

You will be someone again, someday.

The hands and fingers reach and breach the gentle veiled complacency and respite

that had just been yours upon your mount's ascent, and now the wood is bent and bowed

as faceless things who long to be a who pull splinters from the rot of screaming saddle and of rider. You. Who feels the mask of sharp and hard identity begin its gentle

fracture into jagged shards of names that you once were.

I'm still Hannah! you try to scream, but are you? No. Perhaps there's some
Veronica

as fragments there, or Julian, or Anya, but no, you feel the last of names and
who you might have been be torn away and borne towards new bodies. New
pages, blank, determined to be people.

The rotten, ragged rush of fetid fingernails that dig and push and reach around
the edges of your face until they scrape against the bone in such a
rough-scratched tone that rocks and echoes through the space that was your
mind

and when they peel it from you like
the skin of an orange the skin of an apple the skin of a pig the skin of a child
the skin of a you
then comes the briefest flash that surely now it's done so much perhaps the
pain will be somewhat lessened.

There's no way it could hurt as much as you remember.

But it does.

And so of course you scream and scream and curses foul, obscene
will tumble garbled over where there once sat other people's lips or yours now
gone
and teeth that once shone yellowed ivory a crimson in the flowing sanguine
flood.

And as you lie in agonies and fading dreams of personhood, of knowing who you were and what that might have meant, you hear the bitter whisper of recriminating seekers who have found the treasure of their eager dreams but see it seems there's not enough for all. And so they fall to frantic tearing conflict just as vicious as it was when it was bearing down on you.

You lie there in the fugue of vivid pain and feel that gentle rain from violence overhead as some fall dead (or close as this place lets you lie for truly thus to die would be too eager an escape) and listen to the ebb and swell of slow, melodic wail that well you know conducts the flowing rhythm laced into this endless faceless dance.

At last a victor breaks away in clinging heartfelt terror of his former comrades, sprinting bold and holding to his skull the severed face that was once yours. Willing it to stick as those who notice try to pick themselves back up and give pursuit to close the gap.

Perhaps you should arise and follow on the things that once you would despise but now have joined. You are, of course, a faceless thing as well and so should quickly march the pace of those who chase the self-same prey. But now it is too late they've gone. Their chase will not abate until their former friend is ripped apart in turn. And you have learned to wait.

For there are many faces out upon the carousel, and many names that you might be.

So bide your time a while and wait the coming of another one whose fate and face

might sit upon your grinning carmine skull.

So turn with the turn of the merry-go-round and dance to its jolly old song.

Who will you be, with a name or three, and a stranger's face worn wrong?

[Hissing static starts]

[The music, metal and screams fade into the distance; the wasteland wind returns]

[Hissing static ends]

ARCHIVIST

End recording.

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[The 'Unknowing' music, metal gears and groans, and screams of people are much closer and clearer]

[Footsteps, as Martin and the Archivist walk]

MARTIN

You're joking!

ARCHIVIST

(Amused) I'm not.

MARTIN

...So was it any good?

ARCHIVIST

Uh, what do you mean?

MARTIN

Was it a good poem?

ARCHIVIST

I don't know! No? You're the poetry expert, Martin, not me.

MARTIN

Well did it stir any feeling in you?

ARCHIVIST

Yes, nausea! Because of the horrible things in it.

MARTIN

That's not quite what I meant.

ARCHIVIST

Then I don't know what you mean, Martin; I'm not a poetry person, I don't...
get it. I never have.

MARTIN

That's-That's fine; I understand.

ARCHIVIST

Look, I'm better than I was. I used to think all poetry was bad.

MARTIN

Sorry, what?

ARCHIVIST

I mean, I just thought of— I sort of thought it was pointless. Just—write some prose and stop *wasting* everyone's time.

MARTIN

Hm. What changed?

ARCHIVIST

I don't know, I just... mellowed on it, I suppose.

MARTIN

That's, kind of weird.

ARCHIVIST

In my defence, there is a lot of bad poetry out there.

MARTIN

I guess?

(Beat)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I kinda want to hear that tape now, see how artistic The Stranger actually is.

ARCHIVIST

Or just look up. See it for yourself.

MARTIN

Uh, heh, no, no thanks. Trying to avoid thinking about it, actually.

[A shrill scream]

ARCHIVIST

(Sigh) Of course. Sorry.

MARTIN

How much further?

[Some nearby muffled metal bangs]

ARCHIVIST

I think we're past the worst of—

[Twangs of chain link fencing getting closer, as of someone climbing
or jumping]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

(Quiet) Ah.

MARTIN

What?

ARCHIVIST

She's here.

MARTIN

(Quiet) Oh no.

NOT-SASHA

(From afar) My dearest colleagues.

MARTIN

Just get back!

**[Not-Sasha jumps to the ground in front of Martin and
the Archivist]**

NOT-SASHA

I can't believe you'd decide to pass through my neighbourhood and not say hello to dear, old Sasha.

ARCHIVIST

Just ignore it, Martin.

NOT-SASHA

Oh, you wound me, Archivist. And we used to be so close.

ARCHIVIST

I have nothing to say to you.

NOT-SASHA

Nothing to say! Well, you crush me, bury me in the foundations of your little temple for a year, and now you have nothing to say?

ARCHIVIST

Leitner did that. And Peter released you. All I've done to you is to not die.

NOT-SASHA

Oh, and I would say that is quite rude enough.

ARCHIVIST

Leave us alone. I won't warn you again.

NOT-SASHA

And what if I let you choose this time? Which one of you would I wear next?

Martin looks very comfortable, positively roomy. Oh, wouldn't you agree, Archivist?

MARTIN

John, do we, do we need to run?

NOT-SASHA

Oh, yes, Martin. You very much do. I'll even give you a head start!

(The Archivist begins chuckling)

MARTIN

...John?

ARCHIVIST

You're bold, I'll give you that.

NOT-SASHA

(Hissing) Last chance.

ARCHIVIST

Desperate for one last morsel of terror from us?

(The Not-Sasha growls threateningly)

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

(Amused) A final sip, and then we're gone? Somehow we manage to keep just ahead of you and get away.

God forbid you actually catch us.

(The Not-Sasha breathes out angrily)

Doesn't bear thinking about.

MARTIN

John, what are you talking about?

(The Not-Sasha continues to make noises of anger and huffing)

ARCHIVIST

She can't touch us.

We're so far beyond her now. She's just like everything else here: ruled by the Eye. **(slight laugh)** And she hates it.

NOT-SASHA

(Quickly, angry) Of course you want to wallow in my shame like your voyeur master! Do you know how it feels? To be, anonymous? And yet known! To have all the sweetest dread I can create tainted by the relentless gaze of that damned Eye. I've suffered enough.

ARCHIVIST

Pathetic.

[Backpack zippers click as the Archivist turns to go]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Martin, let's go.

NOT-SASHA

Not as pathetic as your little friend when I ate her life.

(Beat)

[The Archivist takes a step towards it]

ARCHIVIST

(Low) What did you say?

[The ‘Unknowing’ music begins to warp, shifting keys]

NOT-SASHA

(Scared) I- I,I'm- sorry.

[Hissing static starts; but this time joined with other unpleasant electronic high tones and glitching]

MARTIN

John?

[The statics, tones and glitches keep getting louder]

ARCHIVIST

You were wrong, you know.

(The Not-Sasha makes small crying noises and snuffling)

There is more suffering than you can ever experience, so much more. The horror of your victims, their constant, senseless agony.

(Not-Sasha cries out in terror and sobs)

Feel it now. Understand it. You have drawn out so much despair, and now finally, it's your turn. Ceaseless Watcher, turn your gaze upon this wretched thing.

NOT-SASHA

No! No, please, no!

**[Statics, tones and glitches crescendo to a loud digital
glitching sound]**

NOT-SASHA (CONT'D)

(Echoing and fading) No!

**[The statics, tones and glitches — the ‘smite statics’ — fade away
quickly]**

**[The ‘Unknowing’ music continues and returns to near normal;
some distant metal groans and shears]**

MARTIN

(Impressed) Who-a-oa.

ARCHIVIST

(Quiet, drained) I, uh-

MARTIN

What was that?!

ARCHIVIST

I-I, destroyed it. K-killed her.

MARTIN

(Amped) Are you kidding me? You- you obliterated her! You- you smote her!

ARCHIVIST

(Slurring) We should we should go.

MARTIN

What about the merry-go-round? With her gone, is it, is it still going t—

ARCHIVIST

(Snapping) I-I don't know!

MARTIN

(Undeterred) Yes you do!

ARCHIVIST

I, I don't, want to know, pl— We need to go, *please*.

[He starts walking away]

MARTIN

Oh, oh, okay, oh alright, alright, lead on.

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives – 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: Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Jonathan Sims as The Archivist, and Evelyn Hewitt as Not-Sasha. To subscribe, buy merchandise, or join our Patreon, visit rustyquill.com. Rate and review us online, tweet us at TheRustyQuill, visit us on Facebook, or email us via mail@rustyquill.com. Join our community on Discord via the website or on Reddit, at [r/TheMagnusArchives](https://www.reddit.com/r/TheMagnusArchives). Thanks for listening.