

MAG – 079 – Hide and Seek

Content warnings:

- Tunnels & Underground
- Supernatural impersonation
- Spatial disorientation
- Altered reality

Discussions of: arguments, gaslighting, being hunted, manipulation, threats of death

Mentions of: none

SFX: jumpscare, distorted voices, low drone, high pitched tone, electrical disturbance, metallic clanking

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode seventy-nine. Hide and Seek.

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro – Continues]

[Tape clicks on]

MARTIN

Streets. By Martin K. Blackwood.

The streets are hard in London.

Paved in old secrets, the hot smell after the rains.

The threads of people walking, living, lovi–

[The click of the tape cuts off the rest of the poem. There are footsteps.]

MARTIN

You're sure about this? He did tell us to go home...

TIM

Yeah, and then he said, "Sorry for everything". Something's up.

MARTIN

You don't think he's going to... y'know...

TIM

I don't know. But he's going to do something, and it's going to be bad. And I don't mean like 'sneaking a cigarette' bad. Like properly bad.

MARTIN

So we need to help him?

TIM

We need to stop him.

MARTIN

And... we needed my tape recorder because...

TIM

Because something tells me we're going to need evidence by the end of today. I don't want to wind up in court without something to back me up.

MARTIN

Court?

TIM

Yeah. Er, tribunal if we're lucky, inquest if we're not.

MARTIN

You did use a new tape, didn't you?

TIM

Yeah, I took one off the pile.

MARTIN

Was it blank or... Tim?

TIM

It was blank.

MARTIN

He's never going to speak to us again.

TIM

Don't get my hopes up.

[The office door opens]

MARTIN

John?

TIM

Aaaaaand he's gone. Thought so.

MARTIN

You don't think he's going to...

TIM

I don't know, Martin! I think he's going fully off the deep end, is what I think. If he hasn't already.

[The office door closes. Martin and Tim continue walking round the Archives]

MARTIN

Look, I know you don't like him...

TIM

Got that, did you?

MARTIN

But I'm not going to help you get him fired.

TIM

Martin! What do you think is happening here? This isn't office politics. It's not like he's had one too many at the Christmas party and started ranting about the Greeks. Whatever is happening here it's literally supernatural.

MARTIN

Really? Isn't that a little... y'know?

TIM

No, it isn't "a little y'know". There is something in this place, and it's messing up our heads. It watches us all the time. It stops me quitting. I'm pretty sure it would stop Elias firing John even if he decided to try actually running the place for once.

MARTIN

You're sure you don't just want to stay?

TIM

I'm sure.

MARTIN

But, like, deep down –

TIM

No.

MARTIN

Oh. **(Pause)**

So you really think the Institute is, what, haunted?

TIM

I used to. Now I think it's worse.

MARTIN

Worse how?

[A sudden crash]

NOT!SASHA

(Loudly) Jooooohhhn!

TIM

Oh god! What the hell was that?!

MARTIN

Oh no nonononono!

[Not!Sasha roars, and then there's sound of heavy breathing and Tim and Martin run. The trapdoor opens and there's a silence as Tim and Martin wait to see whether they're safe.]

TIM

What the hell was that?

MARTIN

It... er... It looked... It kinda looked...

TIM

Oh don't say it.

MARTIN

It did, though, didn't it?

TIM

That wasn't Sasha.

MARTIN

No. No, no, it wasn't. You don't... you don't think –

TIM

He told her to go home. Like us!

MARTIN

Yeah.

TIM

And she did.

MARTIN

Yeah. **(Pause)**

It went into the tunnels.

TIM

Nope. No. Not happening.

MARTIN

We can't just leave him.

TIM

Yeah, we can.

MARTIN

I'm going.

TIM

Martin! Mar... I'm not coming down there with...

Damn it. Fine.

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on.]

ARCHIVIST

Damn. Damn damn damn damn DAMN!

[The Archivist hits the tunnel wall.]

I... I took Michael's door. It was that or face Sa... the thing that was pretending to be Sasha. It opened into the tunnels. The tunnels. Not exactly the escape I was hoping for. I'm hardly surprised, must be its idea of a joke. Still, it is... it is a head start I suppose. I have no idea where in the tunnels I am. Or how far down.

At least it didn't leave me trapped in some corridor hell maze... a different corridor hell maze, at least.

So I suppose I just... I just wait for now. I don't think it's going to just give up, and I can't risk attracting its attention. It might already be down here with me. Just stay quiet.

Stay hidden. **(Pause)**

God, I'm an idiot. Smash the table, kill the monster, stupid! Lazy, sloppy assumption. Of course the table was binding it. The table is webs and spiders. Spiders are something else. They don't help each other, they oppose, they... they weaken. It was caught in a web, and I... All the pieces were there. And I just... I couldn't see it. **(Pause)**

I don't know how much tape I have left. I'm going to stop recording. To conserve it. If –

NOT!SASHA

(Far away) John!

ARCHIVIST

Oh Christ.

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on.]

MARTIN

What now? We need to hurry.

TIM

Shhh!

(Pause) I thought I heard something up ahead.

MARTIN

I didn't hear anything. Why, do you think it was the Sasha-thing?

TIM

Will you shut up about that. It wasn't anything like her.

MARTIN

No, I know, but I mean... like, if you really stretched her out...

TIM

We're never going to find him down here.

MARTIN

So go get some help.

TIM

Er... Elias is probably still in his office.

MARTIN

I thought you said he was a waste of a suit.

TIM

Yeah, well he's better than nothing.

MARTIN

If you want to go, I understand.

TIM

I... I'm not just going to leave you down here.

MARTIN

You were all about quitting.

TIM

Oh, for God's sake, this isn't about you.

MARTIN

It never is.

TIM

Alright, fine. Fine. What do you want? What's your light at the end of these spooky damn tunnels? And don't say "everyone happy forever", because that's not happening. **(Pause)** Well?

MARTIN

I don't know. I don't know! I want to find out what's going on. I want to save John. I want everyone to be fine, and, you know what? If we were all happy that wouldn't actually be the end of the world.

TIM

Fine.

MARTIN

No, no it's not "fine". You've been going on and on and on about how alone you feel because John's not taking your feelings into account while he's having his breakdown, but you're just doing the same thing. We've all been going through this, Tim, but you're the only one who's been running away.

TIM

Okay, okay. Look, let's keep going. There's nobody here.

MICHAEL

Yes there is.

TIM

Stay back!

MICHAEL

No.

MARTIN

Who are you?

MICHAEL

I'm Michael. Did the Archivist not tell you about me?

MARTIN

No?

MICHAEL

Good. Surprises are better.

TIM

What are you doing down here?

MICHAEL

Probably watching the Archivist die. Maybe not. Either way is amusing. I... I think it's called 'a sport'.

TIM

What?

MICHAEL

I think I might also kill you. It would be easier than killing the Archivist. None of you are protected down here.

MARTIN

No, no, now hang on...

MICHAEL

You are going to try and help him. And I want to see what happens without you there.

TIM

Martin...

MARTIN

No, no, okay, because there's two of us and there's one of you, okay. He's not killing anyone!

TIM

Martin, look at his hands!

MARTIN

Oh.

TIM

Go!

[The sound of a door opening and footsteps. Michael laughs and the door shuts.]

TIM

Where the hell are we?

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on.]

ARCHIVIST

I have no idea where I am. There were stairs. I, I, I kept going lower. No arrows pointing down, though, which is... good? I don't know. I found a weapon. Of sorts.

[A metal pipe clangs against the tunnel wall.]

I don't know if it'll help. I mean, it's not going to help. I can't fight it with a pipe. I'm tired just carrying it. But it does make me feel a bit better, so... so that's something.

I keep thinking I might have gotten away, but I think it can sense me... uh, at least a bit. I can hide for now, I think, but I don't know for how long. I can't kill it. I heard the tape. It erased Sasha, just like that. Deleted her from the world. I just hope this tape works the same, that my voice remains intact. Even if I'm gone, even if it wears a face that people think is mine, pulls me apart, becomes me. Listen, it's not me! Whoever hears this: it is not me.

I don't even remember what she looks like. Even now that I know, now I've seen it twisted and... I still don't remember her. The only face I can picture is...

NOT!SASHA

(Far away) John... John... Come out, come out, wherever you are.

It's okay John; it's Sasha. Reliable old Sasha. Nothing to be afraid of. **(Pause)**

You seem stressed, John. You've been under a lot of pressure. You should talk about it. Have a real good chat. You like talking, don't you, John? **(Pause)**

I'm going to wear you, John. I'm going to wear everything you are. Like you never existed. No-one will even know. And it will hurt. Oh, yes, it will hurt. It hurt Sasha.

ARCHIVIST

Shut up!

NOT!SASHA

(Closer) There you are.

[The Archivist runs. The tape clicks off. The tape clicks on. The following conversation is distorted by Michael's corridors.]

TIM

Where the hell are we?

MARTIN

I don't know. I thought... I thought the door led further down.

TIM

I don't think we're under the Institute anymore.

MARTIN

What was that thing?

TIM

I'm trying not to think about it. It makes my head feel weird.

MARTIN

Well? Wh... which way do you think?

TIM

Er... Right. Let's go right.

MARTIN

(Sigh) Fine. I don't think this thing's working properly. It k-keeps making this weird noise.

[Tape clicks off. Tape clicks on.]

NOT!SASHA

I'm glad we got a chance to run, John. It makes it so much more satisfying. Do you have any idea how long I watched you? You and your little... acolytes. I hated it.

Let me tell you a story. You like stories; we can even call it a statement if you want.

Once upon a time there was a monster, but no one realised. Sometimes someone did and then they were scared, so that was good. But one day a nasty man came along. A nasty man who tricked the monster and wrapped it all in webs and tied it to a table.

So the monster got its friends to carry the table all around, and it still got to take faces and scare people. Then one day it was sent to the house of its enemy, which had the biggest eyes you ever did see. The monster was sent there to steal all its secrets, but it was sad because it couldn't scare anyone any more.

Then finally, after what seemed like forever, a stupid, arrogant, little man cut the webs and set the monster free. Free to kill and scare whoever it wanted.

So thank you. I did leave what clues I could but I never dared hope you would actually release me.

(Laughs)

I must confess, though, I almost enjoyed watching you scurry around.

Desperately missing the point. At least I knew what I was looking for. You really aren't even a shadow of your predecessor. You're nothing. Even I would make a better Archivist than you.

Maybe I will.

You'll miss the Unknowing, of course, but you wouldn't understand it anyway.

ARCHIVIST

(Whispered) I'm sorry. Martin, Tim... Sasha. I'm so sorry. I should have... I didn't... I'm sorry.

God, I'm so sorry.

NOT!SASHA

I wonder, if I wear you, will I really become the Archivist? Rob the eye of its pupil?

Probably not. Better to just kill you I think.

Yes. I think that would be best.

ARCHIVIST

(Whispered) Please forgive me. If you're still alive... if... if you hear this. Get as far away from the Magnus Institute –

NOT!SASHA

Found you.

ARCHIVIST

No. Please...

NOT!SASHA

Sorry, John, but this is –

**[The walls of the tunnel shifts with scraping stone. Not!Sasha screams.
There's silence.]**

ARCHIVIST

What?

UNKNOWN

Mr. Sims?

ARCHIVIST

Yes.

UNKNOWN

I think it's time we had a talk.

[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.