

MAG 199 — Seeing it Through

Content Warnings

- Arguments
- Guilt & self-recrimination
- Smoking
- Explicit language
- Discussions of: altered reality, death & self-sacrifice, mass suffering/death
- Mentions of: violence, murder, mental deterioration, manipulation, trauma, explosions
- SFX: crying

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and ninety-nine: "Seeing it Through."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[The ambient sound of Leitner's room in the tunnels, where

Melanie's comfy armchair is]

[Melanie fidgets with her folded cane]

MELANIE

So...

ARCHIVIST

Yeah.

(Beat)

MARTIN

Anyone want another cup of tea?

[A chair scrapes as Martin rises]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Well, heh, I say ‘tea’, it’s har—

GEORGIE

We can’t keep putting it off. We need to talk about this. About what we’re going to do.

[Martin sits again]

MARTIN

You mean what **John**'s going to do.

BASIRA

No. If we’re doing this, it’s gonna take all of us.

MELANIE

You say “If”? It’s basically our only option, right?

ARCHIVIST

No, it’s not.

MELANIE

So, we're seriously holding up 'let John become God' as a legitimate choice here?

BASIRA

Can't just dismiss it.

(Exasperated exhalation)

MARTIN

Yes, we can.

MELANIE

Seconded!

MARTIN

(Pleased) Thank you.

GEORGIE

We still have to discuss it.

Let's try to lay this out properly. What are our actual options here? As far as I can see there are three.

MELANIE

Okay.

GEORGIE

One. We follow Annabelle's plan. We destroy the Panopticon, kill Elias—

ARCHIVIST

Jonah—

GEORGIE

Whatever.

ARCHIVIST

—Magnus.

GEORGIE

We kill him, and release the Fears into... how many other realities?

BASIRA

She said thousands but, I don't think she actually knows.

GEORGIE

John?

ARCHIVIST

Not something I can see, I'm afraid.

GEORGIE

But is it **all** other realities or just some of them?

[The Archivist takes a step]

ARCHIVIST

Does it matter?

MARTIN

I mean, maybe? If there are **infinite** worlds out there then “thousands” isn’t even a drop in the bucket, cosmically speaking.

MELANIE

“Cosmically speaking”?

MARTIN

You know what I mean.

(Melanie sighs)

BASIRA

Still more than one, though, isn’t it? Which is what we’re discussing.

GEORGIE

So again, option one is to kill Jonah Magnus—

MELANIE

Mm-hmm.

GEORGIE

—and release the Fears. Save the world, but doom other realities to the Fears.

[Melanie’s armchair creaks]

MELANIE

We don’t **know** they’ll be doomed.

GEORGIE

Spread the fears to other realities.

Option two is John takes over from Magnus. Keeps the Powers contained here with us, and tries his best to make the place a little more... tolerable, until the end.

MARTIN

And we lose him.

ARCHIVIST

Martin...

MARTIN

No, John, I'm sorry, but if one world still matters in an *infinite* spread of dimensions then one person does too.

MELANIE

I-I think the issue is he matters a bit too much.

(Martin makes a frustrated noise)

MARTIN

The point is you don't have a responsibility to sacrifice yourself just to make everyone else's lives a bit easier.

ARCHIVIST

I've already made them a hell of a lot harder!

MELANIE

Hmmm.

MARTIN

(Sharply) Then we should **all** sacrifice ourselves, because everyone in this room has some responsibility for it.

MELANIE

Hey! Georgie didn't do anything!

GEORGIE

No, Melanie, I, I didn't.

MELANIE

(Softly) Yeah.

GEORGIE

And maybe I should have. I kept out of it, even when I got a pretty good idea of what was going on towards the end. But... **(sighing)** I should have known better. Hiding never helps.

MELANIE

It keeps you alive.

GEORGIE

For a while! But... we couldn't actually do anything, could we? Couldn't save anyone.

BASIRA

Okay, fine, blame for everyone.

[Basira takes a few steps]

BASIRA (CONT'D)

But the hard fact is, John's the only one who can take over the Panopticon.

MARTIN

Would you stop just putting everything on **him**?

GEORGIE

Which brings us to our third option.

ARCHIVIST

Which is?

GEORGIE

Do nothing. We... adapt to the new world, and just wait for it to finally end.

ARCHIVIST

Leaving everyone to just suffer until the Powers burn out?

MARTIN

You said yourself that even if you did take over you couldn't **stop** the suffering.

If we keep it all trapped here, it's gonna be hell either way.

BASIRA

It's alright for us though, isn't it? We're not the ones trapped in our worst nightmares.

MELANIE

What's your point?

BASIRA

Do we actually have the right to make this decision? The five of us? For the whole world, or for maybe infinite worlds we know nothing about?

GEORGIE

No, of course we don't. But we're the ones **here**. And I doubt there's anyone else out there who's in a better position to decide.

ARCHIVIST

There isn't.

GEORGIE

So, we're the ones that have to make the call, and we need to acknowledge that doing nothing is still on the table as an option.

(Basira exhales)

BASIRA

We could ask them.

GEORGIE

Who?

BASIRA

The people trapped in the domains. The ones **actually** doing the suffering. Why don't we see what they want?

ARCHIVIST

(Pained) Because I already know. They want it to stop.

But to try and explain it all to them, give them enough context for them to make an actual, meaningful choice... I don't think it's possible while they're still trapped. They're too much a part of their domains.

BASIRA

So we bring them out.

You've rescued people before, **we** can do it again.

GEORGIE

True...

MARTIN

S-Sure, but we can't bring **everyone** out. So then, all we're actually doing is deciding who makes the call with even less understanding than us.

MELANIE

Right? It's kind of shitty to bring them out just to ask them if they're willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good.

MARTIN

Mmm.

BASIRA

Shittier than just making the decision for them?

MELANIE

If the decision is to do it, maybe they'd be grateful we saved them the guilt.

MARTIN

If it's just a matter of guilt, then I'll take it right now. I'd rather live the rest of my life lying awake wondering if I made the right choice, over lying awake listening to the screams of everyone on Earth being tortured!

ARCHIVIST

(Angry) What? So it's better for a thousand times more people to scream as long as **we** can't hear them?

MARTIN

No! Because Annabelle said it wouldn't be like that. Wherever they go, it'll be like it was here before, with the Powers just lurking on the edges.

MELANIE

And our world survived like that for... for what, **all** of history?

MARTIN

Mmmm.

MELANIE

Sure, it's not great, but it's, it's not like those other realities won't have bad stuff happening already. We all lived with monsters in the shadows, and we just got on with it.

BASIRA

Yeah, until we didn't, until the ritual kicked off. What's to stop the same thing happening in these other worlds?

MARTIN

It, it took like millennia of failed rituals before this happened. That means there **has** to be a chance that it won't happen at all, right?

[Georgie's chair creaks]

GEORGIE

Maybe.

MELANIE

And if it does happen, it will be because of the actions of the people in those other dimensions, just like here it was because of—

ARCHIVIST

Me.

MELANIE

Because of us.

(Beat)

My **point** is that we can't take responsibility for the **hypothetical** actions of **hypothetical** people in **all** these other universes.

Fundamentally, the Fears travelling to these other places isn't a death sentence. And even if the worst happens they might just find themselves in exactly the same situation as us, deciding whether to pass it all along again.

MARTIN

Like, the worst chain letter ever.

MELANIE

Exactly. Probably have their own Panopticon, their own Archivists.

MARTIN

(Shudders) Their own Martin.

MELANIE

If they're unlucky. Heh.

MARTIN

Oh, ha ha.

ARCHIVIST

But the point is, we have a chance to stop all that. We, we don't have to post the letter. We can keep them contained, a-and even eventually destroy them.

GEORGIE

Can we?

MARTIN

What do you mean?

GEORGIE

Well... Did Annabelle say for certain that **this** dimension is where they were, um... ‘born’, I guess?

ARCHIVIST

No. No, the Eye can’t see its own creation so... I don’t actually know how they came to be. Perhaps we can’t know.

GEORGIE

So, how can we be sure they didn’t come through to our reality in exactly this way? Maybe we’re just another link in a long chain of these things spreading from one dimension to the other, growing at the edges, manifesting, and then escaping to somewhere new.

MARTIN

Like weeds.

BASIRA

Or a fungus.

ARCHIVIST

Sure, but even if that was true, it doesn’t change the situation.

BASIRA

Yes it does. If it's a choice between stopping the Fears completely, destroying them once and for all, here and now, or just being one universe they don't escape among potentially infinite ones where they do... Those are **very** different scenarios.

[Basira takes a step]

BASIRA (CONT'D)

They are to me at least.

ARCHIVIST

We don't know. And even if we hunted Annabelle down, and squeezed more information out of her, I don't think she knows either. We simply **don't** have that information, and we can't just arbitrarily decide what's true just because it makes the choice easier for us.

MARTIN

And you can't just arbitrarily decide it isn't, because you want a better reason to martyr yourself!

ARCHIVIST

That's not what's happening!

MARTIN

Isn't it?

MELANIE

Either way it's not an unreasonable conclusion. It's just as likely as **this** dimension being where they were born. I-It's more likely, even, which means we'd be condemning everyone for no reason.

ARCHIVIST

Hardly "no reason". And let's be honest for a second, you just want an excuse to stick a knife in Jonah Magnus.

GEORGIE

John!

MELANIE

No, he's got a point. I want that smug bastard dead, and if I got a chance to do it myself you can bet I would do it in a heartbeat. But if **you** think that's all I care about here, then frankly you can fuck off out my tunnels on your high horse.

(Beat)

[Melanie's folded cane gently clicks as she untenses]

MARTIN

I, I can't just hang around, and watch the whole world **linger** like this on the off-chance that it **might** do some small good somewhere else.

ARCHIVIST

Maybe it doesn't have to linger.

BASIRA

You want to think very hard about your next words.

ARCHIVIST

I'm just saying... If I took my place in the Panopticon, I'd hoped I could make it easier for everyone, but... maybe I could just make it faster. Shuffle people towards The End. Accelerate things.

(Melanie shivers)

GEORGIE

Would The Eye even let you do that?

ARCHIVIST

It's like Annabelle said, it doesn't really do foresight. As long as it was fed I doubt it would even know until it was too late. And The Web couldn't touch me once I was in control.

GEORGIE

John, you're talking about killing the whole world...

ARCHIVIST

(Firm) You're the one who wanted to cover every option. We need to admit that ending it quickly might be a kindness.

The truth is **any** choice we make is going to lead to an atrocity of one sort or another. At least this way we **know** the suffering ends.

BASIRA

No! No, I'm not just gonna stand here, and watch you try to justify murdering humanity.

ARCHIVIST

(Angry) How is it different from just letting it happen on its own?

BASIRA

(Forceful) Because it is. It's not an option. End of discussion.

ARCHIVIST

Basira—

MARTIN

Uh, I just can't accept it's really that hopeless. There's got to be a **chance** that these other universes will figure something out that we didn't.

MELANIE

They'll have as much of a chance as we did. More, maybe. The Fears had a long time to get a foothold in our world.

ARCHIVIST

Assuming time even works the same in different dimensions.

(Melanie sighs)

GEORGIE

We've got to hope.

ARCHIVIST

Hope that our actions don't destroy countless other worlds!

GEORGIE

(Snapping) It's better than the certainty that they'll destroy this one!

(Beat)

ARCHIVIST

Sounds like you've all decided, then.

BASIRA

Seems that way.

GEORGIE

Shall we vote on it, or something?

ARCHIVIST

(Miffed) No need. Seems pretty much unanimous at this point. We take out the Panopticon, and just **hope** for the best.

MARTIN

Yeah.

ARCHIVIST

Fine. I'm going for a cigarette.

[Footsteps as the Archivist heads for the door]

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[The ambience of the vast tower steps: cameras iris movements and faint whispers are audible; a faint pulsing tone permeates the background; and distant muffled helicopter and drone sounds]

[Climbing footsteps]

[The Archivist takes a drag on a cigarette, then exhales]

GEORGIE

You do know there's an indoor smoking ban right?

ARCHIVIST

They'll make an exception for me.

(Faint chuckle from Georgie)

Besides, I can't really think down there.

(Sighing) That's not true, I can. It's just... exhausting. Puts me in a foul mood.

It's better up here, close to The Eye. Thoughts come quicker.

GEORGIE

If it's any consolation, you seemed pretty on the ball earlier.

ARCHIVIST

It isn't really, but... thank you.

[Georgie sits down]

GEORGIE

Can I have a cigarette?

(The Archivist makes a quiet chuckle)

[The Archivist offers the cigarette packet to Georgie, who then dispenses one for herself]

ARCHIVIST

Hmm. Sure. I thought you quit?

GEORGIE

I did, for my health. But it's already the apocalypse so... I'll need a light too.

ARCHIVIST

Yeah.

[Lighter snicks open]

[Georgie lights up]

GEORGIE

I tried to avoid it in the tunnels when we had our, um... When the others were here.

Nice lighter.

ARCHIVIST

Hmm?

[The faintest amount of hissing static starts and ends]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

You didn't want to tarnish the image of the prophets?

GEORGIE

Just didn't think they wanted one of their revered leaders puffing away in the corner.

(The Archivist murmurs an assent)

Saw a bishop smoking once when I was a kid, full Easter regalia and all. Really weirded me out.

ARCHIVIST

(Soft chuckles) I should probably quit myself then.

[Light metallic sound]

GEORGIE

Then you won't mind if I hang onto this?

ARCHIVIST

(Distracted) Hmm.

[The faintest amount of hissing static starts and ends]

GEORGIE

I'm sorry. I know you hate what we're doing.

ARCHIVIST

I hate all the options. I just... It's all my fault, you know?

GEORGIE

What, because you weren't able to outsmart the literal embodiment of manipulation and scheming?

ARCHIVIST

Mmm.

GEORGIE

We all make bad choices, John. It's not your fault some eldritch horror decided yours were going to affect the whole world.

[The Archivist takes a drag on his cigarette as Georgie speaks]

ARCHIVIST

They were still **my** choices.

GEORGIE

Yeah. And you live with them. Or you don't. That's all there is, really.

ARCHIVIST

Hmm.

[Echoes of a distant door closing]

GEORGIE

Anyway, looks like your next appointment's here.

Thanks for the smoke.

[Georgie stands to leave]

ARCHIVIST

Georgie...

GEORGIE

Yeah?

ARCHIVIST

I, um...

(Beat)

[Faint footsteps climbing the stairs]

ARCHIVIST

I'm glad you and Melanie have each other through all this.

GEORGIE

Thanks.

And I'm glad you've got him.

[Footsteps get clearer]

GEORGIE (CONT'D)

He's all yours.

MARTIN

Thanks.

[Georgie's footsteps descend and fade]

(Beat)

You alright?

ARCHIVIST

Yeah.

Sorry it got so heated in there.

MARTIN

Don't be. I'd have been more worried if you were super calm about it.

ARCHIVIST

Yeah.

MARTIN

I'd understand if you hate me right now.

ARCHIVIST

What? No! No, Martin, I love you. I always will. And I know you love me too. I mean... (**sighs**) that's it, isn't it? That's the real core of it. You want to save me.

MARTIN

I want you to save yourself.

(The Archivist takes a long breath)

ARCHIVIST

Sometimes... I imagine if none of this had happened. If we had just... met. Been together, w-without... all of this.

MARTIN

(Softly) Me too.

[Martin shifts on his feet]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

But we wouldn't have, would we? Been together I mean.

ARCHIVIST

Huh? W-what do you mean?

MARTIN

Well, we had that, didn't we? Almost a year of just working a normal job together, and you *hated* me.

ARCHIVIST

I didn't 'hate' you.

MARTIN

No, no, no, no. I listened to those tapes. At one point you explicitly said you'd be fine with me being chopped up by that old jigsaw lady.

ARCHIVIST

Oh god, Angela! Ha!

She's still about, you know? Lording it over a nasty little Flesh domain.

Anyway, I didn't explicitly say it, I... implied it.

MARTIN

Face it, John, it took almost two years of crisis and trauma to even make us compatible. And that sucks. But here we are.

And I don't want it to be for nothing. I won't let it.

ARCHIVIST

That's very sweet of you, Martin.

Sort of.

Thank you.

MARTIN

Wherever you go, I go. That's it.

ARCHIVIST

You promised to let me go. If I had to.

MARTIN

And you promised not to go if there was any other choice.

And there is. So that's the deal.

ARCHIVIST

That's the deal.

MARTIN

I guess that's why it really bothers me, you know? I try, but I can't actually imagine ever making a decision that I knew meant losing you.

And it... It hurts to know you can.

ARCHIVIST

You didn't damn the world, Martin.

MARTIN

We all dam—

ARCHIVIST

(Harsh) No! “We all” nothing! I, I’m the one who caused all of this, that’s just the truth of it! I’m the one whose whole life has been nothing but one long setup to this.

MARTIN

John...

ARCHIVIST

(Sadly) You didn’t speak the words! You didn’t feel them move through you, vomiting out of you like...

(The Archivist takes a ragged breath)

I did this. It’s my fault. And I don’t want... I can’t let anyone else feel that. That helpless, enormous guilt.

Ever.

(The Archivist sniffs as if tearing up)

MARTIN

Hey. Hey, hey, hey, hey, come here, come here.

[Martin sits and embraces the Archivist, rubbing his shoulders]

(The Archivist sniffs)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

We're going to fix it.

ARCHIVIST

No.

We're just going to pass it on.

MARTIN

You don't know that.

(Beat, as they compose themselves)

ARCHIVIST

Come on. The others will be waiting.

[They stand to leave]

(Martin sighs heavily)

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[The ambient sound of Leitner's room in the tunnels]

GEORGIE

I'm not sure. They said they were out— Oh, hey.

[Door opens, footsteps enter]

ARCHIVIST

There you are. I was getting worried.

[Footsteps, and Melanie folds her mobility cane]

MELANIE

We were scouting. I was showing Basira where we think the gas mainline is.

MARTIN

And?

BASIRA

Not good. You know those eye things?

ARCHIVIST

The old archivists?

BASIRA

Yeah. I think they know something's up. Place is crawling with them, it's like they're looking for something.

MELANIE

Or patrolling.

MARTIN

Hmm.

GEORGIE

That's why the stairs were unguarded?

BASIRA

It looks that way.

MELANIE

Mmm.

[The Archivist takes a step]

ARCHIVIST

So what's the plan?

MELANIE

I reckon me and Georgie go for the mainline, and hopefully they won't notice us.

GEORGIE

I'll need a torch. They might notice that.

BASIRA

I'll give a diversion; I'll try and draw them off.

MELANIE

And if they see Georgie's torch, we just go to Plan B. She becomes another distraction, and I go solo.

GEORGIE

I don't like the thought of you going on your own.

MELANIE

And I don't like the thought of **you** being chased by manky old archivists, but there it is.

MARTIN

Okay. So what are you going to do when you find it?

GEORGIE

We've got some old tools. I guess we just mess with it until we smell gas, and then back off, set something burning and leg it. It can't be that hard to break a valve.

MELANIE

John, you're sure about this whole gas main thing? It just seems, I don't know, really mundane.

ARCHIVIST

It's what Annabelle said, and she wasn't lying. At least, she didn't think she was.

BASIRA

Well, it's a bit late for second-guessing.

MARTIN

How...

[Martin's chair creaks]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

How big is the explosion going to be?

GEORGIE

Big enough. Honestly, I'm kind of hoping there's some sort of supernatural reason it will channel up into the tower, otherwise, um... it's going to be bad news down here.

MARTIN

Don't get yourselves hurt.

GEORGIE

Well, we'll do what we can, but, this is it. Whatever it takes, right? If there's a price we pay it. No hesitations.

MELANIE

And it's hardly going to be a picnic for you either. You're going up that tower to kill Elias, and if we muck up the timing, you'll be up there when it blows.

MARTIN

John can't do it.

ARCHIVIST

What?

MELANIE

Sure he can, just magic-laser-eye zap him or whatever, same as with all the others. Like he did to Helen.

(Martin sighs with frustration under Melanie's words)

ARCHIVIST

Listen Melanie—

MELANIE

It's fine. If we all get out of this, we can talk it through. And if not, well, it doesn't really matter, does it?

ARCHIVIST

I suppose not.

MARTIN

You're not listening. I mean if he kills Jonah, then knowing our luck he's just going to end up taking his place in the Panopticon, isn't he?

GEORGIE

(Sighs) Good point.

MARTIN

He can come up with me, but when it actually comes to Jonah...

BASIRA

You'll have to be the one to do it.

MARTIN

Yeah.

ARCHIVIST

Martin... I don't—

BASIRA

Have you got this? We can trade if you don't think you can do it.

MARTIN

No. No, I can do it.

MELANIE

Make sure it hurts.

MARTIN

Oh, I will.

MELANIE

Good enough for me.

BASIRA

Me too.

GEORGIE

Okay. Sounds like we've got something like a plan.

(Martin makes a sound of assent)

BASIRA

Makes a nice change.

(Georgie makes a sound of assent)

MELANIE

(Brightly) It does, doesn't it? Huh!

Uh... So. When do we actually do it?

GEORGIE

First thing tomorrow. That'll give us time to prep and rest.

MARTIN

Sounds good to me.

[Martin stands up]

MELANIE

Right.

[Footsteps, chair scrape, and door sounds as they go to leave]

BASIRA

Umm, hey, John? Can you hang on a sec?

**[The footsteps of Melanie, Martin and Georgie echo down the
tunnel corridor, fading away]**

ARCHIVIST

Yeah?

BASIRA

I just mean... um...

If we don't make it out of this... I wanted to say thanks. For coming back for
me. **(sighs)** What I did... Who I was... I— Thanks.

ARCHIVIST

I'm sorry for all of this.

BASIRA

We've all got regrets. But we can't undo what's done. All we can do is try and do something worthwhile with the time we've got left.

(Heavy sigh from the Archivist)

[Footsteps and door opening as Basira leaves the room]

ARCHIVIST

Yeah.

[Footsteps]

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – 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: Jonathan Sims as The Archivist, Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Frank Voss as Basira Hussain, Lydia Nicholas as Melanie King and Sasha Sienna as Georgie Barker. 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 the Discord via the website, or on Reddit, at [r/TheMagnusArchives](https://www.reddit.com/r/TheMagnusArchives). Thanks for listening.