

## MAG 197 — Connected

### Content Warnings

- Heights / Vertigo (including SFX)
- Spiders (including SFX)
- Manipulation
- Body horror (including SFX)
- Threats
- Explicit language
- Discussions of: altered reality, mass suffering, arson
- Mentions of: mental disorientation, kidnapping, death & murder, apocalypse, paranoia
- SFX: insects, high-pitched noises, overlapping voices

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and ninety-seven: "Connected."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[A dark electric void sound, swirling winds, and distorted, crackling thunder; an impossible web stretched across a gaping chasm]

[Speeding by every so often is a chitinous rewinding tape sound]

[Careful, sticky, footsteps]

**ARCHIVIST**

Watch your step. Long way down.

**BASIRA**

**(Sighs)** It's fine, the stickiness helps.

**(The Archivist grunts)**

Come on.

**ARCHIVIST**

Right behind you.

**BASIRA**

**(Light sarcasm)** Feeling better now are we? Without those horrible sunny skies and fresh winds?

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Light sarcasm)** Yes, the colossal web stretching down into an endless pit is a significant improvement.

**BASIRA**

**(Dark chuckle)** Don't pretend like you're joking.

**ARCHIVIST**

At least I can think straight now. So we have a chance to— Don't touch that one!

**[A large, distorted twang that thrums and echoes with high-pitched static, the sounds reverberating and moving outwards]**

**[They stop walking]**

**BASIRA**

Sorry.

**(Beat)**

**[The sounds of the web-twang settle]**

**ARCHIVIST**

It's okay. She already knew I was here, I just... I hoped we might be able to sneak you in.

**BASIRA**

I'm guessing she's waiting at the centre.

**[Hissing static starts]**

**ARCHIVIST**

Naturally. They both are. Martin is... he's okay. He's... scared, but also... frustrated.

**BASIRA**

You can't see Annabelle's plan?

**ARCHIVIST**

I know she has something to tell me... and i-it's about the hole below us... her thoughts are all down there and... and the threads are so closely woven, I-I follow them out and in and down and through the strands of web and twisting

tape and down and down and down into the chasm into the emptiness, that stretches—

**BASIRA**

**(Crosstalk)** Woah! Woah! Careful! Careful!

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Crosstalk)** —out belo— Woah!

**BASIRA**

[The Archivist loses his balance and Basira grabs him]

[Hissing static ends]

**ARCHIVIST**

Thanks.

There's a— Sorry, there's a s-sort of, pull to it.

**(Basira lets go of a held breath)**

Every time I get a glimpse it-it, it draws me in...

**BASIRA**

What's down there?

**ARCHIVIST**

I don't know.

**BASIRA**

That makes a change.

**ARCHIVIST**

It's... somewhere else. That's all I've got.

(The archivist exhales heavily)

[Sticky footsteps resume]

**BASIRA**

So. The tapes. They're from the Web, then?

**ARCHIVIST**

Looks like it.

**BASIRA**

Were they always? Right from the start?

**ARCHIVIST**

As far as I can tell, it's hard to s— If I look too closely at them, my own voice, things get... recursive, hard to follow.

**BASIRA**

I always assumed they were with The Eye. The whole 'watching, listening, waiting' thing y'know?

**ARCHIVIST**

No, they were always using them to spin their own web. Out of my words.

**BASIRA**

Mine too.

**ARCHIVIST**

True.

**BASIRA**

But what for? And why here?

[Hissing static starts]

**ARCHIVIST**

I, uh—

[Basira grabs the Archivist again as he loses balance; they stop walking for now]

**BASIRA**

Forget I asked.

[Hissing static ends]

**ARCHIVIST**

Oh! Ooh. Hmm.

[A group of chitinous rewinding tape sounds pass and a distant reverberation]

**BASIRA**

Can't keep catching you every two minutes.

**ARCHIVIST**

Heh.

**BASIRA**

At some point I'll give in to the temptation.

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Sarcastic)** Hah hah.

**BASIRA**

Different question then. How do we play this one?

**ARCHIVIST**

You get Martin to safety, then I deal with Annabelle Cane.

**BASIRA**

Right.

**(Beat)**

I think we should hear her out first.

**ARCHIVIST**

Excuse me?

**BASIRA**

Before you “deal with her”, we should try to get some answers. All of this...

taking Martin... she wants to talk.

**ARCHIVIST**

She's had plenty of chances. She didn't need to kidnap him.

**BASIRA**

Sure, but maybe she—

What? What's with the look?

**ARCHIVIST**

How are you feeling, Basira?

**BASIRA**

**(Sharply)** Do you want to look inside my head? See if it's full of spiders?

**ARCHIVIST**

I—

No, I'm sorry. I-I trust you.

**BASIRA**

How are *you* feeling?

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Sighs)** Yes, alright, you don't need to make a point.

**BASIRA**

Yes I do. You're too close to this, and I need to make sure you aren't going to do anything dumb.

Situation like this, we can't make rash assumptions. Right?

**ARCHIVIST**

Right.

But if she hurts Martin, all bets are off.

**BASIRA**

She hurts Martin, I'll be right there with you.

[They begin to move off]

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[The Web; the deep tail-end of a large twanging sound; multiple chitinous, rewinding tape sounds pass by with it]

[In every direction comes the sound of many recorders playing statements, too faint to be heard distinctly although the voices are recognisably those of archive staff]

**ANNABELLE**

Hmm. He's getting close.

**MARTIN**

(Archly) As if you could hear him over all this racket.

**ANNABELLE**

(Chuckles) I am sorry you find them irritating.

They're a side effect of the very specific way this web has been spun.

I thought you liked his voice?

[Sticky web sound as Martin responds]

**MARTIN**

I do, when it's *his* voice. I've never liked the statements. It always felt— Yeah.

**ANNABELLE**

Well, you can trust me when I say you'll be hearing his real voice very soon.

**MARTIN**

I can't see anything. How can you even tell?

**ANNABELLE**

Vibrations.

**MARTIN**

Urgh, yes, web, vibrations, sure. Yeah but that's not actually what's happening here is it? So why don't you just tell me straight? It's not like I'm going to run off. I'd only trip over my own feet and fall in, even if I tried.

**ANNABELLE**

It's a good way to visualise these things. Symbols and metaphor... they give easy channels for the Great Powers to flow through. Ready forms for their energy to manifest.

**MARTIN**

Blah, blah, dream logic, blah. I've had this lecture before.

**ANNABELLE**

You'd prefer we stay silent until he arrives?

**MARTIN**

I'd hardly call *this* silence.

**ANNABELLE**

I'd stop them if I could.

**MARTIN**

Fine.

Let's talk then.

**ANNABELLE**

Alright.

**(Long beat)**

Is there anything you want to talk *about*?

**MARTIN**

I don't know! It's kind of hard to think of small talk suspended over an endless void!

**ANNABELLE**

You're perfectly safe as long as you don't do anything foolish and unstick yourself.

**MARTIN**

Ah, yeah, yeah. You **say** that, but it seems like you've got this whole **thing** prepared for John, and I-I don't really know whether I should be trying to derail it, or, or whether that's just what you **want** me to do, and, and so doing

nothing is actually the right thing, y'know? And... you're a hard person to talk to.

**ANNABELLE**

Why? Because of what I say, or because of the assumptions you make about my motives?

(Martin makes a frustrated exhale)

**MARTIN**

Either. Both.

**ANNABELLE**

I see.

(Beat)

(Martin makes an annoyed noise)

We could play a game?

**MARTIN**

Uhhh...

**ANNABELLE**

Twenty questions? Animal, vegetable or mineral?

(Martin makes an annoyed exhale)

**MARTIN**

(Sarcastic) Animal. Does it have eight legs? Yes. Is it a spider? Yes. Oh look, I win.

**ANNABELLE**

(Smiling) On edge are we?

**MARTIN**

Of course I am! You've stuck me in a weird interdimensional web, and threatened to fill me with spiders!

**ANNABELLE**

No. I said I had "considered" filling you with spiders.

**MARTIN**

Y-yeah, whatever, the point *is*, there was a time when it was very much your go-to option! And this **one** time I chose to **almost** trust you, you've immediately turned around and used me as bait!

**ANNABELLE**

I haven't broken your trust.

**MARTIN**

(Sputters) Wh-what!?

The deal was you'd tell me a way to end this without John trapping himself in that tower. Using me to trap him here instead, in the most hackneyed metaphor imaginable, is not exactly what I had in mind.

**ANNABELLE**

Perhaps I was wrong about how well suited you are to us. I'm not sure you have the patience for The Web.

**MARTIN**

Oh *piss off*.

**ANNABELLE**

...You don't need to worry about John.

**MARTIN**

You're literally luring him into a trap. This trap. This one right here.

[Martin motions and twangs the web, setting off strong reverberations]

**ANNABELLE**

Please don't do that.

Technically, yes. This is a trap. But the only one in *actual* danger is going to be me. If he chooses to kill me I can't stop him. Not even here. And you're not bait, you're just... an invitation.

**MARTIN**

Oh. Wonderful. I can't wait to attend the Annabelle Cane Show.

**ANNABELLE**

Huh! You know, I did consider it once.

**MARTIN**

Excuse me?

**ANNABELLE**

A TV show. Reaching out into the homes of millions, giving the more vulnerable ones a subtle nudge towards terror. Probably something for children. It never went anywhere, of course. These things rarely do.

**MARTIN**

I'm, I'm sorry, what are you talking about?

**ANNABELLE**

You're the one that didn't want to wait in silence.

**MARTIN**

W— Yeah, well—

[A low vibration, with some chitinous, rewinding tape sounds passing]

Wait... Wait, hang on, is that him?

**ANNABELLE**

Yes. I guess you're better with the Web than we thought.

[Multiple chitinous rewinding tape sounds pass]

**MARTIN**

And— Wait, ha— No, uh... is that... Basira? He, he's got Basira with him!

**ANNABELLE**

Yes.

I did wonder if that would be the case.

Interesting.

And unfortunate for me. That's two heads we'll need to keep cool. My odds aren't looking good.

**MARTIN**

Odds don't matter if you've stacked the deck.

**ANNABELLE**

True. Now settle back. Try to look... intentional.

**MARTIN**

What does that mean?

**ANNABELLE**

They're going to expect a suitably elaborate scene when they arrive, a monstrous tableau. I'd hate to disappoint them.

**MARTIN**

Right...

**[Martin gingerly tries to adjust his position]**

So, w-were you thinking something like this, or—?

**[Annabelle releases a burst of webbing, gagging Martin and  
wrapping him firmly]**

**(Muffled indignancy from Martin)**

**ANNABELLE**

My apologies for the inconvenience, but appearances are everything, Martin.  
Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to change into something more suitable.

[Extended sounds of visceral arachnoid transformation: Bone  
cracks and flesh tears, accompanied by a twisted glitching static  
then stops]

[Annabelle's voice is deeper]

**ANNABELLE (CONT'D)**

It is so very important to prime your audience.

[Visceral arachnoid transformation continues]

**ARCHIVIST**

Annabelle Cane!

[Annabelle's transformation completes: her voice is even deeper;  
her breaths have a growl to them, and her talking ends with small  
chitters; whenever she moves it sounds chitinous yet fleshy]

**ANNABELLE**

Hello, John. Basira.

[All the tape decks playing statements stop at once]

(Muffled agitation from Martin)

**ANNABELLE (CONT'D)**

Calm down Martin. You wouldn't want to slip off, would you?

**BASIRA**

Let him go!

**ANNABELLE**

Not just yet.

**(Muffled anxiety from Martin)**

**ARCHIVIST**

Ceaseless Watcher, see this scuttling thing. Take it—

**[Annabelle hoists Martin up]**

**ANNABELLE**

Ah. Ah. Ah!

**(Martin's muffled anxiety increases to muffled terror)**

You know better than I do if I could actually kill him, but we both know that if I drop Martin from here, he's gone.

So, let's all settle down.

**(Muffled sadness from Martin)**

**(Beat)**

**BASIRA**

What do you want?

**ANNABELLE**

To give you... all of you, a way out of this.

**BASIRA**

And you couldn't just, I dunno, tell us?

**ANNABELLE**

I could, but I needed him to believe me. And for that, I needed him to *feel* this place, this opening beneath us.

**ARCHIVIST**

Put. Him. Down.

**(Muffled demand for release from Martin)**

**ANNABELLE**

Very well.

**[Annabelle lowers Martin gently]**

**BASIRA**

Martin, are you okay?

**(Muffled mm-hmm from Martin)**

You know, we'd probably be more willing to listen if you hadn't kidnapped our friend.

**ANNABELLE**

I didn't. He came of his own free will.

**(Muffled point of contention from Martin)**

**ARCHIVIST**

"Free will," she says, as we stand in the middle of her fucking web!

**ANNABELLE**

**(Laughs)** A fair point. But that's a debate for another time.

I simply mean I did not bring him here through force, threat or false pretence. I made an offer, and he agreed.

**ARCHIVIST**

Martin, is this true?

**(Martin tries a muffled attempt to explain, followed by a muffled sigh and finally a muffled mm-hmm!)**

**BASIRA**

Told you.

**ARCHIVIST**

We'll talk about it later. Once you're safe.

**(Muffled downbeat acknowledgement)**

**ANNABELLE**

He's perfectly safe right now. As long as everyone remains civil.

**ARCHIVIST**

Fine. Speak your piece. Tell us about your "way out".

**ANNABELLE**

As you wish.

**(Beat)**

The Great Fears, do you believe they think the way we do?

**ARCHIVIST**

They don't "think" at all. They just... are.

**ANNABELLE**

Almost true. In truth, it depends on the Fear. Some exist in an eternal moment, some make use of memory to reflect and corrupt, but for most, time is simply another thing for them to play with. To consider the future, to plan, is not something they're capable of.

**ARCHIVIST**

But not The Web?

**ANNABELLE**

No. Not the Mother-of-Puppets, the Spinner-of-Schemes.

**BASIRA**

Hang on. What about the rituals? Those were plans.

**ARCHIVIST**

No. They were... desires, filtered and interpreted by people, and the thinking creatures that they spawned.

**ANNABELLE**

You **are** well informed, aren't you? Exactly this. They hungered for the world, to step from the shadows, and gorge themselves on all humanity.

**ARCHIVIST**

And they have.

**ANNABELLE**

But only two of them could truly conceive of such. Terminus, The End, knows that in such a world they will ultimately consume themselves. And it desires that finality.

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Realising)** And The Web understands it as well. That eventually a successful ritual would doom them all. Leave them trapped and starving in a used-up world with no-one to feed on.

**BASIRA**

Hang on, what? This is news to me.

**ARCHIVIST**

We passed a death domain, of The End. The victims there **do** actually die, meaning even though it would take... I don't know how long. Eventually The End **will** claim everyone and everything. It's inevitable.

**BASIRA**

Oh. **(Exhales)** Okay. Right. And what, the powers don't realise?

**ARCHIVIST**

They don't understand things like we do. But The Web is all about connections, unforeseen consequences. Of course, it realises.

**ANNABELLE**

Of course. And knowing this, knowing for centuries you would eventually be trapped, doomed to starvation, what would **you** do?

(Beat)

**ARCHIVIST**

Plan an escape.

**ANNABELLE**

Just so.

**BASIRA**

An escape? To where?

**ARCHIVIST**

Below us, Basira.

**ANNABELLE**

This is not “*the*” world, it is “*a*” world. And though it has taken so very long to  
prise it open, the gate to a thousand new realities now stands wide. However,  
despite this effort, the worlds beyond them remain so far unspoiled by the  
Fears’ touch.

**ARCHIVIST**

The Powers don’t exist there? They’re, what, *unique* to our... dimension?

**ANNABELLE**

Unique? Oh, I don’t know about that, but certainly there are many, many  
worlds without them.

**BASIRA**

Sorry, we're talking about alternate dimensions now? Seriously?

**ARCHIVIST**

Really, Basira? Look around us! This is where you get sceptical?

**BASIRA**

(Remaining skeptical) Yeah.

(Beat)

[Some chitinous, rewinding tape sounds pass]

Okay, cut me some slack. This is a lot of new and weird information.

**ARCHIVIST**

So The Web, it wants to spread? To escape into new realities?

**ANNABELLE**

Yes, but not alone. Any attempt to separate the Fears is ultimately doomed, as you well know.

**ARCHIVIST**

But *how*?

**ANNABELLE**

We found the one we believed most likely to bring about their manifestation. We marked him young, guided his path as best we could. And then, we took his voice.

**ARCHIVIST**

No...

**ANNABELLE**

His, and those he walked with. We inscribed them on shining strands of word and meaning, and used them to weave a web which cast itself out through the gate and beyond our universe. So that when the Fears heard that voice, and came in their terrible glory, they might then travel out along it.

Or be dragged.

**BASIRA**

Is she talking about the tapes?

**ARCHIVIST**

Yes.

**BASIRA**

So, how is any of this a solution?

**ARCHIVIST**

Because for the Fears to spread into these new worlds, they would need to leave ours, wouldn't they?

**ANNABELLE**

If one should leave this place for... greener pastures, the rest *must* follow.

**ARCHIVIST**

Leaving us behind in the process, freeing our world at the cost of others.

**BASIRA**

What are you saying?

**ARCHIVIST**

We can pass them our apocalypse.

**(Muffled discomfited realisation from Martin)**

**ANNABELLE**

Nothing so extreme. In these new worlds they would exist as they used to in ours, lurking just beyond the threshold.

**ARCHIVIST**

Until someone is stupid enough to release them there as well.

**ANNABELLE**

Perhaps. Even the Mother cannot see the future. Only try to shape it.

**ARCHIVIST**

And so they spread through realities like a disease!

**ANNABELLE**

Perhaps.

**ARCHIVIST**

...I won't do it.

**ANNABELLE**

Possibly. You've seen your other options.

**BASIRA**

What happens to you if they escape? What happens to us? We've all been touched by them.

**ANNABELLE**

I would either travel with them, or I would die. I do not know which. My life is only sustained by The Web. Most would simply lose whatever power they have been gifted.

John would lose much of himself, the parts of him that are The Eye. But he would survive. And perhaps more importantly, he would remain who he believes himself to be. And you would end the suffering of all those others who remain here.

(Beat)

**BASIRA**

How would we do it?

**ARCHIVIST**

Basira!

**BASIRA**

We need to know, John.

**ANNABELLE**

It's very simple.

Destroy the Archives, and cut out The Eye's pupil.

**BASIRA**

**(Sarcastic)** Oh is that all?

**ANNABELLE**

Simultaneously.

**(Muffled despondency from Martin)**

**ARCHIVIST**

I see. Destroy the Panopticon, and you release its power. Kill Jonah, and you cut the connection between the Fears and the world. Do both at the same time, and... for just a moment, all that power rushes through their only remaining connection with reality: the tapes.

**ANNABELLE**

And they would be swept along by it, dragged out of our realities, and into new ones...

**BASIRA**

And how exactly are we supposed to destroy the Archives?

**ANNABELLE**

Many years ago a draughtsman made an unfortunate and egregious error on certain city planning documents. As a result, an unusually large and dangerous gas main just happened to be constructed directly below the building you knew as the Magnus Institute, in a place where it would be protected by the tunnels of Robert Smirke, unchanged by the world's reformation. You need only ignite it.

**ARCHIVIST**

Ignite it?

**ANNABELLE**

Indeed. And it just so happens that the perfect tool was once delivered to you as a token of appreciation. Though you really do need to learn to keep better care of it. Somehow, it always seems to slip your mind, doesn't it?

**ARCHIVIST**

What?

**BASIRA**

John, it's that stupid lighter of yours.

**ARCHIVIST**

(Indignant) My what?

[Hissing static starts]

[The Archivist pulls the gold lighter with embossed spiderweb from  
pocket and flicks it open]

Oh?

Oh.

[Hissing static ends]

**ANNABELLE**

A little anchor of our power, so that we, and our tapes, may follow wherever you go.

**ARCHIVIST**

I see.

So...

**[Flicks lighter shut]**

...if I were to throw it away—

**(Annabelle gasps)**

—into your little pit...

**(Muffled worry from Martin)**

**ANNABELLE**

**(Carefully)** I would advise against that.

**ARCHIVIST**

Oh, would you.

**BASIRA**

John, she still has Martin.

**(Muffled mm-hmm! reminder from Martin)**

**(Beat)**

**ARCHIVIST**

Fine!

Fine.

That's it, then? Everything you wanted to tell us?

**ANNABELLE**

It is.

**ARCHIVIST**

Then we're done here. Give us Martin.

**ANNABELLE**

As you wish.

[Annabelle rips Martin free from his sticky restraints]

[Martin staggers to the Archivist, coughing and spluttering]

**MARTIN**

John!

**ARCHIVIST**

Martin!

[Fabric rustles as Martin and the Archivist embrace]

**MARTIN**

Oh god, I'm sorry, I—

**ARCHIVIST**

It's fine.

**MARTIN**

—didn't realise that—

**ARCHIVIST**

We'll talk later.

**BASIRA**

What about her?

**ARCHIVIST**

**(Harsh)** Good question. As far as I can tell there's now nothing to stop me killing you. And throwing this lighter away forever.

**ANNABELLE**

Nothing, except your own indecision.

I've played my part to its completion. You get to decide how I exit the stage.

**(Long beat)**

**MARTIN**

John?

**ARCHIVIST**

Go!

**ANNABELLE**

Very well. We shall not see each other again, Archivist. But I eagerly await your decision.

**[Annabelle withdraws, scuttling up and away across the webbed chasm, twangs of static and rewinding tape noises in her wake]**

**MARTIN**

So... what do we do now?

**ARCHIVIST**

Let's get out of here. After that... we'll see.

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

**JONATHAN SIMS**

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