

MAG 160 — The Eye Opens

Content Warnings

- Coercion / Abuse of power
- Mortality
- Mention of pet death
- Change

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and sixty:
"The Eye Opens."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[Movement as Martin arrives in the room; sound of tape recorder
being put down; other small items being moved in the room]

MARTIN

Everything alright?

ARCHIVIST

Just, making sure it works.

MARTIN

I still don't think we should have brought it.

ARCHIVIST

Oh, it's better than no warning at all.

(Agreement sound from Martin)

Especially if I'm trying not to, uh.. *See* things, you know?

MARTIN

I guess.

You're unpacked then?

[Sounds of items being moved]

ARCHIVIST

(Warm) Hm? *Oh, yes*; much as I can without any wardrobes to speak of, at least.

MARTIN

(Light) Yeah, it's- it's not exactly the Ritz.

ARCHIVIST

Well, it technically still belongs to Daisy, so... I'm just glad it's not some sort of kill room.

MARTIN

(Joking) Or, **(huffed laugh)** or it is, and she just cleaned it up *really* well.

(They both make uncomfortable chuckles)

ARCHIVIST

...Yes.

(The Archivist makes an uneasy noise)

MARTIN

Are we?

Are we.. safe here?

ARCHIVIST

(**Sigh**) Safe as anywhere else. If Elias wanted to find us, I imagine he could, but... I doubt the police would be able to. If nothing else, I'm hoping there'd be some... jurisdiction complications, in Scotland or something?

MARTIN

(**Scoffs**) Some— somehow I don't think *Daisy* will be worried about jurisdictions.

ARCHIVIST

I— I don't think she'd come here. Doesn't look like this place has been used for years.

MARTIN

And if she does?

ARCHIVIST

(**Sigh**) Well. At least we'll know where she is.

MARTIN

Wh—

(He cuts himself off and exhales)

ARCHIVIST

Besides, I'm more worried about the other Hunters. Or the... Sasha thing. Last I heard, they still hadn't found any bodies. (**big inhale**) A lot of destruction, a lot of blood. (**exhales**) But that's it.

[Sounds of items being moved]

MARTIN

You think they're still out there?

ARCHIVIST

Hopefully a *long way* out there. (**soft**) But I think we're okay.

(Beat)

(Energetic) Not much in the way of food, is there.

MARTIN

Oh, n-no, not yet. I was actually gonna head down into the village to go pick something up?

ARCHIVIST

Hm.

MARTIN

Maybe give Basira a call to check in, ‘cause Daisy apparently couldn’t pick a safehouse with a signal, so....

ARCHIVIST

I think that’s rather the point.

MARTIN

Mm.

ARCHIVIST

Anyway, don’t tell me the phonebox down there doesn’t appeal to your retro aesthetic.

MARTIN

It might. Maybe.

[Martin zips a bag]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You’ll be okay here?

ARCHIVIST

I’ll be fine.

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[A fire crackles indoors]

[Footsteps on wood as Martin enters the room]

ARCHIVIST

How was she?

MARTIN

Oh, same as last week.

ARCHIVIST

Institute still crawling with police?

MARTIN

I mean, they've finished all the interviews? Apparently they're calling it a "terror attack".

ARCHIVIST

Doesn't surprise me. Heh. Appropriate, in a way.

MARTIN

Mm.

ARCHIVIST

Does she know who they're looking to blame?

MARTIN

They're not really talking to her about it? Sectioned or not, I guess *ex-police* only gets you so far.

ARCHIVIST

Mm. Does she know if they've found the old prison yet, the panopticon, Eli—
(hard edge) *Magnus's* body.

MARTIN

I don't know how hard they're looking, to be honest?

Basira says a few of them got lost in the tunnels for over a day—

(The Archivist snickers)

—and it's not like the promise of an old man's corpse is much of a motivator.

ARCHIVIST

Mm.

MARTIN

Still, she did manage to talk them out of burning the whole place to the ground? Oh-ah! Actually, that reminds me, um...

[Jostling sounds as Martin presents a package]

ARCHIVIST

Ah, these-these are the statements.

MARTIN

Ah yes. Basira said last week she'd send some up as soon as the Archives weren't a crime scene.

ARCHIVIST

Yes.

MARTIN

Ah she wasn't sure which ones you'd read already, so she, she just said she'd send a bunch.

[Cassette tapes pulled out and put down]

ARCHIVIST

There's... tapes in here, as well. Did, did she say anything about tapes?

MARTIN

She didn't mention it? But I-I didn't check it 'til after the call.

ARCHIVIST

Mm.

MARTIN

I assume it's her attempt at a- a, a varied diet? Eating your greens, you know?

ARCHIVIST

(Amused) Probably. (reassured) I'm sure it'll work fine.

MARTIN

Cool. Well, as *fun* as listening to you monologue is...

ARCHIVIST

Hm.

MARTIN

...I will give you some privacy. Go for a walk.

ARCHIVIST

(Warmly) Let me know if you see any good cows.

MARTIN

Obviously I'm going to tell you if I see any good cows.

[Martin heads out the room]

(The Archivist chuckles quietly and fondly then sighs)

[Small paper rustle]

ARCHIVIST

Right.

[The door shuts behind Martin]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

(Pleasantly) Statement of Hazel Rutter regarding a fire in her childhood home.

Original statement given August 9th, 1992. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims,
The Archivist.

Statement begins.

(Dark, lower) Hello, John.

[Hissing static starts]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

(Dark, lower tone continues) Apologies for the deception, but I rather wanted
to make sure you started reading, so I thought it best not to announce myself.
I'm assuming you're alone; you always did prefer to read your statements in

private. (**strained**) I wouldn't try too hard to stop reading; there's every likelihood you'll just hurt yourself. So just listen. Now, shall we turn the page and try again?

(The Archivist makes a pained sounds)

[He turns the page]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Statement of Jonah Magnus regarding Jonathan Sims, The Archivist. Statement begins.

I hope you'll forgive me the self-indulgence, but I have worked so very hard for this moment, a culmination of *two centuries* of work.

[A storm begins, thunder echoes in the distance; every so often the cabin creaks; the fire continues]

[Hissing static fades, but remains, faintly heard]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

It's rare that you get the chance to monologue through the voice of another, and you can't tell me you're not curious. Why *does* a man seek to destroy the world?

It's a simple enough answer: for immortality and power. Uninspired, perhaps, but, my god. The discovery, not simply of the dark and horrible reality of the world in which you live, but that you would quite willingly doom that world and confine the billions in it to an eternity of terror and suffering, all to ensure your own happiness, to place yourself beyond pain and death and fear.

It is an awful thing to know about yourself, but the *freedom*, John, the freedom of it all. I have dedicated my life to handing the world to these Dread Powers all for my own gain, and I feel.. nothing but satisfaction in that choice.

I am to be a *king* of a ruined world, and I shall never die. I believe there are far more people in this world who would take that bargain than you would ever guess. And I have beaten all of them.

Of course, this desire did not manifest overnight. When Smirke first gathered our little band — Lukas, Scott, and the rest — to discuss and hypothesize on the nature of the things he had learned from Rayner, I felt what I believe we all felt: curiosity and fear. But as he compiled his taxonomy and codified his theories on the grand rituals, I began to develop a very specific concern. Smirke was still so obsessed with his ideas on balance, even as our fellows began to experiment and fall to the service of their patrons. I began to worry that if one of them successfully attempted their ritual, then I would be as much a victim as any, trapped in the nightmare landscape of a twisted world.

At first, I attempted prevention, but the cause seemed hopeless. The only way to ensure *I* did not suffer the tribulations of what I believed to be an inevitable transformation was to bring it about myself. So what began as an experiment soon became a race. Beyond that, I was getting older, and mortality began to weigh more heavily on my mind. How much in this world is done because we fear death, the last and greatest terror?

I convinced Smirke to work on Millbank, leading him to design it as a temple to all the Fears in equilibrium, such that my own modifications to the design of the Panopticon went... unremarked. It. Took. Years, for the dread of the prisoners that passed through to fully suffuse the place, and I was an old man

by the time I made my first attempt at the Watcher's Crown, sat in the centre of that colossal eye, the great ring of cells encircling me like a coronet. It was... flawed, of course, as all Smirke's rituals were, and none of the inmates survived as the power I attempted to harness shook the building almost to pieces, and the murky swamp upon which the prison was built consumed it. But it left me a gift: For sat in that watchtower, I could see *everything* I turned my mind to. It was a dizzying power, and one I discovered I maintained even as I found vessels to extend my life. Of course, I had to make sure the location was kept under my control while I worked on revising my plans, and so I moved the organization I had founded to assist in my research down to London, and the Institute as you know it, was born.

I'll not bore you with details of my bodies and failures through those intervening years. Suffice to say I kept busy, both planning my own next attempt, and doing my best to stymie those others who tried versions of their own. Surely my interpretation of the Watcher's Crown had been incomplete; there had been some element of the ritual I had overlooked. It was not until I met Gertrude Robinson that things began to really come into focus.

You see, the role of Archivist has been part of the Beholding for as far back as my research can go. This isn't uncommon for the Powers; most of the beliefs around them are guesswork and fallible human interpretation, but there are certain through lines and consistencies that can be spotted, regardless of the trappings. But Gertrude was unlike any other Archivist. She simply did not care about collecting experiences or compiling the fears of others. She was driven to stop those who served the Powers. More than once I thought she must secretly be of the Hunt; but there was never that sick joy in her, that thrill of

predator and prey. She had simply decided that this was her position in life, and went about it with a practicality that even I found disconcerting at times.

I once asked her what drove her, what had started her down that path. She told me the Desolation had killed her cat. I don't know if she was joking, and, to be honest, I could never bring myself to look into her mind and find out for sure.

In any case, Gertrude's ruthless efficiency in derailing and collapsing rituals threw into stark relief a question that had been bothering me for almost a hundred and fifty years: In the whole span of humanity, why had nobody ever succeeded? Perhaps there were a long line of Gertrude Robinsons throughout history, but I found that hard to credit. Could it be, then, that there was something in the very concept of the rituals that meant they *couldn't* succeed? She was clearly having similar thoughts in that last year, all of which culminated with the People's Church. When I saw that she was making no preparations whatsoever to stop it, I realized she was putting into practice a theory, and one she couldn't afford to be wrong. She was going to wait, and see if the unopposed ritual succeeded, or if it collapsed under its own strain as mine had all those years ago. Knowing Gertrude, I'm sure she had a backup plan if she had miscalculated — but she had not. The ritual failed. And all at once, I realized what needed to be done.

You see, the thing about the Fears is that they can never be truly separated from each other. When does the fear of sudden violence transition into the panic of hunted prey? When does the mask of the Stranger become the deception of the Spiral? Even those that seem to exist in direct opposition rely on each other for their definition as much as up relies on down. To try and create a world with only the Buried makes as much sense as trying to conceive

a world with only down. Every ritual tied itself so closely to a single power as to render itself impossible. They could bring their patron close, but could not sever it from the others, and eventually it would be violently pulled back to the place next to reality where they dwell. The solution, then, is simple: A new ritual must be devised that will bring through *all* the Powers at once. All fourteen, as I had hoped I could complete it before any new powers such as Extinction were able to fully emerge. All under the Eye's auspices, of course. We mustn't forget our roots.

And there was only one being that could possibly serve as a lynchpin for this new ritual: The Archivist. A position that had so recently become vacant, thanks to Gertrude's ill-timed retirement plans. Because the thing about the Archivist is that, well, it's a bit of a misnomer. It might, perhaps, be better named: The Archive.

Because you do *not* administer and preserve the records of fear, John. You *are* a record of fear, both in mind as you walk the shuddering dread of each statement, and in body as the Powers each leave their mark upon you. You are a living chronicle of terror. Perhaps, then, if I could find an Archivist and have each Power mark them, have them confront each one and each in turn instil in them a powerful and acute fear for their life, they could be turned into a conduit for the coming of this nightmare kingdom. Do you see where I'm going, John?

It does tickle me, that in this world of would-be occult dynasties and ageless monsters, the Chosen One is simply that; someone I chose. It's not in your blood, or your soul, or your *destiny*. It's just in your own, rotten luck.

[A clap of nearby thunder]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

I'll admit, my options were somewhat limited, but my god, when you came to me already marked by the Web, I knew it had to be you. I even held out some small hope you had been sent by the Spider as a sort of implicit blessing on my whole project and, do you know what, I think it was. Of course, I had to bide my time, get a measure of you before I began to push, learn how you worked; so I decided I would wait until something came for you, and see how you reacted. Attacks upon the Archives were not uncommon during Gertrude's tenure, and, while she was always prepared, I made sure you would not be. I reasoned if you couldn't survive a single encounter, you were unlikely to make it through all fourteen. So, when Jane Prentiss attacked, I watched eagerly, one hand on the gas release from the start. You acquitted yourself well enough, so I decided to see how much further you would get, though I waited until the worms were in you to pull the lever. I needed to make sure you felt that fear *all the way to your bones.*

The discovery that one of the Stranger's minions had infiltrated the Institute in the aftermath was certainly a pleasant bonus. Even if that sliver of paranoia, that vague wrongness you couldn't quite place wouldn't count as a mark, it was only a matter of time before it confronted you in a far more direct and affecting matter. Admittedly, given the advent of the Unknowing, I needn't have bothered. But what's the old saying about hindsight? More important to me was Sasha's encounter with the Distortion. If *it* had taken an interest, then I very much wanted it to cross your path.

So I found one of its current victims and convinced her to make a statement. Poor Helen. I actually had to put her in a taxi myself, she was getting so lost on those narrow London side streets. It worked, though.

Between the stabbing and at least two desperate flights into its door, you're marked very deep by the Spiral.

Jurgen Leitner was a surprise, of course, and I was forced to... improvise. I had no idea how much Gertrude would have told him, and he could very easily have derailed everything if you learned too much too fast. I.. justified it to myself saying I was going to have to send you out into the world anyway, if you were to encounter more of the Powers, but I can't honestly pretend it wasn't a... rather rash move.

Still. I'd requested Detective Tonner be assigned to the case when they found Gertrude's body in the hope that having a Hunter in the mix would eventually lead to a confrontation, and setting you up as a killer certainly hastened that. Then it was just a matter of feeding you statements to lead you to a few avatars I thought were likely to harm you, but probably would stop short of actually killing you.

Jude served her purpose exactly as I had hoped, as did our dearly departed Mr Crew, marking you for the Desolation and the Vast. Honestly, I had nothing to do with Melanie and her *Slaughter* adventure, but when I saw the situation, I made sure to trap her here, so whenever her rage bubbled over you were right there, a ready target. I didn't foresee the mark coming from surgery gone wrong, but it was a very pleasant surprise.

The Unknowing was a distraction, but not an unwelcome one. For this to work, you needed more than just the marks; you needed *power*. And that was something the Unknowing served to test, though it posed no *actual* danger in the grand scheme of things. And it did serve another purpose, of course. It inadvertently pushed you to confront death, a mark I had been *very* worried

about trying to orchestrate. If I tried too early, you'd just *die*. Too late, and you might be powerful enough to see the attempt coming, and maybe even understand *why*. As it was, it was *just right*, and once again, you came through with *flying colours*. By this point, your abilities were coming on in leaps and bounds, and I was concerned that meeting face-to-face might end up with you knowing something you shouldn't. I had initially planned to go into hiding but, when your colleagues surprised me with the police, well. It was simple enough to cut a deal.

All that remained, then, were the Dark, the Flesh, the Buried, and the Lonely. I was a little put out when that *idiot* Jared Hopworth misinterpreted my letters and attacked the Institute too soon, before you were even out of the hospital, but then, ho! You should have seen my face when you voluntarily went to him. I couldn't see what happened in there, of course, but given how you came out, I'm *very* sure it counts as a mark.

I suspected the coffin might turn up again, and once it did, it was simply a matter of getting any, uh... *restraining factors* you might have had flying off on a wild goose chase, and waiting. Honestly, Detective Tonner has been proving *invaluable* through this whole process. I was racking my brains for months about what I could use to lure you in. And, of course, I knew the Dark Sun was just sitting there waiting. So when it came time, I whipped up another apocalypse and sent you on your merry way.

Then all that remained was the Lonely. Poor Peter. He really should have left well enough alone. (**cruel laugh**) Or just done what I asked in the first place. Ah well. He knew what I was attempting and was very unwilling to cooperate until I made him a little wager about Martin. Of course, he had no way of knowing

that, in addition to setting you up for the final mark, he was giving you all the tools you needed to escape from it.

How is Martin, by the way? He looks well. You will keep an eye on him when all this is over, won't you? He's earned that. And there, I think, we are brought just about up to date. I have enjoyed our little trip down memory lane, but past here lies only impatience.

You are prepared. You are ready. You are *marked*. The power of the Ceaseless Watcher flows through you, and the time of our victory is here. Don't worry, John. You'll get used to it here, in the world that we have made.

Now. (**cruel laugh**) Repeat after me.

[As the Archivist begins to read the incantation there is the rising sounds of: the storm intensifying, building creaks, hissing static, whispered chanting, and rumbling]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

You who watch and know and understand none.

You who listen and hear and will not comprehend.

You who wait and wait and drink in all that is not yours by right.

Come to us in your wholeness.

Come to us in your perfection.

Bring all that is fear and all that is terror and all that is the awful dread that crawls and chokes and blinds and falls and twists and leaves and hides and weaves and burns and hunts and rips and bleeds and **dies!**

Come to us.

I

OPEN

THE

DOOR!

[An explosive sound of breaking glass]

[The rising sounds keep intensifying; the tape glitches]

[Tape clicks off]

[Tape clicks on]

[Hissing static is joined by swirling wind and distorting, warping
noises from unknown sources]

MARTIN

(Frantic) Wake up. Wake up. Wait, John, John, John, WAKE UP!

[He slaps the Archivist, who shudders awake with a
disoriented yell]

ARCHIVIST

(Dazed) Uh- Wh- *Martin?*

MARTIN

John!

ARCHIVIST

Wha- wh- (more lucid) Oh god. What happened?

MARTIN

I, I don't, I don't know; everything— (**upset**) It's all gone wrong!

ARCHIVIST

Help me up!

[The Archivist grunts as Martin helps him up]

MARTIN

No, no, no- don't, don't, don't go outside. It's- It's *real* bad.

[The Archivist staggers to the door]

(Beat)

ARCHIVIST

(Realisation breaking him) Oh god.

MARTIN

I don't know if it's just *here*, or...

(Martin takes terrified breaths as the Archivist speaks)

ARCHIVIST

No. No, it's everywhere. They're all here now. (**voice shaking**) I can feel... *all* of it.

MARTIN

John. John, I'm scared.

(Martin takes terrified breaths as the Archivist speaks)

ARCHIVIST

The whole world is afraid, Martin. Because of me.

And The Watcher, drinks it all in.

MARTIN

(Quietly) John?

ARCHIVIST

Look at the sky, Martin. Look at the *sky*.

It's looking back.

(The Archivist begins a fractured, delirious, humourless, laugh that does not end)

[Tape clicks off]

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]

ALEXANDER J NEWALL

The Magnus Archives will return April, 2020.

JONATHAN SIMS

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