

MAG 173 — Night Night

Content Warnings

- Children in peril
- Screams (including SFX)
- Bullying
- Emotional abuse / neglect
- Darkness
- Isolation / Helplessness
- Fear of bodily harm
- Perceived parental negligence

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and seventy-three: "Night Night."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[The sound of night birds call regularly; there is the rusty squeak of
outdoor swing sets every so often]

[Martin and the Archivist walk on pavement]

MARTIN

Slow down, I can barely see a thing!

ARCHIVIST

Sorry.

MARTIN

(Flippant) No prizes for guessing who's in charge here, eh?

ARCHIVIST

Mm, I-I suppose not.

MARTIN

You know, I really miss the days when I could blame broken streetlights on the council. A strongly-worded letter just doesn't feel as forceful when it's addressed to **(funny voice, pitched lower)** whichever Dread Power it may concern.

ARCHIVIST

Mm.

MARTIN

John?

ARCHIVIST

(Distracted) Hm?

MARTIN

(Concerned) John, are you alright?

ARCHIVIST

Uh, I, I—

MARTIN

I mean, like, comparatively.

ARCHIVIST

...I'm fine.

MARTIN

Huh! Nope. Try again!

ARCHIVIST

Look, I would just really like to get through here as quickly as possible.

MARTIN

How come? This one seems like the quietest place we've been in a while, it's just rows and rows of quiet houses. I mean, I know some people don't like that sort of thing, but I'm actually (**slight laugh**) finding it kind of relaxing—

ARCHIVIST

(Interrupting) (distressed) *Martin*. Please.

(The Archivist's breaths are shallow and nervous)

MARTIN

...John? Where are we?

ARCHIVIST

I-it's complicated.

MARTIN

That's, not an answer.

ARCHIVIST

Can we please just move on?

[In the distance, a long, high scream from a child]

[Martin makes a small gasp and turns]

[They stop walking]

MARTIN

John, where have you brought us?

(Beat)

ARCHIVIST

What do you think happened to all the children when the world changed? Or were you not thinking about it?

MARTIN

(Softly) No...

ARCHIVIST

Because they didn't just vanish. Childish fears are... simplistic. Direct.

(As he speaks, Martin reacts and sighs)

The Eye prefers the more complex neuroses and disquiets of a fully developed mind. So the children are allowed to age, and they are placed in domains where their fears can... mature.

Domains like this one.

MARTIN

Christ, that's... that's messed up!

ARCHIVIST

Yes.

MARTIN

We've got to help them.

ARCHIVIST

How?

MARTIN

(Agitated) I, I don't know! I-I'm not the one who's supposed to know everything, alright? There has to be something we can do!

[Another child screams in the distance]

MARTIN

What's happening to them?

ARCHIVIST

Do you really want to know that? Really? I've been trying very hard to keep this one bottled up.

(Martin sighs as the Archivist speaks)

MARTIN

(Inflamed, serious) Wh-what about the avatar? Alright, I know you said it didn't change anything, the-the domain would still exist, but at this point I don't care, alright? Anyone who's chosen to spend their apocalypse tormenting children— God, y-you need to end them. Now.

ARCHIVIST

It's not that simple.

MARTIN

Seriously? Seriously?

(The Archivist lets out a heavy sigh)

ARCHIVIST

Fine.

[The backpack zippers jangle as they start walking]

MARTIN

Okay, good.

(Beat)

Where are we going?

(Beat)

John?

[The Archivist rings a doorbell]

MARTIN

John, wait, a-are you, are you sure?—

[The door squeaks as a young teenage boy opens it]

CALLUM BRODIE

Yeah? What is it?

ARCHIVIST

Callum Brodie?

CALLUM

(Lower) Yeah?

MARTIN

Wait, is this..?

ARCHIVIST

Are your parents home?

CALLUM

Dad's dead. Mum's here, but she lost it a while back. So now it's just me.

ARCHIVIST

Do you know who I am?

CALLUM

You're the Eye guy, right?

ARCHIVIST

That's right.

CALLUM

So you're like, real important.

ARCHIVIST

(Amused exhale) I suppose I am.

CALLUM

(Unimpressed) Okay. So. What do you want?

MARTIN

John, can I have a word?

ARCHIVIST

Sure. Excuse me, Callum.

[Movement as Martin and the Archivist step aside to talk]

[A child screams in the distance; the screams of children start to come every-so-often now, becoming almost regular]

MARTIN

(Half-questioning) That's the Avatar for this place.

ARCHIVIST

Callum Brodie, thirteen years old. He guides the children through their fears of the Dark.

MARTIN

This is that kid Basira went after last year, right? The one the darkness cult took. S-so that's not even a kid, that's whatever was *inside* Maxwell Rayner; it's just wearing his body.

ARCHIVIST

(Calling) Callum!

[Footsteps]

CALLUM

Yeah? What?

ARCHIVIST

You remember when those people kidnapped you? What happened?

CALLUM

(Nonchalant) Mm it was fine. I just hid and the cops came and got me.

ARCHIVIST

Tell the truth.

[Hissing static starts]

(Callum makes a sound of discomfort)

CALLUM

I-I-I was, I was scared, alright? I was really, really scared.

[Hissing static ends]

CALLUM (CONT'D)

And it was da-dark, and I couldn't see anyone, and, I didn't know where I was, and, a-and there was something on my face and it was cold, a-and it was slimy. And it didn't like me.

Then there was a bang, and it was gone. And, the police were there.

ARCHIVIST

And what happened to the thing that tried to take you over?

CALLUM

Don't know, it... went away.

ARCHIVIST

It died in the light.

CALLUM

Whatever.

ARCHIVIST

And it was after that you started shoving smaller kids into cupboards, right?

CALLUM

Yeah, give *them* a taste of it. Make *them* afraid of the dark.

ARCHIVIST

But you've always pushed around smaller children, haven't you?

CALLUM

They made me feel sick. I hate them.

ARCHIVIST

And now?

CALLUM

Now everyone's afraid of me.

(Beat)

ARCHIVIST

Martin?

MARTIN

Fine, you've made your point.

ARCHIVIST

Thank you, Callum.

CALLUM

(Bored) Whatever.

ARCHIVIST

Isn't it past your bedtime?

(Callum scoffs)

CALLUM

I don't have a bedtime anymore.

[Callum shuts the door; Martin and the Archivist start walking]

ARCHIVIST

You see?

MARTIN

See what, John; what am I supposed to see? That you don't want to kill a, thirteen year old kid? Big revelation.

ARCHIVIST

I don't know what you want me to do.

MARTIN

I want you to use your power. I want you to help them; I want you to make things better!

ARCHIVIST

There is no better anymore.

MARTIN

(Worked up) You keep- saying that, and I hate it!

ARCHIVIST

(Worked up) I keep saying it because it keeps being true; you know that!

MARTIN

What I know, is that leaving children here is— **(struggling)** i-i-it's inexcusable, i- it's monstrous!

ARCHIVIST

(Firm) Martin, tell me what you want me to do, and I will do it!

(Beat)

MARTIN

Tell me about this place. I need to know.

ARCHIVIST

I thought you hated listen—

Are you... sure that's what you want?

MARTIN

(Unhappy) Of course it's not. But I need to hear it.

ARCHIVIST

Okay.

[Hissing static starts]

ARCHIVIST

See Jack. See Jack run. Run, Jack. Run into the dark.

[Hissing static ends]

[Night birds, rusty squeaks, and screams continue]

ARCHIVIST

Don't see Jack anymore.

Jack doesn't want to be in the dark. Everyone knows there are monsters in the dark. Horrible monsters, with sharp teeth and red eyes and big nasty claws, that eat up little children who don't run fast enough.

So why does Jack run into the dark? Is it because a grown-up told him to? No. Now that it's dark, the grown-ups are asleep. They are snoring in their beds and will not wake up no matter how much Jack shouts.

Some grown-ups are not in bed, but they do not want to help Jack. They want to be alone. They don't want any children around at all. They tell Jack it is after his bedtime, and put him in another dark room where he cannot run.

So no grown-ups told Jack to run into the dark.

Is it because he is brave enough to fight the monsters? No. Jack is scared all the time. The world is so big and the night is so long, and the monsters are waiting under the bed and in the closet and down the hallway and in the street and round the corner and behind him.

They cannot wait to eat him.

He wants to be somewhere the monsters can't get him.

Jack is not brave. So why does Jack run into the dark?

Because everywhere is dark on Night Street. And if he doesn't run, the monsters will get him.

Jack has never seen a monster — of course he hasn't; it's too dark — but he is sure that they are there. See that shadow, behind the swings? It is twisty and twirly, and if he doesn't jump over it, then Jack is sure it would cut off his feet and eat them.

See that tree, the one in the back garden? If Jack got too close, he is sure the bark will open like a big mouth and splinter teeth will bite off his hands to wear like apples.

You see that drum, the one from the old drying machine? There's a big worm that lives underneath it, and Jack is sure that if he disturbs it, it will wrap around him like a big slimy snake and squeeze him until his eyes pop out.

So Jack keeps running. He keeps running through the dark. He runs through his big, dark house. He runs through his big, dark garden. He runs down the big, dark street that just goes round and round and round.

He runs until he sees another child. It's Callum, from number 27. He is big and brave and isn't scared of monsters, though he knows ever so much about them. He smiles when he sees Jack. He is Jack's friend. For just a minute, Jack stops running. Callum smiles and says he's found a brand new monster.

Jack doesn't want to hear about it. He knows that when Callum tells him what it is, then it will start to chase him. He won't see it, of course, because its just too dark. But he will know it's there.

Jack can't tell Callum to be quiet, though. Last time he did that, Callum put him in a hole for a very long time, and the next hole would certainly be full of all of Callum's nastiest monsters. And anyway, Callum is Jack's friend. And friends don't tell each other to be quiet.

So Callum begins to tell Jack about a new monster. It lives down the drain and pops up through the plughole when you're washing your hands and bites off all your fingers one by one. The only way to stop it is to shine a torch down the hole.

But there are no torches on Night Street. There are no lights at all. No way to check a drain or a shadow or a tree. Only monsters. And the dark.

So Jack begins to run.

See Kaitlyn. See Kaitlyn hide. See Kaitlyn hide in the dark, because everywhere is dark on Night Street.

This time, Kaitlyn is in her wardrobe. The door is closed all but a crack so she can see into her bedroom. But the night light is out, and the room is pitch black, and she can hear the monsters moving about. They are looking for her. They snuffle and grunt and growl. They knock over her lamp and gut her cuddly toys and talk to each other of whether they want to cook Kaitlyn into a stew or barbecue her arms and legs.

Kaitlyn buries her face in her mother's old fur coat and she cries and she cries. Her mother is downstairs, but she is part of the sofa now. She won't stop staring at the television and laughing. Laughing and laughing. She doesn't like it when Kaitlyn is awake. She doesn't hear it if she screams.

The monsters are getting closer. They have looked for her under the bed. They have looked through her chest of drawers. They have climbed up all the bookshelves, and now they are moving towards the wardrobe. She cannot see them, but their voices are sharp and mean and they come closer and closer and Kaitlyn is ever-so scared.

Kaitlyn read a picture book once, full of horrible spiky fish with big eyes and crooked teeth. She would see them every time she went to bed for weeks. That was what the monsters looked like, she was sure of it. They would grip her with their nasty cold fins and bite her head clean off. Kaitlyn could not hide for long. It was very dark. But their big eyes would see her in no time.

She is curled up in the corner of the wardrobe against a huge pile of scarves.

Wait. There's someone behind the pile! Kaitlyn can barely see, but it looks like Callum Brodie! What is *he* doing in her wardrobe?

Kaitlyn doesn't like Callum Brodie. He punches her in the arm sometimes and calls her a baby, and he's always told her the monsters were going to get her. He was a bully.

"Go away, Callum Brodie," Kaitlyn says. "I'm trying to hide."

Callum Brodie just smiles a big grin full of crooked teeth.

"She's in here!" Callum Brodie shouts, loud enough for the whole street to hear.

Kaitlyn can hear the monsters coming towards the wardrobe. She pushes Callum Brodie back and opens the door. It is so dark outside that she can't see anything at all, but she runs and she runs and she runs, looking for another place to hide.

See Kaitlyn hide.

[Hissing static starts]

ARCHIVIST

(Darkly) Is that enough for you? Do you need to hear more?

[Hissing static fades, then gets loud again]

See Luka. See Luka sleep—

MARTIN

No, no, no; that's enough! That's enough.

[Hissing static ends]

(Beat)

[A few steps]

ARCHIVIST

Thank you for not hitting me this time.

(Martin takes some shaky breaths)

Was that what you wanted? What you needed?

(Beat)

MARTIN

(Upset) No. No, it didn't help at all.

ARCHIVIST

I'm sorry.

MARTIN

Let's get out of here.

ARCHIVIST

If you're sure.

MARTIN

The sooner we get back to the Archives, the sooner we can put a stop to this.

All of this. They just... (sighingly) They'll just need to hang on a little longer.

ARCHIVIST

Right. Right.

MARTIN

Come on.

[They start walking]

[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: Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Jonathan Sims as The Archivist, and Will Harvey as Callum Brodie. 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.