

MAG – 112 – Thrill of the Chase

Content Warnings:

- Knife violence
- Direct violence
- Blood
- Body horror
- Sadism

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode one hundred and twelve.

Thrill of the Chase

[Tape clicks on.]

BASIRA

Okay... (**Exales.**)

(Imitating the Archivist's statement voice.) Statement of Lisa Carmel,
regarding—

(Normally) No. Statement of Lisa Carmel, regarding her involvement in a series
of murders. Statement number 0111311, 13th November 2011. Basira Hussain
recording.

Statement begins.

BASIRA (STATEMENT)

Okay, I know how it sounds, but Murder Club wasn't supposed to be like this. It was just true crime stuff. My boyfriend, well, ex-boyfriend, used to call it my "serial killer fan club", which I'll admit doesn't make it sound a lot better, but you've gotta believe there was no way any of us would have chosen to get involved in anything like what's happening.

Except, I guess, that we did. Somehow.

I'm not a violent person, not at all. My sisters used to play fight when we were kids, and I'd always just... I'd end up crying in the corner. But for some reason, true crime never had that effect on me. Or maybe it did, but I kind of liked it when I could control it. I remember when I first got the taste. I stumbled across a book on famous murders that had somehow ended up in our school library. I read about Lizzie Borden, feeling the breath catch in my throat, and I put the book away quickly before literally running out of the library. I didn't sleep at all that night, but I still went back to that book the next day.

It's always scared me. That's the thing. I could never get into horror; ghosts and monsters always left me bored. Even thrillers never really got me in the same way. But there was just a part of me that always knew it wasn't real, it never happened. But true crime? The awful stuff that humans do to one another? That got me. I used to think it was about facing the darkness, and coming to terms with my fear, or somehow honouring the victims, but it's not. It's just that there's a part of me that gets an awful little buzz from it. From that shudder that goes through my body when I'm getting all the gory details of how someone died at the hands of a real-life human monster.

Books, podcasts, documentaries, I... I went through all of them all, and still wanted more. And then I found Murder Club.

Well, it's more that I founded Murder Club. Co-founded, at least. And Murder Club wasn't an official name or anything, it's just what we called it. We all met through one of those meetup websites, I-I forget which one. It was about three years ago, and I'd just moved to London, so...

I tended to trawl a bunch of them to try and find things to do, places I might make some new friends. This one was advertised as the first meeting of a "True Crime Discussion and Reading Group", and as you might have guessed by now, that was right up my street. We met up, had a great time discussing a book on Tillie Klimek, and decided to make it a regular event. Pretty soon Murder Club was meeting up every other week. A few of us wanted to do it weekly, but Jamie was a slow reader and didn't think he could keep up. We'd occasionally all see each other outside the regular meetings if we were watching a new documentary together or something like that. Once, we even went on a day trip to the True Crime Museum in Hastings.

Let's see, at the moment it's me, Jamie Sanders, Ananya Kaleka, who we were all founding members, and then there's Ananya's wife Evelyn, Andrew Cochrane, who I invited him from work, and Debbie Truss, who joined us about a year ago, but... I don't remember where from.

There used to be more, but people... come and go. So, six of us at the moment. Well, I suppose three. Evelyn, Jamie and Debbie are already dead, so I don't know how much you'd call them 'current members', but you know what I mean.

I really don't know how it all happened. This 'jump' from morbid book club to actual murder came so quickly. This time last week I was finishing up a memoir by a retired FBI profiler, getting ready for Murder Club the next evening; now

I'm here, trying to explain things to you in case the others get to me. Probably putting you in danger as well, to be honest, so... sorry about that.

That was the meeting where everything went wrong. It was at my flat – I technically only have a room, with the rest of the place shared between a rotating cast of whatever international students and burnouts my landlord rents to. But that night I had the flat mercifully to myself. I opened the windows to let out the smell of smoke, turned on a small space heater to help with the chill, and laid out a couple of bottles of wine that I bought special.

Jamie turned up first, as usual. He has an obvious crush on me, but he's also about ten years older than I am – was ten years older – and I just wasn't into him. Still, he was nice enough company, and we usually chat until the others arrived. Ananya and Evelyn were next, and then Debbie. Andrew was late, but it was because he'd been whiskey shopping, which he explained was apparently a thing, and he was in a sharing mood, so we managed to forgive him. We all had our little pre-club catch-up, talking about life and work and the state of the world, and we were just about to dive into the main discussion, when there was another knock at the door.

[There's a knock at the door.]

BASIRA

Ah.

[Door opens]

Oh, hiya Daisy!

DAISY

Come on.

BASIRA

Um, I'm kind of in the middle of something.

DAISY

Well, finish up. Sims is back. Wants to talk to everyone.

BASIRA

What? Since when?

DAISY

(Impatient) His flight got in a few hours ago.

BASIRA

And he called you?

DAISY

No. Elias sent me to pick him up. Didn't want him grabbed again.

BASIRA

Again?

DAISY

You coming?

BASIRA

Well, not yet. I've got to finish here first. You go on ahead.

...

Daisy?

DAISY

Fine.

[Door closes]

BASIRA

Okay, where was I?

Right, okay, statement continues.

BASIRA (STATEMENT)

—we were just about to dive into the main discussion, when there was another knock at the door.

There was a quick look of confusion that passed between us all, and my heart sank, assuming one of my flatmates had returned earlier than promised. I was dreading an awkward Lithuanian math student sitting in the corner with a glass of orange juice, staring at us as we self-consciously talked about... decomposition rates and timelines. But those worries vanished as soon as Jamie opened the door. The person who stood on the other side of it was definitely not one of my flatmates.

The first thing I noticed was the height. They were well over six foot, and the top of their head disappeared above the door. The second thing was the mask, pure white polystyrene, and cut into the rough shape of some kind of demon or wolf. The third thing I noticed was the knife.

Jamie noticed it too, and leapt backwards just as the figure lunged towards him. Suddenly everything was moving. Everyone was on their feet, shouting as the figure lumbered clumsily inside, swinging wildly at everyone who got near. I dashed to the small kitchen, and reached for a knife of my own, never taking my eyes off my target. It was a strange thing to watch. I would have expected everyone to be running; Evelyn and Debbie both had a clear path to the open door, but instead we were all just watching, keeping as much distance as possible, occasionally making a motion to disarm him, staying just out of the blade's path. As I reached for another knife, I found myself tapping my foot, as if to music.

Our attacker was starting to slow now, his movements becoming laboured, his lunges predictable and weak. When he swung at Andrew, his blade went too wide, and he overbalanced. Ananya didn't waste a second, dropping down and kicking him hard in the back of the knee. He fell like... like an ancient tree, and his head slammed into the corner of the old wooden coffee table with a nasty thud. It tore through the thin grey string that held the mask in place. He lay there motionless.

The face underneath was nothing special. A bald man, maybe forty years old? None of us knew him. He wasn't an infamous murderer, or someone with a personal vendetta; he was just a man who came to my home to kill us. Everyone had gone very quiet, but it wasn't like a silence of shock or terror. It was more like a heavy silence of waiting for something to happen. Of expectation. Debbie finally spoke up, saying we should call the police, but she was lying and we all knew it. I looked down at my hands, and realised I'd picked up six knives from the kitchen drawer. Two were chef's knives, three were for vegetables and one was a battered old bread knife. All of them were

sharp enough to do the job, even if I still hadn't quite figured out what the job was.

I walked slowly over to the unconscious figure on the floor. The others all leaned over him, inspecting their prize. I swear Ananya was licking her lips. When I reached them they all turned to stare at the blades in my hand, and one by one they took whichever knife spoke to them. I ended up with a vegetable knife, one of the smaller ones, but wickedly sharp. I can show it to you if you like.

We all stared at each other for a long few seconds, waiting, like there was going to be some invisible signal. And apparently there was, because all at once we descended, stabbing and slicing and carving and cutting, blood dripping and spraying up in tiny bursts as our knives worked on him. I don't know exactly when he died. Maybe he was dead already when his head hit the table.

It doesn't matter. It makes no difference to what happened.

And when it was over, we just stood there, satisfied, basking in what we'd done. Like the warm glow of an approving parent, tinged with a bloody sweetness. Or the feeling after a heavy but delicious meal, where you want nothing more than to sit and enjoy how full you feel. When Andrew suggested he get rid of the body, no-one thought to object. He and Jamie dragged it out, I assume to his car, and that was that. I guess they must have gotten rid of it. The police certainly haven't come round asking about a corpse. Not that I'd know if they had, I guess.

The others drifted out at their own pace. They didn't need to say goodbye. They... didn't need to say anything. We understood each other perfectly. I wandered dreamily into my bedroom, and fell onto my bed.

I was woken up by a pounding on my door. It was Matis, my flatmate, clearly angry and not a little alarmed at the mess in the living room. His face went pale when he saw I was streaked with gore, and he just kept asking, "Is it blood? Is it blood?" I didn't really know what to say to this, so... I just nodded, and he took a few steps backwards, then he turned and walked away unsteadily. I thought about following him, trying to explain what had happened at Murder Club, but there didn't seem much point. Poor Matis would never understand. At best he could only watch from the sidelines, getting a... a sad vicarious thrill from crimes he was too cowardly to even consider. But I was better than that. I am better than that. I'm beyond.

I went back into my room to change into clean clothes. There was no need to announce my intentions to the world, and... the others would certainly be waiting. I took my small knife and tucked it away. I thought about testing it on Matis, but there was no way he would have been able to understand what was happening.

I first paid a visit to Andrew's house up near Hampstead, where I was told by his upset mother that he wasn't home. She said he had left abruptly, and had shoved her aside when she asked where he was going. As she said this I spun around, suddenly afraid I had left myself open, but the street was empty. I didn't even notice Andrew's mother slamming the door. I retreated to the shade of a tree to think about my next move. For some reason, the memory of the whiskey shop that Andrew had talked about the day before pushed into my head, so I smiled, and took off at a sprint. I'm sure it would have been quicker

to take the Underground or a bus, but I craved that run through the cold November air, my blood pumping and my teeth sharp.

I arrived at the small Camden whiskey shop too late. Andrew wasn't there, but apparently Debbie and Jamie had had the same idea as me, and they'd met outside the shop. If I were a betting woman I'd have put money on Debbie, and I'd have been right. She was the sort of big with real strength behind it, and she had used it to put her bread knife all the way through Jamie's throat. She looked up from the body and saw me. And as soon as our eyes met, I knew the chase was on, and this time I was the prey.

I fled, ducking through alleyways and market stalls as she ran after me. She had the edge in strength, but I was quick, and found it easier to slip through the morning crowds. I had a close call near Camden Lock, but I managed to lose her, disappearing up towards Holloway.

And the last five days have been more of that. I caught Evelyn alone two days ago on a bridge near Leytonstone. She almost threw me into the traffic below, but... instead I stabbed her four times in the chest, and my little vegetable blade found her heart. Andrew managed to lure Debbie into an ambush just outside my flat, of all places, even though I haven't been back since the last Murder Club. Which, I rather think will have been the last Murder Club.

And I was thinking, yesterday, how strange all this was. And it occurred to me that, while it might seem ridiculous, maybe there was something supernatural about all this. Maybe the chase isn't as normal as it feels. Before we killed that man, I don't think any of this would have felt right. So I thought I'd come and talk to you, before it all comes to an end. So, sorry if Andrew or Ananya attack anyone here because they saw me come in. I don't think they will, they're

usually pretty careful, but still. I think that's all of it, really. I'm probably going to leave now, try to hunt down my friends. It's weird, you know? I don't remember feeling this way when we first set up Murder Club. But... I suppose at least we don't have to change the name.

BASIRA

Statement ends.

Damn. I remember this case. It was a bit before my time, but yeah. Six, um, 'friends', they basically spent about two weeks murdering each other before the last survivor was finally caught.

Ananya Kaleka was apprehended just after she cut Lisa Carmel's throat in an alleyway near East Croydon station. The way the other officers told it, she never said a word except to plead guilty, and died in her cell a few months later. Apparently, she just... stopped.

I don't know anything about any assailant in a mask, though. That's not a part of the story I've ever heard before. You don't get a great description in this statement, but it might be worth checking missing persons for that period, checking any violent offenders that might have disappear—

[Knocking at the door]

(Sighs) Come in, Daisy.

[Door opens]

DAISY

You done?

BASIRA

Yeah, let's go.

DAISY

No need.

BASIRA

Um...?

DAISY

He's gone. Heading over to some storage unit. Says it's important.

BASIRA

Oh, so are we going to meet him there, or...?

DAISY

He asked for someone to stay back, distract Elias a bit. I said we'd do it.

BASIRA

Both of us?

DAISY

Yeah. Couldn't find Tim, but he's gone with Martin and... the other one.

BASIRA

Melanie.

DAISY

Sure.

BASIRA

I mean, it might be dangerous.

DAISY

They'll be fine.

BASIRA

Is... Is there something wrong, Daisy?

DAISY

No. So... how's your new job? Working a lot of overtime?

BASIRA

It's, uh... alright, I guess. Once you get used to constantly feeling like you're being watched. Just a bit of low-level dread. Kinda peaceful. Been reading a lot.

DAISY

Mmm.

BASIRA

How about you?

DAISY

Elias is keeping me busy. Hunting. Takes a while. I'm used to working with a partner. It's fine.

BASIRA

Daisy...

DAISY

It's fine.

BASIRA

Right. But it's not, though, is it?

DAISY

You're getting comfortable with all those books. Don't forget why you're here.

BASIRA

I know where I am, Daisy, and I know that I'm a prisoner.

DAISY

And you want to escape.

BASIRA

Yeah. But not on my own. We're working on something. I'll ask Melanie to fill you in.

DAISY

Fine.

...

Maybe you could ask Elias if you can join me on a case?

...

BASIRA

How does it feel?

DAISY

What?

BASIRA

How does it feel when you make a kill?

DAISY

I don't know. Good. Why?

BASIRA

I don't know, it doesn't feel like... “the warm glow of an approving parent, tinged with a bloody sweetness”?

DAISY

Don't.

BASIRA

What?

DAISY

I'm not one of your bloody puzzles.

BASIRA

I'm sorry. I just... I worry.

DAISY

Worry about yourself. I'm fine.

BASIRA

Are you sure? 'Cause you look... Are you sleeping?

DAISY

Yeah. Do you still have the dreams?

BASIRA

Um, no, not really. Not since we joined up here, I don't think. You?

DAISY

Yeah.

BASIRA

They're getting worse?

DAISY

No, not, it's just— Doesn't matter. We need to decide what to do with Elias before the others get to Hainault.

BASIRA

Daisy.

DAISY

I'm thinking a fire.

BASIRA

Maybe something a bit subtler? A problem in the break room?

DAISY

I could beat someone up?

BASIRA

Maybe. Anyway, do you want to, um... I could do with some air.

[Tape clicks off.]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro]

JONATHAN SIMS

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