

MAG – 120 – Eye Contact

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode One Hundred And Twenty
Eye Contact

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro - Continues]

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ELIAS

Statement of Elias Bouchard, regarding the dreams of Jonathan Sims, Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute, currently unresponsive. Details pulled directly from subject.

Statement begins.

The Archivist does not know where he is, and in many ways that is correct, for to say that he was anywhere would be an error. He has no conception of his body, lying on that grey hospital bed, perplexing the doctors: heart unbeating, lungs unmoving, but mind and nerves alive and firing wildly. Everything but braindead. But he is where he exists so often when his eyes are closed. He wanders the dreams he was given.

A cold and well-cleaned room, sterile metal tables that overflow with a gentle trickle of blood. The hearts that beat upon them spasm and spurt without any sort of rhythm, and were they to stand still for but a moment, it might become

clear just how wrong they are in their construction. There are no strange figures standing over those tables, no mockeries of earnest learning, but in the centre stands a weeping, bearded man in a lab coat. In his thin, vinyl-gloved hands he holds an apple, though he dearly wishes otherwise.

The doctor cannot bring himself to look at the tables, so instead looks to the Archivist, whose eye watches him and cannot close. He tries to scream, to curse at the Archivist, pleading to him for peace, for rest. The Archivist watches as the blood creeps along the tiled floor and pools at the doctor's feet.

Desperate, he tries to throw the apple at his observer, but it is too late; the doctor has forgotten how the elbows work and wrenches it to the side with a sickening crack. He tries again to scream, but he hasn't got the throat right, and the wheezing, half-choked gurgle that escapes would stir pity in the Archivist if he had not heard it so many times before.

The Archivist waits, expecting to awaken, but there is nowhere for him to awaken to, no avenue of escape from these dreams. He turns to see the familiar screen, the familiar woman beneath it. She looks up at him with an expression of recognition and weary dread. She types and types and types, her fingers a blur flying across the keyboard and yet never fast enough to outrun the relentless words that flow like dark water across the screen that stretches off into the sky: IT HURTS. She is shaking her head, defiant in her well-worn terror, and tries with every corner of her will to force back the rolling tide of words: IT HURTS. Her fingers are still; her hands raise to her mind, trying to think, trying to comprehend: IT HURTS.

She turns to stare at the Archivist. There is hatred in her eyes, and blame, an aching certainty that she is here because of him. He has brought her here. He watches as she slowly brings the keyboard up to her lips, fighting against it every moment. She bites down, shards of plastic cutting her fingers, as the words scroll unfettered across the screen for miles and miles and miles and miles. And she is gone.

The Archivist wanders. He is searching, though for what he does not know. He passes those places he can no longer watch: the silent wards of peeling skin; the empty warehouse of thick darkness and frightened children; the rusted train car that smells of eager, infectious hate. All through it the shadow is above him, the shape that gazes down upon him, bloodshot and unblinking.

The rain is still there, though it is empty. The long and desolate road, slick with the downpour, a police car's lights flashing over the unmoving van. The doors are open and the two familiar statues stand either side of the well-worn wooden box. He looks around, his eyes scanning this forever road and the clouds of iron grey, looking for her, but she is not there. The Archivist expects, he hopes, to find the violence in her looking back at him, hungry for pursuit and murder, but the emptiness of the place is complete, the only sounds the gentle singing of the box and the pounding, bitter rain. He knows the writing on the coffin has changed, though it is still carved deep into the splintered wood: I AM FOR YOU. He knows it is not addressed to him, but he reaches down and pulls the chains off all the same. It opens and he walks slowly down the steps into the earth, but even as it closes above him, the great shadow still sees him. There is nowhere in this universe that it would not blot out the sky.

The rough-hewn tunnels go down, down beyond anything but sodden earth and despair, until the Archivist arrives at the tunnels. Here he sees the train, twisted and pressed in on all sides, nothing but shrieking metal and cracked glass. He climbs inside and takes his seat, mouth tasting of mud and soil, his eyes moving through the dust and grit unblinking. The passenger is there, though she is, as always, stationary. Dry dirt trickles between her teeth as she smiles mirthlessly, seeing the Archivist has returned. She is relaxed, suspended from a dozen broken handrails and shattered, jagged seats. They cut her flesh, but she does not bleed. There is no pain in her eyes. There is nothing except the certainty of her fate.

The train begins to move, the wheels screaming with the awful weight of it, every part buckling and pressing in, but the Archivist is not afraid. His only fear is that even here at the centre of the world, barrelling towards a lightless, infinite tomb, still he will be watched. Still *he* will watch. The expression on the passenger's face does not change, even as the contorting metal crushes her skull like an egg and she vanishes from view. He catches a glimpse of an advert above his seat: DIG.

There is a door in front of him, a yellow door. He knows the dream it used to lead to. He knows it well. But that's not where it leads any more. He does not know what is behind it anymore, and he is deathly afraid of finding out. The Archivist turns away.

Behind him are the ants. They move like a terrible rolling wave along the hard-packed ground, and he can see every twitching antenna, every clenching mandible. Somewhere, underneath that twitching, burrowing mass, is the

exterminator. He is screaming. The Archivist knows he is screaming, can see him screaming, although the sound is lost under the noise of those hundred million ants that crawl and scurry over everything. For a second, a hand breaches the shifting mound, desperately stretched towards the Archivist in supplication, pleading for help. The Archivist watches as it disappears painfully back into that sea of scrabbling life. Then all at once, the ants are gone, fled in a moment away from the still shuddering form of the exterminator, and a familiar terror finally pushes its way into the Archivist's heart.

Before him rises an incinerator door, the glowing light of the flames curling around the cracks. With a wailing shriek, the door opens, and the burning silhouette that stands within is ingrained upon the Archivist's racing mind. They smoke and sizzle, but still the worms crawl through her charred and pockmarked flesh, her now-singed red dress shifting with the movement beneath it. The exterminator looks to her, then to the Archivist, and it is not certain which he fears more. The Archivist, for his part, is hopelessly willing the dream to stop, but as she takes one scorched step after another, it is clear that he has no power to make it. When faced with her, he even longs for the terrible dream of the melted woman, who would see everything desolated without rhyme or reason. But she was beyond his reach the moment she knew he was there. So the Archivist can only stand and stare as the hive goes about its infested, long-dead work.

The dark building is newer, but he knows it well, knows the two lost souls who creep through it with an alert hunger on their faces. He recognises that look from the other hunter whose dreams he has watched for so long. They stalk

the darkness itself and hope to catch and kill it before it can do the same to them. They see him watching, but they cannot catch his scent.

At last, he is in the moonlit graveyard, the oldest of the dreams. It is peaceful, cool and damp as the rolling, foggy fields stretch out in all directions. He hears her calling pathetically from the bottom of the graves, but by now he knows there is nothing he can do but stare. She begs to be released, to dream of this place no more, but there is nothing he can do. So he watches her, trying in his single-minded focus to ignore the attention of that impossible thing that covers the sky and fixes its gaze on him with such force it would choke him, were he breathing.

Another dissection room. Another figure standing in its centre. But this one is calm. She simply looks at him sadly, a pity in her face that burns him worse than any flame. More than anything, the Archivist wants to look away, to turn his eye from her gentle sadness, from the disappointment in what she sees in him, but he cannot. So he watches her until she simply fades away.

And at last, the Archivist looks up. At last he looks into the eye that sees all and knows all and clutches at the secret terrors of your heart. The ceaseless watcher of all that is and all that was. The voracious infinite hunger that tears at his soul, invoking him to discover, to observe, to experience all and everything and forever. It stares into him and it stares out of him and he is falling into the devouring eternity of its pupil. He wants to cry out in horror, but he cannot. He is whole.

And still he does not wake. Wandering his slim collection of gifted nightmares, passing the grey and lifeless remains of severed dreams he can no longer watch. He waits, but not for long, before they all begin again.

You are doing well, John. I only hope you can continue your growth without my guidance.

(Knock at door; Elias sighs)

Come in.

(Door opens)

Hello, Inspector. Martin. I'm, uh, sorry to hear about Tim.

MARTIN

Don't.

ELIAS

And Daisy, I suppose.

MARTIN

Don't you dare.

ELIAS

I suppose it's some consolation Basira made it out, and John... more or less.

INSPECTOR

(Hurried) Is this is him?

MARTIN

Y-yes.

INSPECTOR

Right. Elias Bouchard, you're under arrest.

ELIAS

On what crime?

INSPECTOR

(Shrugging) Take your pick. Never had a tape recording of a murder before, something of a novelty. And that's not the half of it; plenty of stuff in those files could easily get you a nasty end if you weren't careful.

ELIAS

Huh. No Melanie? I'd have thought she would have wanted to gloat.

MARTIN

N-no, I, I—

ELIAS

You didn't tell her. Worried she might create too much of scene. I understand. I just hope she doesn't hold it against you.

MARTIN

That's... look, that's none—

INSPECTOR

(Loudly) Don't worry, Mr Blackwood. *We* will take it from here.

ELIAS

I'm sure you will. However, before we proceed, I have a flash drive in my shirt pocket. Please ensure it gets to Chief Inspector Henderson. It contains various information I think she and the metropolitan police would be keen not to have released to the public.

INSPECTOR

Yes, I was briefed that would probably be the case. Can't let you go, though, not with all the evidence kindly provided by your colleagues.

ELIAS

I quite understand. I would just hate for my case to be too... truncated.

INSPECTOR

Not my place to say, Mr Bouchard. I'm just here to get you behind bars. You and the chief can discuss the rest.

MARTIN

(Quietly) It's better than you deserve.

ELIAS

Perhaps so, but I'm glad you were sensible about it. I was concerned you might have bought into Melanie's... fixation.

INSPECTOR

They gave you to us all but wrapped up in a bow.

ELIAS

I must admit I'm impressed, Martin. I knew you were all planning something, of course, but I didn't believe you specifically would have the, ah, capacity for boldness that you displayed. Took me quite by surprise.

MARTIN

You didn't just see it in me?

ELIAS

Honestly, I didn't look. For all my power, I will admit I am not immune to making the occasional lazy assumption. I presumed that I knew you thoroughly, but by the time you demonstrated otherwise... Well, there was simply too much to keep watching over. I only have two eyes, after all.

INSPECTOR

Right. Are you all done now?

ELIAS

I believe so. I think we should be fine, provided you make sure the data reaches the Chief Inspector.

INSPECTOR

I'm sure she'll be happy to pick you out a cell *personally*.

ELIAS

So long as it isn't the morgue, I'm sure I'll be perfectly comfortable.

MARTIN

Just be... be careful with him, alright? He can see things, put thoughts and... stuff... into your head.

INSPECTOR

Like I said, I've been briefed, and the situation is being monitored.

ELIAS

Quite unnecessary, I assure you.

MARTIN

Just please be careful. He's really dangerous.

INSPECTOR

Well, by all means, Mr Bouchard, why don't you have a look in my head and see exactly what will happen to you when you mess with me.

ELIAS

There'll be no need for that, Inspector. I'm sure we'll get along famously.

INSPECTOR

Good.

ELIAS

Best of luck, Martin. Let the others know I shall be thinking of them.

INSPECTOR

Come on now.

(Elias grumbles)

ELIAS

Are those really necessary?

(The inspector punches Elias)

INSPECTOR

Not really, no.

ELIAS

(Wheezing) I see.

INSPECTOR

Let's go.

ELIAS

Goodbye, Martin. Be seeing you.

(Door closes)

(Martin sighs)

(Slight static)

PETER

Must be a relief.

MARTIN

Uuuuhhh...

PETER

Honestly, I thought there'd be more of a scene, but he always surprises me.

MARTIN

What... What are you doing here. Mr Lukas?

PETER

Please, call me Peter.

MARTIN

Um, no. No, I think I'm okay.

PETER

As you like. Look, don't let Elias get to you. You did very well. Really. I honestly think you managed to surprise him, even if he'd sooner die than admit it.

MARTIN

I'm sorry, I'm still not sure exactly what this is.

PETER

Oh, right, of course. Well, you've successfully managed to remove Elias as the Head of the Magnus Institute, so...

MARTIN

Oh. Oh God. What does that do?

PETER

Hm? Oh, no. No, no, no, not in any, um, metaphysical sense. No, he's still very much the, um ... how did he insist on phrasing it? Ah yes, the "beating heart" of the Institute. But practically speaking, he can hardly fulfil his more mundane managerial duties from a jail cell.

MARTIN

So he knew this was going to happen?

PETER

Not exactly. He... anticipated that you would likely find some way to remove him. So he made alternative arrangements.

MARTIN

Which would be you.

PETER

(Cheerful) Exactly! To be honest with you, Martin, I didn't expect to be taking over the place so soon, or in quite such a state of disarray, but I'll do my best to keep the place afloat.

MARTIN

Right.

PETER

Oh, what's that look for? You won! I am sorry if it doesn't look quite like you hoped, but here we are.

MARTIN

I suppose so. So what now?

PETER

Well, if you could send Melanie and Basira up to see me, I'd like to introduce myself. After that, I'll put through a couple of weeks of paid leave for you all. I think giving everyone some space to try and deal with the loss of Tim and Daisy might do everyone some good. Oh, and if *you* want to talk to a counsellor, the Institute will of course cover any costs.

MARTIN

Um... Thanks?

PETER

Don't mention it. I know how it can be with a new boss. I'd like to help you ease into it.

MARTIN

Is that... can I go?

PETER

Of course. Oh, and Elias said you'd probably be keeping a close eye on the Archivist's condition, so I'd be keen to hear any developments.

MARTIN

(Wary) Sure.

PETER

Marvellous. And don't look so down. I know change can be scary, but eventually it happens just the same. I think we're going to great things, Martin. Great things.

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[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]

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Today's episode was written by Jonathan Sims and directed by Alexander J Newall.

It featured: Ben Meredith as Elias Bouchard, Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Alasdair Stuart as Peter Lukas and Richard Davies as the Inspector.