

MAG 161 — Dwelling

Content Warnings

- Isolation

ALEXANDER J NEWALL

(Pre-episode introduction)

Hi everyone. Alex here, director of *The Magnus Archives* and voice of Martin on the show.

I'm just taking a moment ahead of today's episode for a couple of updates.

Firstly, in order to ensure we thank every Patron who has been promised a shoutout, we are moving them to the end of episodes going forwards. This is because we need to increase the number of names read, and we don't wish to increase the delay at the start of episodes any further.

Secondly, I need to give everyone a warning: Season 5 of *The Magnus Archives* was conceived, written, and entered production well before the current situation regarding COVID-19, and it dives pretty heavily into themes of isolation, contagion, and Armageddon.

After serious consideration, we have elected to release this season as it was originally intended, as we felt doing otherwise would be a disservice to the story and all our dedicated listeners.

We will, of course, continue to provide content warnings in the show notes for every episode, and we advise everyone to check these, even if customarily you don't.

Thirdly and finally, we just wanted to thank everyone for their support and patience during this season break. We couldn't have done this without you.

And now, the wait is over, and we hope you enjoy the final season of *The Magnus Archives*.

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and sixty-one: "Dwelling."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[Sounds of breathing and cloths movement in the otherwise quiet space]

MARTIN

Careful!

TIM

Sh-hh!

[A squeak as the Archivist's office door opens]

[A light switch is flicked on]

TIM, SASHA, MARTIN

SURPRISE!

[Someone blows a party horn]

[The Archivist drops a stack of paper]

ARCHIVIST

Jesus!

TIM

Happy birthday, boss.

SASHA

Happy- Oh, (**laughing**) are you okay?

ARCHIVIST

No, I!- Christ, one second.

[The Archivist begins collecting up the dropped papers]

MARTIN

Sorry, sorry; Tim wanted to surprise you, and-

TIM

Snitch.

ARCHIVIST

No, no, it's *fine*, thank you. Just a- shock.

TIM

Well, that's the idea!

ARCHIVIST

Indeed. Though, uh, honestly, the bottle of wine was just fine.

[He pulls out a chair as he talks]

TIM

Pfft, yeah, as a *decoy*.

ARCHIVIST

Yes, well, thank you. This is very- (**final page rustle**) *elaborate* of you.

SASHA

Plus, it was kind of fun, giving you a heart attack.

(Slight laugh from Tim)

ARCHIVIST

Mm, I'm sure. I notice you didn't jump out at Martin when he had a birthday.

TIM

(Smiling) No, he's way too jumpy as it is.

(Martin lets out a short sound of offense)

TIM (CONT'D)

We were worried he might *damage* himself!

MARTIN

Hey! Well- I preferred going out for ice cream anyway.

ARCHIVIST

You went for ice cream?

SASHA

Yes, you were there!

MARTIN

You had- rum and raisin, and taught us all about emulsifiers.

ARCHIVIST

Oh. Right, yes, (**unconvincing**) I- I remember.

TIM

(**Smiling**) *Liar.*

ARCHIVIST

Well, thank you anyway. This is all- very touching.

TIM

We just wanted to do something to lighten the mood, you know?

ARCHIVIST

Yes, I'm- (**inhales**) aware it's been a- rough start.

SASHA

That's not what this was about; we just thought you could use a chance to unwind.

ARCHIVIST

I.. suppose it couldn't hurt.

[Two quick knocks on the door]

JONAH MAGNUS (AS ELIAS)

Knock knock.

TIM

Double boss!

SASHA

(Guarded) Elias?

JONAH

I'm not too late for cake, am I?

ARCHIVIST

There's a cake?

TIM

How did y- *Martin!* That was a secret!

MARTIN

I didn't say anything!

JONAH

He didn't have to. Nothing escapes my notice, and I like to keep an eye out for this sort of thing.

TIM

Well- it's- good to see you.

ARCHIVIST

Yes- Y, yes!

[Chair movement]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Come in!

JONAH

So, how old is the birthday boy?

ARCHIVIST

Uh- thirty-eight.

SASHA

(Tch-ing) Liar.

(Slight laugh from Tim)

ARCHIVIST

(Petulant) How would *you* know.

TIM

What, does someone need to change their password again?

ARCHIVIST

I- what?

(Tim laughs)

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Sasha, have you been going through my computer-

SASHA

Definitely not; No idea what he's talking about.

TIM

'Course not!

(Tim and Sasha laugh in the background)

ARCHIVIST

(Under his breath) That's *really* not appropriate.

(Crosstalk) (Sighs)

MARTIN

(Crosstalk) Oh, come on, guys!

JONAH

Anyway. Ah- did somebody mentioned cake.

TIM

Uh, yeah. You did.

JONAH

Yes, I did, didn't I.

(beat)

TIM

(Sighs) Alright, alright. Well, I guess the cat's out of the bag now anyway, look-
just give me a second.

(Archivist sighs)

[Cake tin and ceramic sounds as Tim gets the cake ready]

TIM (CONT'D)

(Sings) Happy birthday-

(Martin, Sasha and Jonah joins in)

JONAH, MARTIN, TIM, SASHA

-to you.

ARCHIVIST

(Embarrassed) Oh, okay.

MARTIN

Mhm!

JONAH, MARTIN, TIM, SASHA

Happy birthday to you.

ARCHIVIST

Right!

JONAH, MARTIN, TIM, SASHA

Happy birth-

ARCHIVIST

Yes! (sighs)

JONAH, MARTIN, TIM, SASHA

day, dear-

TIM, SASHA, MARTIN

(Crosstalk) -John.

JONAH

(Crosstalk) -Archivist.

JONAH, MARTIN, TIM, SASHA

Happy birthday to you.

ARCHIVIST

I-

TIM

(Crosstalk) (laughing) Yay!

ARCHIVIST

Alright, yes- thank you. I do hope you're not planning to *light* those candles.

TIM

Oh, goodness.

[He shakes a box of matches]

TIM (CONT'D)

A source of ignition? In the Archives?

(Sasha laughs)

TIM (CONT'D)

Uh-oh.

ARCHIVIST

(Crosstalk) Tim.

TIM

(Crosstalk) Mmm.

Oh. Whoops!

[Strikes a match]

[The flame crackles as he lights each a candle]

TIM (CONT'D)

Sorry. My hand slipped.

And again-

And again-

And a couple more times- here, I'm so *clumsy* today; that is a *lot* of fire.

[The candles continue to crackle in the background]

ARCHIVIST

I'm really not comfortable-

SASHA

So blow them out, then.

ARCHIVIST

Oh. (**Slight pause**) Right, yeah-

JONAH

And make a wish.

ARCHIVIST

If I wish for you all to go away, do you think it'll work?

TIM

He's so *grumpy* today, isn't he Martin?

MARTIN

(**Crosstalk**) Uh- oh! Well, um-

TIM

(**Crosstalk**) Do you think it's his looming sense of mortality?

MARTIN

(**Splutters**) Uh- I, I don't think-

ARCHIVIST

Fine.

[He blows out the candles, which is followed by cheers and handclaps]

TIM

So, what did you wish for?

[Hissing static, as from previous seasons, begins]

ARCHIVIST

I can't tell you.

JONAH

He wished for a little bit of peace and quiet.

ARCHIVIST

(Small inhale) Was it that obvious?

[Hissing static ends]

JONAH

Oh, I wouldn't worry, John. It's an Archive. Quiet is very much the course du jour.

TIM

Well, after the party, at least. Wine, anyone?

ARCHIVIST

Tim, it's eleven in the morning.

[A cork pops]

TIM

Pfft, yeah, at your *birthday party*.

[He begins pouring the wine]

ARCHIVIST

I *really* don't think it's *appropriate*-

JONAH

I'll allow it. In fact! I'll join you.

ARCHIVIST

(Surprised) Oh! O-kay, um, a-al, alright then?

[Sounds of continued pouring behind all this]

SASHA

Martin?

MARTIN

Oh! Uh, (slight laugh) I mean- I don't- normally- drink wine, you know- t-tannins are a proven headache trigger, and so-

SASHA

Martin.

MARTIN

W-, uh- (more stuttering) - yeah, sure, maybe, just uh, a drop. Heh.

[Pouring ends]

ARCHIVIST

(Informatively) You know that there's a lot of tannin in tea as well?

MARTIN

What?

ARCHIVIST

Hang on, have you been recording this?

TIM

Oh! Yeah! I- just thought it might be nice, you know, something to look back on when we're all old and sick of each other.

SASHA

You probably should have told us, Tim.

TIM

(Laughing) What, are you afraid we're going to get sued over the *Happy Birthday* song?

MARTIN

Oh, oh, well I am *now!*

(Tim sighs)

SASHA

It's just a bit of a privacy thing.

ARCHIVIST

(Crosstalk) (Under his breath) Oh, hypocrite.

TIM

(Crosstalk) Alright, alright, *fine*, look. I'm turning it off. Any last words for your future selves?

ARCHIVIST

Yes. Fire Tim!

(Tim laughs)

[Tape click]

[In the background is the sound of strange and distant howls from unknown creatures, and the sound of muffled wind. Closer, wood creaks regularly, as of a building settling and moving]

(The Archivist exhales and breathes somewhat shakily)

[There are three soft knocks at the door, and footsteps]

MARTIN

(Gentle) Hey.

ARCHIVIST

(Quiet but rough) Hi.

[Footsteps as Martin moves into the room]

MARTIN

You, uh, listening to the tapes again?

[Pause with clothing rustles]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

How many times is that, now?

ARCHIVIST

They were sent to me, Martin. There's got to be some reason—

MARTIN

(Sigh) Gloating, John. Elias won, and there were some tapes he'd kept for himself, and he wanted to gloat. So he sent them. I, I don't see—

ARCHIVIST

He's not. *Elias*.

MARTIN

Jonah, then. I don't know; I find it hard to think of him as— I don't really like to think of him.

(beat)

You should get some sleep.

ARCHIVIST

I- **(sigh)** Can't. I, I can't. I, I don't think I do anymore. Sleep. **(shaky)** How long's it been, now?

MARTIN

I don't know. It's not like there are days to count anymore, **(sigh)** all the clocks are stopped, and...

ARCHIVIST

Well, I haven't yet. I get- tired, but it doesn't feel the same.

Probably for the best. Sleep doesn't look... pleasant.

MARTIN

...No, it's.... It's. Not.

ARCHIVIST

I couldn't wake you.

MARTIN

I'm sorry.

ARCHIVIST

It's not- (**struggling**) you're not the one who ended the world.

(Archivist breath shows he's close to tears)

MARTIN

(Forced brightness) Well, just as well I don't remember my dream.

ARCHIVIST

I do.

MARTIN

What?

ARCHIVIST

They— I see most of the suffering around here. When it's quiet, it just— It's like.. I can.. see it, like I'm watching all of it.

MARTIN

You haven't been opening the curtains.

ARCHIVIST

No, I don't need to. *It* can see us here, and.. and I can see out as well.

MARTIN

O-kay, we'll just file that under— *ominous* for now.

(Beat)

We *seem* safe enough in here, at least.

ARCHIVIST

I suppose so.

MARTIN

Bit of a hideaway?

ARCHIVIST

Or a prison.

MARTIN

...Yes. Still, better than outside.

[Pause, as the sound of strange and distant howls and the building
wood creaks continue]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

It sounds bad.

(The Archivist laughs a strange, humorless laugh)

ARCHIVIST

It is.

(Beat)

MARTIN

Are we still safe?

ARCHIVIST

Y-Yes. It- It doesn't want to harm me.

MARTIN

And me?

ARCHIVIST

I won't let it.

MARTIN

Um, thanks.

(Beat)

[Breaths and clothing rustle]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

John, it's not your fault.

ARCHIVIST

(Sharp) Martin, can we *not* do this again?

MARTIN

Sorry.

ARCHIVIST

I'm just- I'm *mourning* a world I *killed*-

MARTIN

(Placating) I know-

ARCHIVIST

(Increasingly fervent) and we're all *trapped* in its *rotting corpse!*-

MARTIN

Enough, John.

[The Archivist starts taking a cassette tape out of its case]

ARCHIVIST

Have you heard the Gertrude one?

MARTIN

What?

[The tape is placed in a tape deck]

ARCHIVIST

The Gertrude one; there are a few of them, but this is my favourite.

MARTIN

(**Sigh**) I don't-

ARCHIVIST

Just. Listen.

[Tape click]

[A quiet space]

GERTRUDE

Right. If you're listening to this, then it is likely that— (**sighs**) No. Let's not beat around the bush. If you're listening to this, it means I'm dead. And you have been chosen to be my replacement as Head Archivist.

Hopefully, this means you, Sasha, but if someone else is hearing this, and Elias has made a different choice for some reason, then these words are still very much intended for you.

Before I continue: it is very important to be absolutely clear this is not a joke. Nor is it any sort of prank, or game. Your colleagues have not convinced me to record this as an attempt to... *haze* you. This is completely serious. And very, very important for you to know.

If it is you I'm talking to, Sasha, hopefully your background in Artifact Storage will lend a certain degree of... credence to my words. But others may have to take it on trust.

All I can do is assure you I am deadly serious.

(sigh) So. The first thing you have to do is accept that you are in great danger, and will be for the rest of your life. There are now things that will actively be trying to kill you, due to your new role as Archivist, and Elias has plans for you that are little better.

You will also be unable to relinquish the position or quit the Institute, finding you are supernaturally compelled to remain.

In fact, it occurs to me that attempting to do so is probably the quickest and easiest way to establish the truth of what I am telling you, so I suggest you do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

Things you need to be aware of: there exists in our world supernatural entities of incredible power that reflect and feed on the fears of all living creatures, but most commonly humans. Many consider them gods, and while I believe that is far too simplistic a comparison, for our purposes here it is perhaps the most useful shorthand. They do not rule our world, but they do exercise considerable power, which they generally manifest in the form of monstrous beings that spread further fear or incarnations, those humans who have willingly, though not always knowingly, chosen to take on the power of these entities.

You, unfortunately, have unwittingly made the decision to become one of those incarnations. For the Institute serves a being variously known as: The Eye, It Knows You, The Beholding, The Ceaseless Watcher. It is the fear of being watched, and judged, and having all your secrets known. The Institute serves as a way for it to harvest the fears of the other entities, dragging out the suffering of those who come to give statements and claiming their terror.

But, there is another part of being the Archivist. These beings, these gods of fear— their followers believe that they have... rituals. Grand projects which, if successful, would allow them to enter our world, reshaping it in unthinkable ways. Moulding it into a dimension where terror is as natural as gravity.

You are now one such ritual.

I do not know the exact details of it, but be wary of whatever Elias asks you to do.

Oh, yes. On the subject of Elias: Trust nothing he says. He was originally known as Jonah Magnus, the founder of this Institute, and I have known him also as James Wright, the previous head of the Institute.

He has certain... abilities of clairvoyance, which allow him to perceive out of any eye, real or symbolic, so be wary. Play ignorant as long as you can while you expand your own research.

I've managed to keep the Archives in a state of chaos for decades, as I believe his plan would benefit from their organization. But I leave that to your judgement. Certainly, the longer he is ignorant of how much you know, the better.

Above all else: be *ready*. There are many things out there loyal to other powers which know your importance to the Eye, and will want. You. Dead.

You are entering a new world, a place I've lived for most of my life. A place...
(sighs) A place that will often demand a high price from you. Pay it without hesitation, because one way or another, the world is now on your shoulders.

(Sigh) I wish I had more time to explain it to you. But time is short, and hopefully my actions tonight will ensure that this tape never needs to see the light of day.

But if you are hearing it, then- good luck. Do what you have to do.

(She sighs, heavily)

[A squeak as the Archivist's office door opens]

JURGEN LEITNER

Are you finished?

GERTRUDE

Jurgen! I told you to stay in the tunnels.

[Jurgen walks in]

[A chair is pulled out]

JURGEN

Your message also told me it was urgent.

GERTRUDE

(Sharper) If Elias is watching right now—

JURGEN

Then your recording all that was meaningless anyway. Besides, I'm not afraid of him.

GERTRUDE

Bravado. Hah-Really?

JURGEN

Mmmmm- it's not *bravado*—

GERTRUDE

We're wasting time. Do you still have the Ruskin book?

JURGEN

I do, though I don't relish the thought of using it. Makes it rather hard to breathe, like your chest is being—

GERTRUDE

(Interrupting) You know the gas main, a little way out in the tunnel?

JURGEN

I do.

GERTRUDE

I need you to move it.

JURGEN

(Hem-and-haw) liii, ummm. That's. I mean it's not just earth; there's pipework, and all sorts of—

GERTRUDE

Find a way. I need it to be directly under the Institute, or at least closer.

JURGEN

I'm more likely to rupture it and fill the place with gas.

GERTRUDE

Hm, that would also be acceptable.

JURGEN

Mmm. I'll do what I can. When do you need it?

GERTRUDE

If my guess is right, the Church's ritual should be collapsing any time now, so—immediately.

JURGEN

And if you're wrong?

GERTRUDE

Then a bit of gas will be the least of our worries.

JURGEN

...Right. What are you going to do?

GERTRUDE

Paper burns well.

[She holds up a container of sloshing liquid]

GERTRUDE (CONT'D)

Petrol burns better.

(Leitner laughs)

[The container sloshes again as Gertrude sets it down]

JURGEN

I always forget your pyromaniac streak.

GERTRUDE

Mm. Remind me to tell you about Agnes sometime.

JURGEN

Right.

(Beat)

Did you mean to leave the tape running?

GERTRUDE

Oh, good *grief*. Forty years I've been using them, and I *swear*, I'll nev-

[Tape click]

[The sound of strange and distant howls and wood creaks resume]

ARCHIVIST

Can you imagine? If we'd had this?

MARTIN

But we didn't though, did we.

ARCHIVIST

No—

MARTIN

So there's no point in dwelling.

(Heavy breath from the Archivist)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

John, I- This isn't healthy.

ARCHIVIST

Healthy? I am an Avatar of voyeuristic terror, who unquestioned *craving* for knowledge has condemned the entire world to an eternity of torment; *healthy i-isn't- i,it's not-*

MARTIN

Fine, fine. I get it.

ARCHIVIST

Besides. G— (**shaky**) Grief... is healthy. I,if nothing else, it pushes away the other feelings that that— *thing* wants me to experience.

MARTIN

It just— It *hurts* me to see you wallowing like this.

ARCHIVIST

(**Snapping**) Well, some of us weren't able to cut ourselves off from the world before it ended.

MARTIN

That's not fair.

(**Beat**)

ARCHIVIST

No, it's not; I'm- I'm sorry, I just— (**large shaky breath**) It hurts.

MARTIN

I know.

ARCHIVIST

I need time.

MARTIN

I know. But we can't stay in this cabin forever.

ARCHIVIST

Why not? It- It's quiet, here, and I have you.

(Martin half laughs, half exasperatedly sighs)

MARTIN

What about food?

ARCHIVIST

What about it? When's the last time you thought to eat, or even felt hungry?

MARTIN

(Quiet) Wh— What? (Louder, a revelation) Uh- I don't know.

ARCHIVIST

No. Whatever is sustaining us now doesn't need us to eat.

MARTIN

That- That can't be possible.

ARCHIVIST

It's a new world, Martin; the natural laws are whatever they want them to be.
And I suspect they don't much care to keep humanity fed and watered.

MARTIN

Well, that as may be, we can't just stay here forever.

ARCHIVIST

What could possibly be out there that you want to see?

MARTIN

A way to stop this, a way to turn the world back!

ARCHIVIST

Do you really think there is one?

MARTIN

Well, if there is, it's not in here, is it?

ARCHIVIST

It's so- (**shaky breath**) It's so.. loud, out there? The agony, the, the terror, I can see it all so much more clearly.

MARTIN

I'm sorry.

ARCHIVIST

No, it's- I love you, I just— I need more time.

(Beat)

MARTIN

It's alright.

(Beat)

It's alright; I'm good at waiting.

ARCHIVIST

(Near whisper) Thank you.

(Beat)

I just wish it didn't feel like whatever's out there was waiting, too.

MARTIN

..Yeah.

(Beat)

[Clothes rustling]

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Hey- Hey, when did you start recording?

ARCHIVIST

(Confused) I- didn't. I only brought one, and I've been using it to play the tapes.

MARTIN

Oh. (sigh) That's not a great sign.

ARCHIVIST

No. No it's not.

[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, Lottie Broomhall as Sasha James, Mike LeBeau as Tim Stoker, Jonathan Sims as The Archivist, Ben Meredith as Jonah Magnus, Sue Sims as Gertrude Robinson, and Paul Sims as Jurgen Leitner. 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 Discord via the website, or on Reddit, at [r/TheMagnusArchives](https://www.reddit.com/r/TheMagnusArchives). Thanks for listening.