

MAG 176 — Blood Ties

Content Warnings

- Explicit language
- Misogynistic language
- Hostage situation
- Victimisation / Scapegoating
- Evisceration
- Blades
- Character death
- SFX for gunshot, evisceration, panicked breathing

ALEXANDER J NEWALL

Hi everyone. Alex here, with a short message ahead of today's episode.

Throughout this season, we have been taking a number of measures to ensure that we can maintain production through the COVID outbreak in a safe and sustainable manner. Producing content under these conditions takes significantly more time and resources than normal, and as a result of this, we elected to split this final season into three acts.

This is so that we can have a short hiatus between acts, which allows us to ease the pressure on our tireless production team and thus ensure that all episodes are kept to our highest quality.

Today's episode marks the end of Act One of this fifth and final season of The Magnus Archives. This means that, following this episode, we will be taking a

six-week hiatus, during which we will be releasing special content on our normal, weekly schedule.

The story will continue with Act Two, which releases to the public on Thursday, 3rd of September 2020.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we take the time we need to ensure that everyone working on this show stays happy and healthy.

That's all for now, apart from saying, as always, be kind to one another, and we hope you enjoy today's episode.

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents... *The Magnus Archives*. Episode one hundred and seventy-six: "Blood Ties."

[Theme finishes]

[Tape clicks on]

[Trees creak; every so often comes the cry of a hawk and a kestrel]

**[Backpack zippers jangle and the ground crunches as the Archivist
and Martin walk through dense foliage]**

(In the following, Martin and the Archivist speak in hushed tones)

ARCHIVIST

Hold on, take it easy.

[They stop walking]

MARTIN

What?

I'm going at a normal pace; you're the one that's slowing down!

ARCHIVIST

(Adamant) I am not.

MARTIN

You are! You're dragging your feet. What's up?

(Beat)

What aren't you telling me?

ARCHIVIST

Martin, please. I'm trying to find our way to Basira.

MARTIN

Talk to me, John.

ARCHIVIST

(Snapping) I'm fine.

MARTIN

Glad to hear. And the fact that we're hunting our friend in a domain of the Hunt isn't getting to you at all? Not even a little bit? Hmm?

ARCHIVIST

I don't like betraying someone's trust like this.

MARTIN

(Gentle) It's not a betrayal if you're doing it to help.

ARCHIVIST

(Rueful half-laugh) I'm not so sure.

MARTIN

Look, if it was me in her shoes, I'm sure I'd forgive you. It-it's for the best!

ARCHIVIST

Mm.

MARTIN

(Sigh) Look, you'll feel better about it when it's done. Okay, putting it off, it's, it's just going to make you feel worse.

ARCHIVIST

Mm.

MARTIN

...Besides, I thought the Hunt was meant to make you go faster.

ARCHIVIST

Depends on the type of pursuit. Besides, the chase isn't really the point of this particular place.

MARTIN

Oh no?

ARCHIVIST

No.

MARTIN

I can't believe I'm asking this, but what is the point, then?

ARCHIVIST

Have you ever had your friends turn on you? People you thought you could count on?

(Short thinking exhales from Martin)

MARTIN

I mean... I-I worry about it, but, but, actu-actually, no? Not like a full-blown betrayal or anything.

ARCHIVIST

I'm glad. Because this place focuses on that worry, that fear of your own pack turning their claws on you.

MARTIN

Hm. Is that... really a Hunt thing?

ARCHIVIST

Can be. The old divisions don't mean as much these days. Maybe they never did. The domains are... smaller, more, personal than the powers.

They don't just feed on the worst fears of the people trapped there; they're shaped by them, too. It's enough to fear the domain itself, if not the entire power behind it.

MARTIN

Hm.

You should get that on a mug. 'You don't have to fear the Hunt to be trapped here...'

ARCHIVIST

(Humourless) But it helps.

MARTIN

Look, so can we, just, move on?

[He takes a step]

ARCHIVIST

Soon.

MARTIN

Look, John, I, I didn't want to say this, but we either need to move on or you need to tell me what's going on because...

I think we're being followed.

ARCHIVIST

(Agreeing) We are.

MARTIN

Oh. 'Kay. That's not what I wanted to actually hear.

ARCHIVIST

I know, that's why I didn't mention it before.

MARTIN

(Under his breath) Oh my god...

But we're safe, right?

ARCHIVIST

As long as you remain calm, yes, absolutely.

(Beat)

MARTIN

So-so are you... going to tell me what's going on? What the plan is?

ARCHIVIST

We're going to find Basira.

MARTIN

(Annoyed but still hushed) No, John, that's the *goal*. Wh-what I want is the plan, the steps in between that need us to be hunted through the woods. I'm flying blind here, I'm—

[A cry from a bird of prey]

ARCHIVIST

Yeah. I'm sorry. I do know what I'm doing.

MARTIN

How nice for you, but I don't, unless you tell me! How, how are we even going to approach Basira?

ARCHIVIST

It's tricky, she's, **(sighing)** she's had a bad time.

MARTIN

(Slight scoff) I mean, haven't we all?

ARCHIVIST

No. No, we haven't.

(Beat)

MARTIN

Right.

ARCHIVIST

If we approach her directly, she's likely to bolt. And she can move a lot quicker than we can.

MARTIN

Um, yeah, okay, but I'm still not hearing a plan as such.

ARCHIVIST

Ah—

MARTIN

What?

ARCHIVIST

Uh— Hold on.

MARTIN

Oh my god, are you actually serious, right now?

ARCHIVIST

I'm sorry!

(Martin makes a short annoyed sigh)

MARTIN

Fine. Just — I'll keep a lookout, be quick.

ARCHIVIST

I'll do my best.

[Martin walks away]

[Hissing static starts]

ARCHIVIST

Feet pound silent whisper silent blood on lips blood on teeth blood scent of
hated prey flows through veins and into feet pound silent in pursuit.

[Hissing static ends]

[The birds of prey fall silent while the rest of the forest sounds continue; now with the jagged breaths and running feet of a group of people; and every so often a rustle as they go through the undergrowth]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Teeth smile. Ready to kill.

The lashing branches reach and claw and try to hold back the charging vengeance of the pack. But they slip, and fall away. The killers make no sound as they move across the forest floor, their steps quick and certain. In the distance they hear the crashing stumble of the one who deserves to be hunted, all stealth forgotten in the panicked flight from righteous cleansing violence. There are no names among the pack, no words, only a razor-keen unity of purpose, a shared loathing of the sickly scent of the one they chase. A mutual determination that their quarry does not deserve to live.

If any were able to form the words to express them, no doubt the crimes listed of their prey would be as varied as the pack themselves, and some, perhaps, even true. But that is not important, not really. Not the driving, pounding need behind the hunt, what spurs pursuit of tooth and claw is not some calmly made assessment or solemn judgement on the weight of the hunted's sin. It is the need to tear and rend and coat their faces slick with the blood of the guilty that pulses through every fibre of them. The thumping need inside their head to hate, and to be right within that hate. To taste the blood of those that have declared themselves deserving of it.

But as the pack runs, each and all among them are afraid. Of what? The pounding in their heart drowns out the unease, makes it hard to taste and feel it out, but it is there. Are they afraid of their prey, fleeing in abject terror, their trail marked clear by the scent of fear? No, it can't be. But what else could it be? Surely not their packmates, sprinting along beside, leaping, jumping, grinning in anticipation, moving as a group, their minds as one, never looking each other in the eye.

[Distant fall into undergrowth]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Up ahead, the quarry trips, cries out, tumbles to the floor in a desperate heap. They try to stagger to their feet but they are caught in the undergrowth, ankle twisted, vines wrapped around it. They already lost their boots, and now their bare and muddy foot is trapped, flesh and dirt and oozing blood, the blood that fills the nostrils of these hunters, and drives their furious chase with the awful scent of its transgression. Tears flow, too, but no one notices, and no one cares. Their punishment is at hand.

[Rustles of undergrowth as the runners come to a stop; from different directions, every so often a twig snaps from their movement]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

In moments, the prey is surrounded. The spaces between the trees are filled with eyes that hate and hands that hold the promise of a life ended on the rotting leaves of the forest floor. They smile, and their teeth glint in the moonlight, still red with all that remains of their last morsel of prey.

They begin to step closer. One step. Two steps. When the prey turns, they are still, but they surround in all directions, moving slowly when they are not being watched. What's the time, Mr Wolf? The time to run is over. The time to suffer has arrived.

But there is one last burst of strength within the prey. Not strength of arm, or speed of escape — what good is fight-or-flight in this place? — but a strength of voice, of bitter, angry recrimination. Hurling accusations upon their pursuers: hypocrites, bullies, pathetic wretches that would hound the innocent so. Perhaps the prey earnestly believes it, casts themselves full woeful into the mould of victim, of one who has done no wrong. Or perhaps they feel within themselves the weight of the sin stinking out of them, flaring the hearts of their persecutors, but see in the faces that approach them those same transgressions shining, reflected back upon them. It doesn't matter in the end, for the cry is the same: "This isn't fair. This isn't right."

[Rustles as the pack moves; then there is ripping and eating sounds]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

The pack descends and the prey is silenced, protests cut short by teeth digging into throat, nails piercing skin and clawing at gristle, bones shattering under relentless, merciless blows. And the blood and bile flow freely, exciting the pack to ever-greater raptures of cruelty, of pure and cleansing rage. They taste their fury in every corner of them. There is no sound to break their peace but the wet ripping of flesh and the occasional transcendent scream of deserved agony.

[The sounds of ripping and eating concludes]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

And then it is over. There is a moment, a single, holy moment of blessed absolution, washed clean in sweet and sticky blood. And then the unease returns. The uncertainty and fear that at some moments gripped them throughout their pursuit. They look around from one to another, aware as they stand over the twitching remains, that they are suddenly without prey.

Expressions sharpen, eyes narrow, growls begin to bubble up deep from within each chest. They are afraid. They can each smell it wafting from the others, but who will it be? Who is the most afraid? Which of them held back? Which of them...

[A loud twig snap]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

There. You. Blood on your hands, no doubt; blood on your lips; but not much. Not much at all. Perhaps you couldn't get close enough, there were so many hunters, after all. Or perhaps you stayed your hand out of mercy. Out of... sympathy. Perhaps you stink of that same sin.

No words need to be spoken, no accusations put in so coarse a form as voice. The pack immediately knows which among them is no longer theirs, which has exposed their own inequity. Which is now prey.

[Rustles of the undergrowth, then jagged breaths and running feet]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

The prey turns and runs, all grace of the Hunt forgotten as they stumble, crashing through undergrowth and dirt.

[Hissing static starts]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

Behind them, feet pound silent.

[Sounds of the pack fade away; the forest sounds continue, with the birds of prey resuming their calls]

(The Archivist exhales)

[Hissing static ends]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

(Calling) I'm done.

(Beat)

[Rustles as Martin walks back]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

You alright?

MARTIN

(Snapping) Just peachy. **(softening)** I don't, I don't know; I feel like I saw something in the trees.

ARCHIVIST

You did.

MARTIN

(Sarcastic) Oh! Fantastic. You're very reassuring, you know that?

Is it that... pack thing you were talking about?

ARCHIVIST

No, they'd have, they'd have no interest in us. We're not one of them.

MARTIN

Look, John, if-if you know what it is, then why don't you just tell me, so—

ARCHIVIST

Hold up. Shh.

MARTIN

Wh-no! No, John, you just did a statement, I don't care if you want another one—

ARCHIVIST

(Interrupting) Martin.

MARTIN

—we've gotta move...

(Beat)

[There is some quiet movement coming closer towards them]

ARCHIVIST

Right. Martin, do you trust me?

MARTIN

What? Ah, Christ, this can't be good. Y-yes?

ARCHIVIST

Then it's very — listen — look at me. The next couple of minutes are going to be quite unpleasant for one of us, and I'm sorry.

(Martin makes bewildered stuttering noises)

MARTIN

Sorry, what?

ARCHIVIST

You need to remain very calm, and don't make any sudden movements.

MARTIN

Oh, okay, now I'm worried; what d'you—

[The bushes rustle from a rush of movement; there is impact and knife clink sounds, and an attacker growls]

MARTIN

(Shakily) Huh!

TREVOR HERBERT

(Desperation) Don't move! Don't you *fucking* move!

(Martin gasps out a choked breath)

And don't *you* say a word, or I'll cut him open! I know what that voice of yours can do, so shut it!

ARCHIVIST

(Politely, in control) Mm-hmm.

(Trevor slowly calms his ragged breathing over several beats)

TREVOR

Okay. You can talk. But slow-like. You try and do any of that — word magic — and he's dead.

(Martin breaths shakily)

ARCHIVIST

(Slowly) Understood.

Hello, Trevor.

MARTIN

(False calm) John? What's going on?

ARCHIVIST

It's okay. Trust me.

MARTIN

(High) Okay.

TREVOR

It's not okay. Stop fucking smiling!

[Trevor grips Martin tighter, the knife closer]

(Martin lets out a pained sound)

MARTIN

(Shaky will false-calm) John? I know you keep saying we're safe, and I am feeling very calm, but just so I know, can he... can he kill me?

ARCHIVIST

He could, yes.

MARTIN

Right.

ARCHIVIST

If he were still a hunter.

TREVOR

(Hissing) Shut it.

'Course I'm still a hunter!

[Trevor jostles Martin further]

(Martin lets out a pained sound)

(Trevor's breathing is heavy, and he grunts)

MARTIN

Mm-hmm... gotta go with Trevor on that one, John!

ARCHIVIST

(Dark) No. Right now he's prey.

[A trill from a bird of prey]

ARCHIVIST (CONT'D)

How long have you been running now, Trevor?

(Trevor's breathing becomes more fearful)

TREVOR

Don't know. Too long.

ARCHIVIST

And Julia?

(Beat)

TREVOR

Dead.

ARCHIVIST

I'm sorry.

TREVOR

(Upset) Shut it!

Shoulda been me. I'm old. Slow. **(breathing harder)** It's not fair, outliving her.

But that dog of yours, that rabid bitch— she knew— Killed her first, so she could see me limp away.

It's a game to her.

ARCHIVIST

If you're looking for my pity, I'm afraid you're too late.

MARTIN

John...?

TREVOR

(Aggressive) What I want, is to make *you* feel the same loss!

MARTIN

(Wavering) John!

ARCHIVIST

It's okay, Martin.

(Trevor's breathing calms)

Maybe I spoke too soon. Perhaps I do have some pity for you. After all, I know you, Trevor, you've had a tough life. Hardship from beginning to, huh, this strange and twisted end.

TREVOR

Never complained.

ARCHIVIST

No. You haven't, have you? And maybe that's the greatest tragedy of all this. I'm sorry, Trevor.

(Trevor's breathing goes from calmed to fast and heavy)

TREVOR

(Aggitated) For what?

ARCHIVIST

For putting us all in this situation. I *had* hoped you'd go for me, but, well. I'm sorry I've reduced you lower even than prey.

MARTIN

John?...

TREVOR

(Snorts) No!

ARCHIVIST

(Dark) To bait.

MARTIN

(Fast breathing) Don't-

[Gunshot rings out]

[As Trevor falls, the knife clatters to the ground]

(Martin whimpers)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

(High) Oh-hoh. Hoh. Christ, you just, He jus—

ARCHIVIST

Relax, Martin.

MARTIN

(High) I'm I'm I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna relax; I'm sick of never knowing what's going on, and then, eh—

[As he speaks, footsteps come through the bushes]

ARCHIVIST

Hello, Basira.

MARTIN

I- E- **(some stutters)** Basira?

BASIRA

Don't move. Either of you.

MARTIN

Hey! Hey, hey. Whoa. Whoa, Basira, it's us.

BASIRA

I said don't move. This place plays tricks.

ARCHIVIST

It is us, Basira.

BASIRA

(Disbelieving) Mm-hmm? Sure. And you just happened to wander into Trevor's path while I was tracking him. What a fun coincidence for everybody.

ARCHIVIST

Not a coincidence.

(Beat)

[A trill from a bird of prey]

MARTIN

(Tentatively) Can I at least put my hands down?

My-my arms are kinda getting tired.

BASIRA

Prove you're real.

MARTIN

I- Wha-what? Like, like, pinch... you, or?

BASIRA

Prove you're really Martin Blackwood.

MARTIN

(Voice break) How?

ARCHIVIST

You could do a poem.

BASIRA

Shut up.

MARTIN

(Hissing) John, this is serious!

BASIRA

What's something only Martin would know?

MARTIN

...What? I don't know!

BASIRA

Fine. Then—

[She cocks the gun]

MARTIN

No-no-no-no-no-no-no-no, wait, wait, uh- I- oh, god, I don't know, we've never hung out much! I've no idea what you know about me!

(Beat)

BASIRA

What about you?

ARCHIVIST

I mean— I can know **(laughing)** literally anything, so, ask away I guess.

BASIRA

You understand how unhelpful that is for proving identities.

ARCHIVIST

(Amused) I'm sorry to be an inconvenience.

BASIRA

Well, you better think of something, or...

[She waggles the gun]

ARCHIVIST

Basira, I know you're not going to shoot us. There's already too much doubt in your mind.

(Beat)

BASIRA

I told you before not to look into my head.

ARCHIVIST

So you do believe it's me, then.

BASIRA

...Know-it-all prick.

[She uncocks and holsters the gun]

MARTIN

S-s-so, can I...?

BASIRA

Yeah, put them down, Martin. It's fine. You're you.

(Martin lets out a huge sigh of relief)

ARCHIVIST

You're sure?

BASIRA

If you were monsters, that would mean I'd get to finally kill something with your smug face. No way am I that lucky.

ARCHIVIST

Can't fault your logic.

[Rustles as she starts walking]

BASIRA

Come on. You've wasted enough time already.

MARTIN

Wh... **(sputtering)** H-wh- hey, wait!

[Basira pauses walking]

BASIRA

I said come on!

[She restarts walking]

MARTIN

(Still shocked) Wh-! Wh-! John?

ARCHIVIST

After you.

(Martin makes a noise of bewilderment)

[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: Jonathan Sims as The Archivist, Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood, Ian Hayles as Trevor Herbert, and Frank Voss as Basira Hussain. To subscribe, buy merchandise, or join our Patreon, visit rustyquill.com. Rate and review us online, tweet us at [TheRustyQuill](https://twitter.com/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.