

MAG – 134 – Time of Revelation

Content Warnings:

- Environmental disaster
- Spatial disorientation
- Emotional manipulation
- Death and dying

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode one hundred and thirty-four. Time of Revelation.

[Tape clicks on.]

MARTIN

Right... Martin Blackwood, Archi— Uh, Assistant to Peter Lukas, head of the Magnus Institute, recording statement number 0060122, statement of Adelard Dekker, taken from a letter to Gertrude Robinson dated 22nd January 2006.

(Martin clears his throat.)

MARTIN (STATEMENT)

Gertrude,

Sorry I can't be there in person to go over all this with you. I still have a few things to clear off over here, but I thought it would be best to let you know as soon as possible. I am now certain my theory is correct. There is something

new emerging, a fifteenth power. I didn't want to believe it either, not at first, but I was alerted a few months ago to the case of a woman named Bernadette Delcour. She works at the Faculté de Théologie at the university in Lille, and is an expert in eschatology, specifically failed apocalypse predictions. She had an encounter I believe is directly connected to the new emergence, and I managed to track her down. She was reluctant to talk, though I eventually managed to get the story out of her.

Bernadette had, apparently, received a call from a colleague in Paris about a discovery regarding Garland Hillier. Now, Hillier was a member of the Millerite movement in upstate New York during the early 1840s. I don't know how familiar you are with the Millerites, but they would eventually grow into the Seventh Day Adventist Church. They followed a preacher named William Miller, who believed he had calculated exactly when the end of days was coming and pinned it down to October 22nd 1844. Now, Gertrude, I'm sure you'll have noticed that date came and went without any sign of Jesus returning, and Miller's followers noticed the very same thing, calling it "The Great Disappointment". Most of his followers stuck with him, and gradually turned into the Seventh Day Adventists, but Garland Hillier apparently took it harder than most, abandoning the movement and returning to his native France the following year. He spent the next twenty years publishing widely-derided collections of poetry, as well as essays on belief and atheism that were roundly ignored by the philosophical salons of the time. He was supported by several literary friends, as he was reputedly a gifted editor, even if his own work was often all but incomprehensible.

Garland Hillier's final essay, published in 1867 and simply titled *L'Avenir* (The Future) was supposedly a rambling and meandering speculation on the end of

the human race. Influenced by Darwin's recent publication of *On the Origin of Species* and his own shattered faith, he posited a future where, far from any glorious or holy revelation or reckoning, a decadent and corrupt humanity was violently and utterly supplanted and wiped out by a new category of being, one he referred to as "les héritiers", "the inheritors". He gave no details on what he believed they might look like or how they might behave, but his predictions for the final days of humanity were unpleasant and visceral.

The piece was not popular or widely distributed at the time and has, for the most part, been utterly forgotten by history. I've been unable to find any accessible copy myself and have had to rely largely on professor Delcour's recollections of its contents, as she has the dubious distinction of being one of the few academics familiar with Hillier's work. Anyway, the point is that some time after that essay was published, Garland Hillier disappeared. Exactly when this happened, no-one is really sure, but the last records of his existence can be found near the end of 1867. No contemporaries commented on his disappearance, nor was there any search inquiry, but neither is there any record of his death or indication of emigration or travel. Despite his dubious academic credentials, he was apparently a man who consistently attempted to court the public eye, and his disappearance has long been a puzzlement, if not a full-blown mystery, in certain academic circles for a long time.

So, it's probably not surprising that, when Bernadette got a call from Paris telling her that some workmen had discovered Garland Hillier's apartment, it got her on a train almost immediately. And it certainly was a discovery, in the most literal sense. On the fifth floor of an apartment building on the Rue Lagarde, near the Panthéon, some construction workers had uncovered a door that had at some point in the past been completely plastered over. Removing

the covering and breaking through the old wood revealed another apartment, one apparently unnoticed by any of the other residents, or indeed the owners of those sections of the building, each of which had assumed the space was owned by one of the others and connected to a different part. As far as anyone was able to determine, the apartment had been sitting there, sealed and undisturbed, for almost a hundred and fifty years. It was untouched, pristine, with barely a thin layer of fine dust coating the possessions and belongings that had stayed there for so long. A few objects identified the place as belonging to Hillier, including a short journal, and so the local authority, baffled as to what to do with this find, had called a history professor from the Sorbonne, who had passed it on to Bernadette, as she was one of the few academics familiar with Hillier.

She went immediately. While the confusion over legal ownership would probably keep the place in limbo for some time, Bernadette was also acutely aware that it meant there would be limited protections in place as well, and she was keen to see it before anything too drastic happened to it. She got her wish, and her colleague even managed to supply her with a photocopy of the journal, though it made little real sense. It talked of Garland Hillier's "new revelation" about the "absolute change of the world" in terms that seemed at first elegiac, but later seemed almost panicked, with the final entry simply repeating the words "la porte est la porte", "the door is the door". Clearly his mental state had been in decline, and Bernadette said she could not help dwelling on the image of this poor man, his whole world shifting and falling away from him, lost and alone in his tiny apartment, gradually losing himself, until at last, he lay down and simply did not get up again. But that couldn't be the case, she knew, as there had been no sign of a body.

Bernadette arrived and got into the building without any trouble save for the five flights of stairs that needed to be climbed, and found the door unlocked. Monsieur Pinard, who had been supposed to meet her there, was apparently nowhere to be found, so she simply let herself in.

The place felt strange, she told me, like a tiny pocket of another time, a bubble where the world had never changed, and stepping inside she almost felt like she would never change either. Even the light that came through the window seemed to be of a different quality, muted and gentle. The street chatter of Paris, which usually reaches all but the most remote of windows, seemed to vanish entirely. There was a sense of peace to it all, shot through with a strand of disquiet, a wrongness she told me she could not identify, but she could almost smell it.

The objects left within the room itself were, unfortunately, somewhat disappointing. While the clothes and household objects were in a remarkable state of preservation, none gave any particular insight into the life or fate of Garland Hillier. The bed was unmade, but seemed to hold no clues, and aside from the journal, there were no papers in the place that gave any useful information, save for a few letters from Hachette and the like, declining to print his essays.

All in all, Bernadette described it as intensely disappointing, at least from her perspective, since the only aspect that served to shine any further light on Hillier, his theology or his fate, seemed to be the journal, something she hadn't needed to spend an hour and a half on the train to get to. She turned to leave, and that, she says, is when she started to get the sense that something was wrong. The door had been damaged by the builders who uncovered the place and there were several distinct gaps in the wood, but as she walked back out,

the door appeared to be whole. She ignored it, and left anyway, trying to reason it all away as a strange quirk of memory, just one of those things. Unfortunately for her, it was not the only thing that had changed.

The walls of the stairwell were discoloured, as though covered with some a dusting of some faint yellowish dirt, and the stone steps were ever so slightly sticky beneath her shoes. There was no sound, no sign of life other than the squeaking of leather as she descended, trying desperately to convince herself that nothing was wrong, that it had been just as quiet on the way up, that this building had always had a thick, humid feeling to the air.

When she stepped outside into the street of corpses, that was when her mind could no longer deny that she was not in any Paris that she knew, no matter what the architecture might have looked like. There were hundreds of them, stood in place where they had died, some fallen, a few kneeling. They were stiff and desiccated, mummified by some process Bernadette could not begin to guess at, but that rendered their flesh like tightly packed ash. At least, that's what it looked like, as she dared not touch them. Those that had fallen seemed to have fused with the street, and some that seemed to have been too close to nearby walls were embedded within them. Every single shrivelled, ashen face was contorted in a scream of agony; every sharp and jutting jaw cracked and twisted in an expression of horror, of understanding not just of their death, but the end of everything they knew. It was clear that they had been this way for years, if not decades. Bernadette says she was sure that nothing had moved in that dead city for a hundred years. She was mistaken.

I have never envied you your position, Gertrude. I have never coveted your gifts, as I know the terrible costs that come with them. But honestly, trying to get a description of these things, these “inheritors”, from Bernadette Delcour

made me wish I could just pull the image from her lips like you would have been able to. In the end, she would say nothing of them except that, “There is nothing done in the history of humanity that deserves the things that come after us.” She was more precise on her escape. Remembering Hillier’s words about the door, she had just enough time to retreat back to the apartment and barricade herself inside. Then she waited until the entrance changed again and she could emerge back into the world she remembered. At least, that’s my interpretation of events. She was rather agitated by this point in the account, so I believed it best to leave her to it. I may try to interview her again later, though I have my suspicions she may find herself disappearing. She has that quality about her, I’m sure you know what I mean, of an unfinished meal, and I can only hope that when the second course starts she can remember her way back to Garland Hillier’s apartment once more. But of course, the evidence suggests that, in the end, even he wasn’t able to.

Now I know what you’re going to say, Gertrude. Odd doors are a sign of the Spiral, empty worlds tend towards the Lonely, and eschatology is almost literally the study of The End, but this is different. I feel it. This fear is new. This is a fear of Extinction. Of change. It used to be part of The End, perhaps, when the end of humanity was to be the end of all things, but now the fear is not of a rapture or a revelation, it is of catastrophic change. A change in our world that will wipe out what it means to be us and leave something else in its place. Mankind will warp the world so much it kills us all and leaves only a thousand years of plastic behind. Technology will strip us of what it means to be human and leave us something alien and cold. We will press a button that in a moment will destroy everything we have ever been. Animals are witnessing the end of their entire species within a single generation. These are new fears,

Gertrude, and a new power is rising to consume them. The Extinction. The Terrible Change. The Future Without Us.

I know you don't credit my theories, and I'm sure you'll have plenty to say on this one, but I'm going to need your help with this at some point, I'm sure of it. I don't know how you can stop the birth of something that has no life or mind or substance, but if anyone can figure it out it's you. I've never met anyone so gifted at understanding that strange dream-logic of the fears, and if what I suspect about this new power is true, it could be catastrophic. Until then, I'll keep searching for evidence, trying to find instances and manifestations of The Extinction. I'll keep you updated.

Stay safe.

Adelard.

MARTIN

(Exhales) So that's it, is it?

[Static rises]

PETER

It is.

MARTIN

A new Power.

PETER

The Extinction, yes.

MARTIN

So... so, what? You're afraid of the competition?

PETER

Not at all. Honestly, that's the sort of thing I normally relish. I've always been a little bit of a gambler, and the higher the stakes, the better.

MARTIN

So... So, this is what?

PETER

This is different.

MARTIN

I'm listening.

PETER

Good, it's about time. There are two Powers that, to my knowledge, have never attempted to fully manifest, never had followers set them up for a ritual: Mother-of-Puppets and Terminus. The Web and The End. The Web I've never really been sure about. If I were to guess, I would say it actually prefers the world as is, playing everyone against each other and so on. The End, on the other hand... The End doesn't really need one. It knows that it gets everything eventually, so why bother? The End manifesting would not be a new world of terror, it would be a lifeless world, devoid of everything.

MARTIN

Including fear.

PETER

Exactly. It has no reason to truly attempt to enter our world. It's passive, but The Extinction... The Extinction is different. It is active. It will seek to create a lifeless world in a way that none of the other powers ever would. Some interpretations suggest it might replace us with something new that can then fear annihilation in turn, but I, and those like me, would rather that did not happen.

MARTIN

S-so, what? You want to stop it being born?

PETER

I don't know if such a thing is even possible, but if it is, then yes. Or at the very least, weaken it.

MARTIN

Okay ... Okay, so let's say for now that I believe you, hypothetically. Wh-what does this have to do with me?

PETER

I'm still working out some of the kinks, but I believe I have a plan. However, it requires this place, and it requires someone touched by the Beholding. Elias was, perhaps unsurprisingly, unwilling to help.

MARTIN

And you thought that, since I'm so lonely already, I'd be ideal.

PETER

Yes.

MARTIN

You see, the thing is, Peter, I'm still not all that keen on being part of any ritual you set up. You know, in fact, if I were to be blunt, I'd say that it would be suicidally stupid.

PETER

(Patiently) Martin, it's going to be decades, if not centuries, before I get another chance to bring Forsaken into this world. Your last Archivist saw to that. Honestly, if Elias hadn't killed that woman, I'd have been very tempted. I warned him she was a danger, but he alway—

MARTIN

Peter. Peter.

PETER

Anyway, the point is that yes, obviously, if I last that long, I'm going to try again. But I'm rather keen for the world not to end in the meantime.

MARTIN

Hmm...

PETER

Martin, this is what we agreed. After The Flesh attacked, you came to me, and I've held up my end of the bargain, despite your continued hesitations. Your friends have been largely untroubled by the many, many enemies that they have made.

MARTIN

What about the delivery guy? Breekon? And the coffin?

PETER

Was that its name? To be honest with you, I thought it was dead.

MARTIN

You thought wrong.

PETER

True enough. And as soon as I learned it was here, I moved to intervene, but... Well, it turns out I wasn't really needed, and as far as the coffin goes, there's not much I can do about a bull-headed Archivist, who seems hell-bent on self-destruction. My powers only extend so far.

MARTIN

Mmmhmm.

PETER

Look, I'm not going to pressure you into doing anything you don't want to. It won't even work unless you're willing to commit. In any case, I have plenty of preparations to work on myself before it's ready. I'll see what else I can find to

help with your reservations in the meantime. Okay? Just don't hesitate too long. We are on a deadline after all.

MARTIN

Fine.

PETER

Right, then if you'll excuse me, I have a family thing to get to.

MARTIN

Are we going to talk about John?

PETER

Do we need to?

MARTIN

I... Uh...

PETER

Because, to be honest, I'm not entirely sure what's been going on with him these past couple of weeks.

MARTIN

(Sceptical) Oh, yeah, sure.

PETER

Martin... My patron, hopefully our patron someday, doesn't give me any sort of special insight. I'm not quite the accomplished voyeur that Elias was. I have to keep tabs on things the old-fashioned way.

MARTIN

What, turning invisible and eavesdropping?

PETER

If you like. But I'm only one person and I can't keep an eye on everything.

MARTIN

Or anything, apparently.

PETER

As I said, one of the last shreds of the circus delivered a gateway into Too-Close-I-Cannot-Breathe. I went to help, but was too late. Then your detective friend—

MARTIN

No, she's not a detect—

PETER

—went on one of Elias' wild goose chases. Then John wilfully hurled himself into the coffin. I did not intervene, because thankfully, I did not agree to protect your friends from their own idiocy. Though actually, he gave it more consideration than I thought he would.

MARTIN

He's not a moron.

PETER

If you say so. Regardless, he's in there three days, then what do you know, he manages to pull himself out of the coffin like a grubby Jesus and he even brings a penitent thief along in the form of your pet murderer. Does this seem about right to you, so far?

MARTIN

Yeah.

PETER

Now, from my point of view, so far, none of this has been any of my business. We have bigger concerns than this little soap opera you call an archive. What does puzzle me, though, and I mean that genuinely, is why you were piling tape recorders onto the coffin while John was in there?

...

It's a question, Martin. It's not an accusation.

MARTIN

I don't know. I just felt like it might help. He's always recording; I thought it might help him find his way out.

PETER

Interesting. Were you compelled?

MARTIN

I don't know... Maybe? I definitely wanted to do it.

PETER

But?

MARTIN

I'm not sure where the idea came from.

PETER

You should watch out for that. Could be something dangerous.

MARTIN

Sure.

PETER

I can't help but notice you're recording right now?

MARTIN

(Defensive) It was a statement, alright? That's what we do.

PETER

Anyway, point is, I'm not your captor or your torturer. I'm not going to tell you to stop talking to him, or even saving him, if it comes to it. If that's not a decision you are willing to make yourself, me scolding you isn't going to help. You know what the stakes are now, and I just have to hope you're with me on this, focusing on the big picture.

MARTIN

Yeah.

PETER

Okay. Now, I really am running late, so if you don't mind?

[Tape clicks off.]

[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: Alexander J Newall as Martin Blackwood and Alasdair Stuart as Peter Lukas.