

## Interlude From Another Reality: Taxidermy

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/40264314) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/40264314>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">Gen</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft SMP</a>
Character:	<a href="#">Grian</a> , <a href="#">Joe Hills   joehillssays</a> , <a href="#">ZombieCleo</a> , <a href="#">GoodTimesWithScar</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Alternate Universe - The Magnus Archives Fusion</a> , <a href="#">Comedy</a> , <a href="#">Body Horror</a> , <a href="#">Non-Consensual Body Modification</a> , <a href="#">Amputation</a> , <a href="#">all discussed not shown but uh yknow</a> , <a href="#">non-canon to the rest of the au</a>
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of <a href="#">From the Archives: Marginalia</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">Hermitcraft x TMA fics</a>
Stats:	Published: 2022-07-12 Completed: 2022-07-16 Words: 3,921 Chapters: 2/2

## Interlude From Another Reality: Taxidermy

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

### Summary

#### [GRIAN]

Are you the manager? Because when I asked the person at the front to direct me to a manager they told me to come here. I have a complaint.

#### [JOE]

Well, I can understand that.

(A couple non-canon bonus scenes to my [From the Archives](#) series, in a timeline where everything is a little bit upside down.)

### Notes

hey!! so this is not canon to the rest of the from the archives series; it's just a fun little bonus scene my coauthor and i wrote corresponding to the events of [ornithology](#) in a version of the au where joe is the archivist, cleo, bdubs, and jevin are his assistants who all suck at their jobs, and the boatem crew are, well- various monsters.

additionally, unlike the main series, this one *does* contain spoilers for the magnus archives through season three, so i would skip this one if that's something you want to avoid!

hope you enjoy! we will be back to our regularly scheduled canon-timeline statements over in the main series soon.



## Statement: Taxidermy

[Click]

*(Knocking)*

**[GRIAN]**

Hi. Hey, can you help me with the door?

*(Door creaking open)*

**[JOE]**

Oh! Howdy!

**[GRIAN]**

Are you the manager? Because when I asked the person at the front to direct me to a manager they told me to come here. I have a complaint.

**[JOE]**

Well, I can understand that.

**[GRIAN]**

This woman who works here, I didn't manage to catch her last name but she calls herself Cleo. Red hair, sarcastic?

**[JOE]**

Mean and occasionally violent? I know the one. Go on.

**[GRIAN]**

I can complain about her to you, right?

**[JOE]**

Oh, please, be my guest.

**[GRIAN]**

Great!

**[JOE]**

Wait, hold on a sec, actually- oh, it's already recording. Statement of... Um, I need your name.

**[GRIAN]**

Grian. *(Pause)*. And you are?

**[JOE]**

Joe Hills, head archivist. Statement of Grian, last name not provided so I'll also note here that he's fairly short and looking at me with conspicuous irritation, regarding an encounter with my assistant. Alrighty, please continue.

**[GRIAN]**

Well, first of all, I lost my job because of her! I just had my friend call in for me today to ask if I could still come in and I found out I'd been fired four months ago for not turning up. That's not my fault! I was kidnapped!

**[JOE]**

Well, hold on, how was that her fault?

**[GRIAN]**

*She kidnapped me!*

**[JOE]**

*Oh*, I see. You probably should have opened with that.

**[GRIAN]**

Your assistant grabbed me off the street and kept me in her closet for six months, my cats went unfed for almost a week before my friends realized I was gone and had to file a missing persons report, I got *fired*, and now I can't even navigate doorknobs without help!

**[JOE]**

Uh-huh. I noticed you have-

**[GRIAN]**

*Oh, did you?*

**[JOE]**

Well, I didn't want to be rude. Now, my question is, I've been in Cleo's apartment in the last six months, and it's not exactly spacious. I feel like I would have noticed if she was holding an entire adult human in there against their will.

**[GRIAN]**

Well, it's not like I could scream or anything. Because of the statue magic.

**[JOE]**

Run that by me again?

**[GRIAN]**

*The statue magic.* You know, the- okay, I actually don't know how it works. But I was frozen perfectly still, unable to move, blink, breathe, or, because you asked, scream. It lasted for six months, so it was definitely magic, not some kind of drug. She was definitely taking credit for it, so presumably it was *her* magic. And she kept calling me a statue, so it seems reasonable to call it statue magic. And she used it on me. To keep me in her closet. For, let me emphasize, *six entire months*.

**[JOE]**

Huh. I've never heard her mention anything like that.

**[GRIAN]**

*Obviously* she didn't mention it, she's not *stupid*. And she's very careful, which is not a compliment. Do you know how hard I had to work to track this place down? She didn't even give me her name, I just overheard it. Actually, I'd say careful is even is kind of an understatement: throwing a drop cloth over my head whenever she wasn't working on me was more like *paranoid*. Why would anyone visiting her look in her closet? Honestly.

**[JOE]**

Working on you? Could you expand on that?

**[GRIAN]**

What, did you think she was calling me a statue for no reason?

**[JOE]**

I'll admit I was a little bit stuck on the kidnapping. Indulge me. This *is* an audio recording, you know.

**[GRIAN]**

I hope you're recording this to *show her later*. Fine. She's an... artist. A sculptor. Whatever. At least that's what she calls herself, and I guess I can't argue. I didn't really figure out what that meant, at first. I thought she was just going to pose me, you know? Use me as a model or something. I don't know what sculptors do, I'm a structural engineer. Was. Probably *will never be again, because your assistant kidnapped me*. How'm I supposed to buy cat food like this?

**[JOE]**

Go on?

**[GRIAN]**

Oh. Yeah, well, she posed me, but then she also started sticking feathers into my skin. That was the first thing, I think. It's been awhile, because I was *in a closet for six months*, but I'm pretty sure she started with feathers. In... my forearms, I think? Ha.

**[JOE]**

I see.

**[GRIAN]**

No, you don't. You know what the worst thing about all this was? My friend Pearl started crying when I talked to her after your assistant let me go. I think she's owed an apology. I'm also owed an apology, because I don't know what to do when Pearl cries, because she never does that. It was *unbelievably* awkward.

**[JOE]**

Right. I'll be sure to pass that along. Can we circle back to the feathers?

**[GRIAN]**

I suppose. What about them?

**[JOE]**

Well- you said she started with your arms?

**[GRIAN]**

Yeah, I think? It all got pretty blurry after awhile. I was trying to keep track, but it's really very difficult when you're already disoriented and also you can't move your eyes. I mean I've got them- on my chest, now, here, here, on these obviously, down by my ankles to cover up the scars there, and I don't even know if I've found them all. I don't know if that was all before I checked out, or after- the ankle ones were probably after?

I'm more feathers than not! And I have to take care of them! Do you know how much work that is like this? I'm not that flexible! I have to ask my friends for help, and that's *embarrassing!*

**[JOE]**

My... condolences? For... a great number of things. Apparently. What do you mean by 'checked out'?

**[GRIAN]**

Oh, after she cut my arms off my brain just sort of powered off. No idea how far in that was, though.

**[JOE]**

Ah. Of course.

...You, uh, mentioned your ankles? After that incident?

**[GRIAN]**

Yeah, I can't remember it at all, but, well, bird feet. Take a look. Claws and everything. She must have gotten bloodthirsty after chopping my arms off, I guess.

**[JOE]**

*(heavy sigh)* That does sound like the Cleo I know. Albeit on something of a different scale than I'm used to.

**[GRIAN]**

Actually, alright, since we're on the topic. I need to put a note in my complaint that this isn't me taking issue with, like, her design choices. I actually *really like* what she did, with the wings and the feathers and all that. I wasn't expecting to. In fact, I'll admit, I didn't *want* to like it. I mean, I was kind of in agony for six months, and I'm still pretty sore, and also it's not like she ever pulled out a mirror. If she ever wanted to look, she just pointed a flashlight in my eyes or whatever. The circumstances weren't exactly confidence-inducing.

**[JOE]**

I'll say.

**[GRIAN]**

But it looks *amazing*. One thing I'll say for her, her artistic vision was spot-on. So I'm not complaining about being turned into a bird, okay? Just about all the rest of it.

*Especially* the doorknobs.

**[JOE]**

Okay, just so I'm sure I understand your grievances in order of severity. We've got... your friend Pearl cried, you lost your job, got kidnapped, and... let's say general difficulties associated with, uh, no longer having hands. Am I right in understanding the feathers themselves don't really rank on this list?

**[GRIAN]**

Well, I wish I didn't have to preen them, you can put that down. But besides that- oh, wait, I just remembered *another* thing. My friend Scar, he also turned into a weird monster while I was missing, so I didn't even get to be special about it!

**[JOE]**

Oh, could you describe the weird monster?

**[GRIAN]**

I don't know, he's full of spiders now? It's not important. He keeps getting startled by them, though, which I guess is pretty funny.

**[JOE]**

Web, then... Tell me, did he seem at all distressed by this? Aside from occasional startlement, I suppose.

**[GRIAN]**

Nah, he's fine. I think he's trying to start a pyramid scheme with his friend Cub, who he's sharing spiders with. Or something. I didn't get the whole story, because one of his spiders crawled onto his nose and he almost fell out of his wheelchair. *I'm* distressed about it though! I was supposed to at *least* be able to be the weirdest person I knew once Cleo let me go. It was my one hope!

**[JOE]**

Right. Well, thank you, and I'll be sure to pass all this on to Cleo, and hopefully convince her not to, uh, kidnap and mutilate people for art anymore?

**[GRIAN]**

Good.

**[JOE]**

Is there anything else you want me to include, or are we done?

**[GRIAN]**

Tell her I've managed to hunt down her address. And that I only didn't call the cops on her because that would be rude.

...Hey, what did you mean by Web?

[Click]

[Click]

*(Door opening)*

**[JOE]**

Oh, Cleo! Got a minute?

**[CLEO]**

Sure? What is it?

**[JOE]**

I'm... following up a statement? A guy named Grian was here to- well, he was mostly here to complain. To me, specifically.

**[CLEO]**

Oh... kay? What do you need my help for with that?

**[JOE]**

Well, y'see, he was here to complain about, uh, my assistant kidnapping him and turning him into a bird. Though, more the former than the latter, I guess?

**[CLEO]**

*Oh!* Him! Aw, he was here and I missed him? I wish he'd waited for me. Hey, could he move the wings?

**[JOE]**

See, I was hoping you wouldn't say that. I was more hoping for something along the lines of 'Joe, that's insane, I would never do anything like that, he must have been talking about somebody else.' And then I would go 'oh, of course, that makes much more sense, because I know my good friend Cleo whom I trust would never kidnap and mutilate people on a regular basis,' and we would both go on our merry ways.

**[CLEO]**

...I wouldn't say it's a *regular* basis. Maybe once every couple months? ...And I think it's a little rude to call my art *mutilation*.

**[JOE]**

Cleo, you cut his arms off. Also, his feet.

**[CLEO]**

Okay, *maybe*, but then I gave him better ones!

**[JOE]**

I also looked up a list of the categories and characteristics of psychological torture and compared them with what he described, and you got a bingo, which is generally not what I would consider a good thing.

**[CLEO]**

Well, I- I'm sure it's fine. I'm sure he's *fine*. It's fine! (*Pause, and then she continues rapidly.*) You know, I'm really proud of the work I did on- what did you say his name was? Grian. I put so much time and effort into making that bird, and it all came out so beautiful. So you have to tell me if he liked it! And if the wings worked.

**[JOE]**

Cleo, being perfectly frank here, I just got complained at in an incredibly bewildering order by a man you trapped in your closet for half a year, and I'm currently suffering both a headache and a moral quandary. If you want to know more, feel free to listen to the tape. I think I need a nap.

**[CLEO]**

Oh, fine. Have some nightmares about me while you're at it.

**[JOE]**

Fairly probable, yes.

**[CLEO]**

...Hold on, I just realized this means he was able to track down where I work. Not sure I like that.

**[JOE]**

Gonna be honest, Cleo, that does sound like a problem you made for yourself.

Oh, he also said to tell you he has your address.

**[Click]**



## Bonus: Investment Opportunities

### Chapter Notes

okay season 3 spoilers again but like way more this time, if you want to avoid those this is your warning

another silly little bonus scene in this side continuity, set shortly after the first chapter. chris said we had to post this one too and really who am i to argue

"So Scar," says Grian, "I've been doing research."

He's got the video call up on Mumbo's monitor, because Mumbo is at work anyway and won't miss it. Scar raises an eyebrow on the other end of the camera.

"I managed to get one of the more easily guilted staff members at the Institute to lend me a book." He grins. "Did you know your spiders probably originate from an extradimensional fear entity?"

"Does Mumbo know you're in his house?" Scar asks after a moment, which Grian thinks is horribly missing the important point at question here.

He waves a- *wing* dismissively, and hears something fall from a shelf. "That's not important. Do you want to hear about the fear gods or not?"

"I was just wondering! Of *course* I want to hear about the fear gods," Scar says, sounding unreasonably offended that he would even imply otherwise. And then, after a thoughtful moment: "Do you think fear gods would be interested in an investment opportunity?"

"See, this is why I came to you with this!" Grian says, moving to clap his hands before hastily aborting. "I knew you would understand. I *have* an investment opportunity. That being me. I'm the investment opportunity. I just need to choose an investor."

"Go on?"

"So, you've already got a patron, or whatever, right. Yours is the Web, probably, because apparently that's spiders and also being a manipulative bastard."

"Why thank you!" Scar says brightly.

"You're welcome. I have this list here of all of them, and what I need *your* help with is deciding which would be most profitable for me to devote myself to."

"Oh, well, lay it on me then," says Scar. He leans back. "Of course, I *will* be charging you commission if you do successfully make an investment. Get invested in."

"Obviously," agrees Grian. "I'm sure we can settle on something agreeable to both of us later. Hold on a sec."

The list was kindly copied over by the incredibly drowsy-looking assistant Grian had also gotten the book from, once it became clear that Grian wouldn't be allowed to actually remove the book in

question from the Archives. He'd stuck it in Grian's pocket, which was mostly inaccessible to Grian, so Grian hadn't bothered to take it out until now.

Unfortunately, he can't remember all the items on it, so he leans over and manages to awkwardly snag a corner of it with his teeth. Maybe he *should* have called the cops on Cleo. This is criminally *irritating*.

He deposits the slightly crumpled list on the desk and flattens it with his chin, and then looks back up to see Scar visibly holding in giggles.

"Shut up," says Grian. His throat-feathers are all ruffled from the weird angle, but he can't really reach them with a non-wing limb to smooth them. And wings are really quite terrible at smoothing things, he's found.

"You always put on such a funny show, though!" points out Scar.

Grian makes a face at him, and then grumbles and glances down at the list. "So, we've got the Buried, first."

"Sounds creepy," Scar says.

Grian gives him a flat look, and continues. "I guess the Buried is like... burying people alive? Which might be fun... next is the Corruption, which, I think, is a hard pass. I don't want bugs in me."

Scar frowns theatrically. On cue, a spider skitters out from behind one of his ears.

"The Dark... is the dark. Which also has potential to be *very* fun. Desolation is like arson, which is promising, but also I don't know if it's the sort of destruction I personally enjoy, you know? The End... nah. The Eye... fear of being watched. *That* has potential. I think I could do a lot with that."

"Should I be taking notes?" Scar asks. "I didn't realize how many of these there were."

Grian rolls his eyes. "Well, one of us probably ought to, and it's not going to *beme*, is it?"

"Alright, alright!" Scar says, putting one hand up while fishing around on his desk for sticky notes with the other. "Keep going, don't mind me."

"The Flesh is all mutilation and body stuff, which... maybe. I might've had enough of that already, to be honest. But the *Hunt-hm*. Chasing and terrorizing... that's another one that could be very fun. The Lonely... no thanks. That seems boring. The Slaughter... maybe. Definite maybe. But I would be worried about that getting boring too, I think."

"You're terrifying, you know that?" Scar says idly, not looking up from where he's scribbling notes down.

"Well, I was paralyzed and tortured in a closet for six months, *I* think I've earned it," Grian says back, slightly huffy.

"Hey, I wasn't complaining!" complains Scar. "I think it's charming. No friend group is complete without a large and menacing bird of prey."

"As long as you don't expect to remain unmenaced," says Grian.

"I would never expect to remain unmenaced by *you*," says Scar. "Even my optimism doesn't stretch

that far."

"Well, as long as we're on the same page," says Grian. He glances down at his list. "Hm... the Spiral. Disorientation, liminal spaces, that sort of thing. I could definitely work with that, although the disorientation might end up being a bit of a dealbreaker. The Stranger is Cleo's patron apparently, so I'm gonna call that a no. It's a little too subtle for me, anyway. Kinda boring."

"She *did* do a good job making you look eerie."

Grian rolls his eyes. "Moving on, uh, the Vast. Maybe! I can see the potential, but I wouldn't call it my *top* choice... Same category as the Spiral."

"Not huge on it myself, I would say," notes Scar. A spider has spun a line down from the brim of his hat and deposited itself on the eraser of his pencil.

"Your spiders are so small you'd lose them," says Grian. "And speaking of which, the last one is the Web. Which definitely sounds fun. Although the spiders are a little discouraging; I'm not sure I want to worship the Web if spiders are required. I've already got a bird theme!"

"Can't muddle the theme," Scar agrees, nodding sagely and bouncing the pencil idly back and forth between his fingers. The spider, presumably, holds on for dear life. "That's all of 'em?"

"Yeah, I think so," Grian says, prodding at the folded bottom edge of the paper with a claw to make sure there's no more writing hidden in the fold.

"And our goal here is to figure out which one of these investors, as we've been euphemizing, is right for you," Scar sums up. "So, Grian, what do you think you'd be primarily looking for in a patron fear god?"

Grian scrunches his face up in thought. "Fun? I guess? And, uh- *versatility*. That's the big one. I would want something that gives me a lot of room to work in. So... probably knock Buried off the list? Same for Desolation. Vast, too. Like, I think those would be fun in the short term, but they might get old in the long term."

"Thinking ahead! That's good, that's good," Scar says, scribbling on his notepad. "So that leaves us with, I think... Dark, Eye, Hunt, Spiral... maybe Web? I don't think you should do Web, honestly. That's my thing! You can't steal my thing."

"Well, if you say that, it just makes me want to do it more, you know."

"It just seems rude," Scar says. "I think you should be at least two degrees of separation from somebody before it's okay to copy his brand."

Grian frowns, ignoring him. "Dark, Eye, Hunt, Spiral, Web... agh. They all sound fun! Even if I take Spiral and Web off the list..."

"You know what you *could* do," Scar says thoughtfully after a moment, spider-silk smooth.

"You're the asset here, right? The investment opportunity? I mean, genuinely terrifying freak of nature, right here, up for the bidding- why don't you try and find out what *they'll* offer *you*?"

"Oh, *now* we're onto something," says Grian, grinning. He leans forward, catching himself just in time before he tries to brace on the edge of the desk with arms he doesn't have. "Scar, you're a genius. I *knew* coming to you about this was a good idea."

"Aw, you flatterer, you," says Scar. "I'm a genius with a price tag, is what I am."

"Any genius who doesn't think of charging for his services isn't a genius at all, that's what I always say," says Grian.

Scar nods emphatically. The spider on his pencil, brave terrified little thing, takes the chance to jump back to the brim of his hat. "A luxury few can afford."

Grian giggles. He feels the feathers on his chest and stomach fluff up a little with the laughter, which hasn't gotten any more comfortable since the first time it happened, curled up on Scott's couch and trying not to snicker at Joel's reaction to his wings.

He needs to get himself some looser clothes. Maybe one of the people at the Institute know a tailor willing to work with people who've been turned into birds? Maybe he can blackmail Cleo into modifying some more shirts for him. She apparently knows how to work a sewing machine. And she *so* owes him. That's a problem for Tomorrow Grian, though. Current Grian has something *way* more exciting to worry about.

"So, I'll be holding an auction," he confirms. "For the right to my dedicated servitude and also possibly my immortal soul, because I don't actually know how these fear gods do deals."

"Right," says Scar. He scribbles something else down with his now-spiderless pencil. "You'll need an auctioneer."

"Want the job?"

"You know, I was *hoping* you'd say that. I'll even get my auctioneer's license renewed!"

"They have those? Nevermind- consider it a deal, then," agrees Grian. He shakes his wings out. "So, the next problem is figuring out how to *contact* them."

Scar contemplates for a moment, tapping his cheek with his finger. "Was there anything in that book you were reading about getting their attention?"

Grian frowns. "Not that I can remember. Mostly just advice on how *not* to attract their attention." He pauses. "And how to survive them, I guess."

"Man, not even any weird rituals? I was kinda hoping you'd have to like, sacrifice a chicken under the full moon at midnight or something. Useless," says Scar. "Although I guess that means it might be *easier* to get them to notice you? If they're not used to people trying to make business proposals to them."

"Maybe," says Grian. "I *would* have to make sure to get all the ones I'm interested in listening at the *same* time, though. That might be tricky."

"Mmm," hums Scar. "I'll think about it."

Distantly, Grian hears an insistent meow, and almost starts talking to Maui before he realizes it's coming from the call and anyway his cats are still at Timmy's.

"Not now, though! Jellie needs me!"

"Of course," says Grian. "I'll call you tomorrow?"

"As long as you get the time zones right and it's not in the middle of my meeting," agrees Scar. "I've got important schemes to work out with Cub, I gotta focus! But I'll think about solutions. And, of course, payment."

"Naturally," says Grian, and grins. "I'm *very* excited. I think we've really hit on something golden here."

And when Scar grins back, his smile is wicked, and Grian couldn't be happier with the outcome.

Well, except for whatever exorbitant price he'll have to pay for the help. But that... is Future Grian's problem.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!