

MAG – 086 – Tucked In

Content warnings:

- Nyctophobia
- Human remains
- Body horror
- Paranormal encounter
- Physical violence
- Graphic injury

Discussions of: amnesia, paranormal impersonation, death, sadism

Mentions of: corpses, disappearances, emotional abuse, gaslighting, gunshots

SFX: low drone, high pitched tone

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode eighty-six. Tucked In.

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro – Continued]

[Tape clicks on.]

TIM

(Sighs) Statement of... uh, Benjamin Hatendi... Hateendi? Regarding a... a blanket. Dead friend. Monster. Regarding his unavoidable and gruesome end. How he tried to hide. He couldn't. Statement is from... 1983, March 2nd. And I guess... I guess I'm doing this one. Tim Stoker. Archival assistant... Archival prisoner at the Magnus Institute.

Statement.

“My parents never let me have a nightlight. I was always afraid, but they were ju–”

Ugh, this is stupid.

This is stupid. Look, if, if anyone’s listening to this useless tape, it was stupid when John was doing it, and it’s stupid now. I mean, I mean, just what’s the point? We might as well be engraving them on wax cylinders.

[The statement rustles.]

Whoever is listening to this, right now: you’re wasting your time. And if you work for the Magnus Institute, get out. If you can. I mean, that’s what really pisses me off, you know, you spend so long getting used to a jo–

[Someone knocks on the door.]

Uh, come in?

[Melanie enters.]

MELANIE

Hi... Tim, right?

TIM

Right.

MELANIE

I’m Melanie.

TIM

Right.

MELANIE

Melanie King?

TIM

I know who you are.

MELANIE

I... Did Martin not explain?

TIM

Yeah. Yeah, you work here now.

MELANIE

You sound thrilled.

TIM

It's not you. It's his fault. He didn't warn you properly, and now you're trapped here. With us.

MELANIE

Oh, is this, this whole 'you can't quit because of spooky magic' deal?

TIM

Yeah. You tried?

MELANIE

No. And I'm not going to. I need a job, and it's fine here. I like it. It's quiet.

TIM

Sure. If you ignore all the corpses. And the monsters. And the disappearances.

MELANIE

Oh, trust me, you'll find plenty of those elsewhere. If this whole 'give quitting a try' thing is meant to be some kind of subtle hint... I... I just feel like you two don't want me here.

TIM

We don't. Martin's not big on change. I don't want anyone to be here.

MELANIE

Well, thanks for making me feel like part of the team.

TIM

You're suspicious and resentful, right? Welcome aboard.

MELANIE

Good talk.

TIM

Wait. Tell me about the two Sashas.

MELANIE

Oh? What?

TIM

Martin said you were rambling about there being two Sashas.

MELANIE

Look, I don't, I don't know, I... um, well, the... the first time I came to give a statement, there was a young woman working here named Sasha, er, and then when I, when I came in again there was a different woman working here. And everyone called her Sasha as well, which... I didn't think it was too strange. I mean, i-i-it's a common name, but everyone kept saying they were the same person and, and they weren't. At all! John kept saying there'd only ever been one Sasha working there, but they were totally different. And everyone's been giving me really strange looks whenever I talk about it.

TIM

What did she look like?

MELANIE

What? Sorry?

TIM

The first Sasha. What... What was she like?

MELANIE

Uh, she was... um... I don't, er... maybe I'm... I'm getting it wrong. I just... okay, I can't, er –

TIM

No. I... think I understand.

MELANIE

Well, can you explain?

TIM

Who am I even sad for?

MELANIE

I... I'm, I'm sorry... I don't, er...

TIM

Um... I'm, I'm going to lie down. Um. Can you record this for me?

It's part of your job now, I guess. The tape's already running.

MELANIE

Sure. Sure thing.

[Tim leaves, the door opening and closing]

MELANIE

Uh, right. Benjamin Hatendi's account of... oh for... a, a strange encounter. Er, statement date, March 2nd, 1983. Melanie King recording. Apparently.

So, uh... marker! **(Melanie claps)** Right. Here we go. Er...

MELANIE (STATEMENT)

My parents never let me have a night light. I was always afraid, but they were just that sort of stubborn which doubled down when I screamed or cried about something, instead of actually listening. So no matter how terrified I might have been, I would always end up sleeping in the dark.

I don't know why it was such a cornerstone of their vision to see me grow up strong, but even an adult they would tell me how they "helped me get over my

fear of the dark”. It was such a point of pride for them that I could never bring myself to tell them, to say that the fear never really went away. I’ve heard that being exposed to the source of your terror over and over again can help break its power over you, numb you to it, but in my experience it just teaches you to hide from it. Sometimes that might mean hiding in a quiet corner of your mind, but sometimes it’s literally a blanket.

It wasn’t a specific blanket, either. I didn’t have it from childhood, or carry it for security; it was just whatever was on my bed. Thin summer sheet or thick duvet, it didn’t matter, as long as I could duck my head underneath it and curl into a ball, I was fine. Weirdly, the fact it was still pitch black when I was underneath those covers didn’t bother me a bit. The darkness beneath the blankets was my darkness: it was warm and cosy. I trusted it. But that cold, hateful gloom waiting just beyond the thin wall of my sanctuary never really left my mind.

Eventually I grew up, like pretty much everyone, and as the years passed I forgot my childhood fear. The blanket was just there to keep me warm. Until last week.

The mother of an old friend of mine, Robin Patton, called me out of the blue. Now, at that point I hadn’t really seen Robin in about three years, but she sounded close to panic so I listened. She told me she hadn’t heard from him in almost a month, and was convinced something terrible had happened to her son. Apparently he lived alone, and I was the closest friend to Robin’s address. She begged me to go over, and see if anything was wrong.

I feel a bit guilty about how long I put off going, although in the end I guess it didn’t matter. Robin and I hadn’t parted on bad terms or anything, he was just

a bit dull, and I had no real wish to bring him back into my life. Still, I couldn't *not* check on him, not after that phone call. So, eventually, I drove the half hour over to his cheerful suburban bungalow.

It was almost evening by the time I got out, and as I walked up to the front door I noticed that none of the windows were lit. I was reassured, though, when I saw a shape watching me from the kitchen. I couldn't really make it out, and it disappeared almost as soon as I'd seen it, but I managed to convince myself that it was Robin, probably wondering why I'd shown up at his door unannounced. I kept telling myself there was no reason to feel so uneasy. When I reached the front door, I saw it was open, and shadows spilled out of it like paint.

It wasn't open so wide that you could have seen it from the street, but it was immediately clear that something was very wrong with Robin Patton, and I already regretted getting involved. I expected the door to creak when I pulled it, but the hinges moved in complete silence. Inside, everything was gloomy, lit only by a few stray beams of sunset that had managed to slip in past the heavy curtains. There was no sign of any figure watching from the window, but something in the light made the shadows seem as if they were moving. Forwards and backwards, shifting to a beat that only they could hear. I fumbled for a moment or two, looking for a light switch, until I was able to flick the ceiling lights on and the shadows retreated back to where they should have been.

Inside, the place was an absolute mess. Robin had never been a tidy guy, but it looked like it hadn't been cleaned in weeks. A thin film of dust coated everything, and there was this rancid smell pervading the place, that I thought must have been coming from the fridge. On the wall hung a calendar, still

pinned to January. From the looks of things, he hadn't been living there in over a month. I was about to head out, and find a phone somewhere to call Robin's mother, and then maybe the police, when I caught another glimpse of movement. I saw through a crack in one of the doors that lead further into the house. This time it was a slow, languid motion, and I was absolutely sure that I'd seen it.

I called out for Robin, or for anyone who might be in there to respond, but I got nothing but that same thick silence. My heart was thumping so hard I could feel my legs shake as I approached the door. I pushed it open, and reached for a light switch on the wall. I found it, turned it on and... nothing happened. The room remained completely black, and for the first time in almost twenty years I began to feel that childish fear of the dark.

Thankfully, I always keep a heavy torch in the car, in case I break down somewhere at night, so I went to fetch it. The weight in my hand was reassuring and solid, as I walked slowly back and into the darkened room. In the light I could see this was Robin's bedroom. There was a small writing desk covered with papers, a large oak closet, a single bed missing its covers, and a door to a small en suite bathroom in the corner. As I went in, I noticed the dust in here wasn't as thick as in the rest of the house, and that the last entry marked on his desktop calendar was the 12th of February. Empty food packets and bottles were strewn about the room and piled up in the corner. It looked as though Robin hadn't left his bedroom in weeks. The rancid odour that I'd caught wind of outside was stronger in here, and I no longer thought it was coming from the fridge.

Slowly and carefully I made my way towards the wardrobe. It was a stark, imposing thing: a good two feet taller than I was. The smell was making my

eyes water, but I pushed through. Even if I knew what I was going to find inside, I felt like I had to open it, if only so I could accurately describe it to the police. So that's what I did. I gripped the ice-cold brass handle, took as deep a breath as I could endure, and opened the door to the closet.

The shape that slid out did not, at first, resemble anything I would have called human. It looked like a large, wet bag, glistening and slick, with a dark liquid that oozed from it onto the floor. I won't even try to describe the smell. It was only when I saw a shrivelled, nearly skeletal hand gripping the edge of the bag from the inside that I realised what I was actually looking at.

It was Robin, but when he had climbed into that cupboard he had taken the sheets from his bed. He had wrapped them tightly around himself as he sat in there, clutching them in what I can only assume was mortal terror. And now, in death, they had fused to him, his own putrefying fluids mixing with whatever gross liquid had soaked into that thick fabric. How long had he sat there waiting? Hours? Days? Had it been since the 12th, two weeks before I had come to check on him?

And as I stood there, in utter horror, the growing pool of dark liquid touched the tip of my shoe. That's it. That's the moment that I believe it started for me. I don't know why particularly that moment fixates me, that there must have been dozens of other ways I called attention to myself. But even so, whenever I look back, I *cannot* shake the conviction that it was that moment I sealed my fate. Because I didn't watch where I put my feet.

I called the police at that point. They were very understanding, although once a search turned up nothing they didn't pay any attention to my insistence someone else had been in the house. For all the strangeness of it, there didn't

seem to be any actual evidence of foul play, so I was really just offered some condolences, and sent on my way. They were the ones that called Robin's mother in the end, and to be honest I'm glad. I don't really think I could have handled that conversation.

And then it was over. Nothing for me to do but go home, and try to process what I was feeling, what I had seen in that dusty bungalow. And I thought I was doing okay. At least while the daylight held. But that night it came for me.

I woke up at 2:40 in the morning. I don't know why. There was no sound to disturb me, just a sudden and urgent need to no longer be sleeping. And as I opened my eyes I felt that old fear of the dark hit me again with such force my muscles began to seize up. I raised my head just enough to get a clear view of the door to my room, and I saw what I somehow knew I was going to see.

It was impossible to make out any details of the form that stood in the doorway, it was simply a patch of shadow even darker than the night that surrounded it. A silhouette in the pitch black. At first I thought it was a trick of my eyes adjusting to the dark, but then it began to move. Its body was fat and bulbous, with no limbs or head, so when it came towards me it did so with a slow, undulating pulse along the floor. I could see its outside was covered in what might have been feelers or fleshy tubes, and as it gradually made its way towards me I could see them flicking out and spasming wildly, in what looked horribly like excitement.

Instinct, honed throughout my entire childhood, kicked in and I pulled the thick blanket I was under up and over my head. I gripped the edges close to my chest, weeping and muttering desperate prayers. I clung to it, my tiny island of safety and protection, not even daring to stick my arm out to grab my phone

from the nightstand. Who would I have called, anyway? Who could possibly have been prepared to deal with something like this?

As my mind raced through the possibilities, I gradually began to realise that I could hear nothing from beyond the blanket, nor did it appear I had been devoured by whatever the thing in the darkness was. Very gently I poked my head out from my sanctuary. It was still there, looming in the doorway, utterly still. As soon as I saw it, though, it convulsed back into movement and started once again making its way towards me, painstaking and slow. I dived back under the covers, gripping them tighter than ever.

Another hour passed, and then two, but it was only when I poked my head out that the thing would move. As ridiculous as it sounds, it seemed that while I was under the covers it couldn't move. It couldn't get me.

I stayed under the rest of the night. When the daylight began streaming in the next morning, I finally left the safety of my bed to see what had become of the thing. It was gone, unsurprisingly, and in its place there was simply a small patch of dark, foul-smelling water.

I wasn't quite ready to celebrate, though, and the following night proved me right. Because it came back. I woke again, and saw it start that twitching, torturous journey towards me. So back under the covers I went, heart racing, desperately trying to think through what might be happening to me. In retrospect it's odd that at no point did I even consider that I might be hallucinating. I never had *any* doubts that the thing was real. At some point I finally fell asleep, and I guess I managed to stay under that blanket.

That's been my life for the last week and a half. I wake up, gripped by terror of the dark, and hide under the covers from this thing that only comes closer

when I leave their protection. It's been awful, obviously, but in the end it wasn't the gradual wearing down of my nerves that got me. If anything, it was the opposite. I got too comfortable.

Last night I woke up like before. I sensed it there, but as I raised the covers over my head, I realised that I wasn't worried. Fear had given way to routine. I lay there, warm and protected, and simply waited to fall back to sleep. But this time, what I felt instead was a sudden weight pressing down on the end of my bed. Whipping tendrils began to smack and grasp against my flimsy fabric barrier. I could see that shape of absolute darkness looming over me, quivering with triumph. Then I heard a voice, crisp and clear, whispering.

And it said, "The blanket never did anything."

I won't describe what happened after that. You've taken plenty of photos of my back and shoulders already. To say it hurts is the least of its horrors. That thing will come for me again tonight, I know it will, and there is nothing that can protect me. I just thought sharing my story might help some other poor idiot in the future.

I miss my blanket. Hiding was always so much easier.

MELANIE

(Melanie claps again) Marker.

Uh, statement ends.

Well, er, that was... I suppose this is what I do now. Um... there, there aren't any photos in the file, er, certainly not of weird supernatural injuries. There's a photocopy of a death certificate for Benjamin Hatendi – looks like Martin has highlighted the cause of death. Says "Unknown – possible biological agent. All

samples incinerated”. It’s dated as March 7th 1983, five days after this statement.

Then there are some old cuttings about Robin Patton. Profiles from magazines... um... Oh, he must have been quite something in the hiking community. Ah, apparently he wrote a book. Something about the best natural pools and lakes for swimming. Yeah, mostly just background fluff, and pictures of the guy emerging topless from waterfalls. Hmm, wasn’t bad-looking, before... well... that.

Er, anyway, er, doesn’t look relevant.

I, I suppose that’s it. Er, the only other thing in there is... a sealed Ziploc bag containing an old fabric tag. Fantastic. Looks like it might be from a mattress or a duvet, maybe. It’s, uh, it’s got some rather pronounced dark stains on the end. It’s probably nonsense. It’s all probably nonsense. But I’m going to keep it sealed.

Uh... I suppose... that’s a wrap.

[Tape clicks on. Tape clicks off. The scene changes to a café.]

ARCHIVIST

Thank you for meeting me.

MELANIE

Well, why wouldn’t I? It’s not like you’re ‘wanted for murder’.

ARCHIVIST

Shh. Can you keep it down?

MELANIE

Sure, I'll just quietly sit here and become an accessory, shall I?

ARCHIVIST

You, you – You know I didn't do it.

MELANIE

Oh. Oh, do I? Is that what I know?

ARCHIVIST

Alright. Why didn't you send the police, then? If you genuinely think I'm a killer, why meet me?

MELANIE

W– I mean, it's not... it's not like you've got any reason to kill me.

[The Archivist grunts, noncommittally]

MELANIE

Fine. I don't think you did it. But I still don't want to get caught up in whatever it is.

ARCHIVIST

Should have thought about that before you joined the Institute.

MELANIE

What is the deal with you people? Look, I know it's kind of a boys' club, but you all really hate me being there, don't you?

ARCHIVIST

What? No, I – There's a lot of very messed up things going on there and, I... I mean, we were already tied to them, but you I just... You didn't need to get involved.

MELANIE

I really don't think that's true.

ARCHIVIST

How's the leg?

MELANIE

Fine. Got shot by a ghost.

ARCHIVIST

Uh... er, what?

MELANIE

Look, can we not do that now? I'm really not in the mood. What do you want?

ARCHIVIST

I... Right. It's... like I said, there's a lot of messed up stuff at the Institute, and... I think the murders might be the least of it. I need someone on the inside to keep an eye on things, let me know what's going on. I'd ask someone else, but...

MELANIE

Tim hates you, and Martin's probably being watched.

ARCHIVIST

And Elias is my chief suspect, so... I'm also rather missing the library. My investigative tools out here are, uh, lacking.

MELANIE

You know what? Fine. Fine! But you tell me everything. Okay? Everything.

ARCHIVIST

I mean... you, you won't believe it.

MELANIE

I don't care.

ARCHIVIST

Alright. Alright.

MELANIE

Start with Sasha.

ARCHIVIST

Okay.

[Tape clicks off.]

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]

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