

MAG – 028 – Skin Tight

Content Warnings

- Arguments
- Ghosts
- Smoking
- Hospitals
- Graphic injury
- **Mentions of:** Blood
- **SFX:** Brief static

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode Twenty Eight Skin Tight

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro - Continues]

[CLICK]

JONATHAN SIMS

Please state your name and the subject of your experience.

MELANIE

Into that? You're joking.

JONATHAN SIMS

I can assure you this will record just fine.

MELANIE

I knew you guys were a bit... slapdash, but this is absurd.

JONATHAN SIMS

No doubt you're used to a higher calibre of equipment when pretending to see ghosts in old churchyards and mental institutions

MELANIE

People like a show. People like our show. And, even if we do ham it up a bit, even we do add a bit of sparkle, we're still more respected and evidence-based paranormal investigators than you and your lot.

(Mocking laugh)

JONATHAN SIMS

We are not 'paranormal investigators'. We are researchers. Scholars.

MELANIE

Whatever. The fact is, we may play it up a bit for the camera, but that's because you can only look at temperature spikes and EMF readings for so long. We still only look into genuine, documented supernatural phenomena. You take any ridiculous story, from any drugged-up, dreaming, traumatised idiot off the street. Vampires, monsters under the bed, mind control – really! Who cares about evidence, who cares about scientific instruments when you can just tell a story to the Magnus Institute!

JONATHAN SIMS

And yet you've come to make a statement.

MELANIE

Well, yeah... But...

JONATHAN SIMS

Let me guess. None of your ‘respectable’, paranormal investigators would believe you?

MELANIE

(SIGHS)

JONATHAN SIMS

Well, let me be quite clear. Chances are very strong that I won’t believe you either. But we will take your statement. And we will look into it for you. Now, please state your name and the subject of your experience.

MELANIE

My name is Melanie King. I’ve got a YouTube channel called Ghost Hunt UK.

JONATHAN SIMS

And your statement is regarding...

MELANIE

What I saw at the abandoned Cambridge Military Hospital when we were filming there in January 2015.

JONATHAN SIMS

Recording date 17th April 2016. Hold on, the Cambridge Military Hospital? I was under the impression the hauntings there were very well-documented.

Why would none of your ‘respectable’ colleagues believe you? I would have thought it would be right up their alley.

MELANIE

Because what I saw had nothing to do with the hospital itself. At least, I don’t think it did.

JONATHAN SIMS

Go on.

MELANIE

Well, we’d been angling to film there for months. The show is pretty standard stuff – we head to the location after dark, we explore a bit, we set up the equipment, and then, of course, we spend some time afterwards analysing the data and...

JONATHAN SIMS

Seeing ghosts?

MELANIE

Well, yeah. Y’know what? Sometimes, sure. We do. We get evidence. Anyway, we’d been angling to go into the CMH for months, er, but I couldn’t get permission. Apparently there’s asbestos in the walls; it makes it “too much of a health and safety hazard”. It was due to be pulled down and turned into a housing development in June, though, so we were on a bit of deadline. Luckily, we’re an independent show. I don’t have anyone breathing down my neck or

checking my legals about this sort of thing. And it wouldn't be the first time that we were going to do something...

JONATHAN SIMS

Illegal?

MELANIE

Unorthodox! And hey, the worst that we've ever got before was a fine, so we figured it wasn't going to be too much of a problem. The team going in was meant to be me, my co-host Andy...

JONATHAN SIMS

Full names, please.

MELANIE

My co-host, Andy Caine, as well as Peter Warhol on sound and Antonia Farron, er, Toni, doing camera work. Thing is Pete got cold feet a few days before we were due to head out. Apparently he just wasn't comfortable with the possibility of asbestos. I guess I can understand, but it meant we were down a sound guy, so I put out feelers to see if anyone had any contacts who could step in. Well, Georgie Barker, who hosts the "What the Ghost?" podcast knew someone. She'd said she'd done a few location episodes of WTG with a sound engineer by the name of Sarah Baldwin, and could vouch for her reliability, although Georgie warned she was "a little bit unsocial". I reckoned we didn't need her talkative as long as she knew her stuff, so I gave Sarah a call. She agreed to help us out, and I figured the episode was going to come out just fine.

So, the night of the twelfth rolled around, and Toni came round to pick us up. She's the one with the van, so generally does the driving. Me and Andy live together, so the three of us headed over to pick up Sarah. Her address was listed as in Sydenham, down in South London, but when we pulled up the building seemed dark. I don't think it was abandoned or anything like that, but it certainly didn't seem like anyone was home. Andy hopped out and buzzed her number on the doorbell, and after a minute of waiting there, there was no reply. We were all just getting a little bit antsy, because if we don't have a sound tech, we don't have a show. So I gave Sarah a ring. And it went straight through to voicemail. I was just about ready to scream in frustration, but almost as soon as I put the phone down I got a call from an unknown number. I answered it, and immediately I heard her voice, asking if we were outside. I said yeah, and she ended the call immediately. We all watched the door, but another two minutes passed, and still no-one came out. Then, out of nowhere we heard a knock on the back of the van.

I hopped out, and standing there was Sarah. She was short, really short, with dark brown hair cropped close. She was wearing black cargo trousers and a grey T-shirt, with a light black jacket over the top. I... I thought that was a bit off as it was the middle of January. I mean, sure, it was a mild winter, but it's a long way from T-shirt weather. I introduced myself, but she just nodded and lit a cigarette. I was about to say that we'd prefer she didn't smoke in the van, but she'd already opened up the back door and climbed inside, puffing away. I remembered Georgie's warning that she was 'a little bit unsocial' and kicked myself for not asking more about it. Still, she was here now, we had a sound tech, so we were going to be able to have an episode.

It was about a two hour drive to the CMH. It's down in Aldershot, in Hampshire, and I've got to say that was about the longest two hours of my life. Sarah didn't talk much. If you asked her any questions, you'd just get a one word answer, and, I swear, she worked hard to find the shortest word she could. She smoked constantly, so we had to ride with the windows down and the van was freezing. And there was also... I don't know. The oddest smell. It was definitely Sarah. It smelled like a really bad perfume: sharp and faintly floral, but not like any scent I could place. I didn't like it, but it was hardly noticeable through those damned cigarettes. I could tell Toni was having a hard time too. Andy seemed happy enough, but he's one of the most laid-back people I've ever met, so no surprise there.

We got into Aldershot about 8pm and headed toward the old hospital. It took a bit of finding, but eventually we saw it standing there, dark and silent against the night sky. It's a pretty imposing building, the sharp-tipped clocktower above the main hall. We parked a little way away, just in case there was security that might have stumbled across the van, and walked towards it. As we got closer, I noticed that Sarah was hanging back. I asked her if she was okay, and she just looked at me and said, "You didn't tell me about this place." There was real anger in that voice. I was surprised, not only because that was the most words I'd ever heard her strung together, but also because I'd been really quite detailed about where we were going and the history of the place when I first contacted her. I said as much, but she just shook her head. I asked if there was going to be a problem, and she paused, lit another cigarette, and gave me a slow shrug. Then without a word she picked up her bag and started walking towards the main building.

Getting inside wasn't a problem. The ground floor windows were large, and it looked like we weren't the first trespassers wanting to get inside; a few of the boards covering them had been pried away already. So, we turned on our torches and headed inside.

Now, the particular ghost we were after that episode was a grey lady. There are grey ladies everywhere. I mean, it's not like it's an official ghost classification, but if you find somewhere haunted in England, there's a good chance that one or more of the ghosts will be called "The Grey Lady". Old hospitals, asylums, orphanages, they're usually believed to be the ghost of a nurse or something, anywhere that women had a duty. And the Cambridge Military Hospital was no exception to that. Various old tales of soldiers being visited by an apparition in the night while recuperating on the ward; a few members of the public as it was opened up to the civilian population after the Second World War. They are generally benign encounters, even kind, so we were arguing about whether to try and angle the episode for spookiness, or try and build up a more emotional tale.

So, we started wandering round, recounting the history of the place to camera. We made sure to film any bits of the building that might be creepy enough twice – once with low light in the cold, stark torchlight, then switching out for the warmer bulbs in case we wanted to use the footage for a tragedy angle. The builders had clearly been in already, and marked various areas with spray paint. It was a bit disconcerting, as the shade of red they had used kept making me think that they were blood splashes, so I was leaning towards the 'creepy old hospital' angle. There was also the normal, actual graffiti, of course. Mostly the standard collection of tags, names, but there was one that stood out. It was in what had eventually become the children's ward; over a

mural of Winnie the Pooh, someone had scrawled in black spraypaint the words “Silk will not stitch the butcher’s meat”. So... yeah, by the end we’d pretty much settled on going for the spooky angle.

We hadn’t had any encounters though, so once we’d got the main footage we needed, we headed into the main ward, now a huge, empty room, with only the metal skeleton of curtain runners around the top. We set up the detection equipment, and bedded down for the night. Each of us had a watch, so as to make sure that someone was awake for any contact. I was hesitant to give Sarah a shift, as she’d be acting so strangely the entire time, but when she volunteered for the 2am to 4am shift, y’know, no-one wants that one, I, I couldn’t easily say no.

I was on the shift before, and there didn’t seem anything much to report. A slight drop in temperature around 1 in the morning, which I filmed, even though in the end we decided not to use that footage. When 2am rolled around, I walked over to where Sarah lay sleeping. She hadn’t been smoking for a while, of course, and that weird floral perfume of hers was stronger than ever. I reached out to touch her on the shoulder and wake her up, when she rolled over and looked right at me. There was no sign of fatigue in her eyes, and I couldn’t help but wonder if she’d been asleep at all. Or maybe just lying very, very still. I tried not to think about it as I crawled into my sleeping bag on the cold hospital floor, and the last thing I heard before I drifted off was the click of Sarah Baldwin’s lighter.

I woke up about an hour later. I don’t know what woke me, but the others were all still asleep. I realised that I couldn’t smell cigarettes, and looking around it appeared Sarah had wandered off. It was almost pitch dark, with only a small amount of moonlight creeping in through the boarded windows. I

turned on a torch and checked the readings. There were no spikes in EMF, but it looked like the temperature had dropped sharply about 10 minutes before. I waited for another five minutes, but when Sarah still hadn't returned I started to get a bit worried.

I should have woken the others, but if it turned out she'd just gone to the bathroom, I didn't want to embarrass her in front of everyone. In that case she should have got one of us up to take over watching, anyway, but she'd hardly been the most professional while she was working with us, so it wouldn't have surprised me if she hadn't. After another five minutes, I decided to go look for her. Maybe the place was getting to me a bit, but all my suspicions about Sarah were making me paranoid. I decided not to take a torch. Instead, I took one of the cameras we weren't using and turned on the night vision setting. Through the viewscreen I was able to see where I was going pretty well.

I started to check the ground floor. The night vision cast everything into stark shapes, and every time I turned the corner it seemed like there was something there, just beyond the range of the camera. I couldn't see or hear anything, but it was just there. I could feel it. There was a smell as well, growing stronger. It wasn't cigarette smoke, though, or Sarah's strange perfume. It smelled of copper, with another scent beneath it, acrid and sour, with the faintest hint of ammonia. I'll, I'll admit it, I was scared. Scared enough that I didn't even think about how great the whole thing would have looked in our show. I didn't look into the camera, or provide any commentary, or make any move except keeping a close watch on the display.

As I walked up the stairs towards the upper floor, I began to hear something. It sounded like someone was talking. It was low, quick and desperate, with an edge to it that sounded almost like pleading. It was coming from one of the

smaller patient rooms off to the side. I slowly crept towards it, feeling absurd about how terrified I was about being seen.

I reached the door and, using the camera, I peered inside. Sarah was there, with her bag next to her. She was gesticulating wildly and talking, though I couldn't see anyone else in the room with her. I couldn't make out most of it, though I heard the words "trespass" and "unintended" several times, and whispered apologies. I was almost about to call out to her, when she suddenly stood bolt upright. It seemed like she was struggling to breathe. Then I heard an impact, and Sarah seemed to be flung across the room by a heavy blow. She hit the wall hard, and I heard a crack as she slumped down, a smear of blood left on the wall.

I froze. I didn't know what to do. Part of me wanted to run over and see if she was alright, but I just couldn't bring myself to move. After a second or two, Sarah stirred. She shouted something into the room, this time in a language I didn't understand, and dragged herself to her feet. She removed her jacket and I saw that there was something very wrong with her left arm. Bits of it seemed to be hanging off where it had hit the wall. She gripped it with her right hand and, er... well, this is where my colleagues would laugh me out of the industry. She peeled off the skin of her left arm. As if she was taking off a glove. I saw it stretch and come away from whatever was beneath. In the camera's small viewscreen I couldn't see what was there, what was underneath, but it was dark and shiny. I will never forget the sound of the skin coming away from her arm.

Once she had taken it off, she stretched it, and then slipped it back over her hand, pulling it until it was tight. She reached into her bag and, from beneath the packets of cigarettes, she pulled out a staple gun. Around the edges of the

skin, where it met the rest of her, she slowly and deliberately stapled the skin down.

I don't know why that was the point I ran. I could have left at any time before that, but for some reason that was the thing that broke me, and I hurried back to the others as quietly as I could. Sarah returned about fifteen minutes later, and didn't seem to suspect she'd been observed. I lay awake the rest of that night, smelling her cigarette smoke and the traces of her odd floral perfume. I never asked her about it. I never brought it up with the others. We got whatever daylight shots of the Cambridge Military Hospital we needed almost in silence, though Andy kept trying to strike up a conversation. The journey back was no better. I kept trying to get a look at Sarah's arm, but her jacket sleeves covered them completely. We dropped her off in Sydenham and I never saw her again.

In the end it was actually Toni that asked we not work with Sarah Baldwin again. Apparently she'd gotten "weird vibes" and didn't feel comfortable around her. I agreed, though I didn't share my reasons. The episode came out okay, in the end though, um, though I didn't include anything about what I saw that night.

JONATHAN SIMS

Interesting. You say you recorded video of the event?

MELANIE

Yeah, I've given your guys a copy, but watching it back the recording is so distorted that you can't really make anything out.

JONATHAN SIMS

Hmm. And you're sure you weren't... dreaming?

MELANIE

Are you serious?

JONATHAN SIMS

I just have to check every possibility. Obviously working in your field, you must have quite a powerful imagination.

MELANIE

Great! Great! I should have known this was a complete waste of my time.

JONATHAN SIMS Probably. The only corroborating evidence you have is so badly corrupted as to become almost unusable. But, we will do what investigation we can.

MELANIE

(Coarsely) Well, thank you so much.

JONATHAN SIMS

We'll be in touch if we need anything else. Statement ends.

[CLICK]

As I mentioned to Ms. King, there is little in this statement by way of information we can follow up. Cambridge Military Hospital is currently in the process of being turned into a housing development, so there is not much to be done in that regard. There are records of a 'grey lady' ghost appearing in

the past, specifically in the form of a nurse, though none of them come even close to matching this statement in terms of manifestation.

We were unable to track down Sarah Baldwin. The address Ms. King provided in Sydenham has not been occupied for the last six month, and does not list her as a previous tenant. We contacted Georgina Barker, who confirmed that she had worked with Sarah Baldwin on two episodes of her “What the Ghost?” podcast, having previously met her at a networking event. She knew nothing about her personal life and has not seen her since the last episode they worked on. Neither the phone number or email address received any answer or reply. Still, where do I know the name Sarah Baldwin from? If I have the time I might go back over some earlier files, see what I can find.

The footage Ms. King provided was just as a corrupted as she said, being virtually unwatchable. Just static and distortion. There's only one or two frames where the quality is sufficient that anything can be made out. It appears to be an empty hospital room, as described. The only point where it differs from Ms. King's story, is that there appear to be two figures in the shot, rather than just the one. The first seems to be kneeling, and matches the description of Sarah Baldwin. The other figure is much taller, and appears to be pointing, though no features can be made out, it does not appear to be touching the ground.

Recording Ends.

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]

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