

MAG – 107 – Third Degree

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode One Hundred And Seven
Third Degree

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro - Continues]

(Click)

(Background noises of an American airport)

ARCHIVIST

I've just touched down in O'Hare International Airport, following up on the address I received from Xiaoling. Apparently they were staying in West Pullman, Chicago. At least, they were when Gertrude requested the statements forwarded on to them. I'm going to get a hotel and follow up the address tomorrow. I wouldn't normally bother recording here, but I think... I thought I was being followed. I might just be jumpy. I'll keep my eyes peeled.

(Click)

(Click)

ARCHIVIST

The address didn't really pan out. The place deals in short-term rentals, and a dozen people must have gone through that apartment since Gertrude and Gerard stayed there. The owner did remember her, "That old Brit and her

son”, but he said anything they left behind was either sold or thrown out. They did leave a forwarding address of sorts – anything that came was to be sent on to the Usher Foundation in Washington D.C., who I assume would send it on to the Magnus Institute. I asked him about circuses around at the time, and he said he didn’t remember there being one about, but a few nights while Gertrude was there, he had heard “music like one of those little organs” coming from West Pullman Park.

I’m planning to make the journey down to Washington in the hopes that Gertrude might have visited the Usher Foundation. According to our earlier emails they don’t have any record of it on file, but ... I did notice however that one of the Greyhound routes there goes through Pittsburgh. According to the details Melanie retrieved a few months back, Pittsburgh is where Gerard Keay allegedly died. He was admitted to UPMC Presbyterian Emergency Department, having suffered a massive seizure, and died less than a day later. I think I might have to pay a visit and ask around.

Also, I’m definitely being followed. There’s a police officer. I saw him at the airport as well. He stood out a bit, because he wasn’t immigration or TSA or anything like that. He just, he just looked like a Chicago beat cop. Well, I saw him again today, and I’m pretty sure he was watching me.

(Click)

(Click)

(Faint television heard through wall)

ARCHIVIST

(Sighs) The hospital was, uh... interesting. It's all very well being able to get people to answer your questions, but if they genuinely don't remember something, it's not always as useful as it seems. I only found only one person, Lewis Brown, a nurse, who recalls working the night Gerard Keay was admitted. His "mother" was with him, and I almost feel like Gertrude took a perverse joy in the pretence. She explained his condition to the doctor, though could apparently offer no good reason he wasn't in full time treatment, as his cancer was by this point very advanced. They did everything they could to save him, but he had a second seizure shortly after he was admitted and there was nothing they could do. Unless he was somehow able to lie to me, this nurse, Lewis, honestly believes Gerard Keay is dead. Maybe I came all this way for nothing.

There's one thing I do very much need to follow up though. Apparently, Gertrude was arrested shortly afterwards. Lewis only heard about this second hand, but she was, apparently, caught breaking in to the morgue where Gerard's body was being kept. I need some sleep. I haven't seen the cop since I left Chicago, so maybe I was wrong. I'm not feeling so good.

(Click)

(Click)

ARCHIVIST

I've been looking into Gertrude's arrest. I couldn't get through to Melanie, but Martin managed to find a few details online. Gertrude was arrested for trespassing but released shortly afterwards without being charged. I managed to track down the arresting officer, one J. Rebbicks, who said she'd been found over the body of Gerard Keay, reading from a large, strangely shaped book. They'd been unable to determine if the mutilations on Gerard's body had been done by her, and in the end she somehow talked them out of pressing charges. Officer Rebbicks didn't remember what she'd said, but he did recall that she never returned for the book. It was sitting in evidence for almost a year before, as far as Rebbicks was aware, it simply vanished.

I don't really know what to make of any of this. I'm confused, I, I'm dizzy... I think I saw that police officer from Chicago again, in the station where I was talking to Rebbicks. I, I'm not ... feeling well.

(Click)

(Click)

ARCHIVIST

(Weakly) Elias has, um... I got a letter, well, an, an envelope. It's a statement. There's, there's a note, "To tide you over". I don't...

(Archivist sighs)

(Increasing strength) Statement of Howard Ewing, regarding his interview with an unidentified member of British Transport Police. Original statement given

February 1st 2010. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims, Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute, London.

Statement begins.

ARCHIVIST (STATEMENT)

The room is hot. It's small and there are no windows and the table is cheap metal. It shouldn't be so hot in January, but I think maybe they've just got the heating turned up to high. When I rest my arms on the table too long, I can see the patches of sweat on the smooth surface as I lift them up again. I've asked for water so many times and he always says it's coming, but it hasn't come yet.

He just sits there. He's wearing the uniform of the British Transport Police, three pips on his shoulder, but he won't show me his badge. He won't show me any ID. Why are they doing this? I didn't do anything. The officers that brought me here were friendly, kind. It was only after they left and it got so hot, and he started sitting across from me. He's smiling, asking me questions again and again.

What were you doing earlier tonight? My job. I was doing my job, cleaning Moorgate station, me and Kelly and Vihaan. We're the night cleaners, and that's what we were doing. We'd done the ticket office and the corridors and the entrances, and we were getting started on the platforms. Why is that so hard for him to understand?

He laughs, and I wince as sweat drops into my eye.

When did you first notice something was wrong? We had just started work on the platform itself, when we heard the tannoy come on. I don't know how. As far as I knew, it wasn't even powered, but there was that slight crackle, and then, "This is a security announcement". We all waited, confused, but what came out next sounded muffled, like it was coming up through five feet of water. I couldn't make out any of the words and, from the looks on their faces, neither could my colleagues.

We strained to listen, but after a few seconds it was silent again. We all looked at each other, and Vihaan started to shrug, when there came an incredible shrieking noise from the speakers. It felt like needles through my eardrums and it was all I could do to stay upright. I saw Kelly fall to the floor, clutching her head. Then it stopped, completely, and we all looked at each other again, catching our breath, trying to figure out who to report this to and, and how.

How did you become aware of the train? The first thing I noticed was the smell. Even before the noise or the heat, there was a sticky, greasy smell in the air, like burning chemicals and spoiled bacon. I tried to figure out where it was coming from, and realised it got stronger the closer to the tunnel mouth I moved. By the time I reached the end of the platform I was almost gagging. The others looked like they had mostly recovered from the screeching tannoy and were noticing my odd movements, and coming over to investigate themselves. I saw Vihaan pull a face as he approached, and I pointed weakly to the opening of the tunnel. I carefully climbed down onto the tracks, and looked out into the dark that led to Old Street. That's when I saw it.

What did the carriage look like? It was hard to tell through the flames. They were all over it, curling and writhing and crawling through the crevices in the wreckage. It wasn't intact, though; parts of it were clearly crumpled and broken, and I saw shards of steel and glass embedded in the wall that was lit by the dim red flames.

What did it look like? There were people still inside. I could see them, arms and heads reaching out of broken windows and split metal, blackened and rendered almost unrecognisable by the fire and the heat. But they still moved, and twitched, and cried out in pain and terror, scratching at the edge of their burning metal tomb. But everything was choked and surrounded by a thick, acrid black smoke that stung my eyes and lungs, so nothing seemed the same from one moment to the next.

What did it look like? It looked like Hell.

What did you hear? Everything. The tunnel echoed and funnelled the sounds, until I could hear every agonised cry, every pop and crackle of the fire, the groaning of metal that matched the groaning of the wounded and the dying. It all hit me at once, like the tunnel was pushing the tidal wave of sound out just for me. The shape was perfect for a terrible screaming oven. From behind me, I heard the shouts of Kelly and Vihaan, though I don't know if it was because they saw it too, or because they saw me fall to my knees in horror. I could hear the tannoy again, now clearly speaking: "Will Inspector Sands please report. Will Inspector Sands please report." Over and over again.

He smiles, and the tiny room gets hotter.

Who is Inspector Sands? It's a code, one of the codes we use to alert staff to situations of disaster or... fire. It usually means there's a fire. It's to keep people calm. It's meant to not cause any panic, keep them safe even if there's an emergency.

He laughs, and I wish I could go home.

How many people were on the train? I don't know.

What sort of train carriage was it? I don't know.

Where did it come from? I don't know.

Did you scream? Yes. At least, I think so. The back of my throat was dry and hot and painful, so my mouth must have been open. I think I was screaming.

What were your colleagues doing? Vihaan was gripping me by the shoulders, shaking me, yelling at me to wake up. But I *was* awake, I was wide awake, and I think in some ways he was talking to himself. Kelly was walking past me, trying to battle through the choking, rancid smoke. I hope she was planning to try and rescue those trapped in the wreckage, but maybe she was simply trying to join them. I couldn't do anything to help either of them, and I knew that if I touched them, I would burn them.

He inhales, as if in triumph.

And where are they now? They're dead. At least that's what I was told when the officers brought me here. They found no wreckage, nothing in the tunnels, no corpses wailing through an underground inferno, just the dead and burnt bodies of Kelly Dwyer and Vihaan Prasad.

What do you love most in the world? The question sends a shock through my whole body. I know this is what he wants, all he truly cares about. I want to lie, to say that I love nothing and nobody, that I am alone in the world and he'll have to look elsewhere. My tongue burns in my mouth as I try to keep it still.

What do you love most in the world? My father. I love my father more than anything.

Who am I? I don't answer, and he lets me leave.

My father is dead a week later. A heart attack. At the age of 63, everyone is surprised and saddened, but not shocked. I try to tell myself it's a coincidence, that a heart attack is the most natural death in the world, but at the funeral, despite arranging it myself, despite selecting the burial plot and the headstone, I watch as they take my father off for cremation. And nobody can tell me why. They simply say how sorry they are for my loss and hand me my father's ashes. I don't want his ashes.

I know he'll be back, the policeman with three bright pips on his shoulder, and he'll ask me what else I love. And I'll tell him. Then he'll ask me who he is, and I won't say. I don't want to cause any panic.

Statement ends.

(Archivist exhales)

I'm going to bed.

(Click)

(Click)

ARCHIVIST

I feel... a lot better. I'd love to rattle off a list of potential other reasons for this, nice rational causes of recovery, but I think we're past the point of transparent rationalisations. It looks like the recording of statements has now passed over from psychological compulsion into a more physical dependence. I don't know whether this is some sort of classical addiction or something a bit deeper, but either way this is not the time for experimentation. I am on a deadline and if I need to be reading statements to stay well enough, then I suppose that's what I shall do. What irritates me most is that Elias was clearly aware of this, hence his sending me this, which seems to me to serve no other purpose but as a restorative. But, as usual, he chose to keep this very useful information to himself.

I think I've reached another dead end here. I've decided it's the last one. The Institute needs me there, not jetting around the world following a cold trail that may very well not have led to anything useful the first time. I've a Greyhound booked down to Washington DC tomorrow. I'm going to stop in at

the Usher Foundation, just in case they have anything that might help, then I'm flying home.

(Click)

(Click)

(Sounds of busy roadside diner)

ARCHIVIST

(Quietly) I'm at a rest stop. The bus has— they're giving us a comfort break. But there's a woman here, in the café, the diner, whatever. I've seen her car. I think she's following the bus. She's early 30s, I think, dressed... nondescript: hard-wearing denim, old leather... She is definitely watching me. She doesn't look like a—she's coming over, I thi— Hello! C-can I help you?

JULIA

(Casual) Sure. Whatever you're reaching for, don't.

ARCHIVIST

Uh, what?

JULIA

Keep your hands on the table and we can all walk away from this.

ARCHIVIST

You're English?

JULIA

So are you. Ah-ah! Hands on the table.

ARCHIVIST

Who are you?

JULIA

Julia. Who are you?

ARCHIVIST

I— Uh, you don't... know me?

JULIA

Should I?

ARCHIVIST

N-no, I guess. Just... everyone normally seems to.

JULIA

Hm. Good for you.

ARCHIVIST

Not really.

JULIA

So, who are you?

ARCHIVIST

Oh, uh... Jonathan. John Sims. I, I'm the head archivist for the Magnus Institute, London.

JULIA

(Pause) Huh. You don't say. So, what brings you down the I-70, Pennsylvania.

ARCHIVIST

Look, I mean, you're the one following me.

JULIA

Yup. Told you were asking some interesting questions around a few places back in Pittsburgh. And you seem to have attracted the attention of something we've been watching for a while.

ARCHIVIST

Uh, my bus is leaving.

JULIA

Let it. You're riding with me.

ARCHIVIST

I don't think so.

JULIA

Then try to run. Go on.

ARCHIVIST

So... Kidnapped. Again.

JULIA

Think of it like an... escort. Personal bodyguard. You're heading to DC, right? Come on. We can chat in the car. I'm sure you've got a ton of librarian stories – the miles'll just fly past.

ARCHIVIST

Do I have any choice?

JULIA

If you did, you'd only make a mistake. Come on.

(Click)

(Click)

(Rumble of engines, driving down the interstate)

ARCHIVIST

Are you alright? You seem, uh...

JULIA

Sure, just keeping an eye out. Waiting, you know?

JULIA

So, you're from the Magnus Institute?

ARCHIVIST

Yes. You know the Institute?

JULIA

Oh, yeah. Checked myself in there a while back. Ended up spilling my guts to this old woman all about my dad. Just... letting it all out.

ARCHIVIST

That would be Gertrude, my predecessor.

JULIA

Didn't catch her name. Weirdest thing, really. Didn't mean to spill half of it, but... really helped me put the pieces together, you know?

ARCHIVIST

I'm starting to.

JULIA

You still haven't told me what you're doing this side of the pond. Or why you're asking around about Gerard Keay?

ARCHIVIST

Would you believe me if I said I was trying to save the world.

JULIA

Probably not.

(Pause)

ARCHIVIST

What about you?

...

What brings the daughter of Robert Montauk all the way out here? And why exactly are you—

(American police siren calls from behind them. The Archivist exhales. The car indicates and slows to a stop. Julia turns off the engine.)

JULIA

Hunting.

(Police car door opens and closes in the distance)

(Faint footsteps outside the car)

(Police officer taps on window. Window winds down)

MAX

Licence and registration.

JULIA

Can I see some ID, please?

MAX

[Laughing] Of course.

You British?

JULIA

I have my green card, Officer... Mustermann.

MAX

And your friend?

JULIA

Visiting from home.

ARCHIVIST

Julia.

MAX

Does he have his passport on him?

ARCHIVIST

(More urgently) J-Julia.

JULIA

I assume so. Can't say I asked him. John?

ARCHIVIST

Julia, that is... I don't think... uh...

MAX

Step out of the car, please, sir.

JULIA

Now hang on a second...

MAX

(More forcefully) Step out of the car.

(Loud, distinct thump from the trunk of the car; everyone stops; the thump comes again)

MAX

(Drawing his gun) Pop the trunk, ma'am.

JULIA

I mean, there's nothing in there.

MAX

I'm not going to ask you again.

JULIA

Fine.

(Julia pulls the lever)

MAX

Don't move, either one of you.

(Footsteps, a pause, then a shotgun blast)

ARCHIVIST

Holy sh—!

(sound: second blast)

(Another figure shuffles over to the window. An old, pained Mancunian voice speaks)

TREVOR

Bloody hell, Jule. You said he'd stop us after a couple miles! Been near on an hour. You look at my neck; don't feel right.

JULIA

You knew it might take a while.

TREVOR

This him, then?

JULIA

It is. John. Trevor.

ARCHIVIST

Trevor Herbert. The, the vampire killer.

TREVOR

(Suspicious) Julia?

JULIA

He works for the Magnus Institute. He's read all about us.

TREVOR

Oh. Well, ain't that something.

JULIA

My thoughts exactly.

TREVOR

Time for that later. You two helpin' or what? This one needs its head off.

JULIA

You didn't kill it?

TREVOR

Don't know what it is yet, do we?

ARCHIVIST

The, the police officer? I think I have an idea.

TREVOR

(Chuckling) Do ya now? Then you get the axe. 's in the boot.

ARCHIVIST

I, I don't....

JULIA

Come on.

(Car door opens)

ARCHIVIST

R-right.

(Click)

[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: Jonathan Sims as the Archivist, Francesca Renée Reid as Julia Montauk, Ian Hayles as Trevor Herbert and Brock Winstead as Max Mustermann.