

## MAG – 097 – We All Ignore the Pit

### Content Warnings:

- Claustrophobia
- Mind-control
- Earthquake
- Body horror

[The Magnus Archives Theme – intro]

**JONATHANS SIMS**

Rusty Quill presents: The Magnus Archives. Episode ninety-seven. We All Ignore the Pit.

[Tape clicks on.]

**ARCHIVIST**

Statement of Jackson Ellis, regarding the geographical oddities in the town of Bucoda, Washington. Original statement given 3rd March 2009. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims, Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute, London.

Statement begins.

**ARCHIVIST (STATEMENT)**

Last year I moved to the small town of Bucoda, about 15 miles outside of Olympia in the State of Washington. I'd never heard of the town before, and I certainly had no idea about what I would soon start to think of as... 'The Pit'. The choice to move was not entirely mine, as my circumstances had driven me into a very particular situation. I had moved out to Olympia from Pittsburgh to pursue what appeared to be a very promising job as a correspondent for a regional newspaper. There weren't a lot of opportunities in my field, so when I was offered the position in Olympia, I had used all my savings to make the move.

I never got the full story on why the paper closed down so quickly. One person told me they'd gone bankrupt due to embezzlement at a high level, another

claimed there was a huge libel suit and they'd lost it badly, and a third said the decision had been made by their parent company without warning. Whatever the reason, I turned up to my first day of work to find the office halfway through being disassembled. I hadn't technically started my job yet, so there was no redundancy or severance. I was just... stranded in Olympia with no money and no obvious place to go. It didn't help matters that my new landlord proved entirely unsympathetic to my situation.

Since, even if I got a new job immediately, I'd be unable to make the next rent payment on the rather overpriced apartment in the city centre. He told me I was in breach of contract, and was to be evicted. He gave me three days.

So, I ended up in a place where I desperately needed to find somewhere very cheap to live, very quickly. Somewhere I could stay while I looked for another job. My parents were dirt poor themselves, and couldn't help. I mean, I'm sure they'd have taken me back in, but I didn't have the money to travel across half the country, especially not with all my stuff. You never realise how many possessions you have until you find them weighing you down, or how little value most of them have to anyone but you. I sold what I could, but I got less than fifty dollars, and had barely got rid of anything.

So when I got chatting to Tommy in a bar, two days before I was getting kicked out, and he told me he had a spare room he was looking to rent out on the cheap, I said yes almost before he'd given me any details about it. Thomas Krycek was young, blandly handsome, and not desperately bright. He seemed like a good sort, though. He'd bought a small one-storey home in the town of Bucoda with his partner a few years ago, but she'd split a month or two before, and now he was struggling to keep up the payments on the house. It wasn't much, but it fit what might be generously be called my 'budget', and Bucoda was less than an hour's drive from Olympia, so commuting in to any job I might actually get wouldn't be too bad. I shook his hand, and I moved there.

The town was almost exactly what you would expect. A small grid without traffic signs or markings, patches of grass and dirt with small houses irregularly dotted about. What infrastructure there was boasted only volunteers, and I'd be surprised if there was more than five hundred people in total who called it home. The forest pressed in on all sides, like it did everywhere in the Pacific

Northwest, I suppose, but it was an effect I was struggling to get used to. As I pulled up to Tommy's house for the first time, it was... strange. I felt like even before I turned off the engine I didn't belong there. Like I'd walked backstage at a theatre: nobody stopped me, but I couldn't shake the impression that I'd gone somewhere I wasn't supposed to be. Even when Tommy came out, and started to unpack the trunk, it seemed to me that he blended into the town in a way I just didn't.

There was no sign this was anything other than in my own head, though. Tommy didn't seem to notice anything off, and as I shifted my stuff into the tiny bedroom he wordlessly handed me a beer with a big smile. I drank it gladly, and tried my best to relax.

As it turned out my situation wasn't quite as dreadful as I thought. I discovered the next day that my work had actually paid me a small amount. It wasn't clear whether it was meant to be salary or severance, and I couldn't get through to anyone who might have been able to explain it, but it was enough to ease the relentless pressure, if only a little bit. I allowed myself a few days to rest and recover from the chaos that the last week had been. I suppose technically I could have moved out of Tommy's place, but he seemed... genuinely happy to have me around, and I reckoned my efforts were better spent looking for a new job than a place to live.

I spent the next few days sleeping, drinking, and gently exploring the tiny town which now counted me among its residents. It was quiet, though by no means deserted; I regularly saw other people walking the streets, though there was no sidewalk to speak of. It may have just been my imagination, but whenever they saw me, it seemed like they paused for just a moment, staring at me, before they continued on their way. They seemed friendly enough apart from that, and there never seemed to be any subtext or hidden meaning behind their greetings. Thinking back now, though, I'm not sure I ever saw any children, though maybe I'm reading too much into it.

I found the... pit almost immediately. It wasn't like it was something that could easily be missed, sitting there at the intersection of River Street and 6th, gaping up at the bright blue sky. It looked like a sinkhole, but almost completely circular, and instead of the sheer drop of most such holes,

this one sloped gently down towards a small opening at the centre, maybe ten or fifteen feet below street level. In some ways it seemed more like a crater than a sinkhole, but it was so neat and regular, I didn't think it could be the result of any impact or explosion. It was huge, bigger than the street that should have been there, and the thing that struck me as odd, was that the road continued around it. It seemed to split apart just before the pit, and come together on the other side of it. I mean, I don't know if you can judge the age of a hole just by looking at it, but it didn't seem that old. The road did, though, or at least it definitely hadn't been put down recently.

There was no indication it had been laid separately to the rest of the town. The pit was just there.

As I stood, staring at the hole in the ground, I heard a car coming up the road behind me. I stepped to the side as it drove past and around the edges of the pit, before continuing on. I glanced briefly inside the driver's side window, but there was no surprise on her face, no irritation at the obstacle. It seemed to have barely registered. I left soon afterwards, weirdly unnerved by its... smooth, circular presence.

I asked Tommy about it the next day. He was reaching into the kitchen to grab me a beer, when I told him I'd stumbled across it when walking around town. I wondered did he know anything about it? How long had it been there? Was it a sinkhole, or an earthquake, or... or what? It was only after I'd casually tossed out a whole series of questions that I noticed Tommy had frozen in place, one hand in the fridge and the other on the door. He didn't seem alarmed or scared, just completely still. I was quiet for a few seconds, and then he took the beer out and handed it to me, shutting the little fridge behind him. He gave no indication that he'd heard me. So I asked again, the pit on 6th and River, what was it's deal? He looked at me for a while, like he was trying to puzzle out what I had said from a different language, then shrugged, and mumbled something about old roads not being properly maintained. "No," I said, "the pit. The big hole in the ground." He just shook his head like I was talking nonsense, and headed off to his room. I tried to drink my beer, but it tasted thick and unpleasant on my tongue.

I wanted to forget it, to ignore the dusty crater that waited in the middle of this tiny town, but I couldn't. Something about it rubbed at me, like a speck of dirt in my eye, but the more I tried to reach it, the deeper it went. I checked maps of the area, looking to see if any of them featured the odd landmark, but I found ones that went right up to 2008, and none of them had anything marked at that spot, even though the split in the road had clearly been there far longer than a year.

I tried to talk about it, see if anyone else had any idea about what the pit was or why it was there, but when I asked around Joe's - the only diner in town - everyone reacted just like Tommy.

Mishearing, misunderstanding or just straight-up ignoring me. It wasn't even like they seemed deliberately evasive; all their reactions seemed genuine, but no-one was able to talk about the pit.

I'd just about given up on getting anything sensible out of the people at Joe's that afternoon, when an older man walked over to me. I'd seen him around a bit, though I couldn't have told you who he was or what he did. He was big, though, with a face that looked chiselled out of limestone. I stopped eating, and waited.

The old man stared at me for what must have been a good twenty seconds, and then he spoke.

"Nothing for you down there," he said. "You just go and enjoy your sky." There was no mistaking the threat in his voice, as if I wasn't going to have a lot of time left to do so, and I was about to say something when his head suddenly snapped forward, and he spat at my feet. Then he turned and walked away. I looked down, and saw a thick brown lump of mud. Nobody looked over, and I didn't follow him.

I actually tried to take his advice. I had other things to be worried about, and fundamentally there was no reason for me to be so obsessed with a hole in the ground. It wasn't even like I needed to travel that road. I was only regularly travelling to Olympia to apply for jobs, and from Tommy's house the pit was in entirely the other direction. But I started to dream about it.

Dream about walking into the pit, the ground turning to thick, sucking mud underneath me. I'd dream about it filling my mouth, my lungs. I couldn't breathe.

There was one, I can't honestly say if it was a dream, but I also can't bring myself to call it a memory. It was sunny, the middle of the day. I could hear the sound of laughter from somewhere in town, soft voices chatting to each other. A peaceful day. I walked as far as the pit, and for the first time, I crossed the edge and began to climb down into it. It was dry, dusty, and the air felt different from the rest of the town. Slowly, carefully, I walked to the hole in the centre. This bit looked more like a sinkhole, disappearing down into the pitch darkness. It was less than a foot across, and I felt a gentle rush of cool, wet air. I sat there in silence, listening, convinced I could hear something, but there was only silence. I leaned closer, my head directly over the hole, and I heard it. And then I did what it told me to.

I took my hand, and I reached down into the darkness. Down and down, until my whole arm was inside, up to the shoulder. It was damp and cold, with the rough stone sides scraping my skin, but my hand was stretched as far as I could, and it still gripped nothing but empty air. Then the hole began to close, and all at once the spell was broken. I tried to pull my arm out, to get free, but it held me tight. Not quite crushing me, but holding me in place. I screamed and cried for help, looking around for anyone who might be able to hear me, but the only people walking by seemed utterly oblivious to what was happening. Then I felt it, something brushing against my hand from below it in the hole. Teeth. Wet, blunt teeth, which quickly gave way to a rough, slender tongue that wrapped itself around my hand and snaked up my arm, as though tasting me.

Then, without warning I felt it snap back into the darkness, taking some of the skin with it, and my arm was abruptly released.

The next thing I remember I was lying in bed. I want to say I had just woken up and it was all a dream, but I was fully dressed, dusty, and with long, thin scratches that snaked around my arm.

That was when I started desperately looking for a way to leave Bucoda. I'd been there for just over a month by this point, and had managed to find a part-

time job over in the nearby town, Chehalis. The pay wasn't great, but it should have been just about enough to move out if I was careful. Tommy was upset, of course, but didn't seem surprised – that month had been a bit tense, and we weren't particularly well-suited to living together anyway. I suppose that's what you get for moving in with strangers you meet in a bar.

It was the night before I left that it happened. 17th June 2008. I'd got all my things boxed up and ready to go. I had the keys to my new place. All I had to do was get one more good night's sleep.

Instead I was woken up about two in the morning by the sound of the front door closing. I called out, but Tommy didn't respond. I searched the house to make sure no-one had broken in, but the place was empty. I was alone. Tommy's business was his own, I decided, and was about to return to bed when I saw a shadow pass by the window. Then another. I quietly moved to the door and pushed it open, looking out into the street to see if I could figure out what was going on.

There aren't a lot of street lights in Bucoda, and at night, when all the houses are dark it can get very eerie indeed. I was close enough to see the figures moving down the road, though. They walked casually, like they were just going for a stroll, but there were a lot of them. Maybe the whole town. Walking out of their houses and trailers, and down the unlit streets. I knew exactly where they were going, and I just couldn't stop myself following them.

I don't know how the whole town was able to get inside the pit. There must have been hundreds of them, piled high, and encrusted with mud. They did not move, though their eyes shone so brightly in my torch that they must have been alive. None of them made a sound, though I could feel a warmth and shuddering below my feet, as though the earth itself was screaming.

Without warning one of their heads snapped towards me. It was a young woman who had lived the next road over, and whose name I had never learned. She stared at me, eyes suddenly alive with terror, and began to scream. The instant she did, she disappeared, pulled into the ground, cutting the sound off before it had even begun. I turned and ran, back to the house. I wanted to drive away, but I couldn't bear to be outside. So I hid, under my bed the rest of the night, and felt the ground rock gently beneath me.

I don't know if Tommy returned the next day. As soon as it was light outside, I leapt into my car, and began to drive away. I tried to, at least. I didn't want to see the pit again, I really didn't. But I did. It was empty, as before, like the previous night had never happened. But it was bigger. And the road had swelled to encompass it. There was someone else looking at it, though. An elderly woman, face pinched and thoughtful, stood at the edge looking down. I didn't recognise her, or the car she stood next to. She definitely wasn't from Bucoda. Sat in the car next to her, I could see a young man who had clearly been crying. I couldn't get over how blue his eyes were. The old woman caught my eye, and looked from me, to the pit, and back again. I thought about saying something when she gestured for me to leave, and I did. I decided that I was no part of whatever was happening, so I drove away, and didn't look back.

That night, the earthquake struck that destroyed Bucoda entirely, so I guess I'll never know what was going on. And honestly? I'm glad.

#### **ARCHIVIST**

Statement ends.

Why has Elias sent me this statement? It took place the other side of the world, to people who don't seem to have any connection with what's going on. I've suspected for a while there may be some power concerned with caves and enclosed spaces, being buried alive or crushed. So I suppose it's nice to get a statement that goes some way to developing that theory, but... I cannot figure out what it has to do with our current situation. Is it the nameless old man? The old woman? Or whoever was crying in the car? Is he trying to warn me not to ignore my own metaphorical pit, because if so, what is my metaphorical pit?

You know, it's somehow worse, now that I know I can ask why he's sending me these statements, but that he still won't... tell me. I did my follow-up. Mr. Ellis is still alive and well, currently living in Tacoma, and unwilling to discuss these events any further. The town of Bucoda itself is...

Well, it's... gone. Newspapers reported it as an earthquake, and tremors were felt as far away as Castle Rock, but despite every article describing Bucoda as having been "destroyed" by the earthquake, there are no pictures or records of the destruction itself. No damage seems to have

occurred outside of town limits, and all the roads in the area seem unaffected, despite there being no evidence of rebuilding works taking place after the event. As far as I can tell, there was an earthquake, and then Bucoda wasn't there, but aside from these two detail—

**[The sounds of the lights going out.]**

Oh. **(Sigh)** Alright, let's....

**[The lightswitch is flicked on and off a few times.]**

Georgie, where's your fusebo—?

Right. Right. Keep saying it's not meant to trip whenever one bulb goes, but "No, John, I don't want to bother the landlord." **(Sighs.)** Ah.

**ORSINOV**

**(Sing-song)** You don't want to do that.

**(The Archivist gasps.)**

**ORSINOV**

I mean, you can if you really want to, but you're not going to like it. Sometimes not being able to see something is actually quite a good thing.

**ARCHIVIST**

Who are you?

**ORSINOV**

Well, my father called me Nikola, and then I killed him, so I thought I rather deserved to have his second name too. Which makes me Nikola Orsinov. Pleased to meet you at last.

**ARCHIVIST**

You, um... You killed Gregor Orsinov?

**ORSINOV**

Yep! He got really boring, and I'm a monster. I mean, what do you want me to do – not pull him apart? I did use all the bits.

**ARCHIVIST**

I... Y... Y-You don't... sound Russian.

**ORSINOV**

How could I sound anything, silly? I'm plastic.

**[The sound of tapping on plastic.]**

I don't even have a voicebox. I had to borrow this one.

**ARCHIVIST**

Uh...

**ORSINOV**

Don't turn on the light.

**ARCHIVIST**

A-Are... Are you going to kill me?

**ORSINOV**

No! I mean, yes. But not for a good long while yet. I don't want you to go to waste.

**ARCHIVIST**

Then, er... then, then what... Then why are you here?

**ORSINOV**

After you attacked poor Sarah, I thought it was about time we had a good old chat. Face to no face! Eye to... well.

**ARCHIVIST**

W... What do you want?

**ORSINOV**

You remember that old piece of skin you were talking about? We'd like it back. We thought that mean old Gertrude had destroyed it. But then you went looking, and now we think maybe she was just very good at hiding.

**ARCHIVIST**

I'm sorry, are you asking me to find it for you?

**ORSINOV**

That would be lovely. And a lot nicer for you than our other ideas.

**ARCHIVIST**

What is so important about some ancient bit of taxidermy?

**ORSINOV**

(Happily) I want to wear it when I dance the world new.

**ARCHIVIST**

But... But wh—URK!

[It sounds as if the Archivist has been hit.]

**ORSINOV**

Question time is over, little Archivist. Find the skin for us. You have until... well, until I change my mind.

[The sound of an impact – the Archivist gasps for breath.]

Shhh... Save your energy for the dance.

[Footsteps over laboured breathing]

[Tape clicks off.]

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Outro.]

**JONATHAN SIMS**

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